ADB to pour $100m into road upgrade

THE Asian Development Bank (ADB) yesterday announced that it will provide a US$100 million loan to upgrade a section of road in Myanmar which is currently considered the “missing link” of the Greater Mekong Sub-region’s East-West Corridor.

The completion of the Myanmar sections of the corridor will link Da Nang in Viet Nam with Mawlamyine and Yangon. Along with the ADB-assisted project, the Government of Thailand is separately supporting improvements to the road linking Kawkareik and Myawaddy on the border with Thailand, while the section between Eindu and the main Yangon-Mawlamyine highway is being rehabilitated through a government-managed build-operate-transfer concession operated by a private Myanmar company.

The loan will be used to upgrade a 66.4-kilometre section of a two-lane road between Eindu and Kawkareik townships in Kayin State which also has the principal road link to Thailand. According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), 25 percent of Myanmar’s land-based trade relies on this route.

“Upgrading this stretch of the road will complete improvements to Myanmar’s sections of the GMS East West-Corridor. This will open up new economic opportunities for the state and country and support inclusive growth,” said James Leather, Principal Transport Specialist in ADB’s Southeast Asia Department.

The project will improve the road section in line with Greater Mekong Sub-region road network standards. An access road to a river port in Kyondoe Township will also be upgraded using the funds, said the Manila-based lender.

ADB’s loan comes from the bank’s concessional Asian Development Fund. Additional co-financing support of $20 million is being provided by the ASEAN Infrastructure Fund, with the Government of Myanmar providing counterpart support of $1.8 million. The project will run for over 3 years, with an estimated completion date of September 2019.

According to the bank, the project’s scheduled completion date is September 2019.
Japan to provide further assistance to flood-hit schools

THE Myanmar delegation led by U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs, arrived back here by air on 13th November after attending the First Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Jinghong, Yunnan Province, China, on 11-12 November.

On 11th November, the Union Minister accompanied by the Myanmar Ambassador to China and members of the Myanmar delegation, met Mr. Wang Yi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of China at the Sheraton Xishuangbanna Hotel. The two Foreign Ministers cordially discussed matters relating to bilateral relations between the two countries and exchanged views on the First Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Foreign Ministers’ Meeting and related issues.

On the morning of 12th November, the Union Minister met Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand at the Sheraton Xishuangbanna Hotel. The two Foreign Ministers discussed matters relating to further enhancing the bilateral relations and economic cooperation between Myanmar and Thailand.

Next, the Myanmar delegation led by the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs attended the First Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Foreign Ministers’ Meeting. The meeting announced the official launching of the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Framework and welcomed the Concept Paper on Mekong-Lancang Cooperation. The Foreign Ministers from Mekong-Lancang countries had an in-depth exchange of views on promoting cooperation under the Framework. A joint press communiqué was also issued after the meeting.

During the stay at Jinghong, the Myanmar delegation together with other delegations from Mekong-Lancang countries visited Jinghong Hydro-power Station and paid homage at the Xishuangbanna General Buddhist Temple.

The first Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Foreign Ministers’ Meeting was convened following the initiative put forward by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang at the 17th ASEAN- China Summit held in Myanmar on 13th November 2014 to establish a new mechanism of cooperation among six Mekong-Lancang countries comprising of Cambodia, China, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam.—Myanmar News Agency

Union Culture Minister inspects construction on National Museum

UNION Culture Minister U Aye Myint Kyu visited the Myanmar National Museum in Nay Pyi Taw on 13 November to inspect the progress of construction works. The National Museum has been under construction since 2010 and aims to throw a spotlight on the country’s rich cultural heritage to visitors. Among the five buildings, building A and B have already opened to the public, while buildings C, D and E are still under construction.

U Aye Myint Kyu inspected exhibition rooms, including the ASEAN room, the Myanmar handicrafts room and the Thihathana Throne room.—Myanmar News Agency

Real estate seminar to analyse future trends

THE future of Myanmar’s real estate market, which has slumped in previous months, will be discussed at a seminar today hosted by the online property trading platform Myamanarhouse.com.

The seminar will take place at the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) in Yangon. Local experts and real estate agent panelists will share their knowledge and experience with seminar attendees. The property market had enjoyed a boom period since the reform era began in 2011, with real estate prices skyrocketing – particularly in Yangon. However the market started to dip in late 2014. The situation is likely to improve in early 2016, according to U Khin Maung Than, Chairman of Myanmar Real Estate Services Association. The cooling of Myanmar’s property market this year will be discussed and analysed, along with pondering its future prospects. Speakers include Sai Khan Naung, managing director of Sai Khun Naung Real Estate Agency, U Myat Thu Win, Managing Director of Shwemintha Real Estate, U Nay Min Thu, MD of iMyamanarhouse.com, Kyi Soe IC and U Tin Maung, managing director of Royal Tun Thitsa Co, who also serves as chairman of Mandalay Real Estate Agent Development Association.

Graduation ceremony of course in diplomacy held in Yangon

THE Graduation ceremony of course in diplomacy (4/2015) conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was held at the ministry in Yangon yesterday, with an opening address delivered by Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister U Thant Kyaw.

The course is aimed to enhance the ability and knowledge of the newly recruited junior officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The curriculum includes foreign policy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and current international issues, international relations and ASEAN related matters, communication skills, diplomacy, protocol, consular and legal matters, economic, cultural and social matters, English proficiency and computer subjects.

Altogether 30 heads of branch/ third secretary participated in the 12-week course.

Responsible officials from the ministry, retired ambassadors, professors and instructors were also present on the occasion.—Myanmar News Agency

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Union FM attends First Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Foreign Ministers’ Meeting

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Vice President U Nyan Tun meets with Japanese delegation

VICE President U Nyan Tun met a Japanese delegation led by Ambassador Mr Tateshi Higuchi at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday to discuss the further development of economic ties.

At the meeting, both sides also discussed matters related to Myanmar’s successful and fair general election of 8 November and the promotion of Japanese investment in the country.

Also present at the meeting were deputy ministers U Tin Oo Lwin and Daw Lei Lei Thein, and Central Bank of Myanmar’s Deputy Governor U Set Aung.

The Japanese ambassador was accompanied by Military Attaché to Myanmar Colonel Takeshi Hara. —Myanmar News Agency

NLD wins general election

THE Union Election Commission announced yesterday that the opposition party, the National League for Democracy, has won the majority of seats in Myanmar’s general election.

Counting began a day after the historic vote was held on 8 November.

As of 9 pm last night, the NLD had won 247 Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) seats, 131 Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) seats, 459 state/region parliament seats, 14 state/region Hluttaw for ethnic seats, totaling 851 parliament seats.

