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President U Win Myint holds talks with General To Lam, Vietnamese Minister of Public Security, at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

## President U Win Myint receives Vietnamese Public Security Minister

PRESIDENT U Win Myint received a delegation from the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam led by the Minister of Public Security, General To Lam, at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw

yesterday.

During the meeting, they openly discussed implementation of national reconciliation and internal peace in Myanmar, regional development in Rakhine

State, cooperation in the South-east Asian region and globally, bilateral cooperation in security and stability between Myanmar and Viet Nam, working together in countering terrorism, drug traf-

ficking, and transnational crimes, increasing bilateral collaboration in agriculture, livestock, industry, air travel, communications, trade, and investment, and increasing working visits between the two

countries' high-profile representatives. Union Ministers Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe and U Min Thu, and other officials were also present at the meeting. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

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## Pyithu Hluttaw

Second Pyithu Hluttaw holds 17<sup>th</sup>-day meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> regular session

By Aye Aye Thant (MNA)  
DURING the 17<sup>th</sup>-day meeting of the 11<sup>th</sup> regular session of the Second Pyithu Hluttaw yesterday, MPs discussed at length on a motion tabled by Daw Aye Mya Mya Myo of Kyauktan constituency urging the Union Government to equip nursery school teachers with the required skill-sets and to allocate funds for nutritional supplements for the children.

Service providers violating the law will be penalized

The first oral question on the Hluttaw's agenda was raised by Dr. U Hla Moe of Aungmyethazan constituency asking whether there were plans to take legal action towards licensed service providers who have violated the rights of its consumers.

U Thar Oo, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications, replied that if licensed service providers are found to be charging consumers different rates from its advertised services then action will be taken against them in line with Section 57 of the Telecommunications Law and Section 41-(a) of the License Issuance Bylaw.

The Deputy Minister said they will be conducting public awareness campaigns on understanding service provider advertisements and notifications. He said consumers can report violations of service agreements to the



Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat. PHOTO: MNA

Directorate of Communications and the Consumer Affairs Department, and added that they are working closely with the latter department to ensure users do not face losses when filing reports.

#### Repairing weathered MPT office and other questions

U Ar Moe Si of Khaunglanphu constituency raised a question on whether the Myanmar Post and Telecommunications office in Khaunglanphu Township, ruined by the weather elements, will be swiftly renovated. Deputy Minister U Thar Oo replied that a suitable new office will be built to replace the old building if the proposal for capital funds in the 2019-2020 FY is verified and allocated.

The rest of question time focused on Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe, Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Soe

Aung, and Deputy Minister U Thar Oo replying to questions raised by Daw Nan Htwe Thu of Pasawng constituency, U Kyaw Tin of Saw constituency, U Khin Cho of Hlaingbwe constituency, U Nyunt Win of Kanpetlet constituency, and U Myint Lwin of Twantay constituency.

Speaker U T Khun Myat then announced the Pyithu Hluttaw has received the Bill Amending the Myanmar Engineering Council Law, send back with amendments from the Amyotha Hluttaw, and called for MPs interested in submitting further amendments to enroll their names.

MPs discuss motion regarding nursery teachers, nutrition

Pyithu Hluttaw representatives discussed a motion tabled by Daw Aye Mya Mya Myo of Kyauktan constituency urging the Union Government to equip nursery school teachers with the necessary skills for taking care

of children between the ages of 3 and 5 years old and to submit a suitable budget proposal for providing nutritional supplements in nursery schools.

U Myint Oo of Magway constituency seconded the motion, saying the early childhood years are important for ensuring proper mental and physical development throughout children's entire life.

U Aung Thaik of Seikpyu constituency also seconded the motion, adding that the Union Government should also push for the emergence of nursery schools, with approval and regular support from the Department of Social Welfare, in remote regions of Myanmar.

The motion was further discussed by U Sai Oo Khem of Hsenwi constituency, U Yan Kyin Kan of Kunlong constituency, Daw Nan Than Lwin of Hpa-an constituency, Daw Ni Shwe Lian of Thantlang constituency, U Myo Naing of Chanayetharzan constituency, and U Ar Moe Si of Khaunglanphu constituency. Deputy Minister replies to motion, gives approval

Deputy Minister U Soe Aung then responded to the motion. He said child-centered learning is employed to create a learning environment that encourages play, music, arts and crafts, encourages curiosity and innovation in a safe space for children. He said the Department of Social Welfare commits itself to ensure public

and private nursery schools are legally registered, shares technical skills, and conducts capacity building training.

The Deputy Minister responded to a statement in the motion that reads: 'the practice of lining children up for nap time is intended to passively discipline them and is a mistaken way of developing them'; by saying that nursery school teachers are outfitted with proper childhood development methods and follow the curriculum set by the Department of Social Welfare.

The Deputy Minister said they will continue collaborating with other relevant ministries, NGOs, and civil society organizations to ensure every child gets to attend nursery school and child development methods are disseminated among the public. He said he agrees with the well-meaning intentions of the motion and for it to be approved.

Next, the Speaker asked the MP who tabled the motion for any additional consideration and the MP replied for the motion to be approved. The Speaker then called for the deliberation of the Hluttaw, and after receiving no disagreements from the other MPs, announced the Hluttaw has approved of the motion.

The 18<sup>th</sup>-day meeting of the 11<sup>th</sup> regular session of the Second Pyithu Hluttaw will be held tomorrow. ■ (Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

## Amyotha Hluttaw

17<sup>th</sup>-day meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> regular session of Second Amyotha Hluttaw held

By Aung Ye Thwin, Lu Maw (MNA)

AT the 17<sup>th</sup>-day meeting of the eleventh regular session of Second Amyotha Hluttaw held at Amyotha Hluttaw building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning Deputy Minister for Ethnic Affairs U Hla Maw Oo said declaring a government or state holiday to honor Sayadaw U Ottama alone at the present moment is not appropriate. The Deputy Minister was responding to a question raised in the question and answer session. In addition to the question and answer session the Amyotha Hluttaw meeting held yesterday also covers approving a bill and discussing a motion.

Question and answer session

In the first question of the question and answer session U Wai Sein Aung of Rakhine State



Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than. PHOTO: MNA

constituency 1 asked if there is a plan to declare 9 September, a day when the leading light of the country's independence Sayadaw U Ottama passed away, as a government holiday or a Rakhine State holiday. In order not to affect the ongoing peace process, create misunderstanding among ethnic nationals by appearing to favor one ethnic national over another and not

to affect the government machinery it isn't appropriate at the present moment to declare the day as a government holiday or a Rakhine State holiday said Deputy Minister U Hla Maw Oo

Similarly questions raised by U Myo Win of Mon State constituency 8 on a plan for constructing a road and bridges to transport agriculture products in Mon State, Ye Township; U

Kyaw Ni Naing of Shan State constituency 11 on upgrading Kawkaik-Hpa-an road in Kayin State that is linked to the border gate at Myawady; construction related questions raised by U Tin Aung Tun of Magway Region constituency 5 and Daw Nan Moe Moe Htwe of Kayin State constituency 4 were answered by Deputy Minister for Construction U Kyaw Lin.

Hluttaw approves Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage Regions Bill

Next Hluttaw announced the approval of Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage Regions Bill approved and sent with amendment by Pyithu Hluttaw after Hluttaw decided on it.

Hluttaw discusses a motion on establishing a

National Land Law

Afterwards a motion tabled by Dr. Pyae Phyo of Ayeyawady Region constituency 7 urging the government to review National Land Use Policy to establish a National Land Law was discussed by Daw Htu May of Rakhine State constituency 11, U Aung Myo of Sagaing Region constituency 2, Naw Chris Tun, @ Dr. Arkar Moe of Kayin State constituency 7, Dr. Zaw Lin Htut of Mon State constituency 9, U Mann Htun Kyaing of Ayeyawady Region constituency 6, U Hla Myint @ U Hla Myint Than of Mon State constituency 11 and U Ba Myo Thein of Yangoon Region constituency 5.

The 18<sup>th</sup>-day meeting of the eleventh regular session of the Second Amyotha Hluttaw will be held on 27 February it is learnt. ■ (Translated by Zaw Min)

# Vice President U Myint Swe attends meeting on awarding religious titles, donation of rations

A COORDINATION meeting of the Patron Committee and Steering Committee to successfully hold the ceremony to award religious titles and donate dry rations, was held at the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture's meeting hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon. Vice President U Myint Swe in his capacity as Chairman of Patron Committee attended and addressed the meeting.

In his speech at the meeting, Vice President U Myint Swe said that to successfully hold the ceremony, a five-member patron committee led by Vice President as chairman and a 19-member steering committee led by Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture as chairman was formed by Presidential order No. 18/2019 on 1 February 2019. On 4 February 2019 the steering committee formed a work committee, 11 sub-committees and assigned duties and responsibilities to conduct the works successfully and systematically, he said.

The steering committee's coordination meeting was held on 13 February 2019 where 11 decisions were made and it is learnt that decisions have been implemented by the sub-committees. The Union government's ceremony to award religious titles and donate dry rations will be held in two parts. The first part, a ceremony to donate "soon" will be held on 18 March 2019. The second part of awarding religious titles and donating dry rations will be held on 20 March 2019 at the Sasana's Maha Beikman within the compound of the Uppatasanti



Vice President U Myint Swe delivers the speech at the coordination meeting of the Patron Committee and Steering Committee on holding the ceremony to award religious titles and to donate dry rations in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw. Therefore, the work committee and sub-committee members are to coordinate and work together based on the experience of past years' ceremonies so that there are no lapses in the work.

The ceremony to award religious titles and donate dry rations is a union level event that had been conducted since the days of early Myanmar kings. The ceremony had a long tradition and had been conducted by successive governments and it is a ceremony where the highest religious titles were conferred. The Ministry of Transport and Communications is to arrange special flights for State Sangha Mahanayaka Sayadaws and Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida Sayadaws to travel from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw and back.

The venues where the local and foreign Sayadaws and Thilashin Sayagyis (nuns) were to stay temporarily need to be arranged so that the stay was pleasant and convenient. The offering of "soon" in the morning and noon at these venues as well as provision of healthcare as in the past years had to be arranged. The preparations and offerings at the Sasana Maha Beikman in which the ceremonies will be held have to be worthy of reverence. The relevant committees need to co-ordinate with each other so that the events were held and concluded within designated times, said the Vice President.

