Myanmar, Thailand sign two MoUs, one Agreement on Bilateral Cooperation

Following talks between State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand Dr Somkid Jatusripitak in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, two Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) and one agreement were signed by high-ranking officials of the two countries.

An MoU on Development of an Emergency Department at Dawei General Hospital and another MoU on Fisheries Cooperation and Money Transfer Services Agreement for Myanmar migrant workers between the Central Bank of Myanmar and Thailand’s Krung Thai Bank were signed by high ranking officials of the ministries concerned in the presence of State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Deputy Prime Minister Dr Somkid Jatusripitak.

During the talks, the State Counsellor and the Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand discussed issues on promoting bilateral cooperation in the tourism sector, border trade and rural area development between the two countries.

Thai Commerce Minister Apiradi Tantraporn, who is part of a trade mission to Myanmar, said that under their close strategic partnership, Thailand and Myanmar would double bilateral trade to US$13 billion (457 billion Thai baht) by the end of 2021, according to the Bangkok Post.

“Thailand and Myanmar will forge closer ties in many areas to strengthen trade and investment growth, while they will also help increase competitiveness for the private sector, especially SMEs [small and medium-sized enterprises], and help Myanmar people to trade online,” she said.

The 22 companies on the mission are from a wide range of sectors, such as construction, property development, agro-industry, telecommunications and innovation, infrastructure development, energy, retail, consumer products, finance, services and education.

During the mission, participating companies will sign at least 15 MoUs concerning cooperation between the two sides, covering such fields as energy, medical, media, banking, and the plastics and sugar industries.

Moreover, the Commerce Ministry will join with the Board of Investment of Thailand to set up a Thailand-Myanmar Business Cooperation Council in Yangon, which more than 300 businesspeople from both nations involved, Apiradi said.—GNLM

Myanmar health department declares war on tuberculosis

The MYAMAR government plans to raise the budget expenditure to combat tuberculosis by 2.5 per cent within three years, hoping to reduce TB incidence by 40 per cent through new health facilities, laboratories and diagnostic services, according to the Ministry of Health and Sports.

Myanmar is one of 22 countries that since 1998 has been considered to be a “high burden” country (HBC), according to 2016 statistics. According to the study, there are approximately 150,000 cases of TB detected annually in the country.

Transmission of multi-drug-resistant TB is also targeted to decrease by five per cent between 2015 and 2020 through collaborative efforts of the government and its partner organisations.

To reduce the burden of tuberculosis in the country, new outpatient departments will be opened in Yangon and Mandalay with the support of the Three Millennium Development Goal Fund (3MDG), one of the largest contributors of external assistance for health in Myanmar.

The new health facility will be fully operational by 2018 and will be able to receive between 100 and 150 patients a day. This will include referrals for complicated and drug-resistant TB cases from across the region.

SEE PAGE 3 >>
MPs discuss motion on preventing dyed food at 2nd Pyithu Hluttaw

The 2nd Pyithu Hluttaw 4th regular session’s 2nd day meeting was held at the Hluttaw in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, focusing on amendment of the Penal Code and the control of chemically dyed food.

Later during the meeting, Dr A Zin Latt of Shwebo constituency put forward a motion urging the State Government to effectively control and ban the sale of unhealthy, chemically dyed food in markets including school canteens across the country.

