IMF warns of downside risks despite strong economic growth

By Ye Myint

YANGON, 1 July — An International Monetary Fund team on Wednesday cautioned Myanmar about the downside risks stemming from its rapid credit growth, expansionary budget and widening trade deficit, despite predicting strong economic growth of 8.5 percent in the current fiscal year.

The warning came on the final day of the Washington-based IMF team’s two-week visit to Myanmar.

Mission chief Mr. Yongzheng Yang told the media in Yangon that these potential risks could affect the economy given weak capacity and thin policy buffers. He emphasized the importance of carefully managing the rapid liberalization of the financial sector despite its overall benefits.

He warned of risks to the country’s fiscal and external positions that could be weakened by persistent dollar strength and low natural gas prices.

With strong demand and credit growth caused by the increased fiscal deficit and continued monetization of the deficit, inflation may rise further this fiscal year, while the external current account deficit is expected to widen further due to the continuous release of pent-up demand, the mission chief added.

“ Myanmar needs a tightening of monetary and fiscal policies to restrain inflationary pressure and anchor exchange rate expectations.”

Mr. Yang called on the Central Bank of Myanmar to scale up deposit auctions to mop up excess liquidity and implement a prompt transition to the newly calibrated reserve requirement for banks.

Revenue mobilization and expenditure re-prioritization could help reduce the fiscal deficit for FY 2015-2016, he said.

Emphasizing the stability of exchange rate expectations, he stressed the need for the central bank to sell foreign currencies to importers at competitively determined market rates to decrease the risk of excessive drains on international reserves.

In conclusion, the IMF’s Myanmar mission chief said building the institutional capacity for macroeconomic management is crucial to addressing Myanmar’s huge development challenges.

According to his statement, the current account deficit widened further to about 6 percent of gross domestic product in the previous fiscal year due to strong import growth.

With lower-than-expected foreign direct investment inflows, the foreign reserves held by the CBM are equivalent to less than three months of imports. The Myanmar kyat has depreciated notably although in real effective terms it remained largely unchanged, the statement said.

During its visit to Myanmar, the IMF team met Vice-President U Nyan Tun, CBM Deputy Governors U Sett Aung, Daw Khin Saw Oo and U Soe Min, Deputy Minister for Finance Dr Maung Maung Thein and other senior officials. They also held discussions with parliamentarians and private sector representatives. — GNLM

Tax stamp policy successful, Yangon IRD chief says

By Aye Min Soe

YANGON, 1 July — The Yangon Region Internal Revenue Department hailed its restaurant tax stamp policy a success Wednesday, after collecting more than K3 billion in commercial taxes from food outlets last fiscal year.

At a meeting with businessmen, Yangon Region IRD chief U Zaw Thant Lwin said the commercial tax pulled in more than K3,129 million in fiscal 2014-2015, compared to K1,938 million the previous year.

Last year, the Ministry of Finance and Revenue launched a program across the country selling to restaurants stamps to be affixed to receipts as proof of tax payment to customers.

More than 950 million has already been collected in the first two months of April and May of the current 2015-2016 fiscal year. Despite the success of the program, the department received complaints from some customers that they had received receipts without stamps, U Zaw Thant Lwin said.

(See page 3)

Hours-long queues subside at Yangon’s new KFC outlet

YANGON, 1 July — Waiting times to eat at Myanmar’s first Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet dropped to around 20 minutes Wednesday after being unable to get a seat the previous day. “The price is fair. The taste is good,” she said after tasting the food for the first time.

(See page 2)
Parliament plans to hold referendum simultaneously with election

NAY PYI TAW, 1 July—
To save time and money, a referendum on amendment Article 59 (D) is scheduled to be held along with the general election, after informing the chairman of Union Election Commission, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker told the parliament on Wednesday.

The amendment of the article was passed with 556 votes, or more than 75 percent of members, in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 25 June, and must now be but to a referendum.

Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann said he would ask the chairman of UEC to hold the referendum together with the upcoming general election.

Dr Banya Aung Soe, MP of Mon state constituency 7, voiced his support for the amendment, which seeks to allow representatives of states and region

parliaments select their respective chief ministers.

Defence Services representative Lieutenant Colonel Kyaw San Oo said the president can select experienced experts for government ministries in accordance with democratic norms.

He also said ministers should prioritize the ministerial affairs rather than their parties’ activities.

U Thein Swe, MP of Ayeyawady region constituency 10, said committees of parliament should have the rank of Union level, adding that the military should consider amendment of the constitution to promote good relations between the military and the people.

MPs from ethnic areas also suggested the amendment would help establishment of national reconciliation and ceasefire agreement.—MNA

Thilawa SEZ job vacancies to be posted online

YANGON, 1 July —
Fuji Work Company is set to launch a website for people seeking work at the Thilawa Special Economic Zone, where business operations will soon start.

The website will provide information not only for vacancies but also for workshops for job opportunities organized by Fuji Work Company, according to Ma Zun Pwint Phyu of the company’s Myanmar Branch Office.

Fuji Work Company established the first vocational training centre in Thilawa Special Economic Zone in June 2015. It is conducting free vocational training courses for residents displaced by the project in cooperation with the Government of Myanmar and Myanmar-Japan Thilawa Development Ltd.

A director of Fuji Work Company said, “We are conducting training courses for operating machinery in the first phase and in the second phase, we will conduct Japanese language, English language, information technology and accounting courses.”

The course will admit some 1,000 trainees, said the director, who estimated some 100,000 Myanmar citizens will eventually be employed at the special economic zone.

Secretary of Thilawa Special Economic Zone Management Committee Dr Than Aung said the special economic zone is the first of its kind in Myanmar being implemented with the aims of developing infrastructure, attracting foreign investment and fostering the economic and industrial potential of the country.

So far, Japan, Taiwan, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, the United States, China, Sweden, Hong Kong, Australia and Malaysia have invested in manufacturing of auto parts, electrical appliances, construction materials, shoes, packaging materials, garments, foodstuffs, cement and other products in the special economic zone.

Job vacancies of companies in Thilawa Special Economic Zone will be posted at https://www.thilawajob.com after the site is launched.

Job seekers may register their names at the website and further information will be available by phoning 09 979007123 or emailing thilawajob@gmail.com.

Reported by Ye Khaung

Information for Public Remonstration

1. Negotiation, Stability and Peace Party headquartered at No 4/361 on 12th Karya Street in Thangnyangyi, Mingaladon Township, Yangon Region, has submitted its application for the registration as a political party to the Union Election Commission in July 2015 in accord with Section 5 of the Political Parties Registration Law, along with the following party’s name, flag and emblem.

2. It is hereby announced that those who want to remonstrate with the UEC about the party’s name, flag and emblem they may submit a complaint along with the strong evidences within seven days starting from issue of this announcement in line with the Section 14 (d) of the Political Parties Registration Rules.