Finally the Vice President urged the steering committee, work committee and sub-committees to openly discuss sta-

tus of completion of sector wise works, difficulties faced and provide suggestions where required.

Next Steering Committee Chairman Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko explained about status of works conducted for conferring religious titles and donate dry rations. Steering Committee Vice Chairman Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Kyi Min explained about the ongoing work status and future works of the committee while work committee Chairman Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture Permanent Secretary U Htun Ohn explained about the works implemented and future works of the work committee.

Later, the sub-committees

reported on their respective works. The Vice President gave comments and advice to ensure coordination with regard to the discussions and reports, and concluded the meeting after delivering a closing speech.

The meeting was attended by: Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman Dr. Myo Aung, Deputy Ministers Maj-Gen Aung Thu, U Kyi Min, U Thar Oo and Dr. Tun Naing, Nay Pyi Taw Council members Col. Min Naung and U Aung Myin Tun, chairmen and members of the steering committee, work committee and sub-committees, and other departmental officials.—MNA■

(Translated Zaw Min)

## Myanmar, Viet Nam hold 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Security Cooperation

THE Third Ministerial Meeting on Security Cooperation between Myanmar and Viet Nam was held at the Ministry of Home Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

It was attended by Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, Deputy Minister Maj-Gen Aung Thu, Chief of the Myanmar Police Force Lt-Gen Aung Win Oo, directors-general from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs, Minister

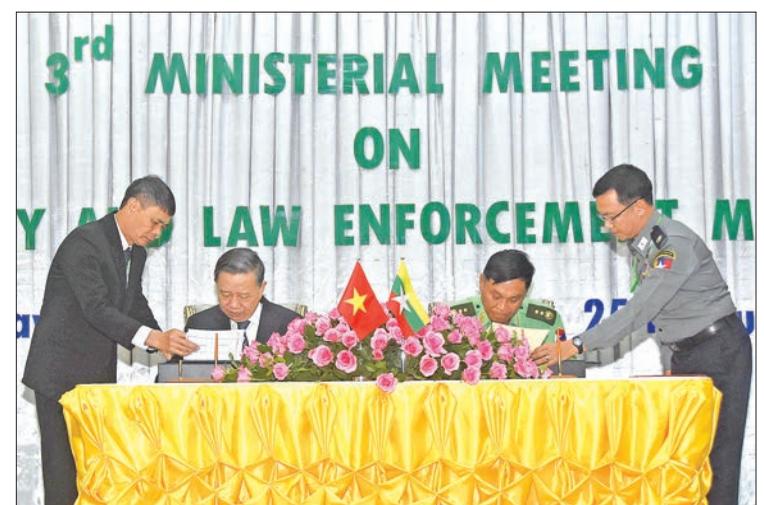
of Public Security of Viet Nam Gen. To Lam, Ambassador of Viet Nam Dr. Lun Thuy Duong and senior officials.

At the meeting, they discussed bilateral cooperation in security and the rule of law and fighting transnational crimes including combating drugs, trafficking in person, terrorism which is threatening the regional and the global countries, promoting capacity of police for prevention of crimes

and investigation. The two sides also discussed and approved the further cooperation between the two ministries.

After the meeting, Union Minister Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe and Gen. To Lam signed the bilateral agreement on cooperation in prevention of crimes and fighting transnational crimes, and the ministerial-level minute of the meeting.—MNA ■

(Translated by GNLM)



Union Minister Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe and Gen. To Lam sign the bilateral agreement at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Security and Law Enforcement Matters in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

## Senior General inspects Tatmadaw Heavy Industry factory in Htonebo



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing inspects Tatmadaw Heavy Industry factory in Htonebo yesterday. **PHOTO: THE OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF**

TATMADAW Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing visited the Tatmadaw Heavy Industry factory in Htonebo yesterday afternoon and inspected the production of vehicle parts, assembly of vehicles, and manufacturing of engines in the production lines of the Diesel Engine Manufacturing Plant.

Next the Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief met with factory personnel and said the former

Ministry of Industry 2 factory in Htonebo previously produced Mazada Jeeps, B-600 and T-2000s but had stopped manufacturing for quite some time. It was transferred to the Tatmadaw in 2016 and the production of vehicles and engine parts were restarted. Now it had produced the 100<sup>th</sup> vehicles that is the first own design vehicle and the factory personnel were being honored and rewarded with cash prizes,

said the Senior General.

Afterwards Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief and party went to an airfield inside the ancient city of Thayekhittaya (Sri Ksetra) in Pyay Town to meet with departmental officials and suggested on continuing the maintenance of the airfield according to the news release of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services. — MNA ■ (Translated by Zaw Min)



Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Tun Tun Hein delivers the speech at the Joint Committee meeting to amend 2008 Constitution in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

## Joint Committee to amend 2008 Constitution holds meeting 2/2019

MEETING 2/2019 of the Joint Committee to amend 2008 Constitution was held at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Building D in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

The meeting was attended by Chairman of the Joint Com-

mittee Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Tun Aung @ U Tun Tun Hein, Deputy Chairman of the Joint Committee Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye Tha Aung, Joint Committee sec-

retary, joint secretary and members who were representatives from political parties and Tatmadaw Hluttaw representative and officials from Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Office.—MNA ■ (Translated by Zaw Min)

## President's Office continues announcement of illegal drug arrests, seizures acting on tip-offs

THE Office of the President issued Press Release No. 8/2019 yesterday, publicly announcing the Ministry of Home Affairs' arrests and seizures in the fight against illicit drug trafficking up till 24 February.

The ministry made the arrests, acting on information, sent to the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department of the Office of the President as of 24 February.

The full text of the press release will be reported in the 27 February issue of The Global New Light of Myanmar.—GNLM■

### Myanmar Gazette

## Head of service organization transferred

The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has transferred U Aung Soe, Director-General, Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization under the Ministry of Commerce, as Director-General of the Union Minister's Office of the Ministry of Commerce from the date he assumes charge of his duties. ■

## Personal interview of foreigners approved by ICC for Permanent Residency

A PERSONAL interview of foreigners whose applications for permanent residency were reviewed and approved by Implementation Central Committee (ICC) for Permanent Residency was held in Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population meeting hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

Chairman of ICC for permanent residency Union Minister U Thein Swe met with officials conducting the personal interview and explained about the types and granting of permanent residencies and urged all to suggest on whether to permit or not the people who were reviewed.

Next, officials explained about the personal interview process and ICC for Perma-

nent Residency Chairman and committee members conducted personal interviews.

Since the work process of allowing permanent residency was started in 29 January 2015 to date, a total of 480 out of 590 applicants for permanent residency were being granted permission for permanent residency and relevant documents and cards were issued.

In the day's interview 32 persons whose applications for permanent residency were reviewed and approved by ICC for Permanent Residency were interviewed and when approved, submissions will be made to relevant upper levels and relevant documents and cards will be issued.—MNA ■ (Translated by Zaw Min)



Union Minister U Thein Swe meets with officials conducting the personal interview of foreigners in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

# Basic Diplomacy Course for Hluttaw Office personnel opened

PYITHU Hluttaw Deputy Speaker and Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC) on Hluttaw Development Chairman U Tun Tun Hein attended and addressed the opening ceremony of Basic Diplomacy Course for Hluttaw office personnel held at Learning Center Room 3 in Hluttaw Building yesterday morning.

In his address, Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker and JCC on Hluttaw Development Chairman U Tun Tun Hein said the Basic Diplomacy Course for Hluttaw Office personnel was opened under the arrangement of The Asia Foundation and experienced experts are going to conduct the course.

Our Hluttaws had increased engagement with international



Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Tun Tun Hein addresses the opening ceremony of Basic Diplomacy Course for Hluttaw office personnel at the Hluttaw Building yesterday. PHOTO: MNA



organisations and Hluttaw Office personnel who frequently went along with Hluttaw representatives to international meetings, workshops, training courses and study tours need to have a basic idea of diplomacy said U Tun Tun Hein.

Course attendees are to use the experience gained from this course to defend and promote the interest of the country when dealing with international organisations and international parliamentary circles and are expected and hoped to become

well versed and qualified in diplomacy. Similarly, continuous study is required to effectively utilize the experiences gained in the course in their practical works said U Tun Tun Hein.

The opening ceremony was attended by Hluttaw represent-

atives, JCC on Hluttaw Development members, experts from Hluttaw Offices and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, partner organisations and international experts.—MNA ■

(Translated by Zaw Min)

# MoI chalks out plan for govt's 3<sup>rd</sup> year performance report

THE State-run media will broadcast and publish the work done by the incumbent government in its third year as part of efforts for fulfilling the people's right to information about what their elected representatives have achieved.

"People elected the government and they have the right to know how the government is running its administrative machinery and how it spent the revenue contributed by the

people in the form of tax," said Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun at the coordination meeting for covering the performance of the incumbent government in the state-run media. The meeting was held at the ministry in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The ruling National League for Democracy assumed office in March 2016. State-run broadcast media MRTV and the print media have reported on the government's performance at the end

of every year since it took office. Filming for the third-year performance report will be carried out from 11 to 26 March and it will be broadcast and published

from 1 April, with two ministries covered per day.

At the meeting, officials of Union-level institutions and governments discussed the pro-

gram for broadcasting and publishing, and the meeting came to an end with concluding remarks by the deputy minister.—MNA ■

(Translated by GNLM)



Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun delivers the speech at the coordination meeting for covering the performance of the incumbent government in state-run media in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA



Chairman of the MNHRC U Win Mra addresses the basic course on human rights at office of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission in Yangon yesterday. PHOTO: YE HTUT

# MNHRC conducts Course No. 1 on human rights in Yangon

A BASIC course on human rights conducted by the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission began at its office on Pyay Road in Hline Township yesterday, with opening remark by Chairman of the MNHRC U Win Mra. The two-week course is being attended by 52 trainees.