The motion drew support from legislators. “The aims of the National Food Law’s section 3 are for the public to have genuine and hygienic food and to protect people from consuming unhygienic and unhealthy food, to systematically supervise the production of controlled food, and to systematically control the production, import and export, storage, distribution and sale of food. This is protection of people with good intentions. The Department of Food and Drug Administration was formed in 1995 as a branch of the Health Department to control the quality of food, drugs, cosmetics and commodities. In 2013, it was upgraded into a separate department to give more supervision than ever. Yet, it was found that FDA could not manage to protect consumers and cases of arresting those producing and distributing unhealthy foods and importers were not found. As for the consumers, due to the lack of basic hygienic knowledge, they cannot decide which food is safe and which food is dangerous. People from the grass-roots level consume food depending on their income, so safe, nutritious and healthy foods are often out of their reach. Myanmar traditional food such as fish paste/napp, arsenic and urea fertilizer are found. Within various kinds of chili powder are found to be contaminated with chemical dyes and fungi, thus it is very dangerous for our country. What is worse, these foods with attractive packaging are being sold at school canteens, which most children rely on as their daily snacks. These foods are of low quality, made in China. If restrictions on these foods cannot be made, children face possible food-poisoning and diseases. It is a danger challenging the lives of the younger generation. For children to be free from eating these dangerous foods, parents, teachers and sellers themselves need to cooperate so that our future will belong to healthy children. For the guarantee of hygienic living and eating of young children, departmental organisations, food producers and sellers of imported food play an important role,” said U Ne Myo Tun of the Hantabin constituency.

U Win Myint Oo, also known as U Ne Myo of Nyaungshwe and parliamentarians’ constituency supported the motion.

The Union Minister submitted the motion to Hluttaw to approve it, and the Speaker of the Hluttaw announced it was approved.

Yesterday’s meeting also included discussion by Dr Myint Htwe, the Union Minister for Health and Sport, who replied to questions raised by U Aung Than Sein, parliamentarian of the Hlattaw constituency, as to whether there was an arrangement to upgrade the Paro rural health care centre into the station hospital. U Soe Myint of the Pindaya constituency inquired whether an arrangement was made to upgrade a 50-bed hospital into a 100-bed hospital, and U Win Thein Zaw of the Salinngyi constituency asked whether Matalaun Mata village’s rural health care unit would be turned into a station hospital. A question about the 1861 Penal Code amendment draft law was raised by Daw Khin Saw Wai of the Yathedaung constituency.—Myanmar News Agency

Amyotha Hluttaw

2nd Amyotha Hluttaw 4th Regular Session Holds its 2nd Day Meeting

DURING the 2nd day meeting of the Amyotha Hluttaw, action on a law was tabled at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, prompting the Pyithu Hluttaw to make known their disagreement over the withdrawal of the law concerning inland water transport, which had been sent to Pyithu Hluttaw approved by the Amyotha Hluttaw.

In the meeting, U Hla Kyaw, deputy minister for agriculture, livestock breeding and irrigation replied to the questions raised by U Khin Zaw Oo, of constituency 3 of Mon State as to whether there were any arrangements to compensate to the affected farmers due to the river water pumping project in Kayin-kyaway township, Mon State, the question raised by U Hwei Tin of constituency 11, Chin State as to whether there were any arrangements to have solar power panels installed at the houses of those living in Ward 3 of Paletwa township who could not afford to have meter box installed.

Likewise, U Hla Kyaw, deputy minister, replied to questions raised by Daw Than Than Aye of constituency 7 of Magwe Region, U Myo Htut of constituency 12, Chin State. U Aung Thein of constituency 12 of Bago Region and Daw Ma Ma Lay of constituency 8 of Shan State. —Myanmar News Agency

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Union Election Commission
Nay Pyi Taw
Notification 4/2017
6th Waxing of Tabodwe, 1378 ME
(2 February, 2017)

Nine Defence Services Personnel representatives from Region and State Hluttaw substituted

According to a request made in accordance with Section 33 of the Region Hluttaw or State Hluttaw Election Law to substitute nine representatives of the Armed forces who are parliamentarians, the Union Election Commission scrutinized and substituted the following nine Region Hluttaw and State Hluttaw representatives shown on the left column under the Notification 3/2016 of the commission dated 18-1-2016 with those shown on the right column.

The Region Hluttaw or State Hluttaw Representatives to be substituted were nominated by the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services in the second multi-party general election held on 8 November 2015.

