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SMEs DEVELOPMENT

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Workers are putting finishing touches on lacquerware at an industry in Bagan.
PHOTO: AYE AYE WIN

MSWRR, Tatmadaw make flood relief efforts

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement is making flood relief efforts in close coordination and cooperation with military troops in affected regions and states, its union minister said in a press conference in Yangon yesterday.

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye said the floods cut off an area in Kachin State, making it inaccessible except by air.

“Military helicopters provide immediate airlifts of relief supplies,” he said, recalling the army’s quick response to the rescue efforts in previous disasters.

“The role of the army in response to disasters is of paramount importance.”

The military medical teams would rush instantly to places where there was a shortage of health staff, the union minister said.

The onset of incessant rain from mid-July has battered 71 townships in six regions and three states, prompting the authorities and civil society to carry out the emergency evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people from the disaster.

According to official statistics, as of 13 August, more than 430,000 people were evacuated to safer areas.

Flood waters in Kachin State and Sagaing Region have started receding, with local people saying that there were no more rescue camps. In Mandalay Region, 12 townships were affected by the recent floods, which reports said were receding.

According to the press conference, dozens of townships remain flooded: 11 in Magway Region, 6 in Bago Region, 13 in Ayeyawady Region and 5 in Yangon Region.

From 15 July to 13 August, the ministry spent K83.27 million from its budget and K484.85 million from the disaster management fund on relief and rescue efforts in the flood-affected states and regions.
Local people in Mandalay put the blame on man-made works for the flooding this year. 

### MoHT expands ecotourism destinations

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism has announced they will open up 22 regions of the country to ecotourism for both foreign and local travelers.

**Efforts to design the government-backed Ecotourism Plan began in 2015 in the name of developing Myanmar’s tourism sector, and are reportedly being drawn up in accordance with the relevant laws and legislation.**

Ecotourism provides people with a sustainable and dependable livelihoods and advocates the protection and conservation of forests and woodlands.

“**The numbers of tourists visiting Myanmar is augmenting year up year. That’s why we’re expanding the eco-tourism projects.**”

We’ll also make it possible to survey the country’s flora and fauna in order to protect natural wildlife,” said U Tin Thwin, director of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

The Department of Forestry and MoHT are reportedly working together to expand eco-tourism to corners of Myanmar which presently receive little to no tourists.

“**Myanmar now boasts twenty-two new eco-tourism destinations. That said, we haven’t been able to implement any economic activities in these areas as yet.**

The reason being, we’re still eyeing which projects would be potentially sustainable. Then there’s the safety of tourists in these areas to think about, that’s important. Some parts of northern Kachin and Shan States still lack stability,” said U Thet Lwin Toh, chair of the Union of Myanmar Travel Association.

Some of the destinations earmarked for ecotourism development include the Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary in the Ayeyarwady Delta, Maing Hwa Wun Elephant Camp in Yangon Region and Khakaborazi National Park in the northernmost frontiers of the country which surrounds Myanmar’s highest peak.

A total of 4.7 million foreign tourists streamed into Myanmar through its international airports during last year’s 2015-16 financial year, while estimates put this year’s figures at reaching 5.5 million.—Myitmakha News Agency

### Sagaing farmers lack interest in cultivating chemical-free betel

Farmers from Sagaing Region’s Shwebo district have voiced a lack of interest in cultivating betel plants using natural products in lieu of chemicals, despite the absence of dangers to the health of both consumers and growers.

Betal plants are grown annually between April-August and take four months before the leaves are ready to be picked for sale, while cultivation of the plants with chemicals reportedly incurs thirty percent more expense than through using natural methods.

“We tend to the needs of the plants with natural products. The plants are sprayed with an organic spray. The plants are grown with a fertilizer of pickled fruits and vegetables we’ve sourced from our environment. As such, we only incur expenses for palm sugar.”

Farmers rely on the use of chemicals because they lack self-confidence, it’s what their used to,” said Maung Maung Soe, a betel grower from Khin-U Township who utilizes a natural approach to cultivation.

An entire plot of 500 betel plants can reportedly be cultivated naturally with a liquid mixture of milk and pickled juice, which contains lactic acid, for as little as K700.

“The downside of chemical sprays is that they’re more expensive. They also pose health concerns, forcing the health conscious farmers to don face masks and gloves when tending to their crops.”

For those farmers with money, chemicals are readily available and they speed up the cultivation process; one needn’t spend the time concocting natural fertilizers or pesticide sprays. The lack of interest in cultivating organically steams from the absence of a market for such products,” said Naing Win Aung, a betel plant farmer from Myinmu Township.

“**Myanmar now boasts twenty-two new eco-tourism destinations. That said, we haven’t been able to implement any economic activities in these areas as yet.**

The reason being, we’re still eyeing which projects would be potentially sustainable. Then there’s the safety of tourists in these areas to think about, that’s important. Some parts of northern Kachin and Shan States still lack stability,” said U Thet Lwin Toh, chair of the Union of Myanmar Travel Association.

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### 4-hour rain causes havoc in Mandalay

Heavy rain hit Mandalay yesterday, inundating low-lying areas, causing trees to fall and creating havoc on roads.

The four-hour rainfall started around 10 pm Saturday and tied the record for most rainfall in August with 6.2 inches. The flooding began to recede yesterday afternoon.

Isolated heavy rainfall is expected to pour down over Kayin State, Mon State, Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay Region, Bago Region, Ayeyawady Region, Taninthayi Region and Rakhine State today, according to the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology.

Local people in Mandalay place the blame on land work projects for the flooding this year. The land work has changed the waterway, causing it to overflow from the creeks and the Ayeyarwady River. “The situation of this year’s flood, which submerged some areas with unusual strength, is considered to be because of man-made works, and La Nina has also made the situation worsen,” said Chief Minister of Mandalay Region Dr Zaw Myint Maung.—Aung Thant Khaing

*Photo: Aung Thant Khaing*
BFM, Smile Asia to conduct free surgeries to children with cleft lips and palates

UNDER the Eight-Day Cleft Free Myanmar Initiative jointly conducted by Smile Asia and the Kanbawzâ’s Bright Future Myanmar Foundation (BFM), more than 170 children with cleft lips and palates will undergo free surgery.

Medical experts from Yangon General Hospital and Smile Asia will carry out cleft lip and palate surgeries to the children from different areas of Myanmar from 14 to 21 August under the initiative.

The Eight-Day Cleft Free Myanmar Initiative ceremony was launched at Yangon General Hospital yesterday with addresses by the Superintendent of the Hospital Dr Aye Ko Ko, Founder of Smile Mr Vincent Yeow, Ambassador of Singapore to Myanmar Mr Robert Chua and Chairperson of the BFM Daw Nang Lang Kham.

Following the ceremony, more than 170 children received medical check-ups and blood tests in preparation for their upcoming surgeries provided by doctors from Yangon General Hospital and Smile Asia, members of the BFM and volunteers.

All costs, including accommodation and other expenses of the children will be sponsored by KBZ’s Brighter Future Myanmar Foundation. Since its establishment in 2008, when Cyclone Nargis ravaged Myanmar, the philanthropic foundation has carried out social welfare activities nationwide, adopting five tasks for corporate social responsibility and spending more than K170 billion nationwide. — Thittha Tun

Medical teams to take further steps to prevent tuberculosis in measles outbreak areas

Shin Min Thant

AFTER bringing the outbreak of measles in the Naga Self-Administrative Zone (SAZ) under control, the Ministry of Health and Sports is planning to take another step for the prevention of tuberculosis in the area, as the measles virus also attacks the lungs and respiratory system.