Out of 657 Pyidaungsu Hluttaw seats, the NLD has won 378 seats. As it has won more than half the number of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw seats, the NLD will form Myanmar’s new government.—Myanmar News Agency

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets US, Japan ambassadors

THE successful completion of the general election fulfilled the desires of Myanmar’s defence services, the commander-in-chief of defence services told the US ambassador to Myanmar in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

US Ambassador Mr Derek Mitchell called on Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at Bayintnaung Guesthouse in the capital city at 11am.

There was some doubt among Myanmar people living both at home and abroad about pre-election efforts on the part of the government, the defence services and electoral officials, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said.

The government had a responsibility to display its achievements in reforms during its tenure, whereas the army had the responsibility to display its capability to protect the people, serve the public interest and safeguard the country’s territorial integrity, the senior general added.

Their discussions focused on the announcement of official election results, follow-up responsibilities, the possibility of a meeting with opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the government’s ongoing reforms and national peace process, Myanmar’s foreign relations, and prospects of better relations with the United States.

In the afternoon, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing met Japan’s Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Tateshi Higuchi at the same venue.

Speaking of the military’s stance on politics, the commander-in-chief pledged the impossibility of backsliding due to the election results or other options, saying that efforts were being made to encourage remaining ethnic armed organisations to enter into the nationwide ceasefire agreement, which was signed in October.

“The army will continue to cooperate with other stakeholders in restoring peace and national development,” he said, promising that they would join hands with the incoming government to promote the welfare of the people of Myanmar.—Myawady

Speaker meets US Ambassador

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann meets with the US Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Derek Mitchell at his office yesterday.

Also present at the meeting was Pyithu Hluttaw Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission member Daw Aye Aye Mu and officials from the Pyithu Hluttaw Office.

—Myanmar News Agency

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw praises general election

SPEAKER of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann on Friday praised the Union Election Commission and its sub-commissions, the Union Government, local and foreign organisations and the people of Myanmar for the holding of successful general elections on 8 November.

He said he issued his congratulations on behalf of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

An announcement released on Friday by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Office said that the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw will cooperate with department officials for convening the second Hluttaw sessions in accordance with the existing laws and rules and regulations. —Myanmar News Agency
### 2015 General Election of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

#### Victorious Region/State Hluttaw candidates and results

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<th>No.</th>
<th>Region/State</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Victorious Candidate</th>
<th>Party/Independent</th>
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ADB confirms $60m in loans for better water management in Mandalay

Yi Myint

THE Asian Development Bank announced yesterday that it has approved a US$60 million loan to ensure improved and sustained water management in Mandalay, Myanmar’s second largest city.

The loan aims to improve urban environment and public health conditions and to develop the historic city as a cultural, educational and economic hub of northern Myanmar, said the lender in a press release issued yesterday.

Despite having enormous potential to drive growth along the economic corridor linking India to China, Mandalay’s urban services are still sub-standard and it is vulnerable to the effects of climate change, said Eri Honda, Principal Urban Development Specialist in Asian Development Bank’s (ADB) Southeast Asia Department.

Modern water supplies and wastewater management will be prioritised under the terms of the loan, the urban development specialist added.

The bank also pointed out that a lack of investment in public infrastructure and services has left the city with 2 percent of the country’s total population contributing around 8 percent of Myanmar’s GDP.

The piped water system reaches only 55 percent of residents, while sanitation consists of septic tanks connected to roadside drains, lattinnes; and solid waste is dumped into the canals.

Mandalay is also prone to intense flooding during the wet season, the press release stated.

Under the project, a new water treatment plant will be built and existing supply networks will be rehabilitated and extended. Moreover, Mandalay’s first centralised wastewater collection and treatment plant will be set up to reduce the direct discharge of wastewater into canals and creeks, thereby raising public awareness about the environment and health.

A special feature of the project is to the generation of biogas from sludge, which will be used to produce electricity to provide up to half the wastewater treatment plant’s power needs, the bank said.

According to the bank, the project’s scheduled completion date is March 2023.

ADB’s loan will be complemented by $56.8 million in co-financing, with $46 million from the French development agency Agence Française de Développement, $6.8 million from the European Union’s Asian Investment Facility, and $4 million from the Urban Climate Change Resilience Trust Fund. Myanmar’s government will contribute $13.1 million, said ADB.

Women draw water from a tube-well in rural Myanmar. A project financed by ADB and others will result in an increase in the number of households with access to uninterrupted water supplies. Photo: ADB Myanmar
UNICEF, Spectrum launch budget guides for young people

The budget guides help children and young people realise budget cycle and their rights

Khaung Thanda Lwin

The United Nations Children’s Fund launched budget guides for children and young people yesterday in cooperation with Spectrum-Sustainable Development Knowledge Network.

The two booklets have been printed in Myanmar and aim to spread knowledge about government budget cycles and associated issues to young people.

UNICEF Representative Mr Bertrand Bainvel said there are no plans at present to have the books translated into ethnic minority languages.

UNICEF will provide TOT training programmes to teachers from government schools as well as non-formal education to help disseminate the necessary information—including their rights—to young people.

The book helps children and young people realise budget cycle and their rights, Mr David Allan of Spectrum said.

In an attempt to improve the child rights status in Myanmar, UNICEF is planning to host a meeting between children and newly-declared political candidates on 20 November in Yangon to call for commitments to increase investment in the social sectors for children.

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Indonesia’s action on haze won’t stop burning: farmers group

JAKARTA — Forest fires in Indonesia that have caused choking smoke across much of Southeast Asia will flare up again next year because government action to tackle the crisis is ineffective, a palm farmers group said.

Indonesia and the wider Southeast Asian region have been suffering for weeks from smoke caused by smouldering forest and peatland fires, largely in Sumatra and Borneo islands that authorities have struggled to contain.

Green groups and palm oil plantation firms say a 2009 law that allows smallholder farmers to use slash-and-burn practices to clear land for agricultural purposes is a key cause of the annual fires when the burning gets out of control.

“Burning will still happen because the government hasn’t changed the regulations,” Manuets Darto, secretariat at the Indonesian Oil Palm Smallholders’ Union told Reuters on Thursday.

Indonesia, the world’s top palm oil producer and home to the world’s third-largest tropical forest, has faced increased political pressure from neighbours Singapore and Malaysia to address the crisis as the haze has spiked to unhealthy levels, causing some school closures and flight cancellations.

Jakarta has said it would review laws that allow farmers to burn up to two hectares (five acres), and last week sent letters to plantation firms and provincial governments demanding peatland conversion is immediately halted.

Previously, the government ordered four companies to suspend operations for allegedly causing forest fires and revoked the land licences of three other firms.

Darto, however, said the government needed to implement stricter regulations to stop burning and give smallholders, who account for 40 percent of Indonesian palm oil output, better access to credit so they could afford to clear land using best practices.

His group has 48,000 members, mostly in Sumatra and Kalimantan.