Kayah State Hluttaw
(1) BC 26724
Major Min Thu
(2) BC 36001
Captain Win Min Aung
(3) BC 36010
Captain Khant Hein
(4) BC 43259
Captain Thet Naing Soe
Bagu Region Hluttaw
(1) BC 30888
Major Yan Naing San
(2) BC 30860
Lieutenant-Colonel Min Oo
Yangon Region Hluttaw
(1) BC 36258
Major San Tha Nay Aung
(2) BC 35699
Captain Aung Kyaw Myint Win
(3) BC 50477
Captain Myat Min Aung

BC 22000
Colonel Myint Wai
BC 46312
Captain Thet Zaw Lin
BC 50072
Captain Yan Myo Aung
BC 26934
Colonel Kyaw Zeya
Air 2855
Major Kyaw Thuara
BC 30431
Lieutenant-Colonel Myat Min Htwe
BC 36474
Major Ko Ko Latt
BC 47690
Captain Aung Sein Oo
BC 19315
Colonel Min Min Lwin

By order, (Tin Tun)
Secretary
Union Election Commission

Speaker U Win Myint. PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY

Speaker Mahn Win Kaing Than. PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY
President receives Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand

U Htin Kyaw, the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, received a delegation led by H.E. Dr. Somkid Jatusripitak, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, yesterday morning at the Credentials Hall of the Office of the President in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they discussed implementation of small-and-medium-sized enterprises in the development of the border areas of the two countries, promoting the investments of the economy and infrastructure.

Also present were Union Minister for Electricity and Energy U Pe Zin Tun, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Tin and Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Maung Win and officials.

—Myanmar News Agency

State Counsellor presents cash assistance to displaced persons

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi attended a ceremony at the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement yesterday to present cash assistance from the Ministry of the State Counsellor’s Office to persons temporarily displaced due to security reasons in Kachin State.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said the assistance was intended for people who had to temporarily move to camps due to security reasons before pointing out that it was necessary to provide health-care services for the temporarily displaced persons (TDPs) while an emphasis was placed upon day-to-day food supply and education of children at the camps.

She expressed her desire to contribute to the education of the children as well as occupational training for adults.

The State Counsellor said she wanted to send all camp dwellers back to their homes, as life at the camp is not meant to be permanent, before urging the Ministry of Social Welfare Relief and Resettlement to make decisions to help them independently.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi also expressed her desire to help provide displaced women with occupational training for skills they could use at home so that they would not feel as if their time in displaced camps was spent in vain.

The State Counsellor went on to say that she hoped the people of her country would no longer have to live in such camps.

To that end, she said, she has been endeavouuring for peace, the success of which would eliminate the need for such camps nationwide. She vowed to help people who had to live in such places because peace had not been achieved, before expressing her intention that the cash assistance should be spent with the spirit of national reconciliation.

She recognized that there were many different ethnic groups at such camps, and said she would share with them as a fellow Myanmar citizen, in lean times as well as in times of prosperity. “It would not be easy for the promotion of the national spirit, which would unite the country, if ethnic national people embraced the concept that only Bamar would benefit in the union,” she added before saying that Bamar people would like to live alongside other national races through thick and thin.

Later, the State Counsellor presented Ks3 billion in cash assistance to Dr Win Myat Aye, the Union Minister for Social Welfare Relief and Resettlement, who in turn presented a certificate of honour to the State Counsellor, and spoke words of thanks.

The government’s current deposit from the recruitment agencies is Ks5 million before issuing a business license, ge increase is ten times more than the previous deposit rate. “We will report to the Union Attorney’s Office, which has known legal issues concerning the plan of the increased rate,” the federation said.

About 150 agencies have submitted request letters to the government, the federation said.

“The government should take action of withdrawing licenses if agencies breach the disciplines while sending out labour overseas. They should solve the problem in different ways without increasing the license rate,” said U Kyaw Htin Kyaw, general secretary of MOEAF.