The ministry planned to adopt short-term and long-term plans to improve the health standards in the zone and will carry out plans for the prevention and control of diseases in cooperation with the neighbouring region, which saw a similar outbreak of the disease in May.

Local authorities are currently discussing with residents in Naga SAZ to change the traditional designs of their homes in order to get good ventilation in their residences, according to the Ministry of Health and Sports.

“The report outbreak of measles at Htankawlamar Village in Lahe is correct, but the reported death toll of 13 in Nanyun is the total number in six months,” said Dr Soe Lwin Nyein, Director General of the Public Health Department, who also went to the Naga SAZ to control the disease.

Medical teams from the ministry and the Tatmadaw rushed to the areas to fight the outbreak of the disease.

AN outbreak of measles which scourged some remote villages in far northwestern Myanmar’s Naga Self-Administrative Zone (SAZ) is now finally under control, according to the Naga SAZ authorities.

Specialists from the Public Health Department (PHD) of Nay Pyi Taw and Sagaing Region hospitals are reportedly administering vaccinations and providing medical treatment for locals in areas where the disease broke out. “The disease is now under control as specialists from the capital have come and given treatment. They’ve identified the previously mysterious disease as measles and it has since stopped spreading,” said U Kay Sai, chair of the Naga SAZ. The symptoms of measles reportedly start with a sore throat, increasing to a fever, then red spots that cover the whole body, before sufferers vomit blood. The disease can then prove fatal if not treated.

Specialists give medical treatment to children suffering measles and vaccine to children in Nga Self-Administrative Zone. PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SPORTS

MEB, six private banks to lease K30 billion to SMEs

>> From page 1

The duration of the loan is set for five years.

The CGI system is jointly implemented by Myanmar Insurance, Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation and CB Bank.

Small and Medium Industrial Development Bank (SMIDB) announced last month that 300 Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) have outstanding repayments for the 2015-16 fiscal year. K5bn have been issued to 11 SMEs this fiscal year, and K20 billion issued to SMEs in the 2015-2016 FY by the SMIDB.

At the moment, 90 per cent of Myanmar Businesses are SMEs.

Prison bus crash

injuries six offenders, two police officers

AT least six offenders and two correctional officers were injured when a prison bus skidded out of control and overturned on Yangon-Mandalay highway yesterday.

The accident took place near milepost 350/7 on the highway. Heavy rain was blamed for the accident. The injured were taken to the hospital in Ta-dalU.

The prison bus was transporting offenders from the Pyinnmana prison to the Mandalay prison. — Than Oo (Laymyatha)

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The prison bus was transporting offenders from the Pyinnmana prison to the Mandalay prison. — Than Oo (Laymyatha)
Western Command provides health care to villagers in Ann Township, Rakhine State

WESTERN Command’s medical team provided health treatment to 157 villagers, helping arrange for further treatment at a local hospital.

The commander of the Western Command and officials proceeded to the area to give medical treatment to 157 villagers, helping arrange for further treatment at the local military hospital.

The commander and officials then donated lunch to the teachers and students.

Crime

Six arrested after a fight in ward

SIX people were arrested by local police after a fight on the street in a ward in Tachilek Township, in the eastern part of Shan State last Thursday.

A fight occurred between the two groups of people that included Ma Aye Aye Nyein and her sister Ma May Thazin Oo with possession of 135 grams of human trafficking.

A similar case occurred in Banmauk Township in Kachin State on that day. Police collected 0.92 grams of human trafficking.

A drug squad comprising soldiers and police staged a raid on a house in Kya Inn Seik Kyi township on 13 August, leading to the discovery of stimulant tablets, weapons and some cash in local currency.

A drug squad in Taungyi searched a vehicle bound for Heho on Taunggyi-Meiktila highway the same day. The police charged Naing Mon Aung and his wife Ma Shwe Mi with possession.

A drug squad in Taunggyi searched a vehicle bound for Heho on Taunggyi-Meiktila highway the same day. The police have charged Soe Aung and Tun Yi with the possession of 11,800 stimulants.

Police rescue two women from traffickers

POLICE rescued two women Wednesday from local traffickers before they were able to leave Yangon for Muse, a border town between Myanmar and China, arresting three other women for human trafficking.

Thanks to a tip-off to police from a member of the public, police arrested the traffickers at Aungmingala Highway Terminal in Yangon.

A drug squad comprised of soldiers and police staged a raid on a house in Kya Inn Seik Kyi township on 13 August, leading to the discovery of stimulant tablets, weapons and some cash in local currency.

A drug squad in Taunggyi searched a vehicle bound for Heho on Taunggyi-Meiktila highway the same day. The police have charged Soe Aung and Tun Yi with the possession of 11,800 stimulants.

A 26-YEAR-OLD man was arrested by the police after they found in his possession a cache of illegal teak in Indaw Township in Sagaing Region.

Police raids on houses discover stimulants, weapons

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A 26-YEAR-OLD man was arrested by the police after they found in his possession a cache of illegal teak in Indaw Township in Sagaing Region.

Acting on a tip-off, a combined team comprised of members from the township forest department and police searched a car being driven by Chit Phwe (aka Japan) en route from Gahe Village on a road near Natma-hokegyi Village in Indaw Township.

In the car they found 44 illegally harvested teak timbers weighing a total 1.15 tonnes.

The suspect has been charged under Section 6 (1) of the Public Property Protection Act (1947).
Electric car imports suspended

THE import of electric cars to showrooms and the automobile expo will come to a halt starting in early May because there is virtually no demand for the electric cars, said a businessman who is engaged in the car industry.

The unpopularity of electric cars stems from their costly repair when they break down. Also, these cars are difficult to resell on the used car market. Therefore, the import of electric cars will be suspended, said Ko Tun Tun Naing from Tun automobile showroom in Mingala Taung Nyunt Township.

These electric cars are manufactured by Japanese automobile companies, including Nissan, with the aim of reducing pollution. Japanese-made cars worth Ks10 to 15 million are imported to Yangon car showrooms and sales centers. Nissan-made Leaf electric cars were imported because of their popularity across the world.

MCB to commence share trading from 26 August

MYANMAR Citizen Banks (MCB) will commence its share at the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) trading on 26 August, it is learnt from an announcement released by the YSX on 12 August.

MCB is the third company which has been granted permission to sell its shares on the YSX. MCB will announce the opening share prices of MCB on 25 August. Currently, the shares of First Myanmar Investment (FMI) and Thilawa SEZ Holdings are being sold at YSX.

The share prices of FMI and Thilawa are required to be observed when MCB enters YSX. Currently, trading of shares at the stock market has been on the decline.

However, the new company entering the stock market might shake down well the market. Therefore, people should keep eyes on the share market, it is learnt.

Five restricted export goods relaxed by Union Government

RESTRICTIONS on five out of 12 controlled export goods have been relaxed by the Union Government, it is learnt from the Ministry of Commerce.