"Human rights and democracy are related to each other. That's why we conducted this course as part of efforts for promoting human rights in the people and this would be very helpful for building a democracy," said MNHRC Chairman U Win Mra. MNHRC is conduct-

ing the course for the first time and anyone interested in human rights can attend this course free of charge. "I want to deeply understand about human rights because it is the right for all the people. That's why I am attending this course. I will disseminate the knowledge gained in this course," said Advocate Daw San San Myint. About 17 subjects will be lectured during the two-week course conducted by experts. MNHRC will conduct course No. 2 from 25 March to 8 April.—Zaw Gyi ■

(Translated by GNLM)



Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Ambassador of Brunei and charge d'affaires a.i. of Embassy of Kuwait slice the cake at the Kuwait Embassy celebration. **PHOTO: MNA**

## Kuwait Embassy celebrates 58<sup>th</sup> National Day, 28<sup>th</sup> Liberation Day

THE Embassy of Kuwait in Yangon celebrated the 58<sup>th</sup> National Day and the 28<sup>th</sup> Liberation Day of the State of Kuwait at the Melia Yangon Hotel yesterday.

It was attended by Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint and wife Daw Khaing Nwe Oo. First, the celebrations started with the national anthems of

the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the State of Kuwait. Afterwards, Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Ambassador of Brunei Mr. Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Pahlawan Colone (R) Dato Paduka Haji Abdu'r Rahmani bin Dato Paduka Haji Basir, charge d'affaires a.i. of Embassy of Kuwait

Mr. Adel Al Adgham sliced the commemorative cake and posed for documentary photos together with attendees.

The embassy hosted a dinner to the attendees.

Also present at the event were diplomats in Yangon, resident representatives of the UN agencies and guests.—MNA ■

## Tatmadaw negotiation team holds talks with representatives from SSPP/SSA

TATMADAW negotiation team met with representatives from SSPP/SSA at Paunglaung Guest House in Nay Pyi Taw Command yesterday. During the meeting, the two sides cordially and openly matters relating to increasing negotiation, reducing armed conflicts and clashes in Northern Shan State and continuing the participation in the current peace process path.

Present at the meeting were Chairman of the Tatmadaw negotiation team Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, senior officers from Commander-in-Chief (Army) Office, Eastern Central Command commander, SSPP/SSA Vice Chairman Sao Khun Hsai and party according to news released by Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Office.—MNA ■ (Translated by Zaw Min)



The Tatmadaw negotiation team meeting with representatives from SSPP/SSA in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: C-IN-C OFFICE**

## Line Walker-2 continues fourth day of filming near Sule Pagoda

ON the fourth day of filming near Sule Pagoda, cast and crew of 'Line Walker-2' shot a shootout scene between police and criminal gangs in front of the Central Fire Station in Kyauktada Township, Yangon yesterday. Enthusiastic Yangonians once again packed the streets surrounding the film set to show their support for Hong Kong action film while authorities were on site to ensure traffic was smooth.

Ma Zun Li, a textile shop owner in Theingyi Market, said one of the actors in the film is a favourite from her younger days and four more familiar actors are in the movie as well. She said she closed shop today to come observe the film set with her friends.

Despite the sweltering sun heating Yangon up in the afternoon, the director continued taking multiple shots of the gun fight as the crowd of onlookers also persisted in the hot weather.

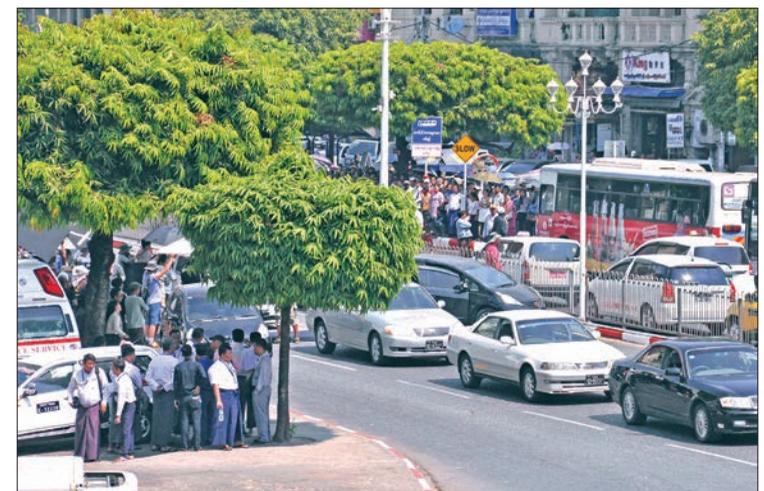
U Naing Oo said he came from Tamway Township to see the filming near Sule Pagoda before it wrapped up on 26 February. He said he will watch the film when it comes out as it focuses on combating human trafficking.

Another avid fan, Ma Shun Kyin, travelled all the way from Ye Ayekwin ward in Taunggyi to see the filming after hearing about it from her Yangon friends.

Filming for Line Walker-2 began taking place in downtown Yangon since last Friday. The

film shot scenes on Maha Bandoola Park Road on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and continued filming on Sule Pagoda Road on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, they shot a helicopter scene and a scene where police crash into the criminal's car to stop them, with a gun fight ensuing, amidst a massive crowd of Yangonians spending their weekend break to watch the filming in progress.

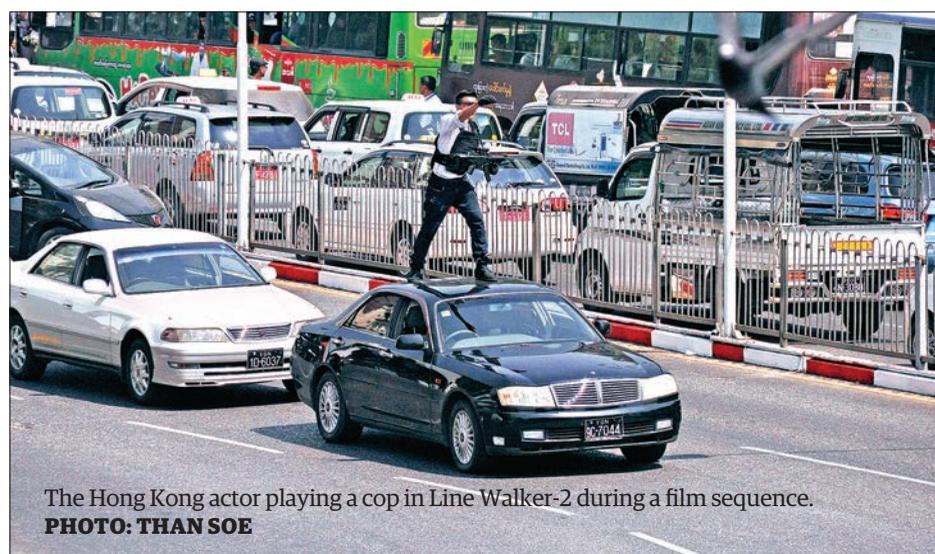
U Maung Maung Soe from Bogalay Market said he is both amazed and honoured that a foreign film has come to shoot scenes in Yangon. He said the people of Myanmar are looking forward to movies that focus on cooperation with neighbouring countries in countering human and drug trafficking and preserving cultural heritage.



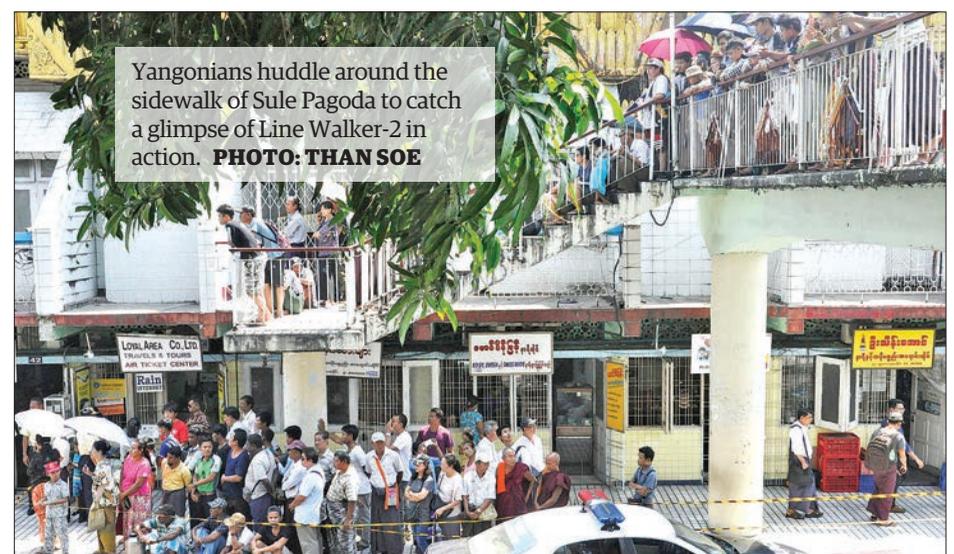
A large crowd of observers on the opposite side of Sule Pagoda Road gather to see Line Walker-2 being filmed. **PHOTO: THAN SOE**

Line Walker-2 (Operation Midnight Shadow) is filming scenes on Sule Pagoda Road and Maha Bandoola Park Road from 22 to 26 February. Yangon

Synthesis Productions is taking responsibility of the Hong Kong film on Myanmar's side.—Than Htike ■ (Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



The Hong Kong actor playing a cop in Line Walker-2 during a film sequence. **PHOTO: THAN SOE**



Yangonians huddle around the sidewalk of Sule Pagoda to catch a glimpse of Line Walker-2 in action. **PHOTO: THAN SOE**

# Prices of lablab pea, rice bean rise on Chinese demand

THE prices of lablab pea and rice bean have increased in the Mandalay market on the back of Chinese demand coupled with competitive buying from local warehouses, according to traders in the Mandalay pulses market.

Lablab peas fetched K80,000 per three-basket bag in the first week of February. Amid an abundant harvest, the price increased to K93,000 per bag on 24 February. The price of rice bean has also increased from K62,000 to K75,000 per bag, said U Soe Win Myint, the owner of the Soe Win Myint depot in Mandalay.

“Consumption of lablab peas in the domestic market is high, and they are also shipped to foreign markets. Although demand for rice beans is low in the local market, they are used in food processing factories in foreign countries. Earlier, China did not buy lablab peas. It started

to purchase them in 2013. The demand from China has driven the price of lablab peas up,” he said.

At present, China is the main buyer of Myanmar’s lablab peas and rice beans. The beans are also shipped to India and Japan. Myanmar also exports value-added lablab peas as ready-to-eat baked peas to Singapore.

“At the moment, it is good to know that the relevant department is carrying out pedigree-based field experiments for lablab peas. As both the beans are helping bring in foreign currencies, growers must expand their plantations,” he said.