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population said the reason for the increased rate is to weed out fake recruitment agencies, to mitigate illegal workers and to reimburse from the collected cash those labourers overseas sent by agencies if they face some external circumstances.

“Our main aim is to protect the workers. Overseas employment business is not a trade. It involves human beings. We want to restrain the agencies from committing labour violations,” U Moe Aung, the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population told The Myanmar Times.

U Moe Aung also said that there had been too many cases in which agency owners swindled would-be migrant workers and then fled, leaving the government to sort out the mess at the taxpayers’ expense.

According to the MOEAF, there are 247 registered agencies in Myanmar, an increasing number as the demand for overseas employment rises.
**Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife designated as third Ramsar**

DESIGNATION of the Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary as the third Ramsar site was announced at a ceremony on World Wetlands Day, which was held at the Moeyungyi Inn Wildlife Sanctuary yesterday, organized by the Forestry Department, the Norwegian Environmental Agency (NEA) and Shwe Pyi Aye Company.

Myanmar wetland areas protect coastal ecosystems including mangroves, mudflats and turtle nesting beaches. It is also important for development of the country and stability of weather conditions. Attempts were made in the past to maintain the wetlands sanctuary, the standard of the sanctuary declined in part because of inadequacy of environmental safety arrangements.

Mr. Frank Momberg, director of Fauna & Flora International (FFI) Myanmar programme, said the forestry department with the assistance of FFI designated a Ramsar site which covers the mangroves on Meinmahla Island and the surrounding estuary, which provides important feeding and nursing grounds for fisheries and protects coastal communities from storms. The site also includes mudflats of global conservation importance, particularly for threatened shore birds. Despite the severe threats, Meinmahla Kyun hosts the world’s largest population of the critically endangered mangrove plant species, threatened migratory bird species and more than 20 species of threatened fauna.

Indawgyi lake is Myanmar’s second Ramsar site, which is located in Meinmern in the Kachin state in 2015. The country’s first Ramsar site was Moeyungyi Wetland in Bago region, designated in 2004. There are now three listed Ramsar sites in Myanmar, accomplished with the assistance of Switzerland. Additionally, there are 14 places in Thailand, four places in Cambodia, eight places in Viet Nam and two places in Laos. —GNLM

**Agriculture sector to be improved under five-year development plan**

THE Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation will improve the country’s agriculture industry under its five-year development plan, Union Minister Dr Aung Thu said in his opening remarks at the recent meeting in Nay Pyi Taw.

To reach the ministry’s goal to enhance the farming industry, the ministry will implement the agriculture development strategy (ADS) in collaboration with its development partners.

**Mobile shops for northern Rakhine launches**

MOBILE shops came as a pleasant surprise to villagers in northern Rakhine State, as they can buy food easily for perhaps the first time in their lives.

Maungtaw District Management Committee sent mobile shops selling foodstuff and clothing to northern areas of Rakhine State as part of its plans for assisting the people in areas which can be easily accessible by road.

The committee set Kyeingyaung, Ngakhuya, Khamauy, Tawngyang and Kyeingyaung as the five destinations for the mobile shops. The mobile shops leave Maungtaw and go to Kyeingyaung on Monday, to Ngakhuya on Tuesday, Khamauy on Wednesday, Tawngyang on Thursday and Taungpyolatwae on Friday. —Maung Zaw and Nay Win Tun

**Fire kills one, destroys 50 houses**

A fire broke out in Mayangon Township at 9.40pm yesterday, destroying about 50 houses and killing one man.

The fire occurred in Zeyakhaymar Road in the township and it was under control by the firemen one hour after it started.