Previously restricted for export were sesame oil, mustard oil and mustard seeds, sunflower seeds and sunflower oil, by-products after oil crops are milled and shrimp brine. Previously, sesame, sunflower and mustard oil and seeds; by-products of oil crop-milling; gold; diamond; petroleum; crude oil; rare animals and products like ivory; buffaloes, oxen, elephants, horses; shrimp brine; arms and ammunitions; and antiques were prohibited for export.

The Commerce Ministry will make efforts to triple the export volume in the incumbent government period. Currently, efforts are being made to bolster the export volume year by year in each sector. —GNLM

Myanmar’s United Paints Group adopts modern software system

FPT Information System (FPT IS), together with ACE Data Systems, last month announced the successful implementation of the SAP® Business All-in-One solution for United Paints Group (UPG), the leading paint manufacturer group in Myanmar.

UPG is the first local company to use the SAP Business All-in-One solution in Myanmar, an integrated system that allows for information to be synchronized across different business units. The aim was to provide the business with higher data accuracy, enhance the calculation of product cost and empower faster decision making.

“The successful implementation of SAP Business All-in-One will provide UPG with a better controlling tool for our operations. This tool not only helps UPG operate efficiently now but will also bring more success in the future,” said Mr. U Aye Han, Managing Director, UPG.

The SAP Business All-in-One solution provides managers and investors with transparent information to better support their decision making. This fixed-scope, scalable ERP software helps customers achieve centralized control over their finance and operations quickly and at a low total cost of ownership with automated tools and pre-configured functionality.

“We are pleased that our software assists UPG to run smoothly and increase competitiveness as the company embarks on an expansion journey,” commented Mr. Lihier Urbizu Sierra, Managing Director, SAP Indochina.

UPG’s success in applying technology into its business process will hopefully serve as an encouragement for other Myanmar enterprises to leverage go digital. This is an opportunity for FPT in particular and foreign IT companies in general to enlarge their market in the country, company officials said. —GNLM

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Bangladesh central bank says withholding heist probe info from ‘foreign perpetrators’

MANILA — Bangladesh’s central bank has said it is withholding findings of investigations into the cyber theft of $81 million from its account at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York to avoid tipping off the “foreign perpetrators” of the hack.

Bangladesh Bank lawyer Aminul Hossain was responding to comments by Rizal Commercial Banking Corp (RCBC) in the Philippines — through which the stolen money was routed before disappearing into the bank.

“Bangladesh Bank knows enough about what happened from the internal and external reports so far obtained by it and others,” the central bank’s lawyer Hossain told Reuters late on Saturday.

“This truth is being deliberately withheld from the public domain so as not to allow the foreign perpetrators of the hacking to have knowledge of the investigations,” RCBC has questioned Bangladesh Bank’s June decision not to extend a contract with US cyber security firm FireEye, whose team defused both, and local reporters said it was also investigated by the central bank in connection with the heist.

RCBC has asked the Bangladesh Bank’s June decision not to extend a contract with US cyber security firm FireEye to investigate the February heist, saying the recovery of the money could be “imperiled” if someone within the central bank was found responsible for the heist.

The initial FireEye report submitted to Bangladeshi authorities in March and seen by Reuters had blamed a sophisticated third party for the attack and had identified around 35 “compromised” Bangladesh Bank assets. As many as six types of malware were used to infect Bangladesh Bank computer systems.

A Bangladesh government-appointed panel said in May that Bangladesh Bank officials may have been involved in the brazen theft, but its report has also yet to be released.

“That’s why I think a report is not forthcoming,” Maria Celia Estavillo, RCBC’s legal and regulatory affairs head, told Reuters. “They should finish their investigation, they should find out what happened in Bangladesh, they should find out who is liable there, they should give a copy of that to the authorities of the government. And if they are confident of the strength of their case, they should file a case in court.”

The central bank of the Philippines last week fined RCBC a record $1 billion pesos ($21 million) in connection with the heist.

RCBC had expected the fine because of some lapses within the bank, Estavillo said, but blamed a couple of rogue employees for letting the money go out of the bank despite stop-payment instructions from Bangladesh Bank. She said internal investigations by the bank showed nobody from its head office was complicit.

Bangladesh Bank said RCBC had “corporate knowledge” of the money laundering.— Reuters

Commuters pass by the front of the Bangladesh central bank building in Dhaka, on 8 March, 2016. PHOTO: Reuters

Five dead, two rescued in Indian fishing boat capsizal, joint search for 10 missing continues

DHAKA — A massive joint search and rescue operation has been launched by Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Coast Guard and Indian Coast Guard after an Indian fishing vessel carrying some 17 people sank off Saturday in the Bay of Bengal.

A Bangladesh Navy official told Xinhua on Sunday that two Indian fishermen were rescued alive from the Bay of Bengal where the Indian fishing boat capsized on Saturday night.

Bangladesh Navy personnel also recovered five bodies which were discovered floating off Bangladesh coast, said the official who preferred to be unnamed.

The Indian fishing vessel carrying 17 people on Saturday night sank off the coast of Bangladesh. Bangladesh Navy had then deployed two ships and a patrol aircraft after getting signal from a passing vessel.

The Indian boat sank in the Bay of Bengal about 40 nautical miles north of Hiron Point, one of the well known vacation destinations in Sundarbans, the world’s largest mangrove forest shared by India and Bangladesh.

According to the official, a joint search operation is now under way.

The Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Coast Guard and Indian Coast Guard have been conducting joint operation in the sea, he said.

“The joint search now is being focused on finding more survivors.”— Xinhua

Thai police find more unexploded bombs following coordinated blasts

BANGKOK — Thai police over the weekend found and defused five explosive devices that had failed to detonate when an as yet unidentified group carried out a series of deadly bomb attacks on popular tourist spots late last week.

Police said they had arrested one suspect following the bomb and arson attacks on Thursday and Friday that killed four people and wounded dozens more in some of Thailand’s best-known southern resorts and islands.

The attacks came just days after Thailand voted to accept a military-backed constitution that the ruling junta, which seized power in 2014, has said will lead to an election by the end next year.

“These acts were undertaken by a group in many areas simultaneously, following orders from one individual,” Pongsapat Pongcharoen, a deputy national police chief, told reporters on Sunday, without elaborating.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Analysts say suspicion would inevitably fall on enemies of the ruling junta ag-grieved by the referendum results, or insurgents from Muslim-majority provinces in the south of the mostly Buddhist country.

Two incendiary devices in mobile telephone power packs were found in a market in the upscale neighborhood of Hua Hin on Sunday, the interior ministry said in a statement. A bomb disposal team defused both, and local police said the devices had been there since Wednesday.

The resort was the scene of one of the most devastating of the wave of bombs when a blast ripped through an alley in a bar area on Thursday evening. There were two more blasts in the town less than 12 hours later.

Another fire bomb was found on the island of Phuket on Sunday and defused, local police said. It had been set to detonate at 3 am on Friday (2000 GMT on Thursday), local police said.

In Phang Nga, two de-vices were found on Saturday near a market that was torched in an attack early on Friday.— Reuters

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Thai police find more unexploded bombs following coordinated blasts

Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) official checks at the scene of a bomb blast in Hua Hin, south of Bangkok, Thailand, on 12 August, 2016. PHOTO: Reuters

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6 Regional
15 August 2016
NEW DELHI — Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said here on Saturday that consensus had been reached with the Indian side to firmly support each other so as to ensure the successful organisation of the upcoming G20 and BRICS summits.

