Holy symbols hoisted atop Sagaing Htupayon Pagoda

A SACRED diamond bud (Seinphudaw) and a sacred bird’s perch vane (Hngetmyatnadaw) were hoisted atop a famous pagoda in Sagaing Region yesterday with a ceremony attended by President U Thein Sein.

The sacred religious objects were consecrated by members of the Sangha led by Sitagu Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Nannisara before being hoisted atop the Htupayon Pagoda in Sagaing.

Prior to the ceremony, the congregation led by President U Thein Sein heard a sermon delivered by the Sitagu Sayadaw, followed by a luncheon offered to members of the Sangha.

The Htupayon Pagoda is said to have been built by King Narapati of Inwa in 806 Myanmar Era in the fashion of the Thuparama pagoda in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. Enshrined in the 202-foot-high pagoda were sacred relics presented by the king of Ceylon.

According to records, the pagoda experienced earthquakes in 874, 863 and 952 Myanmar Era (ME) and was repaired by a king in 967 ME. The religious facility suffered damage caused by an earthquake in 1200 ME and was renovated by the king of Bagan in 1212 ME. Dipa Aye Mya Sayadaw Bhaddanta Nandasiri

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US pledges financial assistance to Myanmar anti-TIP Project

THE United States has pledged assistance to Myanmar’s measures against human trafficking, following an agreement of cooperation, according to the Myanmar Police Force.

Police Chief Police Maj-Gen Zaw Win confirmed the signing of the bilateral agreement in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. Under the agreement, World Vision (Myanmar) will render assistance to prosecution against smugglers, training to social workers, and closer cooperation in the rehabilitation of victims.

The United States has pledged $700,000 for a three-year plan from 1 October 2015 to 30 October 2018. The plan is aimed at protection and rehabilitation of the victims in Myanmar and will be carried out in partnership with local departments, civil society, and NGOs and GOs from Australia and the United States.

According to the police officer, the country joined the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime (UNCTOC) and has signed its protocols since 2004.

The country signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT MoU) in 2004 as part of cooperation in the fight against human trafficking by the six countries in the Greater Mekong Sub-region.

The country also became a signatory to the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in November last year.

As for bilateral cooperation, the country has been working together with its neighbours China and Thailand in combating human trafficking after drawing action plans.

Police Maj-Gen Zaw Win spoke of two five-year plans for anti-human trafficking, the first from 2007 to 2011 and the second from 2012 to 2016.

World Vision (Myanmar) is an organisation that has been focusing its efforts on the development of children and families across the country for 25 years.—

Myanmar News Agency
MPF, USIP organise post-election review workshop

THE Myanmar Police Force and United States Institute of Peace (USIP) jointly organised a workshop on the post-election review in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. The event was attended by senior police officers and experts from the Institute.

In his address, Chief of Myanmare Police Force Police Maj- Gen Zaw Win called for ways and means to be sought at the workshop to ensure the successful holding of future elections, acknowledging public participation in the 2015 general elections.

Next, Mr. Vanessa Johanson, USIP’s country director for Myanmar, extended greetings on the occasion. The workshop is aimed at holding discussions on various topics including the establishment of a coordination mechanism to improve relations among stakeholders including government agencies and political parties, media and public relations, risk assessment and violence prevention, study on conflict management strategies and lessons learned from electoral security.

—Myanmar News Agency

MNA to operate international flights at new terminal as of 20 March

MYANMAR National Airlines will open routes to Singapore, Hong Kong and Bangkok from the newly-opened terminal at Yangon International Airport from 20 March, according to a press release from the airlines yesterday.

Myanmar National Airlines began operating Yangon to Singapore flight service in August 2015, Yangon to Hong Kong in December 2015 and Yangon to Bangkok in February 2016 with its three Boeing 737-800 NG aircraft.

More Boeing aircrafts will be delivered to Myanmar this year, added the airline.

—GNLM

Mandalay students finish matriculation examinations

UNIVERSITY entrance examinations for the 2015-2016 Academic Year which started on 9 March concluded yesterday, with 91,252 students taking their final papers in Mandalay.

According to the office of the Mandalay Region Education Officer, 39,911 appeared for the biology paper while 51,341 appeared for the economics paper at 165 exam centres in the region.

A total of 95,656 students were registered to sit for matriculation examinations that began on 9 March and will end on Friday in Mandalay.

As 91,687 contestants appeared for Myanmar language paper on the first day of the examinations, 3969 students failed the examinations, 3969 students failed to take the examinations in Mandalay Region.

—Min Htet Aung (Mann sub-printing house)

Construction kicks off at Mandalay Industrial Zone wastewater treatment plant

A ground breaking ceremony to construct a wastewater treatment plant is seen.

The plant is designated to treat wastewater from factories and plants in the zone as they are unable to create their own plan to carry out the wastewater treatment process, said U Tun Kyi, Mandalay City Development Committee member-6. The plant construction project is set to be implemented in two phases—construction and installation of wastewater treatment systems—at Taung-inn Myauk- inn area in Amarapura Township of Mandalay Region.

The project has now kicked off the construction phases following an agreement in 2013 between the MCDC and Hydrotek Supreme Mandalay Co., Ltd which is conducting environmental impact assessment for ensuring the release of a report on environmental management plan by the Environmental Conservation Department. Upon completion of the plant, treated water will be released into the Dokhtawady River.

—Min Htet Aung (Mann sub-printing house)

Myanmar receives motorcade tours of Thai, British tourists

TOURISTS are currently visiting Myanmar in motorcades, arriving and departing from the country via border entry points.

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism said that Thai and British tourist groups took a motorcade tour in Myanmar this month separately.

All Asia Exclusive Travel & Tours Co Ltd conducted a three-day motorcade tour for a 180-member Thai tourist group in 49 cars this March.

Under the arrangements of Thanakha Travels & Tours Co Ltd, a group comprising 10 British tourists took a motorcade tour in Myanmar for 13 days, visiting Monywa, Sagaing, Bagan, Kalaw, Pin-daya, Inlay, Taunggyi, Toun-goo, Kyak-hit-kyoe, Mawlamy-ine and Myeik.

The two tourist groups arrived and departed from Myan- mar via Tachilek, Myawady, Mawtaung and Tamu border points, according to the ministry.

—Myanmar News Agency
Holy symbols hoisted atop Sagaing Htupayon Pagoda

>> From page 1

had the pagoda reconstructed and hoisted a sacred diamond bud and a sacred bird’s perch vane in 1329ME as it had suffered from various natural disasters.

The religious structure experienced 15 points of damage on its body due to an earthquake that hit in 1375ME, equivalent to 2012 AD, which prompted Sitagu Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Namsara to protect and preserve the edifices of cultural and religious heritage. The Sitagu Sayadaw initiated the renovations to the damaged pagoda in 2012. The renovation work was completed in 2016.—Myanmar News Agency

President U Thein Sein meets students from University for the Development of National Races

ONGOING endeavors are aimed at shaping a better future for posterity, said President U Thein Sein in a meeting with faculty members and students at the University for the Development of National Races in Sagaing yesterday.

In his address, the President highlighted the importance of the role of young people in the country’s long journey toward building a nation that is on track to development with a promising future, saying the country has regained international recognition and plaudits following its smooth democratic transition.

The president said the university, where all the students are ethnic minorities, is a significant foundation for the Union. He expressed his delight at its record of nurturing able youths who have been elected Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw and regional Hluttaw representatives.

The president stressed the need for the establishment of a federal system that is suitable for the Union and is formed in cooperation with the states, adding that the country was formed under such a system in the 2008 constitution.

He also called for comprehensive understanding of the difference between a confederation and a federal state, saying a confederated state can collapse easily.

He indicated his expectation that a Kayin national belongs not only to the Kayin State but also to the Union in the federal system, stressing the need to ensure equal sharing of development between developed and under-developed regions based on the Union spirit.

On national unity and internal peace, the president emphasised how important common consent is to development as the country cannot enjoy prosperity without unity and peace.

He also stressed the need to improve the country’s readiness for opportunities and challenges, calling for more efforts in the implementation of regional development tasks for border areas and ethnic minority areas.

The president said the country has been transformed into a promising one during the previous five years, and all eyes are on the country hoping to see the country grow over the next 10 years.

On his tour of the university, the president presented K5 million each to the University for the Development of National Races and the Nationalities Youth Resource Development Degree College.