Using tractors, chainsaws or hand tools is the most environmentally friendly way to clear forest areas approved for development, say forestry groups, but these methods are more expensive and time-consuming than fires.

Before his election last year President Joko Widodo promised to provide easier access to credit for smallholder farmers, but has yet to act on that pledge.

He cut short an official trip to the United States last month to try and deal with the crisis as the fires pushed the country’s average daily greenhouse gas emissions above those of the US.

Smallholder farmers have also been hit hard by a drop in palm oil benchmark prices, which touched a near six-and-a-half year low earlier this year.

To help, the Indonesian government wants major palm oil companies to row back on their historic “no deforestation” pledges made last year. The government says the pledges hurt smallholder producers who cannot afford to adopt sustainable forestry practices and are blocked from the supply chain.

Darto rejected this and said that the real reason why larger companies were not buying from smallholders was due to weak palm prices, not the Indonesian Palm Oil Pledge (IPOP).

The IPOP pledges made by major firms would in fact limit expansion to help bolster palm prices, while strengthening the relationship between his members and big plantations, he said.

“IPOP will benefit the farmers,” Darto added. “Companies won’t expand their areas and this means they will instead increase cooperation with farmers to increase productivity.” —Reuters

Japan targets boosting birth rate to increase growth

TOKYO — Japan plans to include steps to raise the birth rate, such easier access to childcare and tax incentives, in a package of reforms due this month to tackle the biggest bottleneck to economic growth, say forestry groups, but these methods are more expensive and time-consuming than fires.

Japanese population began declining four years ago after several years of warnings that the birth rate was too low, prompting some economists to applaud Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s decision to put particular emphasis on policies that will contribute to raising the birth rate.

Abe said on Thursday after a cabinet meeting.

However, others warn the government has fallen so far behind on the population issue that it will be difficult to raise economic growth without opening up to large-scale immigration.

Most countries would turn to immigration, but this has met with resistance from politicians and the public, who prize the country’s mostly homogenous society.

“I want to confront the demographic problem head on and place particular emphasis on policies that will contribute to raising the birth rate.”

Shinzo Abe
Japan PM

There is a lack of childcare facilities and improving this is important,” said Hiroshi Shiraiishi, senior economist at BNP Paribas Securities.

“However, this will not boost growth in the next five years. The more direct way is through immigration.”

Abe wants to raise the birth rate to 1.8 per woman from 1.42 currently by loosening regulations on childcare providers and making it easier for women to return to work after their child is born.

Other proposals the government will consider are easing the tax burden for some part-time employees and making interest-free loans available for higher education.

The idea is to prevent the population from falling below 100 million from around 127 million currently. Advanced economies usually require a birth rate around 2.1 children per woman simply to keep the population stable.

Japan’s population is projected to fall by a third to 87 million in 2060, the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research says.

Japan’s working-age population peaked in the mid-1990s and has been falling ever since, data from the internal affairs ministry shows. Projections show the labour force could shrink to 44 million in 2060, which is half of its peak.

China’s scrapping of its one-child policy and adoption of a two-child policy is expected to boost the country’s economic growth by about 0.5 of a percentage point, a senior Chinese official said on Tuesday. —Reuters
Keep up the momentum for reform

Kyaw Thura

It is no exaggeration to say that the sweeping democratic reforms initiated by the government over the past five years greatly contributed to the success of the general election on 8 November. President U Thein Sein and opposition party leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to commend the collective efforts of the government, the election commission, political parties and the people to organise fair, and peaceful election.

The US president suggested that a spirit of unity will aid the formation of an inclusive, representative government that reflects the will of the people, urging both leaders to respect the official results and forge a prosperous future.

There were 34 million eligible voters to cast in 323 constituencies across the country, with observers estimating a high voter turnout of more than 90 percent. The National League for Democracy was officially declared the winner of the historic general elections yesterday.

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 thanttunmaungin@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.

Ye Htut spoke of the president’s delight about the success of the general elections, which have received praise from foreign heads of governments around the world. He attributed its success to the government’s commitment to democratic reforms during the past five years, stressing that the president instructed his ministers during a recent cabinet meeting to prepare for a smooth transfer of power, as desired by the public.

Two days ago, United States President Barack Obama himself phoned President U Thein Sein and opposition party leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to commend the collective efforts of the government, the election commission, political parties and the people to organise fair, and peaceful elections.

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The Benefits of Walking

WALKING is the easiest, cheapest and most effective exercise that benefits our health. A morning walk and a cold shower afterwards is very refreshing and rejuvenating, that kept me light hearted and agile the whole day. The day I missed my walk, is the day I noticed my age catching up on me. I am not exaggerating and those who did the walking earnestly and systematically would support that statement.

The benefits of walking are manifold. In the early hours, the traffic is still light, so there is no or very little air pollution, which makes breathing easier. The weather is cool and pleasant and makes your mind clear and your heart light. During the morning walks, I felt relaxed and devoid of worries or anxieties. Thus I am free from stress and strains, which are detrimental to the mental health. The fundamentals of longevity is leading a healthy life: both physically and mentally.

Mental health is more important than physical health, though both are necessary. Mental depressions lead to rapid aging and to early deaths. In the chronic cases suicidal tendencies set in and could lead to actual suicides. Walking could, to a certain extent, reduce mental depression. I am saying that from my personal experience. Most of us, at one time or the other had suffered mental depressions, though mild they may be, and I am no exception. My way of overcoming depression is to do a rigorous exercise; either jogging or brisk walking.

The Second Heart

I totally accept the accuracy of the analogy that describes the legs as the second heart. In 1992, I suffered from a mild ischemic heart disease. In those days my workload was very heavy, so I didn’t have time for exercise. It started with a piercing pain in the chest. It was nothing like the chest pains that I had experienced before, that were because of bad gas that moved from place to place. I checked-up with a physician friend of mine. Based on the ECG results, he told me that two of my lead veins were a bit constricted but there was nothing to worry. He prescribed blood thinning medicines only and advised me to walk regularly.

Starting the next morning, I began walking. After about a hundred meters or so, I had to sit down and rest as I felt exhausted. Only a few years before that, I used to jog and walk around the Kandawgyi without getting tired. However, I kept going for a walk every morning and gradually I could walk farther and farther each day. Eventually, after about six months, I was walking around the Kandawgyi without getting tired. I checked-up again and found no sign of ischemic on the ECG graph anymore. To be doubly sure I underwent stress test on a treadmill at the General Hospital and was confirmed that my heart was normal. I believed the walking cured me, so I kept walking since then. During the rainy seasons I rode a stationary cycle at home, if I may not go out to walk due to the rains.