Speaking to journalists before wrapping up his visit to India, the foreign minister said the major aim of this trip was to conduct strategic communications with India ahead of the G20 summit scheduled next month in China and the BRICS summit to be held in India in October.

On bilateral relations, Wang said the two countries have made all-around progress in a number of areas since the establishment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government more than two years ago. He cited growth momentum of trade, rapid increase of China’s investment in India, railway cooperation as well as humanity and cultural exchanges as fields that enjoy vigorous growth.

The foreign minister stressed that as two neighbours that are both the world’s major countries, it is inevitable for China and India to come across certain problems in developing ties. However, the common interests far exceed differences, and the need for cooperation far exceeds competition. China and India should not let specific differences affect the overall situation of friendly bilateral ties, nor should they let individual problems obstruct the course of cooperation, the foreign minister emphasized.

He said that the two sides have reached consensus that individual problems will eventually be solved through the strengthening of mutual trust and reduction of unnecessary misunderstandings.—Xinhua

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (L) receives interviews in New Delhi, capital of India, on 13 August 2016. Wang Yi said here on Saturday that consensus had been reached with the Indian side to firmly support each other so as to ensure the successful organisation of the upcoming G20 and BRICS summits. "Photo: Xinhua"

ISLAMABAD — Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain said on Sunday that the government will take revenge of every drop of the blood of innocent people who lost lives in a recent terrorist attack in the southwestern city of Quetta.

The Islamic States (IS) and a Pakistani Taliban group claimed responsibility for the suicide attack at the emergency department of a hospital on 8 August which killed over 70 people and injured nearly 200 others. Most of those killed were senior lawyers who gathered outside the hospital to collect body of a lawyer who was also killed by militants.

"We are shocked at the Quetta terrorist attack and we stand with the bereaved family. Every Pakistani feels the pain. Blood of the innocent people will not go waste. I announce here, the government will take revenge of the blood of the innocent people," Hussain said in his Independence Day address in Islamabad.

Pakistan is celebrating its 69th Independence Day with traditional enthusiasm to pay homage to those who sacrificed lives to achieve the goal of an independent country for the Muslims of the sub-continent.

“Every visible and invisible enemy will be chased and crushed, in order to establish durable peace in the country,” said the Pakistani president.

He said the menace of terrorism will be eliminated from the country by carrying out decisive actions with a renewed determination.—Xinhua

Pakistani president vows to defeat terrorists in Independence Day speech

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Opinion

Time for reflection about effective teaching

Kyaw Thura

A

quality and

acquisition of quality education is everyone’s dream, which is why the debate on the educational reform has recently attracted more public attention. It is not hard to understand that the standard of education determines the fate of a country. What really matters most is to learn the lessons from the success stories of other countries. It is found that academically successful countries encourage teachers not only to concentrate on education but also to work with each other for self-improvement and self-reflection.

In the teaching-learning process in any given education system, improvement is unthinkable if teachers fail to evaluate and assess their classroom practices.

It is therefore absolutely vital for teachers to reflect on their past and present experience so as to introduce better practices of classroom management in the future. Unfortunately, most teachers in our country remain stuck in daily teaching routines, without noticing that they are becoming fossilised because they have stopped learning from their teaching. Some teachers defend themselves and their actions by saying that the repetition of the same classroom activities is typical of the country’s education system.

Penny Ur once commented on teacher behaviour that “teachers who have been teaching for twenty years may be divided into two categories: those with twenty years’ experience and those with one year’s experience repeated twenty times.” This highlights the difference between ‘fossilised teaching routines’ and ‘innovative teaching practices’. It is incumbent on teachers to break this vicious spiral of their automatic and routine teaching behaviour and start to reflect on their teaching experience.

2016 School Health Week

Dr Aung Tun (Advisor, Ministry of Health and Sports)

School is the basic institution in every society and offers the possibility to improve the health not only of the school children but also of the whole community. It can be achieved by implementing and strengthening comprehensive school health programs in Myanmar.

History of School Health Services in Myanmar

In Myanmar, even before independence from British, a medical officer and a dental surgeon for every 30,000 school children had been assigned by the Department of Education, reflecting the importance of children’s health during their school period. A few years after independence, the Government has established in 1953, the Maternal, Child & School Health Department under the Ministry for expansion of school health activities. School health program has been included in the first Peoples’ Health Plan since 1977-78 as one of the community health projects in the country. In 1996, according to changed concepts and situation of global partners with Global School Health Initiative, Myanmar adopted the concept of health promotion through schools. Aiming to promote the health standard of the entire student youths, the skills and knowledge needed for adoption of healthy lifestyle, Health Promoting School program has been introduced into existing school health services since 1996.

Current Situation of School Health in Myanmar

A very significant activity for school health program of Myanmar, Myanmar Global School Health Survey was conducted in 2007 for the purpose of monitoring the prevalence of health risk behaviors and protective factors related to the leading causes of mortality and morbidity among students aged 13-15 years: dietary behaviors, hygiene, mental health, physical activity, protective factors, tobacco use, Knowledge about HIV Infection and AIDS and violence and unintentional injuries.

The 2007 MYANMAR GSHS employed a two-stage cluster sample design to produce a representative sample of students in Grades 8, 9, 10 and 11 (72) questionnaire were completed in 50 schools. The results of Myanmar GSHS showed that the prevalence of risk taking behaviors among 13-15 years old school children in Myanmar are not very high. The main features of the results are as follows:

- There are good healthy practices such as cleaning or brushing their teeth and washing hands before eating and after using toilets or latrines.
- Prevalence of alcohol use and other drug in comparison of neighboring countries were relatively low. Tobacco use is also reduced compared to 2004 Myanmar GYTS results. Access to tobacco products was reported to be easy. Although the prevalence of overweight is low, the percent of students who are at risk for becoming overweight is 3.1%.
- Unintentional injuries are prevalent among students and are more prevalent among males than females.

School Health Division of Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health and Sports will conduct new GSHS during August 2016.

Aim and Strategies of School Health Program

To promote the health standards of the entire student youth, the skills and knowledge needed for adopting a healthy lifestyle.

Strategies

The following strategies were developed based on the national health policy, UN SDG goals and the primary health care approach aiming towards a successful implementation of the school health program.

1. Conducting refresher training for teachers and BHS on the development of health promoting schools to promote the health standards of the entire student youth, the skills and knowledge needed for adopting a healthy life style at all levels.
2. Enhancing better quality and coverage of school health care by providing sufficient manpower and supplies.
3. Establishing school health committees at different levels for monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure successful implementation.
4. Conducting research on the impact of school health program to promote existing school health activities.
5. Promoting co-ordination and collaboration mechanisms with ministry of education and other related departments.
6. Organising resources for national school health program through the involvement of local and international NGO’s and international organizations.

School Health Services in Myanmar

School Health Division of Department of Public Health is responsible for planning and implementation of school health program in Myanmar. This division is headed by a Director supported by a team of technical staff. State/Region Directors are responsible for school health program activities at the respective state and region.