“We are taking investigation into the fire to know the cause of the fire. A paralyzed man aged over 80 died in the fire,” said an official of the Fire Services Department. —Zaw Gyi (Punyu)

**Illegal chemical fertilizer seized**

MOHNNYIN Township Police inspected a 12-wheeled vehicle driven by Wai Zin Latt, 27, with Min Min, 24, on board and another 12-wheeler vehicle driven by Moe Kyaw, 43, with Htike Ko Ko Aung, 32, on board at Ing-yingone intersection on Tuesday afternoon. Police seized from the two trucks 600 bags of Crown Brand chemical fertilizer, which are made in Thailand but banned in Myanmar.

Police have taken action against Wai Zin Latt of Ward 9 in Pinbaw Township, Min Min of Sabaigone Village in Pyawbwe Township, Moe Kyaw of Ward 5 in Pinbaw Township and Htike Ko Ko Aung of Ward 8 under the Imports and Exports Law. —Myanmar Police Force

**Farmers growing tomatoes on floating islands receive modern equipment**

AN agriculture company recently supported modern farming tools worth Ks5 million to 54 growers, who will develop 50-acre tomato plantations this season along floating islands through Good Agricultural Development Strategy (ADS) in collaboration with its development partners.

The company pledged to share agricultural techniques to the local farmers, planning to extend the market for their organic products. —Than Oo (Laymyathnar)

**Villagers checks blankes sold by a mobile shop. Photo: Nay Win Tun**

**Maps of Meinmahla Kyun. Photo: Fauna & Flora International (FFI)**

**Crime NEWS**

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**Seized bags of Crown Brand chemical fertilizer. Photo: MPF**

**Farmers growing tomatoes on floating islands receive modern equipment**

AN agriculture company recently supported modern farming tools worth Ks5 million to 54 growers, who will develop 50-acre tomato plantations this season along floating islands through Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).

All agricultural equipment provided by the United Nilar Agribusiness Co have been developed through biotechnology. According to the public private partnerships (3Ps) programme, the company offered the farming gear with the aim of fulfilling the needs of growers for the first time in their lives.

Maungtaw District Management Committee sent mobile shops selling foodstuff and clothing to northern areas of Rakhine State as part of its plans for assisting the people in areas which can be easily accessible by road.

The committee set Kyeingyaung, Ngakhuya, Khamauy, Tawngyang and Kyeingyaung as the five destinations for the mobile shops. The mobile shops leave Maungtaw and go to Kyeingyaung on Monday, to Ngakhuya on Tuesday, Khamauy on Wednesday, Tawngyang on Thursday and Taungpyolatwae on Friday. —Maung Zaw and Nay Win Tun
350 units of Yadana Hninsi Housing complex already sold

About 350 units of Yadana Hninsi Housing complex from the Ayeyawun and Yadana high-rise housing project located in Dagon Seikkan Township, Yangon Region, have been sold out, especially those condominium apartments worth Ks60million, according to the Commerce Ministry. Condominium units worth from Ks60 to Ks120million are being sold. The Yadana Hninsi Housing complex, the government’s first public housing development project in Yangon, started on June 1. It is a model project for future housing complexes in Dagon Seikkan Township. The initial buyers have mostly purchased the apartments without taking out loans and have to pay 20 per cent of total costs first, with the remaining 80 per cent payable monthly for period of twelve months. Buyers will receive keys to the apartment only after finishing payments of the installment plan.

The Yadana Hninsi Housing units can be purchased through the link with the Construction and Housing Development Bank.

The Yadana Hninsi Housing complex was officially opened by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on 24 December.

The housing complex was designed by SURBANA JURONG and the project includes 49 eighteen-storied buildings, according to the Urban and Housing Development Department. Private businessmen have been invited to take part in this housing development project, it is learnt.—Ko Htet

Over 140,000 tonnes of diesel and petrol imported through normal trade

A total of 143,621,813 tonnes of fuel oil were imported through normal trade from the 15th to the 21st of January, with 118,743,845 tonnes of diesel worth US$64,396,877 and 24,877,968 tonnes of petrol worth US$20,994,270, according to the Commerce Ministry.