Lablab peas and rice beans are winter crops and are primarily grown in Mandalay, Sagaing, and Magway regions. They are harvested in January.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House) ■ (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)



Merchants evaluate quality of pulses at the Mandalay market. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG (MANDALAY SUB-PRINTING HOUSE)

## Trade deficit narrows to \$927 mln as of mid-February

MYANMAR cut trade deficit to US\$927 million over past four and half months of the current fiscal year (Oct 2018- Sep 2019), which is down by half compared with \$1.84 billion of the corresponding period of last FY.

External trade between 1 October and 15 February amounted to \$12.65 billion, which increases from \$12.29 billion of last FY. This includes an estimated \$5.86 billion in exports and \$6.79 billion in imports.

Myanmar exports agricultural products, animal products, minerals, forest products, finished industrial goods whereas it imports capital goods, raw industrial materials including CMP goods and consumer goods.

The country’s export sector is more depending on the agriculture and manufacturing sectors. Export earnings from

the CMP (cutting, making and packaging) garment businesses are rising while lessening its reliance on natural resources such as natural gas, jade.

The government is trying to reduce trade deficit by screening luxury import items and boosting export. Maritime trade brought in \$9 billion, whereas border trade earned \$3.6 billion, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce.

There were trade deficits of \$91.9 million in the 2012-2013 FY, \$2.5 billion in the 2013-2014 FY, \$4.9 billion in the 2014-2015 FY and \$5.4 billion in the 2015-2016 FY, \$5.5 billion in the 2016-2017 FY and \$1.3 billion in past six-month mini-budget period, according to the statistics released by the Central Statistical Organization.—Mon Mon ■ (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

## Myanmar earns \$6.2 mln from mineral exports in one week

MYANMAR exported mineral products worth US\$6.207 million during a week between 2 and 8 February, down by \$8.4 million, or 57 per cent, as against the corresponding period last fiscal year, the Ministry of Commerce reported.

During the week, the public sector exported \$0.642 million worth of mineral products to partner countries, whereas the private exporters sold the same amounting to nearly \$5.6 million. When compared with this time last FY, this FY saw a decline in

exports of minerals from both public and private sectors.

For the same period during the last FY, the public sector exported \$4.8 million worth of mineral products while the private sector’s export of the same was \$9.8 million, totaling \$14.6 million.

The country’s minerals export over the first 131 days of this fiscal year totalled \$334.9 million, covering \$0.042 million from the public sector and \$333.9 million from the private sector. The current figures decreased by \$267 million matched against

this time last FY.

Within the 2018 mini-budget period between April and September, the country’s mineral exports were valued at \$1.034 billion. As per the ministry’s yearly trade report, the value of mineral exports was pegged at \$897 million in the 2011-2012FY, \$399 million in the 2012-2013FY, \$1.339 billion in the 2013-2014FY, \$1.498 billion in the 2014-2015FY, \$968 million in the 2015-2016FY, and \$1.010 billion in the 2016-2017FY.—Khine Khant ■ (Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)

## Myanmar-India individual border trade exceeds K2.3 bln as of 8 February

INDIVIDUAL trade between Myanmar and India via border gates, as of 8 February, stood at K2.304 billion, registering a trade surplus of K1.8 billion, according to official statistics of the Ministry of Commerce.

In border trade, the two countries deliver commodities mainly through Tamu and Reed border trade stations. The Ministry of Commerce opened the Tamu border trade camp in November 2012. It then opened the Reed border gate in April 2013.

Using individual trading cards (ITCs), border traders exported domestic products

amounting to K2.053 billion only through Tamu border trade station, between 1 October 2018 and 8 February 2019. During the period, the country’s import from the vast South Asian neighbour was valued at K251.531 million, covering K134.267 million from the Tamu gate and K117.264 million from the Reed gate.

According to the ministry, Myanmar-India individual border trade during a week starting 2 February were K84.266 million, with exports worth K83.766 million and imports worth over K500,000.

Marketable products at My-

anmar-India border include areca nuts, ginger, saffron, turmeric, bay leaves and other fruits and vegetables, fishery and forest products, human hair, medicines, oil cakes, electronic products, motorbikes, cotton yarn, non-alloy steel and other construction materials.

To promote trade transactions with neighbouring countries, the commerce ministry introduced ITCs for border merchants from late 2012. Currently, there are over 1,600 ITC holders at all cross-borders.—Shwe Khine ■ (Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)

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# Stay safe under the rule of law

It is important for a country to ensure the rule of law and security for each of its citizens. If they are only assured in some parts of the country, rather than the whole, then, not only would this be a cause for concern for most people, it would also undermine national stability and development.

The judiciary needs to be upright and the rule of law needs to be enforced for security to be strong. The President has been reminding officials about these two factors ever since the civilian government took office. The President touched on this topic in his meeting with the Chin State Government in Haka City Hall, Chin State, on 21 February.

“We must re-erect the judiciary. Democracy can only be

Democracy can only be sustainable if there is rule of law. Every citizen must be equal before the law. Only then will they be sheltered under the law. It is rule of law that will support internal peace. This is why democratic rights, human rights, and the rule of law are all interconnected. If one fails, then the others will be affected as well,” said the President.

The rule of law and the judiciary are important for national development, peace, and prosperity, and to establish Myanmar as a respectable nation on the global stage. These two factors ensure the democratic world is kept on the right path and protect the society within the boundaries of the law.

The rule of law has been enforced with seriousness in recent times, but it is regretful to see some people disparaging it. The peace of a region relies on a strong rule of law and disregarding the law can lead to grave consequences. The purpose of the law is to administer impartial justice to offenders and to deter them from committing similar transgressions again. If criminal activity is on the rise instead, then, the public would be right to be worried.

This is the underlying reason for the President constantly reminding and urging officials, and pushing for a strong judiciary and rule of law. While human vices such as greed and anger can push people towards misdemeanors and criminal activities, the law and its firm enforcement can help direct people to cooperate and find alternative peaceful solutions instead.

We urge everyone to heed the words of the President and work together to strengthen the judiciary, uphold the rule of law, and spread peace so that a genuine democratic federal Union can be successfully established in Myanmar.

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# J&M Steel to up output to 30,000 tons a year to meet local, export demand

Managing Director Mr. Yasuo Shoji (J&M Steel Solutions Co., Ltd.)

Interviewer: Khin Maung Htwe and Win Win Maw, Photos: Zaw Min Latt

The Public Works Department of the Ministry of Construction and JFE Engineering Corporation of Japan set up J&M Steel Solutions Co. Ltd as a joint venture in 2014. Under the JV, a steel factory was set up on a 16-acre plot in Thakayta, Yangon, in July the same year. Myanmar invested 40 per cent and Japan 60 per cent in the project, with the permission of the Myanmar Investment Commission.

**P**HASE A of the factory started production in the month of May in the 2015-2016 fiscal. Initially, the factory produced 10,000 tons of steel annually. So far in the current financial year, the factory has produced 80,000 tons of steel. Annual production will be raised to 30,000 tons to fulfil local demand and for export. As Myanmar has a very large number of natural watercourses large and small, the country needs a lot of bridges for ensuring smooth transport all over it. A news team from the Myanmar News Agency interviewed officials involved in the project:



U Kyaw Kaung Cho

**U Kyaw Kaung Cho**  
Deputy Director-General  
Bridge Management Department  
Construction Ministry

Currently, many of the bridges were built with the steel frames and related steel materials produced by the J&M steel factory. The number of Plate Girder type bridges is over 70, the number of Steel Truss Type Bridge is over 15 and the number of Box Girder Type Bridge is over 13. Up to now over 100 steel frame bridges have been built. Some of the major bridges are the Bogyoke Aung San Bridge (Chaungzon) in Mon State, Htigyaing Bridge, Chindwin Bridge (Khamti) and Chindwin

Bridge (Homalin). The soon-to-be-opened Myaungmya Bridge and many other new bridges are being built with steel produced by the mill. The J&M steel factory exported 200 tons of steel to Laos in 2014, 10000 tons to Bangladesh in 2017-2018, and 300 tons to Sri Lanka in 2016. It exported 8000 tons in 2018-2019. Plans are underway to export steel products to India.

The benefit of the factory is that we can buy steel products with kyats and can cut the transporting time and cost of the materials from the factory to the project sites. And we can also get the required steel products in time, especially in the emergency cases like the Myaungmya Bridge. We will be able to open the Myaungmya Bridge soon, thanks to the availability of re-



Mr. Yasuo Shoji

quired materials in the short time. Another benefit is that we acquired technical knowhow in manufacturing construction materials. Moreover, the factory is paying taxes to the State. A total of 600 Myanmar – 100 engineers and 500 workers – are working at the factory. J&M Steel Solutions Co., Ltd. is also sending scholars to Japan at its own expense. So, it is a good opportunity for Myanmar engineers and workers to learn abroad. As for the Bridge Department, it can study the advance techniques of Japan. Moreover, we can witness how smart and systematic the Japanese are at their work. There are many things to learn from them, especially for the new generation engineers. In my view, the country needs more such factories for its further development as they



Ko Tan Bi

can fulfill its need well. The factory's target is to manufacture 30,000 tons of steel per year. The Ministry of Construction is receiving land lease fees from the factory, and it is pouring back the money into the steel factory project as investment. Up to now, its investment has reached USD 9.1 million.

**Managing Director Mr. Yasuo Shoji**  
(J&M Steel Solutions Co., Ltd.)

I have received a letter to form a joint-venture between the JFE Engineering Corporation and the Ministry of Construction. JFE Engineering Corporation has been conducting technical courses in Myanmar even before the formation of the joint-venture. It set up a branch in Yangon for that purpose. It was a rare opportunity for us to invest in Myanmar. There were no difficulties in passing through the process within the framework of the law and rules and regulations.

Since the idea of establishing a company was conceived, we have the goal of disseminating and transferring technology for the improvement of infrastructures in Myanmar. We also wanted Myanmar to be familiar with the Japanese standard as well as the US standard in connection with technology. We have a plan to extend the company. J&M Steel Solutions is producing steel materials required for bridge projects and for other purposes of the Ministry of Construction. It will also do the same in the future.



Ma Aye Myat Mon

cal workers to Japan for further studies. We have found that they all are ardent learners. We are satisfied with their efforts. I believe that Myanmar engineers will reach the level of designing and manufacturing Steel Bridges by themselves. We need to understand the prevailing situation and the environment of Myanmar if we really wish to make investment in the country. We must find the best means and areas for bilateral cooperation. So, we may be able to make investments more conveniently.