The legs movements pumped the blood from the feet up to the heart from where it was distributed throughout the body. This eased the load on the heart. The legs are in fact the secondary pumps or the second hearts. About five years after the above incident, while my wife was getting treatment from a cardiac specialist, I rechecked with him. He asked me what were my complaints. I replied, I had nothing to complain, but just want to check because I had a history of ischemic heart. After checking the ECG results and thoroughly checking my medicines, I told my doctor had no sign of ischemic heart and asked me if I was sure I had suffered that before. I told him I was sure and that I used to walk at least three miles every morning since then. On hearing that, he told me not to worry about getting heart attack or stroke if I kept on doing that.

Since then I advised my friends to walk. After writing an article on how to lose weight, where I mentioned about combining dieting with walking, an idea came to me to write the benefits of walking. As I want to give the readers more precise information about walking, I rechecked with him. There I found that the benefits of walking are more diverse than I knew.

The Benefits of Walking

Walking is the best aerobic exercise, that is easy, cheap and effective. It is within anyone’s reach. It has many health benefits, which I’ll describe briefly.

1. Walking strengthens the heart. Walking regularly could reduce the risk of heart disease and strokes. It lowers the bad cholesterol (LDL) and increase the good cholesterol (HDL). Helps prevent and control the high blood pressure, which is the main cause of strokes.

2. Walking lowers disease risks. Regular walks reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes and less likely to develop cancer of the colon, breast, and prostate. It can stop loss of bone mass which is a risk factor for osteoporosis.

3. Walking helps weight loss. Walking burns calories that constitute the body fats, thus regularly walking would reduce the body weight.

4. Walking prevents dementia and lowers Alzheimer’s risk. Dementia effects 1 in 14 persons aged over 65 and 1 in 6 persons aged over 80. Older people who walk at least six miles per week are more likely to avoid brain shrinkage, which is the cause of memory loss.

5. Walking tones up the muscles. Walking tones up the muscles and thus gives definition to the legs, hips and abdomen. If uphill walking can be incorporated, it would be more effective.

6. Walking boosts vitamin D. Vitamin D is essential for the bone health and the immune system. Exposure to sunlight is necessary for the production of vitamin D. Thus walking is a pleasant way of enjoying the outdoors, at the same time supplement the vitamin D requirements.

7. Walking generates energy. More energy can get more work done. Walking boosts the blood circulations increasing more oxygen supply to every cells in the body making it alert and alive. Thus walking is a natural energizer.

8. Walking makes you happy. Walking enhances the mood. It is as efficient as an antidepressant in mild to moderate cases of mental depression. It also reduces stress and anxiety.


10. Walking improves sleep. People aged 50 to 70, who take one-hour morning walks are more likely to relieve insomnia than those who don’t walk.

11. Walking supports the skeleton. Bones are living and need physical exercise to maintain a healthy and strong bone. People aged 50 to 70, who walk at least three miles a day, can stop loss bone mass in women with osteoporosis.

12. Walking shores up the immune system. It can stop loss of bone mass and it can stop loss of blood vessels. Both are very beneficial. As for me, though I am in my late seventies, I walked an hour almost everyday, if my constitution permits. How about you wherever you go.

13. Walking shores up the brain. It can stop loss of blood vessels. Both are very beneficial. As for me, though I am in my late seventies, I walked an hour almost everyday, if my constitution permits. How about you wherever you go.

Conclusion
Some recommend to do brisk walking to be effective, but some say that it doesn’t need to be a brisk walk. From my experience, if walking is for weight loss it should be a brisk walk as it would burn more calories. However, for other benefits just normal walking would be enough. For senior citizens, half an hour of normal walk, four times a week is recommended to be enough to maintain a healthy life. If you can do more without exerting too much on yourself, it would be more beneficial. As for me, though I am in my late seventies, I walked an hour almost everyday, if my constitution permits. However, if I didn’t get enough sleep due to various reasons, I wouldn’t go walking that day. To make walking more interesting have a pedometer application downloaded in your mobile phone. Take it with you wherever you go. It will record how many step walked, the distance traversed, the time lapsed and the amount of calories burned during the whole day. In my experience it made me more careful and careful. I would be myself by making me want to better the previous day’s record. In conclusion, I would like to urge my fellow countrymen to walk your ways towards longer and healthier lives.
Tatkon lake de-silted

THE Byaing-in Lake, located three miles northeast of Tatkon, has been successfully de-silted. The project began on 5 August when the Irrigation Department started dredging the lake using K114.174 million provided by the Nay Pyi Taw Council. The dredging was completed in October.

Under the authority of the Irrigation Department, Mon Dam will supply water to the lake. At present, Byaing-in Lake is able to supply potable water to local communities.

—Tin Soe Lwin (Tatkon IPRD)

Taninthayi Region Govt to organise football tournament

A COORDINATION meeting was held to discuss an upcoming inter-township U-25 football tournament in Dawei on Thursday. The meeting took place at the hall of the Taninthayi Region Government in Dawei, with speeches given by Region Minister for Forestry and Mining U Tin Soe. Deputy Director U Soe Moe Naing of the Sports and Physical Education Department explained the arrangements for holding the tournament. Ten townships, namely Dawei, Yebyu, Launglon, Thayetchaung, Moeik, Kyunsu, Palaw, Taninthayi, Bokpyin and Kawthoung will participate in the tournament. The final match of the tournament will be held on 1 December.

—Po Shwe Thun-Dawei

Shan state locals receive training in gender rights and health

A THREE-DAY course covering health and social issues began at the Township People’s Hospital in Namhsam, Palaung Self-Administered Zone, Shan State, on Wednesday.

Medical Superintendent Dr Zaw Win Aung spoke at the event, while course instructor Daw Ja Htwe Aung explained the concepts of gender and social rights, health issues and maternal care. About 30 trainees from women’s associations, social organisations and Myanmar Red Cross members attended the course.

—Myint Aung

Kathina robes offered to Buddhist monks in Mandalay

THE Mandalay Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry held the 1st Kathina robe offering ceremony at the Thaphankine monastic education school in Nawngkhio Township, Shan State, on Tuesday.

The event was attended by 15 Buddhist monks from Thaphankine monastery, chamber chairman U Aung Than and local entrepreneurs.

The chairman and members donated Kathina robes and offertories to the monks. They also donated US$ 787 (10 million kyat) to the fund for the construction of the local Maha Bawdi Pagoda. The Thaphan Kine Charity monastic school admits 19 novices and 165 orphans from ethnic minorities.

—Thiha Ko Ko

Local youth participate in health and social issues in Namhsan.

Photo: Myint Aung
Evidence mounts that British Islamic State leader killed in air strike

BEIRUT — The United States targeted British Islamic State leader “Jihadi John” in an air strike in northern Syria and evidence was growing on Friday that he was killed.

A US official said Thursday’s attack in the town of Raqqa probably killed Mohammed Emwazi, a British citizen who was nicknamed “Jihadi John” after appearing in videos showing the killings of American and British hostages. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a monitoring group, said four foreign militants had been killed in US air strikes.