The University for the Development of National Races has so far educated 93 graduates who obtained Master’s degrees in education, 35 graduates who obtained Master’s of Philosophy, 3,453 B.Ed graduates and 9,609 teacher training diploma holders over the last five decades.—Myanmar News Agency

President U Thein Sein sends felicitations to Irish Prime Minister

U THEIN SEIN, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland, on the occasion of the National Day of Ireland, which falls on 17 March, 2016.—Myanmar News Agency

Union Foreign Affairs Minister felicitates Irish counterpart

U WUNNA MAUNG LWIN, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Charles Flanagan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland, on the occasion of the National Day of Ireland, which falls on 17 March, 2016.—Myanmar News Agency

Commander-in-Chief congratulates president-elect

THE Office of the Defence Services Commander-in-Chief announced yesterday its congratulations to the newly elected President of Myanmar.

The announcement said: “The Defence Services Commander-in-Chief’s Office would like to express delight for the election of U Htin Kyaw as the next president, pledging to cooperate with him in future for stability, unity and development of the country.”—Myanmar News Agency
**Crime NEWS**

**Yabba, Marijuana and ammunition seized in Pa-an**

LOCAL authorities seized one gram of marijuana and 38 yabba pills in a house owned by one Ma and Kyaw Myo Aung who were suspected of selling the drug along Innwa road, Pa-an.

On the same day, police searched the house of one Than Aung and discovered 1,400 yabba pills, a firearm, 25 bullets and a vehicle. One Ma Myint Myint Aye was found together with the host. According to another connected investigation, the police searched a house owned by one Saye Win and confiscated 10,000 yabba pills and a vehicle. Charges have been filed against all suspects under the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law. — Myanmar News Agency

**Police stop robbery in Chanmyathasi**

POLICE have arrested four men who allegedly robbed a couple on 45 street, Aung Thaya ward, Chanmyathasi township on 11 March, according to a police report.

According to the police investigation, four men, aged 20 or so, with two motorbikes approached a couple who were sitting under a tree and robbed them at knife point. They forcibly took away with them two mobile phones and a motorbike.

Local police discovered the crime in progress while on patrol and managed to capture one Hla Cho, 18, from Htun Tone ward. When interrogated, he admitted that he had committed the robbery together with Myo Ko, 18, from Kan Thaya ward, Zar Chi on Bogyoke road in ward 1, Pa-an town on 12 March. Police also arrested Win Htet Aung and Kyaw Myo Aung who were suspected of selling the drug along Innwa road, Pa-an.

**Raw opium and yabba seized in Banmauk**

LOCAL authorities seized raw opium and yabba in a house in Haw Yaw village, Banmauk township, Sagaing region on 12 March.

Acting on a tip-off, the police discovered raw opium weighing 5.6 grams, 5,250 yabba pills and K3.8 million in a house owned by one U San Pyay. Police arrested one Daw Mya Win, 53, Sein Win, 43, and Shwe Than, 38, who came to buy the drugs at U San Pyay’s home. Police have filed charges against them under the Anti-Narcotic Law. — Myanmar Police Force

**Forest fire destroys warehouse in Namtu**

A WAREHOUSE was destroyed by a forest fire in Namtu town, Shan State on Monday.

According to an investigation the fire broke out at around 1:45 pm near a golf course and spread to the warehouse which stood in one U Kyaw Win’s field.

The fire was put out by firemen from Namtu town. — Township IPRD

**Two men injured in car accident**

TWO men inside a six-wheel vehicle sustained injuries in a traffic accident on the Yangon-Mandalay road between mileposts 186/1 and 186/2, Yedashe town, Bago region on 13 March.

According to an investigation the six-wheel vehicle, driven by one Tun Naung, 27, with one Aung Myo Htet, 25, on board, crashed into a 22-wheel vehicle which had stopped on the highway. The two men in the six-wheel vehicle were injured in the accident.

They are receiving medical treatment at Toungoo general hospital. The reckless driver has been charged by the police. — Ko Lwin (Swa)

**Man charged for drug dealing**

A MAN who was found in possession of a cache of yabba pills in Shan State was arrested for drug smuggling on Saturday, according to a police report.

Acting on a tip-off, a combined team comprising members of an anti-drug squad together with witnesses searched a house owned by U Yan Chain Myint in Yarno Village in Mabain Township, Moemeik District, of Shan State.

They discovered 119,600 WY-variety yaba pills and K239 million (US$197,808) in cash from the 41-year-old homeowner, who has been charged under the law by local police. — Township IPRD
**Business**

**YSX to see more public companies this year**

WHILE planning to launch the first list of Myanmar’s new stock exchange participants on 25 March, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Myanmar has a plan to permit more public companies for trading on the YSX this year, said Dr Maung Maung Thein, Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission.


**Government to grant more licenses to foreign insurance firms**

THE Myanmar Insurance Business Supervisory Board plans to give further licenses to insurance companies which have opened offices in Myanmar and operated for at least three years, according to an announcement of the European Insurance Business Supervisory Board.

These companies also need to meet with the rule and standards set by the board. They will get permission to operate their services in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone (TSEZ).

As part of its efforts to attract foreign investors to the Thilawa SEZ, the Myanmar Insurance Business Supervisory Board is planning to grant licenses to foreign insurance businesses. Insurance businesses based in Europe are most likely to receive a license.

Currently there are three insurance companies permitted to work inside the Thilawa SEZ. All are Japan based. The Thilawa SEZ was implemented by the Mon State Development Committee under a directive from the Mon State government, but it was privately funded.

Businesses entrepreneurs, who purchased land from land owners for the purpose of building the infrastructure for the industrial zone, are required to pay a sum of K17 million (US$13,957) per acre of land in instalments over a three-year period.

Implementation of the industrial zone is now about 90 per cent complete. An opening ceremony will be held on 26 March. Around 10 businesses have already started operating [within the zone],” said U Tin Hlaung, chair of the committee.

Construction on the industrial zone project began in 2014. It was led by the Mon State Development Committee under a directive from the Mon State government, but it was privately funded.

**Myinmu site of new solar energy project**

ANDAMAN Capital Partners (ACP), based in the USA is conducting an electricity generating project using solar energy on 450 acres of land in Myinmu Township, Sagaing Region, according to Regional chief minister U Tha Aye. The project is expected to generate up to 80 megawatts of electricity.

The company is currently negotiating with local authorities. It is initiating a report titled the Feasibility Study Report, he added.

Directorate of Investment and Company Administration Department (DICA) was opened in Monywa on Monday with a view to speeding up investments in the region and providing faster service in the investment business in Sagaing Region. It has provided the companies with registration help and extensions.

**Tomato price down**

TOMATO farmers have experienced a decrease in price of the kitchen crop due to the constant mass flow of tomato into the market.

“The mass stock of tomatoes causes a low demand and a cooling market”, said U Myint Oo, a trader of tomato.

Tomato is sold out for K200 per viss (approx. 1.6 kilograms) and K4,500 per box (18 viss) at Thirimunlar Market.

The decrease in the price of tomato has been going on for two months. Traders are expecting that tomato prices will rise again in April.

One of the factors which caused the downward price of tomato is the mass plantation this year.—Myawaddy.

**New Industrial Zone in Mon State to open this month**

THE Kyauktan Industrial Zone Implementation Committee has announced that the Kyauktan Industrial Zone, located in Mon State, will officially be opened on 26 March.

Basic industrial zone infrastructure, including roads, bridges, water and electricity supply have recently been completed after a construction period of two years.

“Implementation of the industrial zone is now about 90 per cent complete. An opening ceremony will be held on 26 March. Around 10 businesses have already started operating [within the zone],” said U Tin Hlaung, chair of the committee.

Construction on the industrial zone project began in 2014. It was led by the Mon State Development Committee under a directive from the Mon State government, but it was privately funded.

Businesses entrepreneurs, who purchased land from land owners for the purpose of building the infrastructure for the industrial zone, are required to pay a sum of K17 million (US$13,957) per acre of land in instalments over a three-year period.

“We businessmen have bought farmland at the current market price. Since this is farmland though, we can’t build an industrial zone on it. We have to pay approximately K20 million to the committee per acre of land owned for it to be levelled and for electricity and water to be made available,” said investor U Win Naing.

A total of 39 investors from around the country have purchased land in the industrial zone, which covers 254 acres.