The import volume of the fuel was up by over 78,800 tonnes of diesel and over 13,300 tonnes of petrol compared to that in the previous period. In the similar period, 36,036 tonnes of diesel worth US$19,000 were imported through Tachilek border trade camp whereas 2,251 tonnes of diesel worth US$1,151,720 were imported via Myeik and 21 tonnes of petrol worth US$12,870 and 7 tonnes of diesel worth US$3,198 were flowed into the country via Myawaddy.

The sale of petrol and diesel is steady in the Yangon market. The prices of diesel and Octane 95 are stable, whereas the price of Octane 92 is up a bit in private petrol stations. Fuel oil prices per liter are Ks700 for diesel, Ks710 for Octane 92 and Ks750 for Octane 95 in petrol stations. Retail prices per gallon were Ks3,000 for diesel and Ks2,800 for petrol in the outside market, it is learnt.—Ko Htet

MCEA requested Planning and Finance Ministry to grant tax exemption on low-cost housing apartments

Myanmar Construction Entrepreneurs Association (MCEA) has requested a tax exemption on low-cost housing apartments, according to statement by the association.

The MCEA has submitted the request to the ministries concerned to grant tax a break on the affordable housing for low-income residents. According to the Union Tax and Revenue Law concerning real estate purchases, a 15 per cent tax must be imposed upon real property worth Ks1 to Ks50 million, a 20 per cent tax on property worth between Ks50 million to Ks100 million and a 30 per cent tax on property above Ks100 million. In addition, a seven per cent stamp duty is also imposed on real estate contracts in Yangon and 5 per cent in other townships outside Yangon, it is learnt.

The price of an apartment in a low-cost housing complex is about Ks12 million.—Ko Htet

Stock trading at YSX reached over Ks73billion as of end of January

Stock trading at the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) reached Ks73billion by the end of January with 300,107 shares worth Ks2,824,520,800 traded last month, according to the statistics of YSX.

The value of share trading last month raised its head again when compared to the December trade value of Ks1,685,847,500, with First Private Bank entering YSX. There are currently four listed companies trading on YSX: First Myanmar Investment (FMI), Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings (MTSH), Myanmar Citizens Bank (MCB) and First Private Bank (FPB).

The monthly stock trading values by FMI at YSX were Ks24,714,431,000 in March and Ks5,867,897,500 in April. With MTSH entering YSX on 20th May, stock trading values of FMI and MTSH amounted to Ks16,216,528,500 in May and Ks6,895,863,000 in June and Ks3,732,548,500 in July respectively. After MCB listed on YSX, the monthly stock trading values were Ks2,907,600,800 in August, Ks2,482,949,200 in September, Ks4,027,821,700 in October, Ks2,213,328,400 in November and Ks1,685,847,500 in December, it is learnt from monthly report of YSX.

FPB reached the lowest share rate of Ks30,000 on 2nd February after its debut on 20th January. A total of 9,441 shares were traded on 2nd February, with 1,034 shares of FMI, 5,597 of MTSH, 10 of MCB and 2,800 of FPB. The share prices were Ks13,500 for FMI, Ks4,100 for MTSH, Ks9,100 for MCB and Ks30,000 for FPB at closing time.—Ko Khant

Myanmar Construction Entrepreneurs Association (MCEA) requested Planning and Finance Ministry to grant tax exemption on low-cost housing apartments.

Trade value expected to hit Ks12,000 billion in next FY

TRADE value of about Ks12,000 billion is likely to be reached during the next fiscal year 2017-2018, a figure that would be an increase of nearly 7 per cent compared to the current fiscal year, according to a first draft of the National Planning Law.

Trade value of over Ks10,983 billion is expected next year, according to the incumbent government. Trade value this year was expected to reach over Ks10,961 billion, which was 6.7 per cent higher than the previous year in the previous government. Trade is also expected to account for 18.4 per cent of the country’s economy next year, according to the draft document.

Trade value next year will likely increase with the lifting of sanctions against Myanmar by the European Union and the U.S.