Union Election Commission

Flag of Negotiation, Stability and Peace Party

Emblem of Negotiation, Stability and Peace Party
Nay Pyi Taw, 1 July—President U Thein Sein received a delegation led by Singapore’s Deputy Prime Minister Mr Teo Chee Hean at the Credentials Hall of the Presidential Palace, here, on Wednesday. U Thein Sein and Mr Teo Chee Hean, who is also Singapore’s Coordinating Minister for National Security and Minister for Home Affairs, discussed further cementing bilateral ties, development of human resources and cooperation in the financial sector.

Also present at the meeting were union ministers Lt-Gen Ko Ko, Lt-Gen Wai Lwin and U Wunna Maung Lwin and U Ye Htut, and officials, and Singaporean Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Robert Chua.—MNA

Myanmar, Singapore pledge strengthening of ties

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Union Home Affairs receives Singaporean Deputy Prime Minister

Nay Pyi Taw, 1 July—Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Ko Ko met with Singapore’s Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security and Minister for Home Affairs Mr Teo Chee Hean and party at the ministry, here, on Wednesday.

They discussed bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries, transnational crimes, search and rescue works and cooperation between two ministries of Home Affairs.

MNA

Daw Nan Shwe Hmon, wife of Singapore’s Dy PM visit Myanma Gems Emporium

Nay Pyi Taw, 1 July—Daw Nan Shwe Hmon, wife of Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham and Madam Chew Poh Yim, wife of Singapore’s Deputy Prime Minister Mr Teo Chee Hean visited the Myanmar Gems Emporium where jade lots were sold through open tender on Wednesday.

In the afternoon, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Daw Myat Myat Oo also observed sales of jade lots at the emporium.

MNA

Tax stamp policy successful, ...

The department sent warning notices to more than 50 restaurants last year and fined more than 30 in 2015 for not following the policy, he said.

According to the policy, customers must pay a 5 percent commercial tax on their meals as of November 1 last year.

The purpose of the program is to collect taxes indirectly from the public through restaurants, said the head of the Yangon Region IRD, who urged customers to make sure they receive receipts with the tax stickers properly affixed without fail.

The stamps produced by the International Revenue Department range from K50 to K10,000 in value.

Taxes on restaurant sales and services started in 1949 and have been brought under the Commercial Tax Law (1990).

GNLM
Floating hotel lets travellers view scenic Ayeyawady River

MANDALAY, 1 July—The Karaweik floating hotel opened in Mandalay on 28 June, giving guests the chance to enjoy the scenic beauty of the Ayeyawady River and surrounds, an official of the hotel said.

“We have schedules to run the floating hotel every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday from 4 to 6 p.m.,” he said.

While staying at the hotel, customers can view natural scenery in Chanayethazan Township, as well as Sagaing and Mingun regions. The hotel charges K7,000 per customer and serves snacks and soft drinks.

The 250-foot-long hotel, decorated with paintings and sculptures, was built in March 2013.

Kyaw Min Thaw

Kalay Township gets new bodybuilding gym, weightlifting hall

KALAY, 1 July — A new bodybuilding gym and weightlifting hall have been added to the people’s sports ground in Kalay, Sagaing Region, as part of a recently completed upgrade.

Myintmo Sekkya Company was assigned to build the new facilities valued at K137.05 million. Chairman of Kalay District Management Committee U Maung Htoo and officials of District Sports and Physical Education Department inspected the buildings on 28 June.

Joe Net

Speakers share knowledge about MERS, dengue fever with students

YINMABIN, 1 July — Health workers gave a talk on the dangers of MERS and dengue haemorrhagic fever at the basic education high school in Yinmabin, Sagaing Region, on 30 June.

At the talks, Health Assistant-1 U Saw Hlaing explained facts about dengue fever while Head of Township Public Health Department Dr Sein Lin spoke about infection of MERS, or Middle East respiratory syndrome. Leader of the Forward Project Daw Nwe Nwe Win discussed the importance of washing hands.

The talk, attended by more than 500 students, teachers and social organization members was organized by the Yinmabin Township Management Committee, the Township Women’s Affairs Organization and Township Public Health Department.—Tun Ko Ko (Yinmabin)
Hockey federation honours bronze medallists, well-wishers

Yangon, 1 July—The Myanmar Hockey Federation held a ceremony for the bronze medal winning team from the 28th SEA Games at the Dolphin Restaurant at Kandawgyi Garden, here, on 30 June.

Vice President of the federation U Kyaw Naing Oo had donated K20 million and K6.6 million for 22 hockey players, K8.5 million for nutritious foods of players and USD 18,520 for meals of athletes during the games.

President of the federation U Htin Zaw Win presented a certificate of honour to the vice president for his generous donations.

On behalf of the players, captain of the team Minbu, 1 July—Minbu Township Public Health Department in Kyaukdaga, Bago Region, opened the midwifery and public health workers course at its hall recently.

Training officials delivered the manual on midwifery and public health to the trainees.

The midwifery course runs for six months, while the public health worker course runs for one month.

Zeya Tun (Magway)

New rural road improves border trade between Myanmar and India

Tunzang, 1 July—Tanzang Township Rural Development Department in Chin State has completed construction of the 15-mile-long Twalkhein-Bwaltal-Panmwal Road. The road, built by Rhema Foundation Co Ltd at a cost of K180 million, is a major route for Myanmar-India border trade in the state.

Zo Hay Hsar

Minbu Township to hold sports competitions at new buildings

Minbu, 1 July—Minbu Township Sports and Physical Education Department is preparing to hold football, Sepak Takraw and volleyball competitions, as well as a mini marathon, on 5 July.

The events will take place at the township’s recently upgraded sports ground and newly built gymnasium.

According to the Township SPED, eight football teams will take part in the football tournament, 200 athletes will participate in the mini marathon, and 20 teams will compete in the Sepak Takraw event.

Zeya Tun (Magway)

Casting of King Athinskha Saw Yun bronze statue complete

Mandalay, 1 July—Metal workers finished casting a statue of King Athinskha Saw Yun, founder of Sagaing, on 30 June, an official of the Pyae Wa bronze foundry in Tamapawdy Ward, Mandalay.

Technicians took more than nine months to cast the 13-foot-high bronze statue in three parts.

Under the auspices of venerable Sitagu Sayadaw, retired construction minister U Khin Maung Myint spent K35 million on the statue. It will be moved to the Ohbo roundabout in Sagaing in the first week of July.

King Athinskha Saw Yun lived from 1299 to 1327 AD.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Road.

Road.

Drains dredged for proper flow of water

Yangon, 1 July—Local authorities undertook dredging of drains and construction of roads in Ward 26, Hlinethaya Township, Yangon, in the last week of June.

Officials of the Township Development Affairs Committee and local residents participated in dredging of drains along main roads in the township to ensure proper flow of water in the rainy season.

They also carried out works to widen Shwe Chit Kyi Yay, Shwe Yadana, Shwe Bontha and Shwe Kantha roads.