I work together with Japanese technicians who are my instructors. Beforehand, I was sent to Japan for a three-year course. After I came back from Japan, I worked and learned together with other Myanmar technicians and workers. I am still a learner till today. At present, workers of the factory have reached a certain level of efficiency. I have some experiences as an employee of a shipyard. I now have a six-year experience at this company besides my study in Japan for three years. The factory gives prior-

**Ma Aye Myat Mon**  
Assistant Manager  
Project Management Section  
Engineer Department  
J&M Steel Solutions Co., Ltd.

I joined the factory in 2013. I was assigned at the Shop Drawing Section. After a one-and-a-half year service at the factory, I was sent to Japan to study designing technology. When I arrived back from Japan, I was assigned at the Design & Project Management Section. I was taught about the documentation and document keeping system



Steel frames produced by J&M Factory.

We were producing only the Simple Plate Girders in the past. But now, we are also producing Truss Type Bridge at the request of the Ministry of Construction. Apart from the orders of the ministry, J&M Steel Solutions is also supplying materials for ODA projects. As most of the bridges are on the watercourses, we wish to erect a jetty so that we can transport our steel products through the waterways as water transport is a cost-effective way. All the Myanmar engineers, technicians and workers are skillful. In accord with our initial goal, we are sending new generation Myanmar engineers and techni-

I would like to make a request that as we are an export company, there should be the strict observance of the law and rules and regulation in connection with the tax collection because we are facing tough competition from the neighbours and our counterparts. So, there must be proper amendments to the law and rules and regulations to facilitate the process and cut unnecessary procedures and formalities.

**Ko Tan Bi**  
Factory Leader  
Production Section  
J&M Steel Solutions Co., Ltd.

I joined the company in 2014.

ity to sanitary, security, safety and health. All the workers must wear a complete set of safety gear at the worksite. Discipline is strict here. When we arrive at the worksite, we first do physical exercise, and then we hold a brief meeting. Afterwards, we start to do our own job. Workers here are trained to be skillful in a particular field. So they become experts in their field, and make fewer mistakes.

They can also stay away from dangers. There is a clinic and a doctor for healthcare. There are also bathrooms and changing rooms, apart from the messing hall, the common room and the parlour.

and mean for ensuring customer satisfaction. Japanese are so precise in doing things. The company staffs are working as a family. Duties are assigned specifically. In the past designing is done by JFE Engineering Corporation in Japan. The factory has only a Shop Drawing Section. But now, plans are underway to perform the designing work by Myanmar engineers at the J&M. I believe that the Myanmar engineers will be able to produce designs in the coming three or four years. My suggestion for Myanmar youths is “Do you work perfectly and take your own responsibility”.

(Translated by TMT)



Workers welding steel frames at the J&M Steel factory.

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# MR nixed 36 routes in 4 years amid mounting losses

By Nyein Nyein

THE MYANMA RAILWAYS (MR) has cancelled 36 routes that have not been profitable for years, according to the Economic Department of the MR under the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

Between the 2015-2016FY and the last mini-budget period, MR has stopped services on 36 routes, including railway mail service, passenger railway service, freight service, and short route service.

"Income from the railway service has been decreasing since the 2011-2012FY. Therefore, we changed our policy and stopped services on certain routes. We will provide more services on profitable routes and upgrade them. Operating some routes did not cover even the cost of diesel. Losses have been mounting. Earlier, all lines were mandatory. To cover losses, MR has cancelled 36 routes," said U Aung Thu Latt, the Deputy General Manager (Passenger Division) of MR.

Although MR stopped services on some routes, the lines for 26 trains — including four express trains, two passenger trains, four short route train,



Myanma Railways is providing railway services to the people with affordable fares. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR**

16 railway mail service trains — which ran on the cancelled routes were changed between the 2015-2016 and 2018-2019 financial years to improve services on profitable routes.

Additionally, four express trains and four trains used for railway mail service were re-directed to profitable routes in the 2016-17FY and the 2017-2018FY. According to data from the Economic Department of MR, freight, passenger, and other railway services earned K30

billion in the last mini-budget period (April to September 2018), K57.67 billion in the 2017-2018FY, K64.2 billion in the 2016-2017FY, K70.28 billion in the 2015-2016FY, K61.8 billion in the 2014-2015FY, K62.2 billion in the 2013-2014FY, K61.68 billion in the 2012-13 FY, and K50.9 billion in the 2011-12FY.

The MR is providing railway services, ensuring safety of commuters, smooth movement of freight and passengers, on-time running, and affordable

fares, said officials.

It has steadily increased the reach of its network, operating 3,798.83 miles (6,110.481km), divided into 11 divisions. It has laid tracks across 12,103 bridges, 12 cave rails, and 863 stations.

MR operates 443 trains, including 40 express trains, 62 trains for railway mail service, 50 passenger trains, 18 short route trains, 241 circular trains, and 22 other trains. ■

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

## Yaba tablets seized in Tachilek, Kawthoung Tsps

A combined team comprising anti-narcotic police force no.34 seized 1,550 stimulant tablets from Thaung Soe at Minglar bridge, Shwe Hintha Ward, Kawthoung Town on Sunday.

On the same day, a combined team comprising anti-narcotic police force no.30 from Tachilek stopped and searched a suspected Mitsubishi TRITON vehicle drive by Thai citizen Mr. Phurin

Phonbun with Thai citizen Miss Kuntima Chootan, Myanmar citizen Law Hsar and Ma Mi Nyo on board and found stimulant-powder weighing 5 grams, one revolver and its six bullets and, eight phones from the vehicle.

Police have filed charges against all suspects under the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Laws.— MNA (Translated by Hay Mar)



(From left to right) Mr. Phurin Phonbun, Kaw Hsar, Miss Kuntima Chootan, and Ma Mi Nyo. **PHOTO: MNA**

## CMP imports up almost 27% since October

MYANMAR'S CMP imports between October and mid-February in the 2018-2019 fiscal year topped US\$885 million, increasing by \$187 million or 26.8 per cent from the corresponding period in the last 2017-2018 FY, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

From this time last FY, the country's imports of CMP raw

materials was \$698 million in total.

CMP is one of four major groups of import products. The country also imports capital goods, intermediate goods and consumer products from overseas countries not only maritime routes but also land borders.

Between 1 October 2018

and 15 February 2019, the country imported \$2.157 billion worth of capital goods, \$2.486 billion worth of intermediate goods, and \$1.261 billion worth of consumer products.

This year saw a continuous decrease in imports. Apart from CMP raw materials, the imports of capital goods, intermediate goods, and consumer products

decreased by over \$460 million, as against this time last FY.

As of 15 February, the country's total import of goods covered \$5.7 billion through by sea, and goods reaching over \$1 billion through the border trade stations.—Shwe Khine ■

(Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. PHOTO: TASS

## Lavrov calls on US to provide solid security guarantees to North Korea

HO CHI MINH CITY— North Korea has been fulfilling its obligation to suspend nuclear and missile tests so the UN Security Council should consider easing sanctions, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at a conference dubbed International Cooperation in a Troubled World, organized by the Valdai International Discussion Club in partnership with the Diplomatic Academy of Viet Nam.

“We continue to call for encouraging Pyongyang to move further forward,” he said. “Pyongyang has been abiding by the moratorium it announced, which concerns both nuclear and missile tests. We believe that the United Nations Security Council could at least make a gesture, easing and lifting some of the sanctions that hinder the implementation of joint inter-Korean projects,” Lavrov added.

The Russian top diplomat pointed out that South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un had agreed to resume railway

service. “Why doesn’t the Security Council consider ways to change sanctions to give impetus to railway cooperation between the two Korean states?” Lavrov said.

He also noted that it wasn’t right to demand that North Korea unilaterally fulfill all denuclearization conditions before sanctions were eased. “The Singapore summit and preparations for the Hanoi summit show that this issue cannot be resolved on the spur of the moment,” he added.

### US and North Korea

If Pyongyang fully denuclearizes, Washington will have to provide it with solid security guarantees, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said.

“I am confident that at the end of the day, it will be impossible to do without a multilateral mechanism. If full denuclearization actually takes place, North Korea must receive solid security guarantees,” he emphasized.—Tass ■

## Kazakh leader appoints new PM after sacking government

ASTANA (Kazakhstan) — Kazakhstan’s long-ruling President Nursultan Nazarbayev appointed a new prime minister on Monday, his office said, after dismissing the government over a lack of economic development.

“The head of state signed a decree appointing (Askar) Mamin prime minister of Kazakhstan,” Nazarbayev’s office said on its Twitter account. Mamin, 53, has previously served as first deputy prime minister and also worked as transport and communications minister and mayor of capital Astana. Mamin’s predecessor

was Bakytzhan Sagintayev was sacked over what Nazarbayev described as poor economic performance, despite the Central Asian nation’s vast energy resources.

Sagintayev was viewed by some analysts as part of a potential leadership transition in the country, which 78-year-old Nazarbayev has ruled over for close to three decades.

Observers point to rising discontent in Kazakhstan, a former Soviet republic whose commodity-dependent economy has struggled to recover from a 2014 plunge in oil prices. — AFP ■

## Venezuela’s Guaido meets with foreign allies for anti-Maduro strategy

WRAP VENEZUELA — Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido is meeting with members of a multinational support group in Bogota on Monday to hammer out a strategy to remove his rival Nicolas Maduro from office.

The trip comes after two people were killed and hundreds wounded as Guaido supporters clashed with Venezuelan security forces in a failed attempt to cross in truckloads of humanitarian aid from Colombia and Brazil.

The European Union condemned Venezuela’s use of violence and armed civilians to block the aid entry, while United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he was “shocked and saddened” by the civilian deaths.

Guaido, the 35-year-old leader of Venezuela’s National Assembly, declared himself acting president in January after the opposition controlled legislature concluded that Maduro was fraudulently re-elected.

Some 50 countries recognize him as Venezuela’s legitimate president.

### Maduro’s ‘days numbered’

Guaido flew to the Colombian capital Sunday for the meeting with members of the Lima Group — 13 Latin American countries plus Canada that are seeking to resolve Venezuela’s political impasse. Vice President Mike Pence will represent Washington at the event. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he was confident that “Maduro’s days are numbered,” blaming the border violence on armed civilian loyalists known as “colectivos.”