Trade in Myanmar is expected to thrive in part because of its favourable geographic location next to high-population countries such as China, India and Bangladesh, according to trade experts. —Mom Mon
Indonesia’s Yogyakarta airport closed after Garuda jet skids off runway

YOGYAKARTA, (Indonesia) — Indonesian authorities said Yogyakarta’s Adisutjipto International Airport will remain closed until Thursday afternoon after a Garuda aircraft with 130 people on board skidded off the runway while landing late on Wednesday.

According to a statement on the website of flag carrier Garuda Indonesia, the Boeing 737-800NG en route from Jakarta “went off the runway, as a result of heavy rain that made the runway slippery”.

Yogyakarta is the gateway to the cultural centre of Indonesia’s main island of Java. The Transportation Ministry said in a statement made no mention of any crew members had been injured or sickened, there were no injuries and the runway would remain closed until 3 pm (0800 GMT) on Thursday.

Airport authorities were working to remove the aircraft from the runway area, an airport spokesman said, but needed to bring in salting equipment from Jakarta and Surabaya through the nearby city of Solo.

“We’ll use whichever comes fastest to help with the evacuation process,” the spokesman said.

PT Angkasa Pura 1, the company that manages Adisutjipto International Airport, proposed temporarily rerouting all Yogyakarta-bound flights through Solo. Indonesia has a patchy air safety record, with 12 accidents in 2016 in which 30 people killed, according to the Aviation Safety Network website. In 2007, a Garuda Boeing 737 jet bunched and skidded off the runway at Yogyakarta airport before bursting into flames, killing 21 people.—Reuters

Philippine leader to use troops in drug war, says willing to ‘kill more’

MANILA — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte said on Thursday he would issue an executive order for military support in his fight against illegal drugs, which he said was a national security threat and he would “kill more” people if he had to.

The mercurial leader ruled out declaring martial law and said he did not need extra powers, but wanted to bring the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) into his drugs war because he could no longer trust law enforcement agencies.

All police operations in the drug crackdown were suspended on Monday due to dangerous corruption. Duterte has placed an anti-drugs agency in charge of the campaign and has said he wants the armed forces to play a supportive role.

“I still have to write the, whether it is a proclamation or any order, but I’ve taken off the runway at Yogyakarta airport while landing late on Wednesday. The Boeing 737-800NG en route from Jakarta “went off the runway, as a result of heavy rain that made the runway slippery”.

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World Bank approves 300 million USD to empower Bangladesh local governments

DHAKA — The World Bank has approved 300 million US dollars to empower Bangladesh’s local governments with discretionary funds that would enable them to decide and implement development priorities.

Built on the success of two predecessor projects, the Local Governance Support Project-3 (LGSP-3) will cover all the 4,550 Union Parishads, the lowest tier of the local government, and benefit over 115 million residents, said the Washington-based lender in a statement received here Wednesday.

It said the project will establish national budget transfers as a norm to the Union Parishads.

The project will also expand to the urban local government, and pilot a fiscal transfer system in 16 Pourashavas (municipalities) in all eight Divisions of the country, it added.

For the first time, the eligible municipalities will receive block grants with discretionary power to select sub-projects aiming to improve service delivery, said the statement.

“The World Bank has been a long-standing partner in supporting the government’s vision of advancing decentralization and empowering the local governments,” said Rashghul Paralkar, World Bank Acting Country Director for Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.

“A predictable and transparent financial resource transfer system will help the Union Parishads and the participating Pourashavas to further improve planning, participatory budgeting, public finance management, and accountability,” the statement said.

To institutionalize the fiscal transfer system, starting from the fourth year of the project, the government will fully finance the Union Parishad block grants out of the national budgetary allocations, with all the principal features, said the bank.—Xinhua

2-meter hole found on grating beneath Fukushima Daiichi reactor

TOKYO — A hole measuring 2 meters in diameter has been found on a metal grating beneath the reactor’s pressure vessel at the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear complex, an image analysis by the plant operator showed Thursday.