“The previous industrial zone was far away from Mawlamyine. It was located in the town of Kyaikmaraw. There were two suspension bridges that needed to be crossed to reach it, making it difficult to access. They had to limit the tonnage of vehicles. Container vehicles weren’t able to cross the Attaran Bridge. Water was scarce, electricity supply was patchy, and phone connections were bad. It was for these reasons that it wasn’t a success. The construction of the new Kyauktan Industrial Zone is in Mawlamyine, so everything is fine,” said U Hla Shein, chair of the Mon State Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The industrial zone features a variety of different business enterprises, including zinc, barbed wire, ready-mix cement, food and drink production, textiles, gold purification, ice factories, shoe production facilities, furniture enterprise, plastic enterprises, cool seafood storage and car accessory businesses.—Mystimakha News Agency

**MPE cancels tender for Nyaungdon LPG Plant Joint Venture Project**

THE Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise (MPE) announced yesterday that there were no successful applicants for the Nyaung Don LPG Plant Joint Venture Project and the tender is officially cancelled.

The MPE invited prospective foreign investors to submit a Letter of Expression of Interest (LOEI) for the implementation of a Joint Venture Project at the Nyaungdon LPG Plant on 1 April 2014. A total of twenty-two companies submitted a LOEI and of those eleven companies were pre-qualified. The eleven prequalified companies were invited to participate in the tender process.

MPE launched the Invitation to Tender (ITT) for the prequalified companies on 3 December 2015 and the tender closing date was 29 February 2016.

According to the announcement, of the eleven prequalified companies, six companies: NK Co Ltd, Korea, Sojitz Corporation, Japan, PTT Titis Sampurna, Indonesia, Andaman Capital Partners, Hongkong, PUMA Energy Group Pte Ltd, Singapore, and PTT Public Company Ltd, Thailand purchased the tender documents.

“None of the above companies submitted proposals before the deadline. Therefore, MPE cancelled the tender and there are no successful applicants for the Nyaungdon LPG Joint Venture Project and the tender is officially cancelled,” said the announcement.—GNLM
Philippine frontrunner favours easing foreign ownership in media, utilities

MANILA — Grace Poe, frontrunner in the Philippines’ presidential election campaign, said yesterday she favoured relaxing restrictions on foreign ownership in utilities and media as part of changes she would introduce in the constitution.

The 9 May election is being closely watched by investors who fear the political succession could derail average economic growth of more than 6 per cent a year and stall efforts to crack down on corruption made under outgoing President Benigno Aquino, who is limited to one term.

Poe, who is a senator, has campaigned on a pro-poor platform, promising to build new hospitals and build infrastructure, which have helped propel one of Asia’s fastest growing economies.

Foreigners are barred from owning media companies in the Philippines that are restricted to 40 per cent ownership of public utilities.

“Within my first month in office, it will be part of the agenda, the economic amendments of our constitution,” Poe, 47, told a business forum in Manila, referring to relaxing restrictions on foreign ownership in utilities and media.

“Why not allow more foreign ownership for as long as they employ Filipinos and there is also a technology transfer? I am not for land ownership but I am for media, for certain utilities, for academic institutions and also for the medical profession.” The Supreme Court on 8 March ruled that Poe, who spent much of her life in the United States, was eligible to run for president, reversing a decision by the election commission that disqualified her on grounds that she failed to meet a 10-year residency requirement.

Poe also supported the lifting of a bank secrecy law as senators launched an investigation on Tuesday into millions of dollars hackers stole from the Bangladesh central bank’s account at the New York Fed and found their way into a Philippine bank.

Poe has been leading opinion polls with Aquino’s chosen successor, former interior minister Manuel Roxas, lagging behind her and Vice President Jejomar Binay.

She is the adopted daughter of action movie hero Fernando Poe who died soon after making an unsuccessful run for the presidency in 2004.

She said she was also keen on signing free trade agreements with other countries if elected.

On the South China Sea, Poe said “a need to be able to engage China constructively to follow a peaceful code of conduct” but added the Philippine military should be strengthened.

“If our defence is strong then we will not be bullied as easily as we are being bullied now.”

China claims most of the South China Sea through which about $5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes every year. The Philippines and neighbours Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam also have claims.

PHNOM PENH — The Thai authorities have rescued 15 trafficked Cambodian labourers from Thai fishing vessels in southern Ranong Province, Chum Souny, a spokesman for the Cambodian ministry of foreign affairs, said yesterday.

The victims, aged between 19 and 62 years old, have been temporarily living in a rehabilitation centre for trafficked victims in the province, pending testifying before the court on 24 March in a case against the fishing boat owners, he said.

Cambodia authorities consider allowing the labourers to leave Thailand when it gets enough answers, he said in a statement. According to the spokesman, the fishing boat owners agreed to pay 25,000 Thai Baht (713 US dollars) to each of the labourers. Trafficked fishermen are frequently forced to work long hours and physically and psychologically abused. They are often unpaid and forced to serve on voyages for months or even years.

Australia, Indonesia renew push for trade deal amid warming ties

SYDNEY — Australia and Indonesia yesterday said they would formally resume long-stalled negotiations at sealing a bilateral trade agreement between the often uneasy neighbours within 18 months.

Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott, who took office in September 2013, revelations that Canberra had spied on President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and his wife sent relations spiralling into crisis.

Abbott’s policy of towing back to Indonesia vessels carrying asylum seekers, while popular at home, infuriated Jakarta, which sees it as an infringement on its sovereignty.

Tension reached a peak in May 2015 when Australia executed two Australian members of the so-called “Bali Nine” drug trafficking ring, despite intense lobbying from Canberra.

Australia’s HK policies will not change despite unrest: Li

HONG KONG — Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said yesterday the country’s commitment to Hong Kong’s semiautonomous status will not change despite recent unrest in the territory, and that he believes in the local government’s ability to handle such incidents.

Li, responding to a question over rioting that took place in Hong Kong’s Mong Kok district last month, said the “one country, two systems” policy and “high degree of autonomy” have not changed and will not change in the wake of the incident.

“We believe the Hong Kong government has the ability, and the people have wisdom, to handle all sorts of complicated issues and situations facing Hong Kong,” Li said, at a press briefing following the closing of the annual National People’s Congress session in Beijing.

Hundreds of people faced off with riot police over Lunar New Year after authorities’ alleged sweeping of street vendors who would normally be allowed to operate during the festive holidays. Violence erupted as police tried to disperse the crowd, members of which threw bottles and bricks in return and forced one policeman to fire two warning shots to restrain the crowd. The chaos lasted about 10 hours and left more than 130 people injured, of which about 90 were police officers, and nearly 80 people were arrested and charged with “riotting.”

The Hong Kong government has blamed the rioters for the violent protest and denied any responsibility for the growing social discontent. The local legislature approved yesterday plans to start an inquiry into the rioting.

Hong Kong, a former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997, enjoys a semiautonomous status under which Beijing is not involved in its economic and judicial systems.
Beijing — China’s relations with Japan have improved somewhat but remain far from ideal due to disagreements over historical issues, Premier Li Keqiang said yesterday.

“There have been some signs of improvement in Sino-Japanese relations, but they are not fully established yet and they are still fragile,” Li told a press conference in Beijing following the closure of the annual session of the National People’s Congress, China’s top legislature.

Li said it is important for Japan to demonstrate consistency between words and actions over historical issues.

“What I don’t want to see is us retracing our steps,” he said, when asked about the prospects for relations between the two Asian powers and a framework for trilateral cooperation also involving South Korea.

Until Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping had their first meeting in November 2014, bilateral ties were at their lowest levels in decades, because of fierce disputes over the sovereignty of the Japan-controlled, China-claimed Senkaku Islands and wartime issues.

China, like South Korea, believes Japan has not appropriately atoned for its atrocities before and during World War II and friction remains over the uninhabited islands in the East China Sea.

Still, Li, Abe and South Korean Park Geun Hye met in Seoul last November for the first three-way summit since May 2012.

After a three-and-half-year hiatus, they agreed to revive the annual trilateral summit talks, which this year are scheduled to take place in Japan.

On Wednesday, Li, who has yet to visit Japan since taking office in March 2013, said, “As to whether the (trilateral) format will enjoy a smooth development in the future, it’s much up to interaction among the three countries.” Noting that the three economies account for about 70 per cent of Asia’s total growth, he said, “I believe our mutually complimentary relationship is strong” and there is still much room for better cooperation.

Li’s press conference, which lasted about two hours, centered on questions about the Chinese economy.

China’s largely rubber-stamp parliament approved the Communist Party-controlled government’s major policies for 2016 and the 13th Five-Year Plan during the annual session that began 5 March.