Chairman of the Township Development Affairs Committee U Kyi Soe said, “We will try our best for development of the township in joining hands with the local residents.”

Min Htet Paing (Hlinethaya)

K YauKdaga, 1 July—The Township Public Health Department in Kyaukdaga, Bago Region, opened the midwifery and public health workers course at its hall recently.

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The midwifery course runs for six months, while the public health worker course runs for one month.

Khin Ko (Kyaukdaga)
Indonesia reviewing ageing air force fleet after deadly crash

Medan, (Indonesia), 1 July — Indonesia’s president promised a review of the country’s ageing air force fleet and a defence modernization drive on Wednesday, as the death toll from the crash of a military transport plane in the north of the country climbed past 140.

The C-130B Hercules aircraft, which went into service half a century ago, plunged into a residential area of the city of Medan on Tuesday, throwing a renewed spotlight on Indonesia’s woeful air safety record.

“There must be an evaluation of the age of planes and defence systems,” President Joko Widodo tweeted late on Tuesday, as earth movers worked through the night to recover the dead from rubble of twisted metal and smashed buildings.

The TVOne news channel said that 141 body bags had been brought to a hospital near the crash site, all but two of which contained complete bodies.

Officials said the Hercules, which plunged into houses and a hotel two minutes after take-off, had been carrying 122 people which would suggest around 20 were killed on the ground by the impact of the plane.

The plane was on its way from an air force base in Medan, one of Indonesia’s largest cities, to Tanjung Pinang in the Riau Islands of Sumatra.

Widodo said he had ordered an in-depth investigation into the cause of the accident, which may be the deadliest yet for a air force with a long history of crashes, and a “fundamental restructuring” of weapons procurement and procurement.

“We should not just buy weapons, but shift towards modernizing our weapons systems,” he said in a televised statement on Wednesday.

“Our defence industry should be involved, starting from production, operation, maintenance. The main point is ... the procurement of weapons should ultimately move toward an independent defence industry.”

According to the Aviation Safety Network, 10 fatal crashes involving Indonesian military or police aircraft have occurred over the last decade.

The Indonesian air force has now lost four C-130s, reducing its transport reach in an archipelago that stretches more than 5,000 km (3,000 miles) from its western to eastern tips. The air force has grounded its remaining eight C-130s until investigators discover the cause of the crash.

The transport plane accident could bring pressure on the president to spend more on modernizing the air force.

“This incident shows us that we must renew our aircraft and our military equipment,” Pramono Anung, a lawmaker and member of the parliamentary commission for defence, said in an interview.

“The Hercules is already old, many of our other systems are already old. As parliament we will support giving more funding to the military so that they can upgrade.”

Although Indonesia accounted for nearly one-fifth of defence spending by Southeast Asian countries last year, as a percentage of GDP the amount was the lowest in the region at 0.8 percent, according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute data.

Widodo, who took office last year, has said he plans to double military spending to $15 billion by 2020.

“Although Indonesia accounted for nearly one-fifth of defense spending by Southeast Asian countries last year, as a percentage of GDP the amount was the lowest in the region at 0.8 percent, according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute data.”

Another official, who asked to remain anonymous, said the government did not yet have a funding plan.

Search to restart for missing people after Ontake eruption

A Shinto ceremony is held in the village of Otaki on the seventh station of Mt. Ontake on 1 July, 2015, to commemorate people killed in an eruption in September 2014 and pray for the safety of those climbing the volcano in central Japan. — Kyodo News

Pyongyang issued a statement on 15 June, saying there is no reason not to hold an inter-Korean talks, but has refrained from offering specific information on foreign participation.— Kyodo News

S Korea urges DPRK back to dialogue table

Seoul, 1 July — South Korean President Park Geun-hye on Wednesday urged the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to return to the inter-Korean dialogue table.

Park made the remarks during a meeting of the National Unification Advisory Council (NUAC), the presidential advisor on unification.

The South Korean government is ready for a frank dialogue with the DPRK about all inter-Korean issues, but the DPRK hasn’t responded to the dialogue offer and only proposed preconditions for talks, Park said.

On the DPRK’s nuclear development, Park said it was threatening the future of the Korean people as well as peace in Asia and across the world.

Pyongyang issued a statement on 15 June, saying there is no reason not to hold an inter-Korean talks if trust and rapprochement mood is formed.— Xinhua

Sri Lanka’s Rajapaksa to stand for Prime Minister in 17 August polls

Medamulana, (Sri Lanka), 1 July — Former Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapaksa said he would run for prime minister during next month’s parliamentary elections, a move that is likely to inflame rival ethnic groups as he is accused of war crimes in a civil war.

“I accept the request to contest the election,” Rajapaksa said on Wednesday, referring to the 17 August parliamentary polls when the island nation is set to choose its prime minister.

Rajapaksa, who is accused of war crimes in a civil war, has already adopted the parliamentary system, under which salary for workers begins to reduce from a certain age, a government report showed on Wednesday.

Among 378 major affiliates of top 30 conglomerates, 177 companies, or 47 percent of the total, have introduced the system, according to the Ministry of Employment and Labour.

South Korea has announced a plan to make the retirement age of 60 mandatory from 2016, but industrial circles opposed it to higher labour costs.

The wage peak system would allow companies to reduce wages for workers of a certain age, many of them from 56 years old, to lower labor costs against the extended retirement age.

The labour world protested against the system as the fallen wage would reduce severance pay, which is calculated based on wages of the last three years before retirement.

More than half of top 15 conglomerates, including Samsung and Hyundai, have adopted the wage peak system or plan to introduce it from next year.

Under the system, wages could fall to 40 percent of the salary of the last year when it peaked.

Nagano, (Japan), 1 July — The Nagano prefectural government said Wednesday it will resume in late July its search work for six people still missing after last September’s volcanic eruption at Mt Ontake that killed another 57 people.

The local government in central Japan said it plans to send an advance team as early as next week to the 3,067-metre mountain straddling Nagano and Gifu prefectures. The move comes after the Japan Meteorological Agency raised the alert level for the mountain to 2 on a five-point scale from 3, although still warning hikers not to approach its crater.

There are submerged fumes and volcanic tremors at the mountain, the agency said.

On Wednesday, officials of local governments and tourism organizations held a ceremony to commemorate the victims of the 27 September eruption in the village of Otaki, Nagano at the foot of the mountain. — Kyodo News

Half of S Korean big companies adopt wage peak system

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China asks two Koreas to take part in parade marking end of WWII: Yonhap

Seoul, 1 July — China has extended invitations to the militaries of the two Koreas to take part in a Chinese military parade in September marking the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. Yonhap News Agency reported on Wednesday.

“ar my military parade,” a South Korean diplomatic source was quoted as saying in the dispatch from Beijing. The source said South Korea is “carefully weighing” the invitation but has not yet made a decision on the matter.