“We’re aimed at a singular mission — ensuring the Venezuelan people get the democracy they so richly deserve,” Pompeo



This handout photo released by the Colombian presidency press office shows Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido (l) next to Colombian Foreign Minister Carlos Holmes Trujillo speaking upon arrival in Bogota, Colombia on 24 February, 2019, prior to the meeting of the Lima group that will take place tomorrow. PHOTO: AFP

said on CNN’s “State of the Union.” President Donald Trump has said the United States is not ruling out armed action.

Upon landing in Bogota Guaido called on the international community to consider “all measures to free” Venezuela.

This is the first time that the Lima Group, which first met in the Peruvian capital in 2017, will speak directly to Guaido.

Venezuela is in the midst of a humanitarian crisis that has seen poverty soar during a prolonged recession and hyperinflation.

Humanitarian aid, much of it from the United States, has been at the center of the standoff between Maduro and Guaido.

Maduro claims the aid is a smokescreen for a US invasion, and has ordered several crossings on Venezuela’s borders with Colombia and Brazil closed.

### ‘Victory consolidated’

“Today we consolidated yesterday’s victory, tomorrow we’ll consolidate it even more,”

Maduro’s right-hand man Diosdado Cabello said on Sunday at a pro-government rally in the border town of Tachira. “Not a single one of those trucks with aid got through,” Cabello said.

Maduro seems to have won this round in the power struggle, even though 156 members of Venezuela’s security forces deserted to Colombia or Brazil.

After Saturday’s events it is “not very clear” that Guaido has “massive” support in Venezuela, analyst Rafael Pineros told AFP.

However the events, which also led to increased repression by the Maduro regime, may instead result in a forceful foreign intervention in Venezuela, according to political scientist Laura Gil. “In the Lima Group the consensus is that Maduro must be removed, but there is no consensus on how to do that,” Gil told AFP. Another winner is Washington, because the only way to justify a use of force, if they are willing to actually do that, “is by invitation,” she said.— AFP ■

## Burkina forces kill nearly 30 ‘terrorists’ in operation: military

OUAGADOUGOU (Burkina Faso) — Burkina Faso’s armed forces killed around 30 suspected militants last week in a land and air operation against jihadist groups operating in the east of the country, the military said on Sunday.

Burkina Faso, part of a joint French-led military campaign against jihadists in the Sahel, is on the frontline of the Islamist mili-

tant insurgency that has gripped parts of west and central Africa.

During last week’s operations, special forces, army and air force units hit militants in Kombienbiga, Kabonga and other eastern regions between Tuesday and Wednesday, an army statement said. “This operation has taken out 29 terrorists and recovered an important quantity of weapons and ammunition as

well as destroying a large stock of food supplies,” it said.

A security source said most of the militants were killed in air strikes on their hideouts and rest in clean-up sweeps by ground forces. Militant raids began in the north of Burkina Faso in 2015 before spreading to the east, leaving more than 300 people dead so far, according to AFP estimates.— AFP ■

# Trump and Kim face unanswered questions in Viet Nam

HANOI (Viet Nam) — US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un meet in Hanoi this week, faced with putting meat on the bones of the vaguely worded declaration that emerged from their historic first summit in Singapore.

That encounter — the first-ever between the leaders of the US and North Korea — left many ambiguities on the key question of denuclearization and analysts say clearer answers need to emerge in the Vietnamese capital.

At the June meeting, Kim pledged to “work towards complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula” but the lack of progress since then has drawn criticism that the leaders were only after headlines and short-term gains.

Stephen Biegun, the US Special Representative for North Korea, acknowledged last month

that Pyongyang and Washington did not have a “shared agreement of what denuclearisation entails”.

The United States has repeatedly demanded the North give up its nuclear arsenal in a final, fully verifiable way.

Pyongyang sees denuclearization more broadly, seeking an end to sanctions and what it sees as US threats — usually including the American military presence in the South, and sometimes in the wider region.

“The ambiguity and obscurity of the term denuclearisation only exacerbates the scepticism about both the US and North Korean commitments to denuclearisation,” wrote Shin Gi-wook, director of the Korea Program at Stanford University.

Trump has employed both carrots and sticks to pursue North Korea’s denuclearization, praising the regime’s potential as a “great economic powerhouse”

but saying tough sanctions will remain until it takes a “meaningful” step.

Pyongyang insists it has already done so, by not testing ballistic missiles or nuclear weapons for more than a year, and blowing up the entrances to its atomic test site.

But at the same time, North Korea says it has completed the development of its arsenal and the facilities are no longer needed. Diplomats in Pyongyang say authorities have emphasised Kim’s demand in his New Year speech that the US must respond with “trustworthy measures and corresponding practical actions”.

The two need to take “at least one step forward on denuclearization” in Hanoi, said Harry Kazianis of the Centre for the National Interest, adding: “Nothing would be worse than for either side to come out of the meeting as if it was a waste of time.”—AFP ■



Trump and Kim. PHOTO: AFP

## Okinawa ‘no’ vote won’t delay US base move: Japan PM



Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. PHOTO: AFP

TOKYO (Japan) — Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Monday that the controversial relocation of a US military base in Okinawa will not be delayed despite a referendum that saw voters reject the move.

“It has been 20 years since Japan and the US agreed” to relocate the Futenma base, Abe said. “We cannot delay this any further.”

His comments came after voters in Okinawa rejected the relocation plan in a non-binding referendum over the weekend.

Some 72 per cent voted against the move, with 19 per cent in favour in a vote that drew 52 per cent of eligible voters, officials said. Abe said he accepted the outcome “sincerely” and would seek “understanding” from Okinawa residents on his decision to move forward with the relocation. “We have spent many years holding dialogue with

people in the prefecture. We will continue our dialogue so that we can gain their understanding,” Abe said.

“Reducing the burden of Okinawa is a major responsibility for the central government... we will continue our utmost efforts towards a reduction of the burden related to hosting bases.”

Okinawa accounts for less than one percent of Japan’s total land area, but it reluctantly hosts more than half of the approximately 47,000 American military personnel.

The heavy US military presence has frustrated local residents with problems ranging from noise and military accidents to crime involving base residents.

To ease tensions, the United States and Japan agreed in 1996 to move Futenma from its current heavily populated location to a remote coastal site being built partly through land reclamation.

Opponents of the move want to see the base relocated outside of Okinawa, arguing responsibility for hosting US troops should be more evenly spread across Japan.

Okinawa residents have elected governors opposed to the move, including incumbent Denry Tamaki, who came into office last year. But Abe’s government has shown no sign of willingness to reconsider.—AFP ■

## Would-be Bangladesh hijacker was carrying fake gun: official

DHAKA (Bangladesh) — A would-be hijacker shot and killed by Bangladesh commandos was carrying a fake gun and told negotiators he wanted to commandeer a Dubai-bound flight because he had troubles with his wife, officials said on Monday.

The 25-year-old was shot and later died of his wounds after taking a crew member hostage on the Biman Airlines jet, forcing it to make an emergency landing at Chittagong airport late Sunday.



Bangladeshi security personnel stand guard near a Dubai-bound Bangladesh Biman plane on the tarmac of the Shah Amanat International Airport in Chittagong on 24 February, 2019, following an emergency landing after a man apparently attempted to hijack the aircraft. Bangladesh commandos stormed a passenger jet in the country’s southeast on 24 February and shot dead an armed man who allegedly tried to hijack the Dubai-bound flight, an army official said. PHOTO: AFP

Some 134 passengers and 14 crew were released unharmed after an operation that lasted barely 10 minutes.

Airport manager Wing Commander Sarwar-e-Jaman said the hijacker was “psychologically imbalanced”.

“The reason he gave for the hijack was that he had troubles with his wife and he wanted to talk to the prime minister, Sheikh Hasina,” Sarwar told AFP.

Flight BG 147 was going from

Dhaka to Dubai via Chittagong when the hijacking started.

The man — named only as Mahadi — reportedly wielded a gun in the cabin and tried to storm the cockpit, forcing an emergency landing.

One passenger told reporters he may have fired the weapon twice, but civil aviation authority chairman Air Vice Marshall Nayeem Hasan said the gun he was carrying was not real.

“According to those who have seen it, it appears that the gun was fake,” Hasan said.

Amid multiple investigations, authorities are focussing on how he managed to smuggle even a fake gun past security at Dhaka’s Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

“An inquiry is underway,” the civil aviation chief said.

“It is virtually impossible to breach this security as the system is designed by the International Civil Aviation Organization,” he added. Hasan said Bangladesh security was in line with global standards and the country’s airports were regularly checked by top international firms.

Pictures of the plane on the runway at Sha Amanat international airport in the dark dominated local newspapers on Monday.—AFP ■

## Vanuatu to give disposable diapers the flush

WELLINGTON, (New Zealand) — The Pacific nation of Vanuatu has announced plans to ban disposable diapers in a move it says will significantly reduce pollution.

Foreign Minister Ralph Regenvanu announced the ban at a conference in Port Vila this week, saying plastic cutlery, polystyrene cups, plastic drinks stirrers and types of food packaging would also be outlawed.

He said research showed disposable diapers — or nappies as they are known outside North America — were the largest single item of household waste in the capital.

“Eliminating this item alone will disproportionately reduce plastic waste,” he tweeted.

Vanuatu is one of several Pacific nations severely affected by climate change and prides itself on showing environmental leadership.

Last year it became one of the first countries in the world to ban single-use plastic bags. The nappy ban, which still needs final approval, is scheduled to begin on 1 December this year. Disposable diapers pose an environmental nuisance as they are lined



Disposable diapers pose an environmental nuisance as they are lined with non-biodegradable plastic and use the chemical sodium polyacrylate as an absorbent.

PHOTO: AFP

with non-biodegradable plastic and use the chemical sodium polyacrylate as an absorbent.

The human waste they contain also leaches harmful chemicals into the environment, rather than going through the sewerage system to minimise its impact. Critics say in addition to being a waste problem, the nappy manufacturing process also contributes to global warming.

However, parents find them far more convenient than old-fashioned cloth nappies, which have to be washed and dried.

Britain’s Environment Secretary Michael Gove was forced to rule out a nappy ban last year after making off-the-cuff remarks seen as paving the way for prohibiting their use.