The most operational unit for rendering comprehensive health care is given by Township Health Unit. Previously, 80 townships out of 330 in Myanmar have already set up with school health teams each of which is organised with a medical officer (the team leader) one assistant medical officer, one dental surgeon, one school health nurse, one dental nurse, one children officer or school medical social worker, and some other clerical staff. In those townships without the school health team, maternal and child health officers or township medical officers take charge of the school health services. In rural area the health assistant who are the team leaders of the rural health center are assigned to carry out school health activities in their respective jurisdictions. According to new organizational set up of Department of Public Health, A Township Officer for MCH/School/Nutrition is assigned to carry out school health activities in each township. Myanmar School-based STI control program are gaining momentum with active involvement of related health projects such as School Health Project, Nutrition project, Maternal and Child Health Project and Lymphatic Filariasis elimination program and Ministry of Education as well as WHO and UNICEF.

2016 School Health Week Activities

As School Health Program aims to improve the health of entire students, the program is in keeping along the track of Health Promoting School up to the community level. The Education sector plays the ownership role and the Health sector is mainly providing the technical support for implementation of the (9) components of Health Promoting Schools.
Kanbawza, Myanmar Football Federation

to sign sponsorship agreement

KANBAWZA Bank and the Myanmar Football Federation will sign a sponsorship agreement for MFF U-19 and U-23 international invitational cups on 16 August, said U Phone Naing Zaw, the chief executive officer of the MFF.

The bank plans to provide primary sponsorship for those tournaments to help the athletes give their best performances in international competition.

As part of preparations for the ASEAN U-19 in September in Vietnam, the KBZ Bank U-19 Four Countries Invitational Cup will take place between 22 and 28 August at Mandalay Thiri Stadium in Mandalay.

Myanmar U-19, Thailand U-19, Vietnam U-19 and J-League Sapporo Club U-18 will participate in the upcoming sports event, with the organizers planning to award K15,000, the champion cup and medals for the winning team, K10,000 and medals for the runner-up and K5000 prize money and medals for the third place finisher.

Tickets will be sold for K2,000 per ordinary seat and K3,000 per special seat. A ticket allows audiences to watch two football matches.

Members and coaches of Myanmar U-19 team arrived Mandalay on Saturday.—200

Local military personnel provide medical help, carry out sanitation work in Pakokku Township

Prior to being reopened, roughly 400 hundred vehicles coming up from Lashio were reportedly queued up along the stretch of highway behind the landslide, waiting for the road to reopen.

“We haven’t finished building a steal bridge under the road to support the road. But, we’ve laid down a road of rocks which have allowed us to let cars pass by one by one. We let the cars coming from Muse go first,” said a traffic police official from the Office of the No.20 Traffic Police.

On the same day, local military personnel teamed up with local people carried out communal sanitation work in schools and monasteries of the villages in Pakokku Township.

They cleared up silt and rubbish in the schools which remained because of the flood water, and cleaned the school furniture.

—C-in-C’s Office

A mobile military medical team of Northwest Command have been giving healthcare services to flood victims from flood-hit villages of Pakokku Township in Magwe Region, who took shelter at the Thihoshin pagoda, Shewgu pagoda and Shwetantit Pagoda in Pakokku Township on Saturday 13 August.

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—C-in-C’s Office

Landslide stricken Lashio-Muse highway reopened

THE Lashio-Muse Union Highway, which was temporary closed on Monday morning after landslides struck a section in northern Shan State’s Hsenwi Township, has been reopened recently.

The landslide, which struck below the level of the road, was the result of continual torrents of water streaming down off the mountainside during four days of consecutive downpours.

After the landslide was reported, Lashio’s toll gate was immediately closed so that urgent repairs could be made to mitigate further congestion backlogs.

Repair efforts to create a temporary one-lane diversion to the section of the road hit by the landslides, by laying a series of rocks, was reportedly completed at 5pm yesterday, allowing traffic coming from both directions to alternately traverse along the section of highway.

Prior to being reopened, traffic police have made it known that while the highway has been reopened, the landslide stricken section of the road has not yet been fully repaired, while efforts will reportedly be made to simultaneously finish constructing the steel support bridge and re-tarmac the damaged road.—Myitmaka News Agency

Students’ Health, Tomorrow’s Wealth

School health services, which serve to develop and improve basic health needs and correct health behavior of the new generation student youth, is an essential and important national investment.

The success and efficiency of school health program depends largely on sound coordinated and effective administrations.

There should be greater understanding and cooperation between the health, education, related departments, NGOs and authorities concerned at all levels in Myanmar.

They should jointly assume responsibilities for strengthening national infrastructure in support of the comprehensive school program.

2016 School Health Week

>> From page 8

With the objective to enhance health promoting school activities, the Ministry of Health and Sports, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education will launch the School Health Week of 2016 in the 2nd week of August. The following activities will also carry out in all basic education schools of the country from August 8 to 13, 2016.

(1) School Environmental Sanitation

(2) School Medical Examination and Treatment

(3) Prevention Communicable and Non-communicable Diseases

(4) School Health Education

(5) School Nutrition promotion and Food Safety

POEM:

Days of lunar eclipse

Hi! Sky,
Water-drops you weep
for us existing in the world?

Hi! Sea,
Heavy sighs you exhale
to create dark clouds for us?

Hi! Sun,
Energy you’ve distributed
to offer us
continuation of survival?

Each is dutiful
In their responsibility
Seasons are alternate in time
But our earth’s exhausted
With soaring vapour of gunpowder.

Yin Nwe Ko (Linn)

Trucks are seen at the Lashio-Muse highway. PHOTO: MYITMAKA NEWS AGENCY

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A military medical team giving medical check-up to local people.

PHOTO: C-in-C’S OFFICE

Photo: MFF

Trucks are seen an the Lashio-Muse highway.

PHOTO: MYITMAKA NEWS AGENCY
Brexit could be delayed as government departments not ready

LONDON — Britain could leave the European Union toward the end of 2019, instead of early that year as expected by some politicians, reported the Sunday Times citing sources who have been briefed by ministers that Brexit departments were not ready.

The UK voted to leave the EU on 23 June, but Prime Minister Theresa May has said she will not invoke “Article 50” before the end of March 2017. The cabinet is expected to hold a meeting on 30 September to decide when to formally notify the European Union of the UK’s intention to leave.

Five killed, over 70,000 people displaced in Philippines due to monsoon rains

MANILA — At least five people were killed and over 70,000 individuals were displaced due to monsoon rains that affected mostly northern part of the Philippines, including Metro Manila, during the past days, the state disaster management agency said on Sunday.

Those who died were either due to drowning or hit by the walls that collapsed in their respective places, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said, adding that one was also injured and another was missing. A total of 5,665 families or 24,225 people were still inside the 52 evacuation centres.

Violent protests erupt in Milwaukee after police kill armed suspect

MILWAUKEE — Protesters fired guns, hurled bricks and set a gas station on fire in the US mid-western city of Milwaukee on Saturday night, hours after a patrol officer shot and killed an armed suspect who took flight after a traffic stop, authorities said.

The 23-year-old suspect, who had a lengthy arrest record, was under investigation for a Violent protests erupt in Milwaukee during their rule which collapsed in late 2001 are yet to claim compensation.

Nepal’s major opposition party urges govt to focus on implementation of bilateral deals

KATHMANDU — The CPN (UML), the main opposition in the Nepalese Parliament, on Sunday urged the government to focus on the implementation of bilateral agreements signed with China and India in the erstwhile K.P Sharma Oli-led government.