The military parade, which will be held on 3 September at Tiananmen Square in Beijing, will mark the first of the kind for China to commemorate what the country calls its victory in the war against Japanese aggression.

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Start revving up engine of socioeconomic growth for peace, stability

By Kyaw Thura

Lasting peace and stability are attainable only when economic and social welfare are assured across the country. Our country has lagged far behind its neighbours, let alone Western nations, especially in terms of technology. Careful consideration of the root cause of instability in the country will reveal lack of proper management. At a time when the use of information and technology has come to the fore, development efforts should directly contribute to the well-being of the entire population, regardless of race, age and gender.

In this context, the government should take the lead in the effort to create conditions of full employment so as to ensure higher standards of living, which in turn will pave the way for conditions of economic growth and social welfare. A hungry mob is an angry mob, sang Bob Marley, supporting the notion that poverty reduction is fundamental to peace, stability and development. Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi described people with full bellies as peaceful people. It is absolutely imperative that the government must recheck whether its priorities are focused on issues of national concern that stress the need for all-round social and economic development. In addition, economic and social reforms should be aimed at the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger through careful analysis.

With steady economic growth and social welfare in place, peace and stability will ensue, thereby encouraging both local and foreign investment in key development areas such as education, health, transportation and agriculture. All things considered, it is time to start revving up the engine of socioeconomic growth.

Is it the right time for a minimum wage?

U Aye Chan

(Opinions expressed here are those of the author.)

The recent news, that the national committee in charge with setting up a minimum wage has just proposed a 3,600kyats per day figure, compels me to ask if it really the right time to set up the minimum wage and if it is really necessary, after all.

There are many arguments for having a national wage, such as most countries having it, providing a survivable wage to lowest income earners, etc.

Most people start jumping onto the minimum wage bandwagon without first understanding what the implications would be for people of Myanmar. Almost everyone assume that minimum wage will help the poorest segments of Myanmar population; people without any skills, qualifications or experiences such as cleaning ladies, tea shop boys or the farmer families who move up to the cities in search of a better living.

It would be so easy to criticize the government and complain how the government is doing not enough for this most vulnerable group of people and the perfect solution would be a minimum wage. Because their wage and if it is really necessary, after all.

• Most 100% of the burden of the minimum wage will be borne by business owners. Is it wise to let them bear all, in an environment where we need more private investments and more FDIs?

Myanmar domestic economic growth is slowing down due to the downturn in the private construction sector and the wait and see attitude coming from the uncertainty over upcoming elections. The burden of the minimum wage should be borne by all society and taxpayers at large, not only by businesses that employ many workers.

Is it the right time for a minimum wage?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Minimum Wage ($)</th>
<th>Jobless Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>$11.69</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>$12.09</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
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<td>Greece</td>
<td>$5.66</td>
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<td>Ireland</td>
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<td>$10.93</td>
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<td>Portugal</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>$10.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average</td>
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<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.1%</td>
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No Minimum Wage

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Country</th>
<th>Jobless Rate</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
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<td>Iceland</td>
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<td>12.5%</td>
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<td>Norway</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The poor could be better provided for through tax rebates, training grants and incentives, job apprenticeship programs, etc., with funding from all taxpayers. If we looked at the United States, a high minimum wage has done little to reduce income gap or growing social inequalities. Singapore, on the other hand, does not have a minimum wage, yet their workers earn more than the US counterparts and income inequality is lesser than the US.

It is imperative that we examine the potential effects of minimum wage in the long term and decide if we really needed one. It would be wise for lawmakers not to succumb to populist measures that will gain little votes but more demonstrations yet damage our currency recouping at this very moment.

[ U Aye Chan of IMA Group is a graduate in Economics from University of London -London School of Economics and also holds a Master of Business Administration from Nanyang Technological University (Singapore). He is also a Certified Public Accountant.]

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email wallace.uun@gmail.com with your name and title. Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish “Letter to the Editor” that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

POEM:

MWAF (2)

(Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation)

Myanmar Mothers: Past, present and future

• Key family figures To keep it close-knit
• And to bring up well-rounded kids.

Myanmar Women: All along standing as a strong force

• Serving national interest in due course;
• With spiritual ability and fine traditions,
• Taking part in various operations
• For development and welfare.

Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation: The great sun has come out bold

• To protect womenfolk young and old;
• With its rays branching around
• To ensure their life safe and sound.

Let’s all hail the federation

For its noble and worthy operations;

• Full tribute should we all pay

On this auspicious ‘Myanmar Women’s Day’!

Aye Phyu

[U Aye Chan of IMA Group is a graduate in Economics from University of London -London School of Economics and also holds a Master of Business Administration from Nanyang Technological University (Singapore). He is also a Certified Public Accountant.]
ARTICLE

CONCEPT OF CULTURE AS A FRAMEWORK OF DIALOGUE AMONG PEOPLES

Continued from page 8)

7

In accord to carry out its Mission Statement “Honouring the State with Culture”, the three national museums and two National Universities of Arts and Culture under the administration of the ministry have their own activities in line with the Objectives of the State Short and Long Term Plans. The Archaeology, National Museum and Library, firstly established as Archaeology Department was the oldest which was established since 1905 with the objectives of: to reveal historical sites and ancient cities by exploration and excavations to preserve Myanmar cultural heritage monuments; to preserve and protect Myanmar cultural properties; to establish and manage museums; to preserve inscriptions and publish books and to reveal and preserve ancient mural paintings. But those cultural policies and programmes were not yet to protect and sustain the existence of the buildings and remains of those historic cities. At present, 13 national museums and Pyu Cities have been nominated as World Heritage List in 2014. The cultural landscapes have been focal areas of excavations and studies to be carried out by the Archaeology Department. Cultural and historical values, heritage remained and other related archaeological finds and artefacts, with those tangible assets come out have to be undertaken systematically. So that we need to follow References under the sustain-ability of those old and ancient cities and their preservation calls for many challenging tasks, regarding the cultural and political landscape and dissemination of culture is the challenges for each ethno-group.

One of the initiatives of the Ministry of Culture is to establish the Art College for the ethnic groups is a part of extending networking and promoting and understanding the culture of ethnic groups. Arts Education and their related assessment underscores the fact that to express the serious and rigorous academic subjects — an essential aspect of human knowing. Here, for arts education, it is meant that to be lectured and practiced their respective arts, qualified and specialized students working in collaboration with professional artists, arts organizations, and cultural and community institutions to bring the arts to ethnic students as participants and spectators to be handed down to the next generations for the preservation of their own culture. The professionals provide a curriculum that includes: engaging students in the processes of creating and producing works of art, guiding students in interpreting and evaluating work by others, providing students with knowledge of and appreciation for the arts, and offering students the opportunity to participate in various art forms of their own ethnic group. It also provides experiences that build teamwork and critical thinking skills and it helps young people shape their skills in critical thinking and creative problem solving especially by exploring their own culture and spirit of preservation. Moreover, they will gain an understanding of the finest achievements of hu- man culture. And as they explore art forms it helps them to expand avenues for personal self-expression. But perhaps most important of all, students educated in this way will become citizens who will be literate about their own culture as well as appreciate and be contributing to other cultures.