Parents groups described the potential ban as a backward step for women, who were most likely to have to shoulder the labour-intensive process of cleaning reusable diapers.

The environmental group Worldwatch Institute estimated in 2007 that 450 billion nappies were

used globally every year.

They are also big business. A report by US market research firm Grand View Research last year said the global baby diaper market was worth \$45.08 billion in 2016 and would grow to \$64.62 billion by 2022 amid rising demand from emerging nations such as China, India and Brazil. Modern reusable nappies are easier to use than the traditional white towelling square, with many featuring biodegradable inserts and velcro fastening rather than safety pins.—AFP ■

## Once thought extinct, world’s biggest bee “rediscovered” in Indonesia

JAKARTA — The world’s largest bee, which until recently was feared to be extinct, was “rediscovered” last month on Maluku Islands of eastern Indonesia, an international conservation organization said this week.

Global Wildlife Conservation said in a press statement that a single Wallace’s giant bee (*Megachile pluto*) female was found in late January on Ternate Island in North Maluku Province by a search team of North American and Australian biologists.

“It was absolutely breathtaking to see this ‘flying bulldog’ of an insect that we weren’t sure existed anymore, to have real proof right there in front of us in the wild,” said team member Clay Bolt, a natural history photographer specializing in bees who took the first photos and video of the species alive.

“To actually see how beautiful and big the species is in life, to hear the sound of its giant wings thrumming as it flew past my head, was just incredible,” Bolt said.

Females may reach a length of 3.8 centimetres, with a wingspan of over 6 cm. Males are nearly twice as small.

The species was first found and described by British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, co-discoverer of theory of evolution

by natural selection, in 1858 on his last day exploring the island of Bacan, also in North Maluku.

It was not seen again until 1981, when entomologist Adam Messer rediscovered it on three islands in the province and observed some of the species’ behavior, including how it uses its giant mandibles to gather resin and wood for its nests.

A female specimen was collected by the French-born entomologist Roch Desmier de Chenon in 1991 on the island of Halmahera, but since then, other researchers have had no luck finding the bee.

However, a single female specimen freshly collected on Bacan in February 2018 was sold on an international online auction for thousands of dollars, followed by another later the same year.

The latest confirmation of its existence, according to Global Wildlife Conservation, has raised hopes that more of North Maluku’s forests still harbor the insect.

“I hope this rediscovery will spark future research that will give us a deeper understanding of the life history of this very unique bee and inform any future efforts to protect it from extinction,” said bee expert Eli Wyman, an entomologist at Princeton University who also was on the team.—Kyodo News ■

## 4.9-magnitude quake hits Sichuan: CENC

BEIJING — A 4.9-magnitude earthquake jolted Rongxian County, southwest China’s Sichuan

Province at 1:15 pm on Monday (Beijing Time), according to the China Earthquake Networks

Centre (CENC).

The epicenter was monitored at 29.48 degrees north latitude

and 104.49 degrees east longitude at a depth of 5 km, the centre said.—Xinhua

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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.

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## Harry and Meghan meet Moroccan girls during official tour

ASNI (Morocco) — Britain's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan on Sunday met with Moroccan schoolgirls at the foothills of the High Atlas mountains, during their last official foreign tour before becoming parents.

Clutching British and Moroccan flags, the teenagers lined up to meet the royal couple during their visit to the town of Asni south of the tourist hub Marrakesh.

The British royals' tour was set to focus on initiatives promoting girls' education, women's empowerment and the inclusion of people with disabilities.

Meghan, with henna on one hand, accepted flowers from one of the girls in Asni while she and Harry chatted to the group from



Prince Harry and his wife Meghan are on their last official foreign trip before the birth of their first child. **PHOTO: AFP**

the programme Education For All Morocco.

The organization runs free boarding houses to give girls

aged 12 to 18 from the High Atlas region access to education, working with 185 teenagers in 2017.

A quarter of Moroccans aged

15 to 24 are out of work and not in training or education, according to official data for 2016, a figure which rises to 44 per cent for girls and young women.

Asni is close to the mountainous area where two Scandinavian women were murdered in December and some British media have raised fears over safety during the royal tour.

But local diplomatic sources have dismissed concerns about security in Morocco, where on Thursday police dispersed protesting teachers with water cannon in the capital Rabat.

The royal visit was described by Britain's ambassador to Rabat, Thomas Reilly, as an "important opportunity to promote the strong relationship between the

British and Moroccan people".

London is aiming to replicate Rabat's trade deal with the European Union once Britain leaves the bloc, the diplomat added.

Reilly was due to host a reception at his Rabat residence later on Sunday with the royal couple, who rounded off their trip to Asni with a school visit.

On Monday the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, as they are formally known, will attend a horse riding programme for young disabled people in Rabat.

Harry and Meghan, who are being hosted by the Moroccan royal family, will also see a cooking demonstration and meet young entrepreneurs. —AFP ■

## Alfonso Cuarón, reliving his childhood in black and white

HOLLYWOOD (United States) — Alfonso Cuarón, who won three Oscars on Sunday, owes much of his success to his 10-year-old self.

Cuarón turned 10 in 1971, a turbulent, formative year in the Mexican filmmaker's life, as he depicts it in "Roma," the widely hailed, semi-autobiographical film that won statuettes for best director, best cinematography and best foreign language film.

"Being here doesn't get old," Cuarón told the audience at Hollywood's Dolby Theatre.

"This award belongs to Mexico. It's a Mexican film on every

single front."

Cuarón has now won Academy Awards with his past two movies, both of which mined the creative material of his childhood — albeit in very different ways.

The 10-year-old Cuarón wanted to be an astronaut, a dream he returned to in 2013 with "Gravity." That film that won him his first Oscar, for best director — the first ever Latin American to claim the honour — and best film editing.

Five years later, Cuarón again returned to his childhood — this time, the reality instead

of the fantasy.

Set in Mexico City's Roma neighbourhood, filmed in black and white, and written in Spanish and the indigenous Mixtec language, Cuarón's latest movie is a hauntingly intimate portrait of a tumultuous year in the lives of his family, their nanny and Mexico itself.

Known as a consummate craftsman, Cuarón, 57, meticulously recreated his childhood neighbourhood and home for the film.

Aside from its technical mastery, however, "Roma" could hardly be more different from "Gravity," a 3D outer-space blockbuster that starred George Clooney and Sandra Bullock.

Cuarón's latest film has no Hollywood stars and a cast of mainly novice actors.

"When I finished my last film, I promised myself the next one would be something more simple and personal," Cuarón said when "Roma" was released. "I realized this was the moment when I could finally return to Mexico to make a movie, with all the resources, tools and techniques I'd acquired over the years."

"Roma" tells the story of the two women who raised Cuarón: his mother, who is in the process of separating from his father, and his nanny, a young indigenous woman dealing with her own unplanned pregnancy while caring for the crumbling family that employs her.—AFP ■



The winner of the 2018 edition of the "Festa delle Marie" (Marie contest), Erika Chia, performs as the Angel of the new Carnival on 24 February, 2019 in Venice. **PHOTO: AFP**

## Two 'flying angels' mark start to Venice Carnival festivities

VENICE (Italy) — Venice Carnival kicked off on Sunday with not one but two traditional "flight of the angel" ceremonies, a highlight of the festival before thousands of onlookers in the Italian Renaissance city's St Mark's Square.

Each first Sunday of the carnival, a young woman chosen as "Marie" has the honour of performing the stunt, gliding through the air on a harness attached to a cable from the 99-metre (325-foot) bell-tower of the Basilica to a stage below.

As she soars overhead, the angel tosses confetti over onlookers below, many wearing costumes and disguised in masks. Erika Chia, 20, descended to music from David Bowie's "Space Oddity". In an exception

this year, she was preceded by "warrior angel" Micol Rossi, 27, who was chosen as a symbol of hope and tenacity for her battle with Crohn's disease.

"It has been so emotional to see the whole city of Venice from above, it's the most beautiful city in the world," Rossi told AFP-TV. "I did this for the many people who are suffering from an illness right now, and I have been thinking of them in their hospital rooms." The centuries-old Venice Carnival, rooted in Christian festivities ahead of the fasting period of Lent, attracts crowds of foreign and Italian tourists to its masked balls and theatrical performances. The carnival, which lasts until 5 March, was created in Venice in 1162, the day after a military victory.—AFP ■



This handout photo released by AMPAS shows Best Foreign Language Film nominee for "Roma" Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón (r) walking with US actress Angela Bassett backstage during the 91st Annual Academy Awards at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California on 24 February, 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

## Huawei takes fight with US over spying fears to top mobile fair

BARCELONA (Spain) — Huawei unveiled a new foldable smartphone on Sunday on the eve of the world's top mobile fair in Barcelona and hit out against Washington's campaign to bar it from developing next-generation 5G wireless networks.

China's most successful global firm has booked a huge stand at the four-day Mobile World Congress and has sent a large delegation which includes its media-shy founder, Ren Zhengfei, and two rotating chairmen.

The trade fair, which officially opens on Monday and is expected to draw some 100,000 people from across the telecoms industry, comes as the United States has stepped up pressure on its allies to block Huawei from building its 5G networks.

US officials suspect that Beijing could use the Shenzhen-based Huawei's products to spy on Western governments, and the company's presence in the United States has already been severely restricted.

Washington considers the matter urgent as countries around the world prepare to roll out fifth-generation or 5G networks that will bring near-instantaneous connectivity, vast data capacity and futuristic technologies such as self-driving cars.

The Trump administration has reportedly sent a large delegation of its own to the trade fair to press its case with industry executives and its foreign counterparts. Huawei, the world's second-largest smartphone vendor after Samsung and the leading supplier of the backbone equipment for wireless mobile networks worldwide, strenuously denied its equipment could be used for espionage.

Asked about Washington's campaign during a roundtable with media on Sunday in Barcelona, Huawei's rotating chairman Guo Ping said he "still can't understand why such a national power wants to attack a company with advanced technologies."

"We have never and we are not and we will never allow back doors in our equipment and we will never allow anyone from any country to do that in our equipment," he added through an interpreter.

"Huawei needs to abide by Chinese laws and also by the laws outside China if we operate in those countries. Huawei will never, and dare not, and cannot violate any rules and regulations in the countries where we operate."

Guo said 5G security standards should be decided by technical experts, not politicians, and

that Huawei hoped each country would make its decisions based on "national interests (and) not just listen to someone else's order".