“A car carrying four foreign Islamic State leaders, including one British Jihadi was hit by US air strikes right after the government building in Raqqa city,” Rami Abdurrahman, Director of the UK-based Observatory told Reuters.

“All the sources there are saying that the body of an important British Jihadi is lying in the hospital of Raqqa. All the sources are saying it is of Jihadi John but I cannot confirm it personally.”

The Pentagon said it was still assessing the effectiveness of the strike in Raqqa, the de facto capital of Islamic State.

Emwazi participated in the videos showing the murders of US journalists Steven Sotloff and James Foley, US aid worker Abdul-Rahman Kassig, British and others David Haines and Alan Henning, Japanese journalist Kenji Goto, and a number of other hostages. The British government said it had “been working hand in glove with the Americans” to defeat Islamic State “and to hunt down those murdering Western hostages.”

It said Prime Minister David Cameron had said “shaking down these brutal murderers was a top priority”. Describing Emwazi as a threat to the world, Cameron said in a televised statement that there was no certainty yet that the strike had been successful but that if it was it would be a strike at the heart of Islamic State. It would come more than a year after US President Barack Obama promised justice after the deaths of American hostages...—Reuters

UN wants clarification of report UAE broke Libya arms embargo

UNITED NATIONS — The outgoing United Nations envoy to Libya, Bernardino Leon of Spain, on Thursday said he would seek a “full clarification” of a newspaper report that the United Arab Emirates was shipping arms to Libya in violation of a UN arms embargo.

One email quoted by the New York Times appears to be from a senior UAE diplomat, who admitted his own country “violated the UN Security Council Resolutions on Libya and continues to do so.”

The report about the emails will likely prove to be a new embarrassment for Leon, who recently defended himself against allegations that his decision to accept a high-paying post heading a UAE diplomaic academy represented a conflict of interest. Leon’s new role is expected to involve training envoys of one of the Arab countries most involved in the Libyan crisis. “In light of this (New York Times) report, I have decided to request a full clarification of the issue, including from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) authorities, as I take time to reflect on the next steps in my professional career,” Leon said in a statement.

Leon will soon be replaced by veteran German diplomat Martin Kobler. Emails documenting Leon’s negotiations with the UAE about his new post, which were taking place while he was attempting to mediate in the Libyan crisis, were first published by the Guardian newspaper.

Libya has descended into factional fighting, leaving the country almost lawless for nearly four years after the fall of Muammar Gaddafi. Two competing governments backed by militia brigades are scrambling for control of the oil-producing country and the chaos has created havens for Islamist militants.

The UAE, along with Egypt, backs the internationally recognised government led by Abdullah al-Thinni that is operating in the east. The UN Security Council imposed an arms embargo on Libya in 2011 when Gaddafi’s security forces cracked down on pro-democracy protesters.

Leon made clear that he was not confirming alleged UAE violations of the arms embargo. “Given the inaccurate or false information we have seen in previous months regarding the process in Libya and the UN and my role, I believe it is imperative to be extremely cautious about the most recent reports,” he said.

He added: “I consider nothing is more important than full compliance with United Nations resolutions. The Times said that Emirati government officials declined to comment on the leaked emails. Reuters was unable to independently verify the authenticity of the emails.—Reuters

Turkish forces clash with Kurdish militants in southeast, 12 killed

DIYARBAKIR — Turkish security forces killed 11 Kurdish militants in clashes near the borders with Syria and Iraq, while one soldier was killed in a firefight elsewhere in southeast Turkey, the authorities said yesterday.

Violence has wracked the mainly Kurdish region since a two-year Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) cease-fire broke down in July, leaving hundreds dead and tearing apart a peace process launched by Ankara with the group’s jailed leader in late 2012.

President Tayyip Erdogan has vowed to fight the PKK until all of its militants are “liquidated”. The PKK fighters were killed in an operation by Turkish forces in the Cizre and Silopi districts of Sirnak province on Thursday, the provincial governor’s office said in a statement.

Further north in Van Province, security forces launched a dawn operation on Friday after a tip-off that PKK members were holed up in a house in the Ercis district, the armed forces said on their website. It said one soldier was killed and three wounded in the resulting clash, which was ongoing.

The PKK took up arms against the state in 1984, and more than 40,000 people, mostly Kurdish militants, have died in the conflict. It is listed as a terrorist organisation by Ankara, the United States and European Union.—Reuters

Invitation for Bids

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Modernization of Public Financial Management Project

Credit No. S4020-MM/Grant No.: TF017910/Project Id.: P144952

Contract Title: Supply of IT Equipment: Desktop Computers, Laptop Computers, Printers, Photographers

Reference No.: MPMp-MAAs-ICB-GS102, Lots 1 to 3

1. The Ministry of Finance, The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has received financing from the World Bank for the Modernization of Public Financial Management Project and intends to apply part of the proceeds of the Project toward payments under the contract for Supply of IT Equipment: Desktop Computers, Laptop Computers, Printers.

2. The Ministry of Finance now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for Supply of IT Equipment:

   Lot 1- Supply of Desktop computers, Quantity 509 nos
   Lot 2- Supply of Laptop computers, Quantity 679 nos
   Lot 3- Supply of Printers, Quantity 597 nos

3. Supply to be made to locations in Nay Pyi Taw and other locations in Myanmar.

4. The qualification requirements are:

   (i) The Bidder shall furnish documentary evidence to demonstrate that he has successfully completed two contracts in the past 5 years for similar goods.
   (ii) The Bidder is required to submit with his bid, documentary evidence to demonstrate that after sales service for maintenance is already set up and available in Myanmar, or will be set up if contract is awarded to the Bidder.
   (iii) The manufacturer of the offered goods must have minimum 10 (ten) years manufacturing experience in similar goods.
   (iv) Meet turnover requirements as follows:
   Lot 1-USD 750,000
   Lot 2-USD 1,000,000
   Lot 3-USD 200,000

5. For combined award of several lots, the aggregate experience in value and turnover will be applied.

6. The bid document may be referred for detailed information on qualification requirements.

7. Bidding will be conducted through the International Competitive Bidding procedures as specified in the World Bank’s Guidelines: Procurement of Goods, Works and Non-Consulting Services under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants by World Bank Borrowers January 2011, (Procurement Guidelines), and is open to all eligible bidders as defined in the Procurement Guidelines. In addition, please refer to paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7 setting forth the World Bank’s policy on conflict of interest.

8. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information from the MPMp Office, Ministry of Finance, Building No 26, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, email if pcaumm@mptmail.net.mm cc rawnag570201@ gmail.com, sukumarshep@gmail.com, and inspect the bidding documents during office hours 09:00 to 16:30 hours at the address given below.