Language, religion, family structure, gender relations, political and economic ideologies, attitudes toward race and ethnicity and learning conflict between tradition and creativity are the Elements to be taken into account for the culture. It is seen that culture has to be used as Tool for the security of today’s nation be- cause of the changing world and security in a global world sometimes in its weakest link; blurring between exter- nal and internal security has profound institutional and cultural consequences; region- al responses become more necessary but not sufficient; emerging importance of law enforcement, declining im- portance of the use of force, focusing on new threats and agendas, not to ignore old ones in new forms, etc. are put into account by the countries. Throughout the histori- cal periods and post inde- pendence, the role of culture, it is to overcome most of its upheav- als, clashes among groups and civil unrests through the main concepts and principles re- ferred as its own established principles and mandated for the emergence of the peaceful and modern state;

• Concept on Three Na- tional Causes: Non-disinte- gration of the Union; Non-disintegration of nation- al solidarity and Perpetuation of sovereignty. Throughout the legitimate of Myanmar Kingdoms, the importance of these Three National Causes was proven. Moreover, the Independence of Myanmar was lost in 1885 because of the negligence of those Causes. The First Myan- mar Nation established by Bagan Dynasty was ru- ined and Kings and Leaders of successive pe- riods, showed their prowess strength and political dia- logue for the future welfare of the parts for the sustainability of the nation and peacekeeping. Thus, the Three National Causes, firmly stand as the Political History of Myanmar and are the benchmark for the State’s stability and sover- eignty.

Moreover, the Union Spirit is the very important to build the nationalism and unity of the nation among hundreds of national races, because those discrimi- nations and divide and rule policy of the colonialists in the past, the legacy of Union Spirit is the one that can unite the nationally and extend the Association steadily over- time. So this is believed that ASEAN, AN’s culture always gives emphasis of the elements of the ASEAN Community: ASEAN Socio Cultural Com- munity ASCC Blueprint de- fined as the collective personal- ity, norms, values, beliefs, philosophy, and patterns of ASEAN community. Mainstreaming and promoting greater awareness and com- mon values in the spirit of unity in diversity at all levels of society are among the pri- orities of the ASCC so this will be the changes of culture in the region as it has its own way. Due to the globalization impacts on culture, in the time of the rise of the infor- mation society, innovative means of communication di- alogue, consultations, web fo- rum, vision, promote, recognize the civil society initiative, keep the database of information and provide guidelines, using of media and its involvement, are to be given prior. Moreover, to harmonise and assist with international developments, the countries like European Commission, UNESCO, etc. innovation, methodology, choice of tar- get group, and the corresponding re- sponse and the way to preserve an issue identified in the surveys are also called for. In accord to the previous World Wars and recent civil unrests all over the world, we all must “Light One Cande”. That is how we make a culture of peace become a reality. We are committed to share knowledge and promote the concept of Unity in Diversity for culture to be a useful instru- ment among peoples.

The aim of the mission of peace- ful coexistence; believe and promote the richness of di- versity through mutual under- standing and respect, trust to be built on, the legacy of peace can be shared together and the love that unites as one big diverse family will be the ingredients for the utmost solution of all fragile relations- hips happening throughout the world. Since the peace is dedicated as the priceless, why not we all can plant the seeds of peace by the ap- proaches of planting it with a heart of forgiveness and un- derstanding, to be in some way or another help us to lessen our negative effects at different levels, some feel- ing of discontinuity on individual, discrimination of different groups, social conflicts, those risks of destructions on vital equilib- rium regarding the natural environment and narrow the horizon for misconduct.
Greece misses deadline for debt repayment to IMF

The word ‘Yes’ in Greek is seen on a banner during a pro-Euro rally in front of the parliament building, in Athens, Greece, on 30 June, 2015. — Reuters

On Tuesday, Thursday, 2 July, 2015

Greece has unverified financial markets, with concerns mounting that it would ultimately lead to the country’s exit from the eurozone common currency. US President Barack Obama said on Tuesday that Greece’s repayment failure should not create a major shock for the financial system but warned that it would have a “significant effect on growth rates in Europe,” and eventually a “dampering effect on the entire world economy.”

“So far, I think the markets have properly factored in the risks involved,” Obama said, warning against overreactions.

Talks on a bailout for Athens will continue as another teleconference will be held on Wednesday, a spokesperson for Jerome Dijsselbloem, the president of the eurozone finance ministers’ group, said.

On Sunday, Greek citizens are set to vote on whether to accept the austerity terms of continued international aid in a referendum.—Kyodo News

Clinton struggled to fit in with Obama’s White House, emails show

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 1 July — Hillary Clinton struggled to fit into the government of President Barack Obama after being appointed Secretary of State in 2009, according to emails released by the State Department on Tuesday.

They showed Clinton turning up for meetings that had been cancelled and worrying about how much time she had with her new boss, revealing growing pains in the relationship between her and former election rival Obama in the early months of her time as America’s top diplomat.

In an email to two aides on 8 June, 2009, Clinton was unsure if the White House had held a Cabinet meeting and whether she should attend. “I heard on the radio that there is a Cabinet mtg this am. Is there? Can I go? If not, who are we sending?” Clinton wrote.

A State Department official wrote back that the government was holding a meeting, but not a full Cabinet meeting that she needed to be at. As Clinton sought to navigate her relationship with the White House, she corresponded with several former aides and advisers to her husband, former President Bill Clinton. They included Sidney Blumenthal, a former White House speech writer, Sandy Berger, the former National Security Adviser and Mark Penn, who served as a political adviser to both Bill Clinton and to Hillary Clinton’s 2008 White House bid.

As the Obama administration was conducting a review of its policy in Afghanistan, for example, Penn emailed her and advised her not to ignore the threat posed by the Taliban. While they were fierce competitors on the campaign trail Clinton and Obama eventually struck up a working relationship in the four years she spent as secretary of state. As she runs for the White House again at the November 2016 election, Clinton’s relationship with her fellow Democrat will come under further scrutiny.

While she has aligned herself with the Obama administration on issues that are popular with the base of Democratic supporters such as immigration reform, she has also tried to make her own mark by distancing herself from Obama on trade. Back in 2009, there were a few misunderstandings, according to an email Clinton sent about what she thought was a meeting at the White House, “I arrived for the 10:15 mtg and was told there was no mtg,” she wrote to aides. “This is the second time this has happened. What’s up?” she asked.

The emails released on Tuesday are among some 30,000 work emails relating to Clinton that a judge has ordered to be released in batches after a controversy broke out earlier this year when she acknowledged using a personal email account rather than a government one for State Department business.