### 12-month jump on rivals

Network operators seeking to quickly deploy the new wireless networks are in a bind as Huawei's 5G equipment is seen as being considerably more advanced than that of its rivals such as Sweden's Ericsson or Finland's Nokia. Guo said Huawei is 12 months ahead of its rivals in implementing 5G technology.

At a separate event in Barcelona, Huawei unveiled a phone with a folding screen, just four days after rival Samsung became the first major handset maker to offer the feature in a device it unveiled in San Francisco on Wednesday.

The phone, Mate X, will be compatible with the 5G networks and cost 2,299 euros (\$2,600), said Richard Yu, head of Huawei's consumer business group.

"Our engineers worked on this screen for over three years," he said. The Mate X's screen wraps around the outside so users can still view it when it is closed, unlike Samsung's Galaxy Fold, which has a screen that folds shut. — AFP ■

## Chinese engineers look to graphene to drive deep space exploration

BEIJING — A two-dimensional form of carbon known as graphene might one day help power space exploration into the unknown universe, say Chinese space engineers.

Graphene, which is just one atom thick, could enable light-powered propulsion technology leading to fuel-free spacecraft.

Traditional spacecraft depend on chemical propellants, and the amount they carry determines how far they can fly, said Song Shengju, the research leader at the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology.

More than 80 per cent of the takeoff weight of current carrier rockets is chemical propellants. If spacecraft could travel without fuel, humans could explore much farther into deep space, Song said.

Scientists in other countries have been studying light-powered propulsion technology. There are about 400 billion stars in the galaxy, and their light could become an inexhaustible energy

source.

Scientists in Europe, the United States and Japan are developing spacecraft with solar sails made with polyimide film, but the thrust is relatively weak, said Song.

Chinese researchers are developing sails with graphene, one of the strongest and thinnest known materials, which can withstand temperatures over 800 degrees centigrade.

Previous research conducted by Professor Chen Yongsheng, of Nankai University, showed graphene can be driven by various light sources including sunlight, and the thrust generated is 1,000 times higher than that of polyimide film in vacuum conditions.

"It's just the beginning. We need to conduct further research on the mechanisms and properties of the graphene and light-powered spacecraft. If we make breakthroughs in this technology, it would facilitate exploration to the unknown universe," Song said.—Xinhua ■

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## Crew from aborted Soyuz MS-10 mission received psychological support

ZVEZDNY GORODOK/Moscow region — Roscosmos cosmonaut Alexei Ovchinin and NASA astronaut Nick Hague of the failed Soyuz MS-10 mission consulted with psychologists prior to their upcoming ISS mission scheduled for 14 March, the crewmembers told reporters on 21 February at a pre-flight press conference in Zvezdny Gorodok.

"After the most recent launch that wasn't very successful we have talked to psychologists. We had some chat sessions and as far as I understand, all of us were relieved that we were fine. I believe this time we'll succeed," Ovchinin said.

That being said, Nick Hague stressed that psychological support is part of the crew's general training. "We have a great team of psychologists. After that failed launch, some work was undertaken.

There were no consequenc-



Alexei Ovchinin and Nick Hague. PHOTO: TASS

es for my family or me. We just quietly began prepping for our next launch," the astronaut added. The launch of the Soyuz

MS-12 spacecraft with an international crew onboard to the ISS from the Baikonur Cosmodrome is scheduled for 14 March.

According to the flight schedule, Alexei Ovchinin, Nick Hague and Christina Koch will spend 204 days in orbit.

### Aborted Soyuz mission

Following a smooth liftoff, the Soyuz's booster malfunctioned between the first and second stages of separating, whereupon the crew was forced to abort the flight and switch to ballistic descent.

The manned Soyuz MS-10 spacecraft ended up landing safely in the Kazakh steppe, with the crew unharmed.

This turned out to be the first emergency situation with the launch of a manned spacecraft over the past 35 years.

The incident-probing commission announced on 1 November that the emergency situation occurred after "a nozzle cover on the oxidizer tank failed to open due to the deformation of the separation contact sensor."

The sensor was damaged during the assembly of the rocket's first stage at the Baikonur Cosmodrome.—Tass ■



Chelsea's Spanish goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga gestures during the English League Cup final football match between Manchester City and Chelsea at Wembley stadium in north London on 24 February, 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

## Mutinuous Kepa has full respect for Sarri after 'misunderstanding'

LONDON (United Kingdom) — Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga insisted he has full respect for manager Maurizio Sarri after refusing to be replaced in the final stages of his side's League Cup final loss to Manchester City on penalties.

Sarri was visibly furious when Kepa refused to leave the field after needing treatment, but the Italian coach later claimed his anger was the result of a "misunderstanding".

"At no time has it been my intention to disobey the coach or any of his decisions," Kepa wrote in a statement issued on his Twitter feed.

"I think everything has been misunderstood in the heat of the final part of the match for a title.

"The coach thought I was not in a position to play and my intention was to express that I was in good condition to continue helping the team, while the docs that had treated me arrived at the bench to give the message.

"I feel the image that has been portrayed was not my intention. I have full respect for the coach and his authority."

Kepa saved Leroy Sané's penalty in the shootout, but could have done better with Sergio Aguero's effort that slipped under his body as City retained the trophy 4-3 on penalties after a goalless draw.

Sarri repeatedly gestured at Kepa to come off, then began to storm down the tunnel in rage before returning to the touchline for the final minutes of extra-time and penalties. However, speaking after the match, Sarri

back-tracked as he suggested it was a communication issue that caused the problem. "In that situation there was a big misunderstanding," Sarri said. "I understood there was a problem and we needed a change. I didn't find out until the doctor arrived to the bench after a few minutes.

"It was a big misunderstanding. I understood the goalkeeper had cramp and for me he was unable to go to penalties but the problem was not cramp so he was able to go to penalties."

The controversy casts a further cloud on Sarri's future with reports prior to the match suggesting he could be sacked if Chelsea failed to beat the English champions.

"If I was in the dressing room I would expect the manager to come in and deal with it straight away," said former Chelsea captain John Terry in his role as a TV pundit. There have been several reports that Chelsea's players have lost faith with his methods and Kepa's behaviour only added to that perception. The blues are languishing in sixth in the Premier League, but did put in a far more spirited display than the one that saw them thrashed 6-0 by City just two weeks ago.

"After this match I have to say that I'm sure (I have the backing of the players) because they played exactly how I asked today and I am proud of my players," insisted Sarri. "We showed to everyone we could become a very solid team. Against Manchester City is not easy so I am really very happy with my players, proud of my players."—AFP ■

## Blank-faced Bale earns Madrid battling win over Levante

MADRID (Spain) — Gareth Bale came off the bench to score a controversial winning penalty against Levante on Sunday but his refusal to celebrate suggested all may not be well again at Real Madrid.

Bale's spot-kick earned Madrid a battling and, in truth, undeserved 2-1 victory at the City of Valencia Stadium where referee Ignacio Iglesias failed to reverse his decision, despite VAR exposing a theatrical dive from Casemiro. The absence of any delight from a stony-faced Bale was telling, as he turned

and brushed off team-mates' attempts to congratulate him.

"The players can celebrate goals how they want, as long as we win," coach Santiago Solari said. This was Bale's sixth game on the bench in the eight matches since he returned from injury and it remains to be seen if his cameo will be enough to win a start against Barcelona on Wednesday, in the semi-final of the Copa del Rey. "He looked thrilled in the dressing room because he scored," added Solari. "I loved how he came into the game, the anger he played with helped, and

he gave us the victory, he gave us hard work. "When we had 10 men he performed a double-job up front. For me, he had a fantastic match."

Bale replaced Karim Benzema in the 74<sup>th</sup> minute, after the Frenchman had scored his own penalty in the first half before Roger Marti pulled Levante level.

Levante had already twice hit the post by then and Madrid will be relieved to have escaped with the points that keep them nine behind Barca, and two back on Atletico, who had earlier beaten Villarreal.

Alvaro Morata scored his first Atleti goal at the Wanda Metropolitano, toasting his smart finish by poking fun at VAR, which had twice intervened to prevent him opening his account at his new club. Real Madrid have been among the most vocal critics of the technology in La Liga this season but Levante were the ones hard done by this time.

Cheick Doucoure's swinging right foot was wild but there was no contact to merit the leap from Casemiro. Iglesias reviewed but retained his decision.

Barcelona, whom Real now face in two Clasicos in four days, the second in the league, also at the Santiago Bernabeu, will now benefit from an extra day's rest and also a suspension for Nacho, who was sent off late on for a second yellow card.—AFP ■



Real Madrid's Welsh forward Gareth Bale. **PHOTO: AFP**

## Liverpool go top after stalemate at injury-hit United

MANCHESTER (United Kingdom) — Liverpool moved one point clear at the top of the Premier League after being forced to settle for a 0-0 draw at injury-ravaged Manchester United on Sunday.

Jurgen Klopp's side climbed above Manchester City into pole position, but left Old Trafford frustrated that they failed to go three points clear after struggling to break down a United team hit by three key injuries.

Liverpool, chasing a first English title since 1990, had few chances to beat their bitter rivals despite United losing Juan Mata, Ander Herrera and Jesse Lingard before the interval.

The Reds, who had just

one shot on target, now have 11 league games remaining, the same number as second placed City, who were in League Cup final action against Chelsea on Sunday. It was a missed opportunity for Liverpool, who used up their game in hand on City and lost Brazilian striker Roberto Firmino to injury. Liverpool's third draw in four games comes in a period in which they have dropped six points in the battle with Pep Guardiola's champions.

United dropped to fifth place as a result of Arsenal's win over Southampton. The pre-match build-up, and intense atmosphere certainly did not disappoint. But, once the action started, it became more about the four substitutions

— three for United, one for Liverpool — that were forced on the respective managers over the first 45 minutes. Indeed, by the interval, there had been twice as many substitutions as shots on target — the game's first such effort being a tame Marcus Rashford attempt which he chipped up for an easy Alisson Becker catch.

United midfielder Herrera was the first to go, having injured himself in the process of fouling Joel Matip on the edge of the home area. Mohamed Salah succeeded only in lofting that free-kick over the home goal although, by the 20 minute mark, Herrera was unable to continue and replaced by Andreas Pereira.—AFP ■