Aimed at growing global concerns over a slowdown in the Chinese economy, Li said he is confident that the country will not see a hard landing and will meet its own growth targets.

He said there are “more hopes than difficulties” for the Chinese economy.

At the opening of the session, seen as China’s most important public political event of the year, Li said the government will aim for average economic growth at or above 6.5 per cent for the next five years.

As China, the world’s second-largest economy, has been struggling to push through reforms, the government has set its growth target for 2016 in a range of 6.5 per cent to 7 per cent, which compares with the previous year’s 6.9 per cent expansion, the slowest in 25 years.

As China tries to move away from an investment-driven economic model, the much-heard phrase during the annual meeting was “supply-side reform.”

Chinese leaders have called for more efforts to curb industrial overcapacity, especially in the steel and coal sectors, and to restructure unprofitable “zombie” state-owned companies, while stressing the need to nurture new growth drivers and develop homegrown products attractive enough for consumers.

—Kyodo News

China’s ties with Japan still ‘fragile,’ says Premier Li
The feel of democracy

Kyaw Thura

WHAT WE ARE GOOD AT BY NATURE IS CRITICISING EACH OTHER, APPARENTLY BECAUSE EACH PERSON SEES THINGS DIFFERENTLY. CRITICISMS, HOWEVER CONSTRUCTIVE OR DESTRUCTIVE, CAN BE INTERPRETED AS INSULTING IF IT LACKS RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS. NEVERTHLESS, CRITICISMS ARE A CRUCIAL FEATURE OF A HEALTHY DEMOCRACY.

It is of utmost importance that the government open to criticism when it comes to creating the feel of democracy. However, it is one thing to take criticism, and it is quite another to pay complete attention to criticisms that reflect some objective reality.

One of the taxing responsibilities assigned to the government by the people is to be on the relentless pursuit of a common goal, which is to bring the people closer to a high quality of life. Another important thing is not to let our disagreements block our ability to compromise on matters of public interest.

As Former US President John F Kennedy once eloquently said: "Geography has made us neighbours; history has made us friends; economy has made us partners; necessity has made us allies; and what unites us is far greater than what divides us."

Our common ground should, therefore, be focused on our collective efforts to leave a better, safer and more prosperous democratic country to posterity. The more united we are, the more we will realise the true essence of democracy.

Write for us

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

Indaw Gyi Lake, the largest wetland of Myanmar

Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja, Sithu Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

THIS year 2016, February Myanmar printed media reported that Indaw Gyi Lake had been enlisted in the world wetlands on the occasion of the UN Wetlands Day. Mo Yun Gyi in Bago Region was the first to join that list. Now Indaw Gyi Lake has become the second. The report gives natural resources, flora, fauna and minerals as well as its natural beauties.

The writer of this article is so pleased with the report that he could not help writing this article for the readers of the highly esteemed Daily The Global New Light of Myanmar.

The writer had visited Indaw Gyi Lake at the time of the festival of Shwe Myituz Pagoda in the middle of the lake. He did some research at the local forest department and local Buddhist monasteries. Below are the data and knowledge he had collected from them.

The largest natural lake not only in Myanmar but also in South East Asia, Indaw Gyi is in Mohmyn township in Kachin State. The largest wetland ecosystem in the country, its water surface and water body measure 100 sq miles and its forested areas cover 214.67 sq miles—a total of 314.67 sq miles. The lake is accessible by train and car in open season.

The lake is a paradise for nature lovers and a virgin field for environmentalists. Thickly covered with temperate and semi-ever green forests, flora varieties include teak, taung tamar, Sei Khar Thin Kon, Ma u, Baing, Ng u, Yamanay, Kanin, Hp et Win, Hpan Kha, Ht auk Ky ayn, Kha Paung, Saga wa, Hp et Hpyu, Mya uk Nyo, Sthitazin, Kyean, Ky e Hein, etc. and several other flower, fruit, medicinal trees, plants and creepers. Fauna varieties range from tiger, leopard, bear, wolf, gour, banteng (wild ox) to wild goat, mountain goat, sambhur, barking deer, wild dog, jackle, hog badger, porcupine, many kinds of monkey, many winged creatures—birds, bees, butterfly and insects. The lake also abounds in aquatic and amphibious lives.

Fascinating legends enthral Indaw Gyi Lake. First the arrival of Lord Gotama Buddha on the summit of Nalagiri mountain. When the Buddha gazed at the vast plain below, Shitanda asked the Buddha why he gazed at the plain. The Buddha predicted that “360 years (about B.C 184) after my demise this plain would become a big lake and where I had stopped there would emerge an island in the middle of the lake on which a zedi would be built. This zedi would be well known throughout the history of my sasana.”

The rest are fairy tales of Naga Serpents. To narrate them briefly, there was a Naga kingdom under the oceans where Naga King “Erapatta” ruled. As Naga population multiplied, splitting over the Kingdom King Erapatta told his family and courtiers to go out and look for new places for habitation. There Ngas, father and two sons went out in quest of a new living place. They came upstream the Ayeyawady River. When they arrived at a place near Indaw, they turned it into a lake. Today this lake is called Manalei Inn (refv, ftif;).

Later the two sons left there to look for another place where they would set up their Kingdoms when they reached where Indaw Gyi Lake is today, they found an extensive plain surrounded by forested lofty mountains. They also met beautiful guardian angles of the mountains. There was romantic love affairs between the two Naga brothers and angles. They caused rain for days until the vast plain turned into a big deep lake i.e. Indaw Gyi in which the two Naga brothers set up their kingdom.

The legend turns to many adventures, warfare and love affairs. Palm leaf manuscripts such as Shan, Kachin and Myan mar found at the local monasteries and their translations give slightly different versions of the same legend.

Shwe Myit Zu Pagoda on the island in the middle of the Lake is one of many Ye l l a i Pagodas in Myanmar — Ye l l a i means in the middle of the water body. There are Kyaut Khame Yeylai Pagoda, Kyauk Tan Yeylai Pagoda and Myat Maw Tin Zin Ye l l a i Pagoda in lower Myanmar. Three Ye l l a i Pagodas in Upper Myanmar are Inlay Phaung daw U Ye l l a i Pagoda, Anya Thihata w yawlai y e l l a i pagoda on an island opposite to Thabek Kyain town and Shwe Myituz Ye l l a i Pagoda in Indaw Gyi.

The history of Shwe Myi tuz Ye l l a i Pagoda began with the arrival of Buddha Sasana there. Forest monks residing in the forests meditated and began building small religious monuments with the help of villagers. It was about the time of King Mindon (1853-1878 A.D) that one monk named U Sobhita re sided in the valley of these mountains to the west of Indaw Gyi Lake. His forest reclus e was so far away in the wilderness that only few humans occasionally visited him. It is said that this monk preached Dhamma to guardi an deities of the mountains and Lake who offered him fruits and water. U Sobhita thought he should introduce Buddha Sasana to the lake area. He told the local people that would build a pagoda on an island in the lake and requested their help. So began the building of Shwe Myituz Pagoda in the Buddha Sasana yer 2421, Myanmar Era 1230 (1868 A.D) on Saturday 11th waxing of Tabaung (March). On the 8th wanning of waso (July) the pagoda was completed. It was 10 cubits high. Because sacred relics enshrined in it were miraculously granted by Shwe Dagon Pagoda where U Sobhita prayed for them, The Pagoda was named Shwe Myituz Pagoda.

The first festival was held from 8th wanning to 1st wanning of Tabaung. Later, Shwe Myi tuz was renovated and embellished by donors. In Myanmar Era 1235 (1872 A.D) one Maung Shin Nye of Nant Phaung village raised the height of the Pagoda to 18 cubits 2 mites and 4 thits.

Apart from the sublimity of the Pagoda and scenic beauty of the Lake and the surroundings, one strange phenomenon that appears when the festival time approaches is the occurrence of two sand pathways in the Lake leading to Shwe Myituz Pagoda — one for human pilgrims and visitors and one for deities and nats-spirits. The two sand corridors are formed by waves in the lake which move opposite bringing up sand and soil making two pathways in the lake. After the Festival they disappear gradually.