As she began her tenure, Clinton worried about perceptions that she was not meeting enough with the president, given that former President Richard Nixon used to see his secretary of state Henry Kissinger daily.

“In thinking about the Kissinger interview, the only issue I think that might be raised is that I see PO-TUS [George] once a week, while K saw Nixon every day,” she said in an email to a spokesman, using Wash- ington, DC, as President of the United States. “Do you see this as a problem?” she asked spokesman Philippe Reines. — Reuters

IAEA chief Amano heads to Iran as nuclear talks extended

VIENNA, 1 July — International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Yukiya Amano will be in Tehran on Thursday to discuss monitoring sensitive nuclear sites with senior officials as major powers and Iran seek a breakthrough in forging a lasting nuclear agreement.

If not, who are we sending?”

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“Do you see this as a problem?” she asked spokesman Philippe Reines. — Reuters

Western powers negotiating with Iran are the five UN Security Council permanent members — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — plus Germany. The French and Chinese foreign ministers are due back in Vienna on Thursday, a French diplomatic source said. All the ministers are expected to attend a meeting on Thursday to take stock of where negotiations stand.

Under the November 2013 agreement, Iran agreed to take some steps to constrain its nuclear programme in exchange for limited relief from sanctions. — Reuters

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CONGRATULATIONS!

Our Heartiest Congratulations

To

United Overseas Bank, Yangon Branch

@ PARKROYAL YANGON HOTEL

We wish you great success with this significant milestone in your international operations.

“May your business grow from strength to strength”

Best Wishes

Shwe Taung Development Co., Ltd.

Congratulations

We extend our gracious welcome and cordial congratulations

on the auspicious opening of

United Overseas Bank

Yangon Branch in Myanmar on 2nd July 2015.

We are fully confident that your world renounced banking services and expertise will take

Myanmar’s financial sector to the global level.

Chairman and Board of Directors

KBZ BANK LTD.
Toyota exec Hamp resigns after arrest over drug import

Tokyo, 1 July — Toyota Motor Corp said on Wednesday its first female managing officer Julie Hamp has resigned after being arrested last week for allegedly importing a narcotic painkiller to Japan.

Toyota "accepted her resignation after considering the concerns and inconvenience that recent events have caused our stakeholders," the automaker said in a statement. Hamp offered to step down Tuesday.

The resignation of 55-year-old Hamp comes only a few months after she assumed the post in April as part of Toyota's efforts to diversify its leadership. Toyota said it was "a big decision" to take as it had never had a foreign executive fully stationed in Japan. But the automaker said it will continue to put the right people in the right places regardless of nationality, gender and other factors. Japanese police arrested Hamp on 18 June on suspicion of sending oxycodone pills, which are illegal without a prescription in Japan, via mail.

Following her arrest, Toyota President Akio Toyoda apologized for the incident, but said he believed she had not intended to break any law.

Oxycodone is often used as a pain reliever by cancer patients and is said to be stronger than morphine.

To bring oxycodone into Japan, a medical certificate from a doctor must be submitted to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare for approval. The drug cannot be imported by mail.— Kyodo News

Havana, 1 July — Cuba on Tuesday became the first country in the world to eradicate the transmission of HIV and syphilis from mother to newborn, said the World Health Organization (WHO).

The WHO announced in a press release that it validated Cuba’s success in eliminating mother-to-child transmission.

“Eliminating transmission of a virus is one of the greatest public health achievements possible,” WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan said.

“Today’s historic success in Cuba and a celebration for UNHCR,” said Birgit Mogen, UNHCR’s spokesperson for UNHCR.

“This is a major victory in our long fight against HIV and sexually transmitted infections, and an important step towards having an AIDS-free generation,” she added.

Cuba celebrated getting the recognition from the international agency.

“It is a historic day for the prevention of HIV and AIDS and for progress towards a generation free of this burden both nationwide and around the world,” Cuba’s state daily Granma said.

“This is a celebration for Cuba and a celebration in children and families everywhere. It shows that ending the AIDS epidemic is possible and we expect Cuba to be the first of many countries coming forward to seek validation that they have ended their epidemics among children,” said Michel Sidibe, executive director of UNAIDS.

Every year, an estimated 1.4 million women around the globe live with HIV become pregnant.

Unintended, they have a 15 to 45 percent chance of transmitting the virus to their children during pregnancy, labour, delivery or breastfeeding, according to the WHO.

The good news is that the risk drops to just over 1 percent if antiretroviral medications are given to both mothers and children throughout the stages when infection can occur.

The number of children born annually with HIV has almost halved since 2009, down from 400,000 in 2009 to 240,000 in 2013, but much more needs to be done “to reach the global target of less than 40,000 new child infections per year by 2015,” the WHO said.

Nearly 1 million pregnant women worldwide are infected with syphilis annually, which can result in early fetal loss and stillbirth, neonatal death, low-birth-weight infants and serious neonatal infections.

Thanks to Cuba’s “reliable, accessible and universal health system,” infected pregnant women are ensured key early access to prenatal care, and HIV and syphilis testing for them and their partners, said the WHO.

Cuba succeeded in lowering the HIV transmission rate to 1.85 percent, below the 2 percent target rate countries in the region in conjunction with the WHO and other health agencies had been aiming for.

“Cuba’s achievement today provides inspiration for other countries to advance towards elimination of HIV and syphilis,” said Dr Carissa F. Etienne, the director of the Pan American Health Organization.

More than 135,000 refugees reached Europe by sea in 2015’s first half — UNHCR

WASHINGTON, 1 July — More than 135,000 refugees and migrants have arrived in Europe by sea in the first half of 2015, with most of the burden being borne by countries in southern Europe, according to a new report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

“Desperate people report to desperate measures and unfortunately...the numbers are expected to continue to soar,” said Birgit Mogen, a spokesperson for UNHCR.

The number of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe in the first six months of 2015 increased more than 80 percent in the same time period in 2014, the UNHCR report said.

It comes as Europe’s Union leaders remain divided over how best to solve the growing migrant crisis.

The increase in refugees and migrants, many braving dangerous Mediterranean waters in unsafe boats, has hit countries in southern Europe particularly hard, the report said.

Greece, the largest arrival point for refugees and migrants in the first six months of 2015, has a struggling economy and was headed for a default on international obligations with the International Monetary Fund.

Refugees and migrants have been pouring into the western Balkans from Greece and since the beginning of June, over 1,000 people have been entering every day “as opposed to 200 just a few weeks ago,” the report said.

Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi rebuffed influential EU leaders last week for failing to agree on a plan to take in 40,000 asylum-seekers from Italy and Greece.

“As arrivals increase, the reception capacity and conditions remain seriously inadequate,” Hansford said. “This is a regional problem that needs a regional response and regional solidarity.”

Syria, which has been embroiled in a civil war since 2011, accounted for nearly 44,000 people, making them the largest group coming to Europe’s shores.

The report said instability in Libya was another reason for the increase.