9. A complete set of bidding documents in English may be obtained by interested eligible bidders upon the submission of a written application to the address below. The document may be collected from the address below.

10. Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before 21 December 2015.

Electronic bidding will not be permitted. Late bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the bidders’ designated representatives and anyone who choose to attend at the address below.

11. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security for each Lot for which bid is submitted:
   Lot 1: USD 4,000
   Lot 2: USD 5,500
   Lot 3: USD 1,600

12. The address referred to above is:
   Attention: Mr Zaw Naing (Deputy Director General)
   Address: Ministry of Finance, Building Number (34)
   City: Nay Pyi Taw
   Country: Myanmar
   Facsimile number: 095-067-410575, 410158
   Electronic mail address: pcaumm@mptmail.net.mm cc rawnag570201@gmail.com, sukumarshep@gmail.com
Britain, India sign over $9 billion pounds in deals despite protests

LONDON — Britain and India welcomed more than 9 billion pounds in commercial deals during a visit by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but his arrival was overshadowed by protests over a perceived rise in intolerance back home.

Modi got a warm welcome by Prime Minister David Cameron, who has tried to cultivate closer ties with India to secure business opportunities in a fast-growing economy at a time when Modi has been prioritising other relationships.

For his part, Modi is seeking to restore his authority on the world stage after a defeat for his Hindu nationalist party in populous Bihar State on Sunday.

He appealed to business to invest in a more transparent India in a speech at the Guildhall, a historic building in the heart of London’s financial district.

While Cameron said he wanted to support Modi in his efforts to transform India with improved infrastructure, the Indian leader signalled he wanted Britain to stay in the European Union, saying the country was India’s gateway to Europe.

“We want to become your number one partner for supporting the finance needed for this ambitious plan, making London the world’s centre for offshore rupee trading,” Cameron told him during a news conference, adding that plans were in place to issue more than 1 billion pounds in bonds.

He later said in a statement: “During this visit, British and Indian companies are announcing new collaborations, together worth more than £9 billion pounds.”

The British government listed more than 20 deals and collaborations, including a 1.3 billion-pound investment by Vodafone.

The two prime ministers also welcomed a package to promote clean energy worth $2.2 billion of commercial agreements, joint research programmes and initiatives to share technical, scientific, and financial and policy expertise.

Before the visit, diplomats said the Indian leader was keen to buy 20 more BAE Systems Hawk trainer aircraft to be made in Bengaluru.

Cameron has visited India three times since taking office in 2010 to try to climb up the diplomatic pecking order, but Modi is the first Indian head of government to pay an official visit to Britain, the country’s former colonial ruler, in almost a decade.

His visit comes at a time when a debate is raging in India over accusations that Modi is failing to rein in Hindu zealots trying to impose their values on all Indians.—Reuters

Cambodian govt approves draft law regulating trade unions

PHNOM PENH — Cambodia’s Council of Ministers approved yesterday the controversial draft Trade Union Law, which is designed to protect and enhance the rights and freedoms of trade unions, a spokesman said.

“The passage of draft Trade Union Law was made during a cabinet meeting which was presided over by Prime Minister Hun Sen,” Phay Siphan, a spokesman for the Council of Ministers, wrote on his Facebook page.

Labour Minister Ith Samheng said in July that the draft bill aimed to protect and enhance the rights and freedoms of trade unions in Cambodia and to prevent any irregular activities conducted by unionists.

Labour Ministry spokesman Heng Soun said the ministry had spent about eight years to draft the bill, which would govern about 3,400 trade unions operating in the kingdom, particularly in 1,087 garment and footwear factories with some 700,000 workers.

However, the Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia (GMAC) said the current version of the draft bill does not take into account many of the employers’ concerns, but those of the International Labour Organisation and trade unions.—Xinhua
Escape claws: Tigers, piranhas may join Indonesia crocodile prison guard

JAKARTA — When Indonesia’s anti-drugs czar announced plans to guard a death-row prison island with crocodiles, the government rushed to explain that it was just a joke, but on Friday Budi Waseso said he was now thinking of using tigers and piranha fish too.

Media quoted the National Narcotics Agency (BNN) chief as saying that he had already obtained two crocodiles from a farm to study their power and aggression and may ultimately put as many as 1,000 in place to keep convicts from escaping.

“The number will depend on how big the area is, or whether perhaps to combine them with piranhas,” he told reporters, according to the rimanews.com portal.

“Their sharp teeth can be very dangerous to convicts,” Waseso said. “People killed in clashes leading up to the shooting, in their deaths, the president was a director of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

The MFO insists it is not a peacekeeping mission by either nation, though their reasons can differ, diplomats told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

“This is the only mission that brings in troops, tanks, fighter jets and helicopters to fight insurgents. Locals believe Israel has even lent money to help fund the Israeli-Egyptian security cooperation. While happy with the Multinational Force Organization (MFO), they half-joke that they are “smoke detectors,” installed in Sinai after Egypt’s 1979 peace deal with Israel as insurance against any future flare-ups. More than three war-free decades on, the US-led peacekeepers are feeling the heat.

An Islamic insurgency in the desert peninsula has claimed casualties among the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), requiring new and often cumbersome precautions. And while participating countries do not say so publicly, there has been some behind-the-scenes debate over the MFO mandate at a period of unprecedentedly close Israeli-Egyptian security cooperation.

In northeastern areas of Sinai once strictly demilitarised, Egypt, with Israel’s consent, now routinely brings in troops, tanks, fighter jets and helicopters to fight insurgents. Locals believe Israel has even lent money to help fund the Israeli-Egyptian security cooperation. While happy with the Multinational Force Organization (MFO), they half-joke that they are “smoke detectors,” installed in Sinai after Egypt’s 1979 peace deal with Israel as insurance against any future flare-ups. More than three war-free decades on, the US-led peacekeepers are feeling the heat.

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Declining snowpack, water shortage projected in areas home to 2bn

NEW YORK — Large swathes of the northern hemisphere, home to some 2 billion people, could suffer increasing water shortages due to shrinking snowpacks, researchers said on Thursday.

Data shows reduced snowpacks — the seasonal accumulation of snow — will likely imperil water supplies by 2060 in regions from California’s farmlands to war-torn areas of the Middle East, according to a team of scientists in the United States and Europe.

In total, nearly a hundred water basins depend on snow across the northern hemisphere run the chance of decline.

“Water managers in a lot of places may need to prepare for a world where the snow reservoir no longer exists,” said Justin Mankin, the study’s lead author and a researcher at Columbia University’s Earth Institute in New York, in a statement.

Basins in northern and central California, the Ebro-Duero basin in Portugal, Spain and southern France, and the Shatt Al-Arab basin affecting much of the Middle East including Iraq and Syria count among those most sensitive to changes, the study shows.