Devotees and pilgrims believe that there are nine wonders of Shwe Myituz Pagoda. They are:

(1) the appearance of two pathways in the lake leading to the Pagoda at festival time;

(2) inspite of heavy rain and storm, lake water does not touch the base of the Pagoda;

(3) there are now crows at the festival time; they come back after the festival;

(4) all ethnic groups regardless of their faiths come to the festival and they are happy;

(5) all aquatic creatures especially fish frolic around the island but no one catches them;

(6) visitors of all religions visit the Pagoda; they all feel happy and peaceful;

(7) there appears a pool of shallow water at the entrance to the island to remind you to take off your footwears;

(8) a red line appears in the lake around the island meaning the deities pour medicine into the lake to purify the water; and

(9) if Wednesday falls on the full moon night of Tabaung, some pilgrims witness emissions of rays of light from the Pagoda and some Arhat Saints coming down to worship the Pagoda.

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Myanmar traditional hand loom draws attention of tourists

Tourists are on a study tour of Myanmar traditional hand loom workshop. PHOTO: NAI MIO WIN (MYITNGE)

AMARAPURA, well known as Yetkan-nyawdaw, is a town in which residents rely on the Myanmar traditional hand weaving industry. The business has quickly gained the interest of tourists. Tourists study how to manufacture the woven clothes at a workshop in Amarapura.

Thai citizens came out on top among tourists who study traditional crafts and they said Myanmar-Lunyaarkyaw silk cloth is famous. “I explain to them the difference of hand woven crafts between Thai and Myanmar people and demonstrate it on the tour”, said a tour guide visiting the Shwesintine silk cloth workshop. We did not contact any tour agencies but welcome all the tourists who wish to see the hand woven business. Tourists mostly came and see in November and March, said the owner of the Shwesintine silk cloth workshop.

Lunyaarkyaw chieft is well known as the weaver who has to warp threads harmoniously with his loom. A Lunyarkyaw silk sells for between K80,000 and K300,000.—NAN MYO WIN (MYITNGE)

10,000 tonnes green gram to be exported to EU

LOCAL exporters plan to ship over 10,000 tonnes of green gram to European markets in the coming fiscal year, a spokesperson of the Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association said.

The export volume of beans and pulses between 1 April and 26 February this fiscal year reached over 1 million tonnes, generating US$900 million.

According to the Ministry of Commerce, this amount represents an increase from the export volume during the same period last year.

India is the largest buyer of beans and pulses from Myanmar. Around 70 per cent of Myanmar’s total pulse exports went to India in the current fiscal year. However, demand from China and Viet Nam is expected to surpass that of India soon. Myanmar generates around US $ 1 billion from exports of beans and pulses annually. It is estimated that the export of pulses is likely to increase in the future as the EU has officially accepted exports of pulses from Myanmar.—May Lwin/Union Daily

Female Community leaders meet Swedish Development Head

A LOCAL level female leader was very proud to share her experience of being a ward administrator with a visiting head of a foreign development agency. Daw Thidar Win showed Ms Charlotte Petri Gornitzka, the Director General of the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), around her ward, Myoma 4 Quarter, Dala Township, located across the Yangon river, a few minutes from the city’s business district.

Village tract administrators, present in rural areas, or ward administrators, in urban areas have a direct line of communication with township administrators and form a bridge between township administration and the people living in the wards and village-tracts. Prior to 2012, local administrators were appointed by Government. Since the reforms in Myanmar initiated in 2012, local administrators have been elected from a group of nominated 10 household heads.

“I start every day by walking around my ward, meeting people, listening to their concerns at the same time noting the conditions of the roads, water reservoirs and other infrastructure. Based on my discussions with people and my observations, I make plans for what the community needs to develop further. For example, when I took up my role, I noted that there was a need for repairing a number of reservoirs which have been the main water sources of many people and roads. I raised this with the Township Administrator, concerned government departments and together secured funds for this work,” Daw Thidar Win told Ms Gornitzka on Sunday.

Little was known about Myanmar’s tiny fraction of female local administrators, until a nationwide local governance mapping exercise conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) together with the General Administration Department, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, revealed that during the first elections held over 2012-2013, only 42 women were elected, constituting 0.25 % of the total 16,785 ward/village tract administrators (W/VTA).

One of the requirements for being elected as a ward or village tract administrator is to be a 10 household head. A number of representatives of Myanmar’s Rural Women’s Network, May Doe Kabar are already shoulderling such responsibilities. They see ward and village-tract administrators as an aspiration to aim for greater leadership heights.

May Doe Kabar board member, Daw Nyo Nyo San, from Nawngkio township in Shan State is very happy that she had a chance to interact with and learn from the female ward and village tract leaders first at a weeklong workshop organized last December, and now an opportunity to observe Daw Thidar Win work in her ward.

“I am now a 10 household head. I would like to become a VTA and help to address women’s needs better,” said Daw Nyo Nyo San.

Ms Gornitzka said she was impressed by the determination and dedication shown by Daw Thidar Win and Daw Nyo Nyo San, as well as the other Myanmar female local leaders she has heard about.

“I have had very inspiring discussions with the local women leaders. It is great to see practical work that matters!” said MsGornitzka.

Sweden provides funds to support UNDP’s work with a particular emphasis on improving local governance and strengthening women’s participation.

Developing women’s leadership in local governance is a priority for UNDP.—GNLM

2,500 tonnes of nutritious rice to enter local market within six months

WITH the aim of promoting public health among citizens, the Myanmar Rice Federation will distribute 2,500 tonnes of nutritious rice for local consumption within six months, a federation spokesperson said.

The nutritious rice includes vitamins and minerals including iron, zinc, folic acid, Vitamin A, B1, B6 and B12, which can protect people from several diseases. The nutrients are also meant to ensure the normal development of foetuses.

Through the cooperation between government departments, international social organisations, the MRF and other local companies that manufacture nutrient-rich rice for public consumption, the project is proceeding with success.

In its first stage, the nutritious rice manufactured at 10 rice mills in Yangon, Bago, Mawlamyine and Latbutta townships will enter the market through 1,000 retail shops this month.—200
Trump knocks Rubio out of Republican race, party in chaos

PALM BEACH — US Republican front-runner Donald Trump swept to victory and drove rival Marco Rubio out of the White House race, but the New York billionaire’s loss in the crucial state of Ohio wrenched more chaos for a party deeply fractured by his candidacy.

While the Republican race remained in turmoil on Tuesday, Hillary Clinton’s victories in Florida, Illinois, Ohio and North Carolina cast doubt on US Senator Bernie Sanders’s ability to overtake her for the Democratic Party’s nomination.

Trump’s wins in Florida, Illinois and North Carolina brought him closer to the 1,237 delegates he needs to win the nomination and left those in the party trying to stop him with a dilemma.

Republicans can either throw their weight behind a candidate who rejects their policy goals or go on trying to stop him in the hope that he falls short of the majority required, enabling them to put forward another candidate at the July convention in Cleveland to formally pick their candidate for the 8 November election.

That, however, would risk alienating the millions of Americans who back the real estate developer and former reality TV show host.

Ohio Governor John Kasich’s victory in his home state left him as the last establishment Republican candidate standing after Rubio, a US senator, pulled out of the race after losing in a Trump landslide in Rubio’s home state of Florida.

US Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, who has sought to fashion himself the lead anti-Trump alternative, was outclassed by Trump everywhere on Tuesday except Missouri, where he trailed Rubio by only 1,000 votes, leaving nearly all votes counted.

Early yesterday, MSNBC projected Trump and Clinton would win Missouri in very tight races.

Many party leaders are appalled at the billionaire Trump’s incendiary rhetoric and believe his policy positions are out of step with core Republican sentiment, such as his vow to deport 11 million illegal immigrants, temporarily ban Muslims from the United States, build a wall along the border with Mexico and impose protectionist trade policies.

But their bid to stop him has come too late as a Republican field that once included Trump and 16 high-profile party figures has dwindled now to only three with Trump, 69, in command ahead of Cruz, 45, and Kasich, 63.

Trump, speaking at his Mar-a-Lago beachfront resort on Florida’s Atlantic Ocean coast, called on Republicans to unite behind him and made a point of mentioning that he had spoken to the two top elected Republicans in the United States, House of Representatives Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

“The fact is we have to bring our party together,” Trump, more restrained than usual, said at an event that was billed as a news conference but where he took no questions.

“We have something happening that actually makes the Republican Party the biggest political story anywhere in the world,” he said, referring to what he says are the millions of new voters he has attracted to the Republican Party.

“Democrats are coming in. Independents are coming in, and very, very importantly, people that never voted before. It’s an incredible thing,” Trump said.

This year Trump needs to win about 54 percent of the roughly 1,100 delegates still up for grabs. It’s not an insurmountable challenge, especially when factoring in winner-take-all states, like Arizona’s 58 delegates and New Jersey’s 51 delegates.