Eritrea and Afghanistan were the second and third-largest countries of origin, the report said.

The report added, however, that increased EU funding for rescue operations has meant a decrease in the number of deaths at sea since May.— Reuters

18 killed in landslides in E India

NEW DELHI, 1 July — At least 18 people have been killed in landslides triggered by heavy rains in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong subdivisions of Darjeeling district in the eastern Indian state of West Bengal since Tuesday night, said local media on Wednesday.

The Press Trust of India quoted officials as saying at least 25 landslides have caused extensive damage to two local highways, cutting off areas in the region from the rest of the country.

Government rescue teams have rushed to the affected area, where at least 15 people are reported missing.

The two one lane highways to Darjeeling district of West Bengal run through the only land transport links to the hilly area.—Xinhua

Australian treasurer confident of AIIB structure, decision making mechanism

CANBERRA, 1 July — Australian Treasurer Joe Hockey said in a series of interviews with Australian and international media on Monday and Tuesday that Australia is confident of the China-proposed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank’s (AIIB) structure and its decision making mechanism.

In an interview with Bloomberg TV, Hockey said Australia has the capacity to be a major beneficiary of new infrastructure, especially in the Asia-Pacific region where there has an eight-trillion-US dollar infrastructure shortfall for the next 10 years. As for the US concerns about the structure of the AIIB, Hockey said, “We went into negotiations in good faith hoping to ensure that the bank had the best corporate governance principles of any major multilateral bank and they’ve actually got that.”

“We’re satisfied that when it comes to issues like ensuring that minority shareholders are not oppressed, there are protections now in place ensuring the directors make the decisions about where the money goes. Those arrangements are in place. And importantly, it’s not dominated by any single shareholder,” he told Bloomberg.—Xinhua

12 | Thursday, 2 July, 2015
CONGRATULATIONS!

Our Heartiest Congratulations

To

OCBC Bank

On the official opening of **OCBC Yangon Branch**

@

Union Financial Centre (UFC)

We wish you great success with this significant milestone in your international operations.

“May your business grow from strength to strength”

Best Wishes

Shwe Taung Development Co., Ltd.

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Congratulations

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“OVERSEA-CHINESE BANKING CORPORATION”

Yangon Branch in Myanmar on 2nd July 2015.

We are fully confident that your world renounced banking services and expertise will take

Myanmar’s financial sector to the global level.

Chairman
and Board of Directors
KBZ BANK LTD.
CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV THAI BINH STAR 01 VOY NO (-)
Consignees of cargo carried on MV THAI BINH STAR 01 VOY NO (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 2.7.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MIP where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.
Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claims Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.
No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.
SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S G LINK EXPRESS PTE LTD
Phone No: 2301178

WEATHER REPORT
BAY INFERENCE: Monsoon is moderate in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.
FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 2nd July, 2015:
Rain will be widespread in Bago and Ayeyawady Regions, Kachin, Chin and Rakhine States, fairly widespread in Yangon and Taninthayi Regions, and scattered in Upper Sajag Region, Kayin State and isolated in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavy falls in Rakhine State. Degree of certain heavy falls in Rakhine States, fairly widespread in Yangon and Taninthayi Regions, scattered in Upper Sajag Region, Kayin State and isolated in the remaining Regions and States.
STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters.
OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of increase of rain in the Southern Myanmar areas.

Daniel Radcliffe crowned Britain’s Rear Of The Year 2015

LONDON, 1 July — Actor Daniel Radcliffe has beaten “Fifty Shades Of Grey” hunk Jamie Dornan to win the UK title of Rear Of The Year 2015.

“Thor” star Idris Elba and Oscar-winning actor Eddie Redmayne round out the new top five at four and five, respectively.

Meanwhile, British singer-turned-soap actress Kym Marsh’s posterior won her the female honor, beating her former Coronation Street co-star Michelle Keegan to claim the award.

“I’d like to thank everyone from the heart of my bottom for voting for me. It’s totally unexpected but greatly appreciated. I’m very flattered to receive this award; it looks like all those extra gym sessions have paid off,” Marsh said after winning the title.

Veteran TV presenter Carol Vorderman, who took home the prize in 2011 and 2014, comes in third, followed by actress Amanda Holden at four and “The Great Gatsby” star Carey Mulligan, who is rumoured to be pregnant, at five.—PTI
Residents return to see homes destroyed by Washington state fire

WENATCHEE, Washington, 1 July — Families whose homes were destroyed in a massive grassland wildfire in Washington state were returning to scenes of destruction on Tuesday as firefighters fought to contain the virtual uncontrolled blaze, officials said.

Fueled by extreme heat and gusting winds, the so-called Sleepy Hollow fire has scorched nearly 3,000 acres (1,200 hectares) of rolling grasslands and brush around the city of Wenatchee since it erupted on a parched central Washington hillside on Sunday. The blaze was just 10 percent contained late on Tuesday.

At least 24 residences were destroyed or badly damaged at the north end of the city of some 30,000 residents, as were four downtown businesses including a recycling plant, an agricultural chemical distributor and two packing plants, said Kay McKellar, a fire management team spokeswoman.

Residents and family members of the portion of the city where homes burned were allowed to return to assess damage and gather belongings, McKellar said. In the quiet neighbourhood, there was a little tent set up with two women and children giving away cold drinks and snacks in what they said was an effort to raise peoples’ spirits as building contractors, cable company workers, insurance adjusters and residents milled about.

“I don’t even have a fork or a plate or cloth-ing,” resident Diane Reed, who lost her home in the blaze, told KOMO. “Just the basic things you take for granted. It’s just gone.”

Australia’s snowfields experiencing poor season due to El Nino

MELBOURNE, 1 July — Australia’s ski resorts are suffering through one of their worst seasons on record, with most reporting little or no snow cover as they enter the second month of winter.

The last snowfall experienced by Victoria’s best-known ski fields — at Mount Buller, Falls Creek and Mount Hotham — was nearly a fortnight ago, on 21 June, and the bureau of meteorology is predicting just a single day of snowfall this week.

The weather event of El Nino has been blamed for the poor start to the snow season, which has left resorts desperate for snow. Some have resigned to relying solely on manufactured snow to entice visitors to the area. Many Australian ski resorts are open to those who can ski, with Mount Buller, which last received snowfall almost a month ago on 6 June, operating just one of its possible 41 runs. Only four of its ski lifts are in operation, from a possible 14.

The situation is dire at Falls Creek; only three out a possible 77 ski runs are open, purely due to an artificial snow base of 25 centimetres.

El Nino years are infamous for bringing poorer snow in school holidays and low numbers of 株式会社であるため、El Nino phases. The southern Australian snow season usually begins in late fall and continues until early spring, however El Nino brings with it a shortened season; on average the season lasts three weeks less than a typical season. The snowfields are under pressure to deliver snow over the next two months aslogen and burial ceremonies are in effect across Victoria and New South Wales.