In these areas, global warming is disrupting snow accumulation, which acts as a seasonal source of water when it melts, the researchers said.

Still, across most of North America, northern Europe, Russia, China and southeast Asia, rainfall is projected to continue meeting demand, according to the study published in the online journal Environmental Research Letters.

Earlier this year, amid a devastating drought in California, US authorities reported that a dry, mild winter had left the country’s Western mountain snowpack at record low levels.

World leaders will meet in Paris starting this month in a bid to agree on ways to reduce the effects of climate change.—Reuters
Queen add Classic Rock Roll’s Living Legends award to honours

LONDON — Forty years after their smash hit “Bohemian Rhapsody” was released, British rock band Queen have been honored as “Living Legends” at the Classic Rock Roll of Honour awards.

Formed in 1971, the band, originally consisting of lead singer Freddie Mercury, guitarist Brian May, drummer Roger Taylor and bass guitarist John Deacon, went on to become one of the best-selling musical acts of all time.

Known for hugely popular songs such as “We Are The Champions”, “Another One Bites The Dust” and “We Will Rock You”, Queen released “Bohemian Rhapsody” in November 1975 and it became one of the most recognisable songs in the world.

“It makes you wonder, well, we’re still here for some reason,” May told Reuters at the red carpet for the awards, held by the British Classic Rock magazine, on Wednesday night. “It’s amazing where the time went ... Everybody’s talking about ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’, which is nice. I think Freddie would be very proud and we are too.”

May collected the Living Legends award on behalf of the band, which still perform together 24 years after Mercury’s death. The group announced this week they will headline Isle of Wight Festival with singer Adam Lambert.

“I think Freddie would be very happy because it’s something we used to talk about in the old days, but we never did festivals in the old days so it’s going to be nice,” May said. Other honourees at Wednesday’s awards included American shock rocker Alice Cooper, who took the Classic Album award for “Welcome To My Nightmare” from 1975, and heavy metal veterans AC/DC, who won Band Of The Year.

— Reuters

Julia Roberts plays grieving mother in ‘Secret in Their Eyes’

LOS ANGELES — Hollywood star Julia Roberts takes on the role of a grieving mother in thriller “Secret in Their Eyes”, a remake of an Oscar winning Argentinian film.

The “Pretty Woman” actress portrays an investigator whose life is turned upside down when her daughter is found murdered. The movie follows her years after the event, when Roberts’ character, Jess, is still visibly a broken woman.

Speaking at the film’s premiere in Los Angeles on Wednesday, the actress said she lived the role.

“You just sort of feel that way all the time which is the trick,” Roberts told Reuters. “I just felt that once I got ready I was halfway there.”

“Secret in Their Eyes” also stars Nicole Kidman and “12 Years a Slave” actor Chiwetel Ejiofor.

The movie, directed by Billy Ray, is a remake of the 2009 Argentinian film “El Secreto de Sus Ojos” by Juan Jose Campanella, which won an Academy Award in the Best Foreign Language category. Campanella is an executive producer in this film.

“He was telling this very lyrical love story and I think we were making much more of a thriller,” Ray said when asked how the two movies differed.

“We were making this very intense movie about the cost of obsession and that it expresses itself in a very different way in what Juan Campanella expressed it.”

“Secret in Their Eyes” is released in US cinemas on 20 November.—Reuters

Bieber announces massive 58-date North American tour for 2016

LOS ANGELES — Pop star Justin Bieber will embark on a world tour, beginning 9 March next year.

The “Baby” hitmaker, 21, announced dates during an appearance on America’s The Ellen DeGeneres Show, two days before the release of his new album Purpose, reported Variety online.

He’ll perform 58 concerts in 50 cities, beginning with a show in Seattle, Washington on 9 March and wrapping up at Madison Square Garden in New York City on 18 July.

Stops will include two nights at Staples Center in Los Angeles and a pair of shows at the Air Canada Centre in Toronto.—PTI

Deadpool was a lot of fun to shoot: Ryan Reynolds

LONDON — Actor Ryan Reynolds said that shooting “Deadpool” was “a lot of fun”.

The 39-year-old star is set to reprise the title role in the film, reported Female First.

“There’s some pretty racy, pretty hyper-violent things that happen in this movie and it’s been a lot of fun to shoot,” he said.

“The Proposal” star said that he has enjoyed the experience of breaking the fourth wall with this film.

He said, “Every comic book movie I go to nobody dies! We get an opportunity to do this in a way, which is fourth-wall breaking, that kind of mercenary sensibility and humour, which is very rare in this world, to do something that’s not necessarily for just kids,” he said.

The film is based on the Marvel Comic series and has been adapted for the big screen.

Reynolds is joined on the cast by Morena Baccarin, Gina Carano, TJ Miller, and Ed Skrein as Copycat, Angel Dust, Weasel, and Ajax.—PTI

Miley Cyrus to appear in Glastonbury?

LOS ANGELES — Miley Cyrus is reportedly in talks to appear at Britain’s Glastonbury Festival because of her “outrageousness”.

The British festival’s organisers Michael and Emily Eavis are reportedly keen on seeing the 22-year-old singer take the Pyramid Stage alongside Flaming Lips lead singer Wayne Coyne, who she’s been working on her album with, reported Contactmusic.

“Miley’s been on the Eavis radar for a while. She’s outrageous and there was interest in previous years, around the time of her Bangerz tour last year and when her godmother Dolly Parton played the Pyramid,” a source said.

Meanwhile, the “Wrecking Ball” hitmaker admitted that Wayne and she are ‘in love’ with each other but not in a romantic way.—PTI

Miley Cyrus.

Photo: Reuters
It’s never too late: ‘Twilight divorce’ in South Korea at record

LONDON — From a dog skate-boarding through a tunnel of human legs to a man holding lit candles in his mouth, people around the world have been marking Guinness World Records Day with a range of quirky feats. From the young to the old, some 650,000 hopefuls were said to be taking part in a bid to earn a Guinness World Record title. The day itself was on Thursday.

In Lima, bulldog Otto took the title for “longest human tunnel travelled through by a skate-boarding dog”, passing through the legs of 30 people. On the other side of the world in Japan, Kinichi Ito claimed the record for the “fastest 100 metre running on all fours”, with a time of 15.71 seconds.

The record for “most lit candles in the mouth” is now 15 and was achieved by Dinesh Shivnath Upadhyaya in Delhi. He also claimed the title of “the most matchsticks extinguished with the tongue in one minute” at 30.

In Britain, the “tightest reverse parallel park” was claimed by stunt driver Alastair Moffatt who squeezed a Mini in between two cars, leaving a combined space of 34 centimetres.

“Guinness World Records Day unites people across the planet from all walks of life, all of whom have one common goal — to become the greatest in the world at something,” Guinness World Records Editor-in-Chief Craig Glenday said in a statement.