The wins for former Secretary of State Clinton, 68, added to her lead in pledged delegates over Senator Sanders, 74, of Vermont, and gave her an almost insurmountable edge, burying the memory of her stunning loss in Michigan last week.

As she had after other primary wins, Clinton was thinking on Tuesday about a possible match-up in the 8 November presidential election with Trump.

“We can’t lose what made America great in the first place, and this isn’t just about Donald Trump,” Clinton told supporters in West Palm Beach, Florida. “We can’t just talk about economic inequality, we have to take on all forms of inequality and discrimination.”

Kasich’s win in Ohio, his first in the nominating fight, makes him the candidate of choice for party leaders worried Trump’s rowdy campaign will lead Republicans to defeat not only in the presidential race, but in state and US congressional races.

Kasich, who has tried to emphasize the positive in a Republican race dominated by the pugnacious Trump, said his campaign was “about holding us together, not pulling us apart.”

Switching focus to the long stretch of states across the South before the 14 February Super Tuesday, Kasich is now deficit 93 pledged delegates to Trump’s 321.

He will face other challenges, especially when factoring in winnable states like Kentucky to Ohio.

Kasich’s top aide, HalRibisch, was willing to acknowledge a major challenge yesterday.

Kasich, who has said he would drop out if he is not among the top three candidates, has recently started spending to try to catch Trump in Ohio.

Trump, in contrast, faces fewer challenges in the Ohio race, which is key to his road to the nomination.

The departure of Kasich, who has faced a battery of court cases since returning home from exile in 2013, would remove a source of friction between the powerful army and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Sharif, who ousted Sharif in a bloodless coup in 1999, ruled Pakistan until 2008, when he stepped down in the face of mass protests. His lawyers have said he is in poor health.
Moscow/Beirut/Geneva — Russian warplanes flew home from Syria on Tuesday as Moscow started to withdraw forces that have tipped the war President Bashar al-Assad’s way, and the UN envoy said he hoped the move would help peace talks in Geneva.

The new gesture, announced in the morning, is a sign of a decline in Russian military involvement in Syria, where its forces have been fighting the rebels since 2015. This year, Russia has been flying more Russian warplanes and has been supporting the Syrian regime in its fight against the rebels.

The UN envoy, Staffan de Mistura, said he was hopeful that the withdrawal of Russian forces would help to bring the peace talks in Geneva back on track. The United Nations and the Russian foreign ministry have both expressed their support for the talks, which have been stuck for months.

The Russian forces that were being withdrawn included Russian air force, air defense, and ground units. The Russian military said that the withdrawal was part of a broader effort to reduce tensions in the region.

The move was welcomed by the Syrian opposition, which has been calling for a reduction in the conflict in the country. The Syrian National Coalition, which represents the opposition, said that the withdrawal was a positive step.

The announcement came as a group of rebel fighters captured a strategic hilltop in the north of Syria, which is a key location in the conflict. The rebels have been making gains on the ground in recent weeks, and the withdrawal of Russian forces could give them a boost.

The move also comes as the United States and Russia have been pushing for a political solution to the conflict in Syria. The US, which has been providing military support to the rebels, and Russia, which has been providing military support to the regime, have been trying to find a way to end the conflict.

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THE MEKONG RIVER — The Lao People’s Army patrol boat was custom-made in China with night-vision capability and two of the most powerful engines on this remote stretch of the Mekong River.

Today, like most days, it sits idle for lack of gasoline, guarded by a single Laotian soldier in flip-flops. Even occasional patrols by boats like these, supplied by China to the Laotian army and Myanmar police, have successfully subdued the pirates who once robbed the Mekong’s cargo ships with impunity since Chinese-led joint patrols began in 2011.

But there has been little progress on another objective — stemming the flood of illicit drugs — exposing the limits of China’s hard power in mainland Southeast Asia even as Beijing accelerates its militarisation of disputed islands in the South China Sea.

A trade officer on Mekong shipping have tailed off, drug production and trafficking in the untamed region, known as the Golden Triangle, is booming despite the presence of Chinese gunboats and units of Chinese armed police along the Mekong.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that Southeast Asia’s trade in heroin and methamphetamine was worth $31 billion in 2013. “That’s bigger than the economies of some Southeast Asian countries,” says Jeremy Douglas, the UNODC’s Asia-Pacific chief.

“It’s like having an undeclared currency. It’s a powerful means of exchange,” Douglas tells Reuters, “with no borders and lots of money.”

The UNODC said in 2011 drug production in the Golden Triangle — the heart of the Golden Triangle — was already at unprecedented quantities.

More than 250 million methamphetamine pills, better known by their Thai name “ya ba” or “crazy medicine,” were seized in East and Southeast Asia in 2013, an eight-fold increase from 2008. “It’s a major problem,” Douglas says. “Ice” — a potent, crystalline form of methamphetamine dubbed “the poor man’s cocain” — doubled during the same period.

In 2015, China seized a record 36.5 tons of methamphetamine, said the UNODC, with most of the drug in pill form coming from Myanmar. Myanmar is the world’s second largest producer of opium, the bulk of which ends up in China as heroin.

A recent report from the UNODC, which said the involvement of some Chinese military personnel in drug trafficking, and the number of registered drug users in China rose to more than 2.3 million in 2015. Increasingly Myanmar too has a drug problem, with police last year making record-breaking busts of both ya ba and ice.

This could severely test the new government of Aung San Suu Kyi, whose National League for Democracy party has yet to formulate drug policies, say experts. — Reuters

WASHINGTON — The second-biggest US subway system, which serves Washington DC, will close for 29 hours at midnight EDT (0400 GMT) on Tuesday for emergency safety checks, leaving hundreds of thousands of government workers, tourists and business travelers struggling to get around town.

Transit officials in the nation’s capital announced the unprecedented closure of the Washington DC-area Metro subway system so it could inspect 600 underground cables after a cable fire this week caused delays. The subway will reopen at 5 am EDT (0900 GMT) on Thursday.

The Office of Personnel Management, which oversees the federal workforce, said government offices would remain open but federal workers in the affected zones are ordered to not come in or work from home. Congress will be open.

Ed Etzkorn, a 43-year-old federal employee, said he had no idea how he and his wife, also a government worker, would get to work.

“We’re going to have to figure out how to get around,” he said. “It’s awkward for those of us who have to commute, but I understand they need to do what they need to do for our safety.”

About 700,000 people ride Metro on average every weekday including about a third of the region’s federal workforce.

The area has some of the worst traffic in the United States, and local radio station WTOP predicted the subway closure would cause “major mayhem” on the roads.

Meiss Toure, who rides Metro twice a week, said yesterday would find him behind the wheel of a car. “I’ll definitely be driving tomorrow. It’s going to be a mess tomorrow. I plan to leave about 30 minutes early.”

Buses will run normally yesterday, and parking will be free in Metro-owned lots and garages, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority said.

The shutdown is expected to create high demand and offered new customers $20 off their first ride. Uber (UBER US: Quote) said it would cap surge pricing in the Washington area at 3.9 times base fares during the shutdown. It said it was expanding Uber Pool coverage across Washington, Maryland and the Virginia metro area.

The closure of the 119-mile (230-km) subway system, which has been plagued by equipment breakdowns and fires, will allow safety officials to inspect the cables for wear-out cause. Wash- ington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority General Manager Paul Wiedefeld said at a news conference.

“While the risk to the public is very low, I cannot rule out a potential life safety issue, and this is very low, I cannot rule out a potential life safety issue, and this is very low, I cannot rule out a potential life safety issue,” he said.

Wiedefeld said the shutdown was prompted by a cable fire on Monday that caused delays on three of the system’s six lines. — Reuters

Commuter chaos seen for Washington DC as safety inspection shuts subway

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Metro riders said they welcomed the shutdown as an indication that Metro was getting serious about safety even though it would snarl their commutes.

“We don’t have any way to commmute. I live way out, so the subway is the only way to get in,” said Regina Smith, 50, a federal worker from Quantico, Virginia. She hoped she could telecommute.

Tourist Holly Morris, 57, a teacher from Shorewood, Wiscon-
Argentina coast guard sinks Chinese trawler fishing illegally

BUENOS AIRES — Argentina’s coast guard has sunk a Chinese trawler that was fishing illegally within its territorial waters, the coast guard said on Tuesday, marking a first test for relations between President Mauricio Macri and Beijing.