Speaking at a parliament session on behalf of his party, CPN (UML) parliamentarian Keshav Badal asked the government to implement a number of bilateral agreements reached with neighboring countries during the then prime minister’s visits.

“The incumbent government should work toward enhancing bilaterial relationship with neighbouring countries and for this, implementation of the bilateral agreements reached with China and India will be crucial. Our party strongly suggests the government to implement those bilateral deals reached with both neighbours,” he said.

Bomb blast destroys school in South Afghanistan

QALAT, (Afghanistan) — A bomb blast organized by militants destroyed a primary school in Afghanistan’s Zabul District with Qalat as its capital 340 km south of Kabul on Sunday, a local official said.

“Militants exploded an explosive device inside a school in Shahr-e-Safa district early Saturday and destroyed the building,” district governor Abdul Samad Durani told Xinhua.

Since the attack happened early morning, no one was hurt in the blast, the official assured. The official, however, blamed the enemies of peace, a reference to the Taliban for organizing the blast.

Thai army searches for missing military helicopter, five on board

BANGKOK — The Thai army said it was searching for a military helicopter that went missing on Sunday in northern Thailand with five people on board, including a major general.

The UH-72 light helicopter disappeared from radar at around 10.30 am (0330 GMT) around 30 minutes into its flight, said Lieutenant General Somsak Ninbanjerdkun, Third Army commander overseeing Thailand’s north. Among those on board was Major General Nopporn Ruanchan, commander of the army’s 4th Infantry Division, he said. “The helicopter is still missing,” junta spokesman Winthai Suwarae said on Sunday.

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Syrian refugees in Jordan get German aid of 20 mn euros

AMMAN — Germany and Jordan on Sunday signed a agreement of 20 million euros (223.3 million US dollar) grants to support the teaching of Syrian refugees at Jordanian schools, the state-run Petra news agency reported.

Jordan’s Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Emad Fakhoury said the grant is part of support donor countries pledged to extend to Jordan during a meeting for the donor community held in London early this year. The minister said Germany pledged to provide 300 million euros (335 million dollars) in aid to Jordan during 2016 of which 100 million euros (112 million dollars) will be for refugees and 200 million euros (223 million dollars) to support host communities of Syrian refugees.

The minister, who reviewed challenges Jordan in the field of education, stressed on the importance of the support extended to reduce pressure on Jordan in this regard.

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Kurdish forces in fresh push to close in on ISIS-held Mosul

WARDAK, (Iraq) — Kurdish Peshmerga forces backed by US-led coalition airstrikes launched a fresh attack on Islamic State militants in northern Iraq in the early hours of Sunday, as part of a plan to close in on their de facto capital Mosul, a Kurdish official said.

The offensive began after heavy shelling and several air strikes, a Reuters correspondent reported from Wardak, 30 km (19 miles) south-east of Mosul, where some of the Peshmerga forces are deployed.

“Clouds of black smoke could be seen at a distance, possibly tires or other items set on fire by the militants to obstruct the planes’ visibility.”

The Iraqi army and the Peshmerga forces of the Kurdish self-rule region are gradually taking up positions around Mosul, 400 km (248 miles) north of Baghdad, from whose Grand Mosque in 2014 Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared his caliphate spanning regions of Iraq and Syria.

Mosul is the largest urban centre under the militants’ control, with a pre-war population of nearly 2 million. Its fall would mark their effective defeat in Iraq, according to Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi, who has said he aims to retake the city this year.

The operation that started Sunday is part of the “shaping operations” to prepare for an offensive on the city itself, said a Kurdish official who declined to be identified.

The Iraqi army is trying to advance from the south. In July it captured the Qoyyara airfield, 60 km (35 miles) south of Mosul, which will serve as the main staging post for the expected offensive on the city.—Reuters

Ten children reported dead in Yemen air strike, parliament convenes

DUBAI — At least 10 children were killed and 21 were injured in northern Yemen on Saturday, aid group Medecins Sans Frontieres said, in what the country’s dominant Houthi group said was a Saudi-led air strike on a school.

The tragedy occurred as Yemen’s parliament convened for the first time in al-Mahdw, in a move that bolsters the Houthis and challenges the Saudi-backed exiled government.

A spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition had no comment on the attack.

Saud Arabia and its allies have launched thousands of air strikes against the Houthi movement since 2015.

“Twenty-one children were killed and 21 were under 15 years old,” the medical aid group said on its official Twitter account.

Mohammed Abdul-Salam, a senior official from the Houthi movement whose main support base is in Saada, blamed the attack on the mostly Gulf Arab military coalition that has been at war with the group for over a year.—Reuters

Thousands return to Manbij after IS militants flee city

BEIRUT — Thousands of displaced residents streamed back into the northern Syrian town of Manbij on Saturday after US-backed fighters ousted the last Islamic State militants from their former stronghold, residents and US allies said.

The US-backed Syria Democratic Forces (SDF) announced on Friday they finally ousted after a deal with residents who were in contact with militants, believing to have been their relatives, toward Saudi Arabia and its allies that had been using civilians as human shields.

Hundreds of cars and vehicles carrying families and their belongings flocked into the city from make-shift camps and villages in the countryside, where many of the city’s residents took shelter during the two-month campaign, according to an SDF official and relatives who were in contact with those leaving.

“Thousands are coming back and shops are opening. Today is the first day life is returning to normal,” said Sharfan Darwish, spokesman for the SDF-allied Manbij Military Council.

The militants were showing trademarks of air strikes against the Houthis since they drove the internationally recognised government into exile in March 2015.

“The SDF, formed last year by recruiting Arabs to join forces with the powerful YPG Kurdish militia, launched an offensive with the support of US-led strikes at the end of May to remove Islamic State from areas it controls along the Turkish border.

The loss of Manbij, occupied by Islamic State since early 2014, is a big blow to the militants as it is of strategic importance, serving as a conduit for the transit of foreign jihadists and provisions from the Turkish border. The operation, in which US special forces played a significant role on the ground, marks the most ambitious advance by a group allied to Washington in Syria since the United States launched its military campaign against Islamic State two years ago.—Reuters
Venezuelans cross reopened border to Colombia for food, medicine

SAN ANTONIO, (Venezuelans) — Thousands of Venezuelans were welcomed to Colombia by a military band early on Saturday morning as the two countries’ borders were officially reopened after a year.

Some people had traveled across Venezuela to Colombia for food, medicine and other basics that are in short supply in their own country. The border crossing through the Simon Bolivar international bridge were opened by Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro abruptly closed the border last August hoping, he said, to protect his country from smugglers and paramilitaries.

Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro abruptly closed the border last August hoping, he said, to protect his country from smugglers and paramilitaries. Critics saw the action as a stunt to shift attention away from worsening domestic problems. Maduro announced the reopening on Thursday, alongside his Colombian counterpart Juan Manuel Santos.

“We’re interested in a new beginning in economic and commercial relations with all of Colombia’s productive sectors,” Maduro said on Thursday. Santos said it would be a “gradual” reopening.

Six border crossings and by paying dirt paths, shallow river crossings and by paying.

Venezuela’s stores lack the most basic foods and medicines. Queues of hundreds and even thousands of people are common, and riots and looting are a daily occurrence.

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A representative from Colombia’s Foreign Ministry said 5,000 people had crossed in the first two hours.