Other new records saw the Harlem Globetrotters score a few hoop tricks including “the longest basketball shot made blindfolded” achieved by Thunder Law at 21.18 metres (69 feet, 6 inches).

Other record attempts were yet to come in the day, such as the largest gathering of people dressed as penguins in the UK. —Reuters

‘Star Wars’ costumes go on display in New York

NEW YORK — Costumes and props from the much-loved “Star Wars” films go on display in New York ahead of the highly-anticipated release of the franchise’s next installment in December.

More than 70 items from the movies, including the unreleased “Star Wars: Episode VII — The Force Awakens”, are being showcased by the Smithsonian Institution Travelling Exhibition Service and Lucastfilm.

“We wanted to bring characters from the movies, including ‘Star Wars and the Power of Costume’ exhibition, which features 15 galleries and an interactive experience, runs at New York’s Discovery Times Square from 14 November until 5 September, 2016.”—Reuters

Skate-boarding dog, running on all fours mark World Records Day

SEUL — Twilight divorces after 20 years of marriage are at a record in South Korea as the stigma of divorce wears off in a conservative society and court rulings make it financially viable for older women to go it alone.

For 54-year-old Kim Nan-young, who felt trapped in a loveless marriage for two decades, divorce was better late than never.

“My children were small,” said Kim, a mother of two sons who split up two years ago from her husband of 25 years.

“No, I only have myself to take care of, which makes it easier to find work. There are a lot of things women can do for a living,” said Kim, who has since started her own small laundromat business.

Kim’s sons had given her the financial and emotional support she needed to make the break, but it also helped that courts have been ruling increasingly in favor of splitting up matrimonial assets more evenly on divorce.

As many as 33,140 couples split up last year following more than 20 years of marriage, the national statistics bureau said this month, accounting for more than a quarter of all divorces, and a surge of 31 percent over the last decade.

More women are choosing to walk away from unhappy marriages as their children are grown, as the social stigma attached to divorce dissipates.

The spurt in later-life divorce is in sharp contrast to the drop in overall divorce cases, which stood at 115,510 last year, after having peaked at 166,617 in 2003.

Financial security for divorced women has also improved, as courts seem increasingly willing to award settlements of as much as half the joint property to full-time homemakers.

A woman who walked away from 50 years of marriage to an abusive gambler said she was able to start again because the court granted her nearly half the couple’s assets, although she had always been a homemaker.

“I’m in my 70s,” said the woman, who asked not to be identified. “Divorcing after such a long period of time means you are really desperate. Now my son and daughter tell me I should find my own life.”—Reuters
Djokovic aiming to end golden year with a bang

LONDON — With three of the four grand slam titles and a record six Masters Series crowns scooped up in a year of domination, Novak Djokovic could be forgiven for using the ATP Tour Finals in London as a well-earned lap of honour. Not a bit of it.

The 28-year-old world number one’s appetite for stomping all over his supposed rivals is insatiable.

Serbian Djokovic will start as overwhelming favourite to claim a fourth consecutive title at the year-ender, having won 14 matches in a row at the Thamesside venue where last year ended with a back injury.

The numbers Djokovic has compiled this year surpass even his dominant 2011 campaign when he also won three majors.

He will arrive with a 78-5 win/loss record and on a 22-match winning streak, stretching back to his defeat by Federer in the Cincinnati final in August.

He has owned the number one ranking since July 2014 and will end the year there for a fourth time — the same as John McEnroe and Ivan Lendl.

“In terms of the grand slams, this has been a better season than 2011,” Djokovic, who would have won all four but for an inspired Stanislas Wawrinka in the French Open final, said in an interview with Sport Magazine.

“It’s about the overall feeling of my game — the way I play and the way I feel on the court. I’m a more complete player physically; technically I’ve improved since 2011, and mentally I’m more stable.”

Worryingly, no one seems to have a clue how to stop him.

World number two Andy Murray, who is juggling the Tour Finals on home soil with trying to win the Davis Cup for Britain for the first time since 1936 the week after, has lost 10 of his last 11 matches against Djokovic.

Murray failed to survive the round-robin stage last year when he was demolished by Federer.

Since losing to Djokovic in last week’s Paris Masters final he has practised mainly on clay in readiness for Davis Cup duty in Ghent.

He was, however, placed in the easier-looking group in Thursday’s draw, avoiding Federer and Djokovic.

Federer, 34, always puts on a show in London — having reached the final four times since the event moved from Shanghai in 2009, winning twice.

Unlike last year when several new faces qualified, this year’s eight are the usual suspects, with Japan’s Kei Nishikori the least experienced on his second appearance.

A rejuvenated Rafael Nadal is back after missing out last year through injury and while still not quite the formidable foe he was at his peak the Spaniard will relish testing his improvement against Murray and Wawrinka in group play.

David Ferrer and Tomas Berdych will do well to reach the semis, Wawrinka could be the dark horse after reaching the last four in 2013 and last year when he lost an epic to Federer. — Reuters

Rodriguez snatches draw for Colombia in Chile

SANTIAGO — James Rodriguez struck in the second half to give Colombia a 1-1 draw away against Chile in 2018 World Cup qualifying on Thursday as the hosts dropped their first points of the South American campaign.

Chile appeared to be on their way to a third straight win in the group when Arturo Vidal headed them in front on the stroke of halftime. Rodriguez, returning after missing the opening games through injury last month, had a subdued match until he levelled midway through the second half from one of several chances set up by the dangerous Luis Muriel.

South American champions Chile, unbeaten in their last 10, have seven points from three games and Colombia, quarter-finalists at the last World Cup, have four.

Alexis Sanchez nearly gave Chile a first-minute lead when his shot was turned away by David Ospina in the Colombia goal and he sent another effort narrowly wide with a shot on the turn just after the half hour.

At the other end, Jackson Martinez and debutant Daniel Torres both went close for Colombia, who were beaten 3-0 in Uruguay in their previous outing.

Chile, who had struggled to create openings despite having more possession, broke through in the 45th minute when Matias Fernandez floated over a free kick and Vidal took advantage of poor defending to head in his 13th international goal in 72 outings.

Muriel had been a surprise starter for Colombia, who were missing Radamel Falcao through injury, but inspired their revival in the second half as Chile decided to play a waiting game.

He set up one chance for Rodriguez, who wasted it with a weak shot at Bravo, and then saw an effort of his own deflected wide after a powerful run down the left.

Muriel’s persistence paid off in the 67th minute when he broke down the left again and while his cross was cut out, the clearance went to Rodriguez, who failed to control the ball with his first touch but regained control quickly and scored with a shot on the turn from 12 metres in the 68th minute.

The final 20 minutes was an end-to-end affair and Colombia nearly grabbed a winner when Bravo just managed to stop Edwin Cardona’s shot. — Reuters