A coast guard vessel pursued the fishing vessel Lu Yan Yuan Yu 010 toward international waters in a high-seas chase on Monday, firing warning shots across the Chinese boat’s bow as it attempted to raise the crew by radio.

“On several occasions, the offending ship performed maneuvers designed to force a collision with the coast guard, putting at risk not only its own crew but coast guard personnel, who were then ordered to shoot parts of the vessel,” the coast guard said in a statement.

It was not clear if the vessel sank on Monday or Tuesday. The crew abandoned ship when the vessel began to go down.

Four crewmen were rescued by the coast guard while others were picked up by another Chinese vessel shadowing the pursuit.

China’s Foreign Ministry said in a statement the Chinese government had lodged a protest over the incident and were demanding an explanation.

“The Foreign Ministry and Chinese embassy in Argentina have already lodged emergency representations with the Argentinian side and expressed serious concern about the incident, demanding Argentina launch an immediate probe and report on the details to China,” it said.

China is also asking Argentina to ensure the safety and legal rights of Chinese fishermen and take steps to ensure such incidents do not happen again, the statement said.

Macri’s center-right government, which took office in December, will likely be keen to avoid a diplomatic ruckus with the Asian powerhouse which has gained a strong foothold in South America, traditionally the United States’ back yard.

Relations between Argentina and China tightened under former leftist leader Cristina Fernandez. Macri promised during last year’s presidential race to review all new contracts that would be keen to avoid a diplomat-

French and Chinese fishing vessels in the western Pacific have been involved in a number of collisions.

Ehime high schools to require notice of political involvement

MATSUYAMA — All 59 prefectoral high schools in western Japan prefecture have decided to oblige students to inform teachers in advance of their political activities outside school, the local education board said yesterday.

The move by the schools in Ehime Prefecture to amend their rules so as to introduce the requirement from the next academic year starting in April comes before Japan lowers its voting age from 20 to 18 on 19 June.

Experts warned that the system goes against efforts to encourage young people to participate in politics and possibly infringes on students’ right to freedom of thought, while teachers said the move is aimed at protecting students’ safety.

Japan’s parliament enacted legislation last June to lower the voting age and the House of Councillors election this summer is expected to be the first ballot held under the new legislation. There will likely be about 2.4 million new voters, including high school students.

Given the voting age cut, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology formed the nation’s prefectoral education boards in October of its policy to allow high school students to engage in political activities and election campaigns outside schools.

Against this backdrop, the Ehime prefectoral education board held a meeting of vice principals of prefectural high schools in December. At this meeting, it distributed handouts with examples of how school rules could be changed to ban any political activities on school premises and oblige students to give a week’s notice when they participate in such activities off campus.

An official of the board said it did not instruct schools to change their rules and left the decision up to them, adding that the handouts were for reference only. But the board asked the schools to report back if they implemented such changes.

In January, the education ministry announced that schools would be able to have a pre-notification system if they wished. But the board said it did not instruct any school to use the system if they wished.

The principal of Uetalu High School in Ehime said that the school decided to change its by-laws to include the pre-notification system “to prevent students from getting involved in hate speech acts or any other violent activities.”

“First of all, it is important to give students a thorough education as sovereign members of society so that they will be able to make their own decisions on various things,” Iwai said.—Kyodo News

New Zealand navy resupplies Fiji’s cyclone-battered outer islands

WELLINGTON — The New Zealand navy is to deliver a second shipment of emergency supplies to Fiji’s cyclone-battered northern islands, the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) said yesterday.

The multi-role vessel HMNZS Canterbury had returned to Suva to load more emergency supplies for Fiji’s northern outer islands, Commander Simon Rooke said in a statement.

The vessel will be based at Yacata for the next 10 days.—Reuters

“Returning to Suva has enabled us to pick up more supplies for villages on Vunabaluva Island, including materials for the rebuilding that is under way there, as well as work that will begin on Yacata Island,” Rooke said.

Commanding Officer of the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Task Unit, Major Chris Wilson said eight combat engineers from the NZDF and three from the Republic of Fiji Military Forces formed part of a 16-person reconstruction team that would be based at Yacata to support rebuilding on the island over the next 10 days.—Xinhua

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

HOLIDAY NOTICE

As the wharves, warehouses and chellon Offices of Yangon Port will be closed on the 23rd March 2016 (Full Moon of Tabuang) and 27th March 2016 (Armed Forces Day), loading, unloading and delivery for goods will be received on Payment as Holiday Fees.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV BEHSHAD VOY NO (SCY1013)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV BEHSHAD VOY NO (SCY1013) are hereby noticed that the vessel will be arriving on 17.3.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MLTT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses to subject to the by-laws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim’s Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S LAND & SEA LOGISTICS

Phone No: 2301185
Harrison Ford returns for 5th ‘Indiana Jones’ movie

LOS ANGELES — Harrison Ford and director Steven Spielberg are teaming up to make a fifth “Indiana Jones” action-adventure movie, due for release in July 2019, Walt Disney Co said Tuesday.

Ford, 73, will reprise his role as the Fedora-clad archaeologist and adventurer who first appeared in 1981’s “Raiders of the Lost Ark.”

“We cannot get enough of this character, I could never do any of my shows high or drunk,” Madonna wrote on Instagram.

“Underlying all of this is sexism and mysogny which proves that not only do we not get equal pay but we are still treated like heretics if we step out of line and think outside the box!” she added.

The announcement quickly set off a series of concerts in the British capital that saw one couple get engaged during the singer’s performance.

Talking about makeup, burps, pimples and taking selfies with the audience, the singer-songwriter won over thousands of fans at London’s O2 arena with her stage chat as she belted out her chart-topping hits.

“Hello” — the single that marked her successful return to the music scene late last year following her 2011 album “21.”

In a simple production that saw the London-born singer perform just alongside her musicians, Adele sang her popular singles including James Bond theme tune “Skyfall” as well as chart-toppers “Someone Like You” and “Rolling In The Deep.”

“Adele Live” tour on 29 February in Belfast and will go on to perform around Europe before heading to the United States.

She sang a mix of hits from her albums “19,” “21” and “25,” which has topped charts worldwide since its November release.

“I love the fact that she swears. She’s funny, she tells stories. She’s just a laugh,” fan Jordan Potts said.

“You know it’s a massive show … but it’s so intimate as well. She really connects with the audience.”

Life of Pi screened to promote Brain Sciences among kids

JERUSALEM — Irrfan Khan and Tabu-starrer Life of Pi has been screened here that will help promote awareness about brain sciences among youngsters in Israel.

Screened as a part of a unique project, Art and Brain Week, launched by the Edmond and Lily Safra Centre for Brain Sciences (ELSC) at the Hebrew University and Jerusalem Cinematheque, the award winning film helped students understand how the brain collates a stream of electro-chemical signals and distinctly two different images sent by two human eyes to present a single image.

A doctoral student, Adi Kol, of the ELSC centre in an interesting interactive presentation on “Depth Perception” in imagery prepared the young minds to understand how the brain analyses information sent by sensory organs and how the knowledge has helped enrich artistic creativity.

Explaining the purpose of this unique initiative, the Executive Director of ELSC, Ralf Aviram said that it was an effort of the centre to connect to the masses and specially to promote awareness about research in the field of brain sciences among youngsters who may at a later stage choose the discipline for higher studies.

The purpose of the Brain Awareness Week “is to raise public awareness to the importance of brain research and present research advances in the field”, Aviram said.

“ELSC’s ‘Art and Brain Week’ promotes this goal while strengthening the relationship between community and academia”, he added.

Besides the educational part, the film also had many in attendance admiring the beautiful images of Pondicherry. — PTI
BEKAA VALLEY (Lebanon) — In a humid plastic tent in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley, a Syrian scientist handles the leaves of the chickpeas, lentils and wheat that may one day help fill neighbouring Syria’s post-war kitchen tables.

Fawzi Souied is part of a team trying to safeguard the future of Syrian and global agriculture by recreating a seed collection stored in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo which is at risk of being destroyed by the war entering its sixth year.

Fighting has cut the road to the research centre 30 km (about 20 miles) outside Aleppo and, because of frequent power cuts, scientists can no longer guarantee the safety of the deep-frozen 150,000 seeds, which contain part of the genetic history and future of the world’s food crops.

“There is treasure in Aleppo,” said Souied, research assistant at Lebanon’s branch of the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA).

“The thing is, we have lost the seeds,” said Alan Machlab, ICARDA country manager for Lebanon.