The border has for years been a hotbed of smuggling of everything from price-controlled toothpaste and pasta to illegal drugs and weapons. Maduro blamed Colombians, among others, for the country’s crisis and the closure strained relations between the South American neighbours.

Many people continued to cross the border over the past year using dirt paths, shallow river crossings and by paying officials.

Six injured in attack on Swiss train; motive unknown, police say

ZURICH — Six people were injured in an attack aboard a Swiss train on Saturday by a man armed with a knife and flammable fluid. St Gallen cantonal police said.

Three adults, two teenagers and a child aged six were hurt, according to a police statement. Five were stabbed or burned. A sixth suffered smoke inhalation as he came to the aid of the others. The assailant, a Swiss citizen, was also injured.

“According to current information, a 27-year-old Swiss man poured out a flammable liquid. He was also armed with at least one knife. The liquid caught fire,” the statement said.

Authorities did not yet know the motive for the attacks but a crime of passion was one possibility, Bruno Metzger of the St Gallen cantonal police said in an interview with welt.de.

“A terrorism background still seems very, very far-fetched,” Metzger said.

The assailant was in police custody, he said, but none of those injured — including the assailant — was responsive, so they could not be questioned.

The police said a criminal inquiry was under way.

Both a woman and the attacker were in critical condition, according to Swiss broadcaster SRF, citing the St Gallen police.

The cantonal police did not respond to a request for further information by email and could not be reached by phone.

The attack occurred at 2:20pm (08:20am EDT) as the train neared the Salez station on a trip between Buchs and Sennwald in St. Gallen, a canton in the northeast of the Alpine republic, the police statement said.

It was the first attack of its kind in Switzerland in recent memory. In December 2015, a 33-year-old Swiss man broke into his neighbors’ house in Rupperswil and killed four people before setting the house on fire, an incident that shocked the country.
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS
MYANMA RAILWAYS

INVITATION TO OPEN TENDER

Opened Tenders are invited by Myanma Railways, Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar from reputed manufacturers or their bona fide agents from the Republic of India for the supply and delivery of the following:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr No</th>
<th>Tender No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Tender Issuing Date</th>
<th>Tender Closing Date and Time</th>
<th>Tender Document Fee (per Set)</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>13/MR/INDIA</td>
<td>Track Geometry Measuring (1)</td>
<td>15.8.2016</td>
<td>21.11.2016 (14:30 Hr)</td>
<td>US$ 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>15/MR/INDIA</td>
<td>Rail Road Excavator with five type of Attachments (3) Nos</td>
<td>15.8.2016</td>
<td>21.11.2016 (14:30 Hr)</td>
<td>US$ 100</td>
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Tender Documents are Only available at the Office of the Deputy General Manager (Supply), Supply Department, Myanma Railways, Corner of 51st Street and Merchant Street, Botataung Township, Yangon, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar during office hours on payment of non-refundable fee as stated above. Further enquiries about tender can be made to Deputy General Manager (Supply), Supply Department, Myanma Railways by fax to (Fax No.95-1-291994, 95-67-77016) or by phone to (95-1-291991, 95-1-291985) during office hours.

All Bid not accompanied by earnest money (Bid Bond) will not be considered. No Telegraphic/Telex/Fax/email proposal will be considered or accepted.

Myanma Railways reserves the right to reject any and all tenders without furnishing reasons. Tender will be accepted only from Bidder who has purchased Tender Documents officially.

The above Goods are to be purchased by the proceeds of the loan from the Government of the Republic of India.

Managing Director, Myanma Railways
Ministry of Transport and Communications, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar
Japanese boy band SMAP disappoints fans by announcing break-up

TOKYO — Japanese boy band SMAP will break up at the end of the year, its promoter said on Sunday, disappointing legions of fans in Japan and Asia just seven months after its members pledged to stay together. The five-man group, which formed in 1988 when its members were in their teens, will split on 31 December, Johnny & Associates said in a statement, adding that all members would continue solo careers. “We apologise for the trouble we have caused. Please forgive us for having led to a result like this. We are so sorry,” group leader Masahiro Nakai said, the Kyodo news agency reported.

The break-up attracted wide media coverage on Sunday, and distraught fans took to Twitter to express their sadness at the group’s demise. SMAP, whose name stands for “Sports Music Assemble People” had averted a break-up in January, leading to a collective sigh of relief, even from Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. In its heyday the group packed venues around Asia and sang for Chinese leaders. Its 2003 single “The Only Flower in the World” sold over two million copies.—Reuters

Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone book with rare typo may fetch USD 25,940

LONDON — A copy of the first Harry Potter novel Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone, carrying a typo, is expected to fetch between USD 19,460 to USD 25,940 at an auction. The book, one of the 500 copies of the rare first edition of the book, contains an error on page 53 where a list school supplies that Potter must purchase before attending Hogwarts magic school repeats the ‘1 wand’, reported The Week.

The error was corrected in subsequent prints of JK Rowling’s 1997 novel but some copies are still in circulation. This particular copy is described as being in “exceptionally fine condition” and has been put on the auction block by Bonhams. The book will go on sale on 9 November. “As the first book in the series, Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone has a special place in the affections of the millions of readers across the world and the proofreading error about the wand in the first edition has, of course, become a treasured piece of Harry Potter arcana,” said Bonhams head of books and manuscripts Matthew Hale. The story of boy wizard is on a revival again after nine years in the literary world following the release of the script for “Harry Potter and the Cursed Child”, a London stage play co-written by Rowling, Jack Thorne and John Tiffany and billed as the eighth Potter story. As the new Harry Potter play opened to swooning reviews and delighted gasps from the audience in London on Saturday, its creator came on to the stage to announce that this marked the end of the journey for the beloved boy wizard.

The play Harry Potter and the Cursed Child and a book based on its script have helped awaken a new wave of Pottermania five years since the previous episode was made into a movie.—PTI

Anand L Rai plans to make action drama

MUMBAI — Having delivered hits in comedy and romance genres, director Anand L Rai says he would now like to make an action drama film. “I would like to make an action-drama film. I want to try it. I have an idea. But it is going to be a tough one. It will not be like Hollywood style. It (action) will be backed by emotions and drama,” Rai told PTI.

When asked if his idea is on the lines of films like “Dangal” and “Rowdy Rathore”, he said, “My film will be different. It will have right dose of action coupled with emotions.” Rai has made a place for himself in the industry with hits like comedy “Tanu Weds Manu” franchise and romantic drama, “Raanjhanaa”.

Meanwhile, the 45-year-old director is excited about his next film as co-producer, “Happy Bhaag Jayegi”, which stars Abhay Deol, Diana Penty, Jimmy Shergil in the lead roles.—PTI

Star Wars actor behind R2-D2 robot dies aged 81

LONDON — British Star Wars actor Kenny Baker, who played the robot R2-D2 in six of the films, has died aged 81, Baker’s niece told the BBC on Saturday.

Baker, who was three feet, eight inches tall, had suffered from a long illness, his relative said.

In addition to the first Star Wars film in 1977, he also appeared in Empire Strikes Back, Return of the Jedi and three prequel editions.—Reuters

Canada gold medal swimmer gets bonus: Drake concert invitation

TORONTO — Canadian R&B artist Drake on Saturday invited compatriot four-time Olympic medalist swimmer Penny Oleksiak to one of his concerts after her tweet about lacking tickets set off a Twitter campaign to grant her attendance.