More than 309,000 snow-goers flocked to Victoria’s Mount Bullen alone last year, but without consistent snow, local business-nesses and the economy could also experience a dry year, with visitor numbers likely to fall in 2015.

Usain Bolt withdraws from Diamond League meetings with leg injury

KINGSTON, Jamaica, 1 July — Six times Olympic champion Usain Bolt announced on Tuesday that he has pulled out of the Diamond League meetings in Paris on Saturday and Lausanne on Saturday, due to a left leg "dis- comfort". The 29-year-old sprinter has been feeling dis-comfort in his left leg since his last competition in New York on 13 June, according to a statement on his website. He has been diagnosed with a blocked sartorius joint, “which is restricting his movement and putting pressure on his knee and ankle,” the statement said.

“I am disappointed not to be able to compete in Paris and Lausanne. I love running at these meetings but at the moment I am unable to compete at 100%,” Bolt said in the statement. “I look for- ward to getting back into full training as soon as possible.”

Land prices rise in 10 prefectures in Japan

TOKYO, 1 July — Land prices in Japan as of 1 January increased in 10 prefectures including Tokyo, Osaka and Aichi, up from last year’s eight prefectures, the National Tax Agency said in its annual report released on Wednesday.

The survey, which covered about 329,000 points across the country and is used for inheritance tax calculations, also showed the land prices declined an average 0.4 percent from a year earlier for the seventh straight year but the margin of decline narrowed from last year’s 0.7 percent.

The rising land prices were attributable to increasing investment in real estate, mainly by foreign investors, due to the yen’s depreciation and low interest rates under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s economy policy mix called “Abenomics” amid gradual economic recovery.

Of the country’s 47 prefectures, the sharpest rise was 2.5 percent in Miyagi, followed by 2.3 percent in Fukushima, where reconstruction was under way from the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Tokyo saw a decline of 0.2 percent in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, came next with 2.1 percent.

While land prices rose in 10 prefectures of Miyagi, Fukushima, Saitama, Chiba, Tokyo, Kanagawa, Aichi, Kyoto, Osaka and Okayama, they fell in 35 prefectures, down from last year’s 38 prefectures.

The margin of decline widened from last year in five prefectures of Kagoshima, Miyazaki, Hokkaido, Shimane and Oita.

The highest land prices in prefectural capitals went up in 21 cities, up from 18 last year, and fell in 12 cities, down from last year’s 21. The land price plunged 49 percent at a point in Hiroshima City’s Asamaniu Ward where huge landslides killed 74 people last year. — Kyodo News
Devastating Argentina reach Copa final

Higuain also found the net in a brilliant display orchestrated by an inspired Lionel Messi. Argentina had scored only four goals in their four previous matches but Messi said it was not because the team had not been playing well.

“We talked about that just before the match and we said it was just chance that we hadn’t scored more because we’ve been playing well,” Messi said.

“Today all the goals came at once.”

Gerardo Martino’s side took the lead after 15 minutes when Messi swung a free kick in from the left, Rojo failed to connect cleanly with his first touch but swept the ball home from close range with his second.

Argentina doubled their lead 12 minutes later and again Messi was the provider, threading an inch-perfect pass through the Paraguayan defence for Pastore to run on to. His powerful low shot gave goalkeeper Justo Villar no chance.

The tournament was from bad to worse for Paraguay when both of their strikers, Derlis Gonzalez and Roque Santa Cruz, limped off injured.

Santa Cruz’s replacement, Lucas Barrios, gave them hope with a goal just before the break but in the second half Argentina were unstoppable.

Minutes into the second half Pastore burst through midfield and fed Di Maria, who buried a left-foot shot into the bottom corner of the net.

Six minutes later Messi destroyed the Paraguay defence with a mazy run to set up Pastore. His shot was parried by Villar but Di Maria was on hand to slot home the rebound.

On 80 minutes Di Maria turned provider, crossing from the left for Aguero to head home, and minutes later Higuain came off the bench to score a sixth.

Argentina will face Chile at Santiago’s national stadium on Saturday.

US beat Germany to reach Women’s World Cup final

Carli Lloyd (Front) of the United States celebrates scoring the penalty kick against Germany’s head Silvia Neid at the 2015 FIFA Women’s World Cup in Montreal, Canada on 5 July, 2015.—Xinhua

Luring in the draw as 10th seed after a poor year, the 29-year-old bludgeoned Brazil’s Thomaz Bellucci 6-4, 6-2, 6-4.

World number two Federer, starting his 63rd consecutive grand slam, which he firmly believes can deliver a long-awaited 18th title, was given carte blanche to go through his exquisite repertoire against the willing Dzhumur — a player whose first ten matches were forged in bomb-ravaged Sarajevo.

The 23-year-old Dzhumur pushed Federer harder at the French Open this year, but looked like he had turned up uninvited to a Federer garden party on the world’s most famous lawn at times.

He at least finally made Federer sweat, not much as the free-swinging Swiss fired off graceful winners and raced through service games in the blink of an eye.—Reuters

Federer and Kvitova feast on Wimbledon starters

Story earlier as reigning women’s champion Petra Kvitova scorched the grass with some searing serves in a 35-minute demolition of Dutchwoman Kiki Bertens.

She dropped only one point on serve in a commanding first-round show of force that augurs well for her chances of repeating her title charge of 12 months ago when she blew away Eugene Bouchard away in a one-sided final.

German 10th seed Angelique Kerber also caught fire, thrashing compatriot Carina Witthoeft 6-0, 6-0 to record the third so-called ‘double bagel’ in the women’s singles so far, the most since 1996.

It was not all one-way traffic for fancied players though.

Third seed Simona Halep checked out 5-7, 6-4, 6-3 in round one against 106th-ranked Slovakian Jana Cepelova to become the highest-profile casualty so far.

Last year’s runner-up Bouchard’s fall from grace continued as she was bundled out by China’s Duan Yingying.

By contrast, all of the tournament’s leading scorer, Germany’s Celia Sasic, the tourney’s leading scorer, missed a penalty kick of her own, pushing the ball outside the left goalpost.

LONDON, 1 July — When Roger Federer’s game flows at Wimbledon and his opponent knows his place you half expect him to slide into a deckchair at changeovers, poured cream on to some strawberries and tuck in.

It was like that on Centre Court on Tuesday as the King of Cools began his quest for an eighth title at the All England Club with a nonchalant dismantling of Bosnia’s Damir Dzhumur.

With the mercury soaring into the high 80s Fahrenheit as London prepares for a heatwave, spectators were spared the full glare of the mid-afternoon sun thanks to the welcome shade offered by the part-extended roof.

For 88th-ranked Dzhumur there was no escape from the dazzling shot-making of the Swiss maestro who won 6-1, 6-3, 6-3. It was a similar story earlier as reigning women’s champion Petra Kvitova scorched the grass with some searing serves in a 35-minute demolition of Dutchwoman Kiki Bertens.

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