The ICARDA team in Lebanon has managed to rescue some unique seeds from Aleppo, borrow some 14,000 seeds so far from partner research organisations around the world, and tap a “doomsday” underground seed vault in Syria’s Svallbard islands near the North Pole for around 8,000 seed types.

This was the first withdrawal made from the Svalbard vault which was designed to protect crop seeds from nuclear events, natural disasters and war. A while ago we decided we were now in an emergency situation,” said Machlab. “In the past few months, because of the intensification of fighting around Aleppo, we haven’t been able to reach the centre and see how the seeds are.”

The Syrian conflict, which has killed at least 250,000 and displaced around 11 million, forced ICARDA to move its headquarters in 2012 from Aleppo to Lebanon’s fertile Bekaa valley, seven kilometres from the Syrian border.

Staff were still able to enter the centre to maintain the freezers’ electricity supply, but last year Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s forces, supported by Russian air strikes, stepped up offensives around Aleppo and the seed bank became inaccessible. — Reuters

Bangkok slaps curfew on world’s biggest water fight amid drought

BANGKOK — The Thai capital will impose a curfew during Thailand’s annual water festival next month to show solidarity with farmers hit by drought, city officials said on Tuesday.

Thailand is facing its worst water shortage in two decades, with 14 out of 76 provinces hit by drought swathes of agricultural land at risk.

Thailand has entered its annual dry season, which typically runs from March to May, meaning the drought is likely to get worse. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration’s solution? Be a wet blanket by cutting festival days down from four to three and imposing a curfew.

“This is partly symbolic, but we hope to save water too because our lakes have become deserts,” said deputy Bangkok governor Amorn Kijchawengduj. “We don’t want city folk splashing water around carelessly while farmers struggle.”

The Songkran festival, which marks Thai New Year, is often referred to as the world’s biggest water fight — a time when revellers splashing water on each other and everyone, young and old, is fair game. A major tourist attraction, Bangkok’s water parties typically run late into the night. But this year all splashing will have to stop at 9 pm sharp. “We’ll just shut down the party,” said Amorn. — Reuters

Sony to buy Michael Jackson’s stake in Sony/ATV

TOKYO — Sony Corp. said Tuesday it has agreed to buy Michael Jackson’s stake to wholly own the world’s biggest music publisher that the electronics and entertainment giant set up with the late pop star. Sony will purchase a 50 per cent share in Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC from his estate for $750 million.

The New York-based joint venture was formed in 1995, managing the song catalogues of internationally renowned artists like The Beatles. Sony expects to conclude the deal by the end of the month when the Japanese firm will close its books for fiscal 2015. — Kyodo News

Newborn seal draws visitors at Japanese aquarium

KAMOGEWA (Japan) — A newborn baby seal has won over a legion of fans, wriggling its way to the hearts of visitors at an aquarium in Japan.

Born on 21 February, the seal is the second ringed seal to be bred at Kamogawa Sea World. It is currently with its mother in a special exhibit area. “I wish I could just keep on watching it here for a long time,” teacher Yuka Matsukoa, 38, said during a visit to the aquarium. — Reuters

Largest blue diamond to appear at auction

LONDON — The largest oval fancy vivid diamond ever to appear at auction is headed for sale in Hong Kong next month, where it is expected to fetch $30 million - $35 million.

The internally flawless blue diamond, at 10.10 carats, was mined in South Africa and is one of a collection of 11 cut by jewelers De Beers in London in 2000.

“Blue diamonds are extremely rare and when they are over 10 carats and flawless, they are quite special,” said Chien Yew, Sotheby’s auction house Deputy Chairman for Asia said at a press event in London.

“It’s also the largest oval vivid blue diamond to ever be offered at auction.”

The blue diamond will lead a 5 April Sotheby’s auction in Hong Kong after being exhibited in London, Geneva, New York, Singapore and Taipei. — Reuters
Manchester City ignore injuries to secure Champions League first

Manchester — Celebration was tinged with disappointment for Manchester City who eased into the Champions League quarter-finals for the first time on Tuesday but lost Vincent Kompany to injury in a 0-0 draw with Dynamo Kiev.

Captain Kompany limped off after five minutes with a muscle problem and fellow defender Nicolas Otamendi followed soon after as the hosts chucked up a 3-1 aggregate triumph that was entirely due to their first-leg victory.

There was little in terms of goalmouth action throughout the return leg at the Etihad Stadium, with City keeping a largely lifeless Kiev in check and having the game’s best chance when Jesus Navas hit the post midway through the second half.

Manuel Pellegrini’s team, who were knocked out in the last 16 by Barcelona in each of the last two seasons and face local rivals Manchester United in a domestic derby on Sunday, only looked like conceding at the end when keeper Joe Hart saved well from Vitaliy Buyalskyi and Ol exandr Yakovenko.

“It is a very important achievement for the club,” Pellegiri told BT Sport. “This is a club that is growing and will continue to develop.”

City, whose Premier League title hopes were dented with a 0-0 draw at Norwich City on Saturday, suffered a further blow when Kompany was forced off with a calf problem.

Their injury woes were compounded when Otamendi was also substituted with barely 20 minutes on the clock in what was a soporific start to the encounter.

Kompany had only returned from a calf problem in February, having been out since December, and Pellegrini said he had suffered a recurrence of what has become a persistent issue for the Belgium international.

With City under no pressure to attack having secured a comfortable first-leg advantage, and Kiev seemingly impotent up front, the first half was played like a testimonial.

It took 58 minutes for the home side to make any sort of incision into the Kiev defence as Yaya Toure exchanged quick passes with Sergio Aguero before the Argentine striker flashed his shot wide from a tight angle.

Navas then crashed an effort against the foot of the post three minutes later as the game showed signs of life while Toure fired straight at Kiev keeper Ol exandr Shovkovskiy with 20 minutes to play.

Hart was forced into action in the final few moments with good blocks to deny Buyalskyi and Yakovenko on an otherwise easy night for the City keeper.

“We lost this game in Kiev,” said Dynamo coach Sergei Rebrov. “But I say thank you very much to the players.

“City have big players with big experience but it is not easy now. I wish them well.” — Reuters

Aung La N Sang is ready for his homecoming at ONE: UNION OF WARRIORS in Myanmar

Aung La N Sang, an 11-year veteran of the sport of mixed martial arts, will compete in his biggest match to date on 18 March when he headlines ONE: UNION OF WARRIORS in his home country of Myanmar against Mohamed Ali. He left the country in 2003, and has been living in the United States ever since.

The fact that the card takes place inside the Thawunna Indoor Stadium in Yangon, holds special significance to him. “I lived in a housing district that was about two blocks away,” he said. “Never in a million years did I think I would compete in that stadium.”

He added: “Walking into the Thawunna stadium in front of my people is going to be an amazing feeling. I can just imagine all the loud cheering. It’s going to be the best feeling, and I’m going to use that to my advantage. All my family that’s still in Myanmar will be there. All my high school friends and all my schoolmates. It’s going to be pretty crazy.”

Aung La N Sang began his MMA journey in 2005, winning five of his first six fights. All of those were via finish, something all 16 of his career wins share in common. His resume includes fights with notable names such as UFC standouts Uriah Hall and Costa Philippou, along with a victory four years ago inside the Bellator MMA cage.

It will have been just short of two years since we last saw Aung La N Sang (16-9) in action when he knocked out Mahmoud Salama at ONE: ERA OF CHAMPIONS in Jakarta.

This fight is going to be the light of the night, because I’m going to put all my heart into it and it’s going to end in a finish,” he said. “The perfect ending?” I set back for his overhand and counter with a straight cross and he’s on the floor.”

“It means a lot to be back in Myanmar and fighting in front of my home people. It means that this last decade of work is going to finally come to show everyone what I’ve been working on. It’s going to be beautiful.” — Reuters

Atletico win thrilling shootout to reach quarters

Atletico Madrid celebrated like they had won the trophy after reaching the Champions League quarter-finals by edging past PSV Eindhoven 8-7 on penalties on Tuesday following 210 goalless minutes in their last-16 tie.

Juanfran converted the winning spotkick at the Vicente Calderon Stadium, before ripping off his shirt and charging to celebrate wildly with the home fans after the two sides became the first to end a Champions League knockout match 0-0 on aggregate.

It took 16 kicks to finally produce a winner with Luciano Narsingh hitting the crossbar with PSV’s eighth effort before Juanfran coolly delivered for his side. Atletico are into the last eight for third successive year, having also needed penalties to beat Bayer Leverkusen last season. — Reuters