Oleksiak won her country’s first gold medal at the games in Rio de Janeiro on Thursday in a stunning showing and is the first Canadian to win four medals in a single Olympics session. She is the sister of Jamie Oleksiak, a defenseman for the National Hockey League’s Dallas Stars. Her post about her lack of tickets spawned a hashtag “Get-PennyDrakeTickets.”

“So @Kjmassie (teammate and bronze medal winner Kylie Masse) and I tried to buy @Drake tickets to celebrate. Basically sold out #ugh #maybextime,” Oleksiak tweeted on Wednesday.

Drake, who like Oleksiak hails from Toronto, responded with a picture of Oleksiak on his Instagram account, captioned: “we are so proud of you!!!! Can’t wait to see you when you are back from Rio at a show!”

The Globe and Mail newspaper, citing an anonymous source, reported Drake intended to give Oleksiak free tickets to his Toronto concert this fall. A publicist for Drake declined to comment. Oleksiak did not immediately respond to a request for comment.—Reuters
Rio de Janeiro — The United States won its 1,000th Olympic gold medal on Saturday when the American women’s 4x100 meter medley relay team clinched victory at the Rio Games.

The honour of reaching the milestone was shared by Kathleen Baker, Lilly King, Dana Vollmer and Simone Manuel, who got to the wall first ahead of Australia.

“One thousand gold medals is a remarkable achievement made possible by the culture of sport that is the fabric and foundation of Team USA,” United States Olympic Committee (USOC) head Scott Blackmun said.

Of the 1,000 gold medals, more than half have come from track and field (323) and swimming (246), USOC added.

The US team had arrived in Rio with 977 gold medals, according to Olympstats.com, and had sat on 998 for much of Saturday until long jumper Jeff Henderson put them on the brink with his victory.

Sprinter Tori Bowie nearly took the US over the top in the 100 meters but she was finished second behind Jamaica’s Elaine Thompson, leaving it up to the swimmers to complete the feat.

“It really makes me think about all the generations of Olympic teams and athletes I watched and the inspiration that I have had,” Vollmer said.

“We’re here getting that 1,000th medal for the US and it seems absolutely incredible.

“We’ve had an amazing Games and so many people getting their hand to the wall one after another we’ve felt off that and this is a great way to end.”

If the US women had not captured the landmark medal, Michael Phelps and the men’s 4x100 medley relay squad would have done so, the quarter winning gold in the next event in the pool, which was also the final race on the Rio swimming programme.

Manuel might have also had a chance to grab the 1,000th earlier in the 50 freestyle but finished 0.02 seconds behind Denmark’s Pernille Blume.

“It’s really special that I could do it with the relay is amazing, just sharing it with three other women is icing on top of the cake,” said Manuel.

“I mean 1,000 gold for the USA is a nice number,” —Reuters

Rio’s legacy: a highway where Games buses and local anger collide

Rio de Janeiro — Ester Silva curses the Olympic Games as another bus rumbles over a new elevated highway that passes by her slum in Rio de Janeiro, sending a tremor through her brittle brick house.

“That road ripped our little community in two,” said Silva, 61, who has run a snack shop for 16 years from her home, gesturing up at a stretch of highway where an official Games bus was hit with stones this week as it traveled between venues.

“My home is crumbling, all for an Olympics that is not being put on for us poor, yet we are the ones paying the highest price,” she added, pointing out large cracks in the walls.

At least three Olympic buses have been hit by projectiles while speeding along a dedicated lane in recent days, a senior security source said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the matter.

One bus was carrying a dozen journalists on Tuesday night when two of its windows were shattered by what some on board swore was gunfire but authorities later concluded were stones, likely shot at the bus by powerful slingshots.

In interviews with more than 15 residents and community leaders of Vila Uniao, none said they heard any gunfire when the media bus was hit. But all said they would not be surprised if the buses were targeted by rocks slung by young men in the community, acts denounced by the residents. —Reuters

Ethiopian distance runner Almaz Ayana breaks women’s 10,000 world record

Rio de Janeiro — Ethiopian distance runner Almaz Ayana clocked 29 minutes, 17.45 seconds to break women’s 10,000 meters Olympic record after the women’s 10,000m at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 13 August 2016. PHOTO: Reuters

Almaz Ayana of Ethiopia poses next to a board displaying her new world record after the women’s 10,000m at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 12 August 2016. PHOTO: Xinhua

Team USA sing their national anthem during Women’s 100m Medley Relay Victory Ceremony at Olympic Aquatics Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 13 August 2016. PHOTO: Reuters

United States wins 1,000th Olympic gold medal

Ethiopian distance runner Almaz Ayana poses next to a board displaying her new world record after the women’s 10,000m at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 12 August 2016. PHOTO: Xinhua
Leicester stunned by Hull, Guardiola’s City edge Sunderland

LONDON — Leicester City became the first English league champions for 27 years to begin their title defence with a loss as they went down 2-1 at Hull City on Saturday and Pep Guardiola’s Manchester City reign started with a 2-1 win over Sunderland.

Hull’s Robert Snodgrass got a 57th-minute winner as Claudio Ranieri’s Leicester lacked the intensity of their last campaign while City got away with their intensity of their last campaign Ranieri’s Leicester lacked the intensity of their last campaign

Manchester City reign started on Saturday and Pep Guardiola’s they went down 2-1 at Hull City in 1992, while the last defending champions to lose their first fixture were Arsenal in 1989.

Hull’s victory was a major boost for the club, who have only 13 fit first-team players and are still looking for a permanent manager after Steve Bruce quit on Monday.

Guardiola’s City career got off to a perfect start when Sergio Aguero fired home a fourth-minute penalty after Patrick van Aanholt had brought down Raheem Sterling. Jermain Defoe thought he had rescued a point for Sunderland when he finished with aplomb in the 71st minute before McNair, under pressure from Kelechi Iheanacho, turned the ball past Vito Mannone four minutes after coming on for his debut.

“The first games are always difficult,” said former Barcelon

Patrick van Aanholt had brought down Raheem Sterling. Jermain Defoe thought he had rescued a point for Sunderland when he finished with aplomb in the 71st minute before McNair, under pressure from Kelechi Iheanacho, turned the ball past Vito Mannone four minutes after coming on for his debut.

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Leicester winger Riyad Mahrez’s penalty just after the break cancelled out Adama Diomande’s acrobatic overhead kick in first-half added time before Snodgrass struck from inside the box.

“They played better,” said disappointed Italian Ranieri. “We tried to do our best, our effort was amazing but it was individual, not as a team.”

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The visitors rarely tried to play, preferring to hack at their opponents and it was from a 30-yard free kick that Brazil took the lead after 12 minutes with Neymar curling the ball through a wall that disintegrated.

Brazil were the better team throughout and Luan got the second goal they deserved seven minutes from time when he lifted a sublime chip over the goalkeeper from 25 yards out. “It was very important that we scored early and that helped us not fall into their trap of wind-

RIO DE JANEIRO — Brazil beat Colombia 2-0 to move into the last four and a date with Nigeria and Germany both won on Saturday to set up an intriguing semi-final line up in men’s soccer at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics.

Brazil, who have never won the Olympic soccer title, were nervous, especially in a first half that had 21 fouls and five yellows cards, four of them for Colombia.

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