The hole may have been caused by nuclear fuel that penetrated the reactor vessel as it overheated and melted due to the loss of reactor cooling functions after a powerful earthquake and tsunami on 11 March, 2011, that hit Japan’s northeast. The analysis follows Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc.’s discovery Monday of a black mass deposited on the same grating directly beneath the reactor vessel, possibly melted fuel from the reactor, which suffered a meltdown along with two other reactors.

Images captured using a camera attached to a telescopic arm on Monday also showed part of the grating has gone. A further analysis of the images found the 2-meter hole in an area beyond the missing section on the structure.

If the deposits are confirmed as fuel debris, it would be the first time the radiation has found in any of the three units that suffered meltdowns.

The plant operator plans to deploy a robot at the bottom of the reactor’s containment vessel, which houses the reactor pressure vessel, to check the conditions there.—Kyodo News
Pentagon chief appoaches South Korea with reassurance of defence commitment

SEOUL — Visiting US Defense Secretary James Mattis reaffirmed US commitment here on Thursday to the defence of South Korea, including its extended deterrence.

The Pentagon chief said the Trump administration will deal with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) nuclear threats as top priority among security issues.

Mattis, who arrived here earlier in the day, met with Kim Kwan-jin, senior security advisor to impeached President Park Geun-hye, in the presidential office Cheong Wa Dae.

During the talks, Kim said it was very timely for Mattis to pick South Korea as his first overseas destination given the stern security situations caused by the DPRK’s nuclear and missile threats.

Concerns were deepened recently over the launch of a long-range ballistic rocket as top DPRK leader Kim Jong Un said in his New Year’s Day address that his country had entered a final stage to prepare for such launch.

Mattis and Kim agreed to push for the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) deployment in South Korea. Seoul and Washington abruptly announced the agreement in July last year to install one THAAD battery in South Korea soil by the end of this year. Local media speculated the installation could be completed between May and July.

It sparked strong objections from China and Russia as its X-band radar can peer into territories of the two nations, destabilizing security balance and boosting arms race in the region.

Major presidential contenders in the South Korean election bloc have demanded the cancellation or the delay of the decision to the next government, which is forecast to be launched as early as April.

President Park was impeached in December over a corruption scandal, and the constitutional court is expected to permanently remove Park from office before the middle of March. A presidential election must be held in 60 days after the court’s final ruling.

The Pentagon chief and the senior South Korean security official shared views on the need to strengthen the US-South Korea alliance, promising to closely communicate with each other to respond to the DPRK’s rising threats.

Mattis was expected to pay a courtesy call to Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn, who is serving as acting South Korean president.

The US defence chief will also hold talks with his South Korean counterpart Han Min-koo on Friday morning in the South Korean defence ministry’s headquarters in Seoul, before traveling to Japan for another two-day trip.—Xinhua

On eve of state polls, India’s Modi looks to clean up campaign funding

NEW DELHI — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has moved to clean up political funding with limits on cash donations and new “election bonds”, but some politicians and election officials said the measures would have limited impact.

With several state polls about to begin that will help determine his chances of re-election in 2019, Modi’s administration sought to tackle widespread perceptions of vote-buying by capping cash donations to political parties at 2,000 rupees (£26).

Previously the ceiling was 20,000 rupees.

Announcing his 2017/18 budget, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley also unveiled a scheme under which donors could buy “election bonds” from a designated local bank and give them to political parties to deposit into their account.

Forcing donations through the banking system would mean the assets were declared and so could be traced.

The government also threatened action against political parties that did not file tax returns. They do not pay income tax, but filing returns could bring transparency to the system.

“This reform will bring about greater transparency and accountability in political funding, while preventing (a) future generation of black money,” Jaitley said.

The changes will not directly impact elections getting under way, but the government is likely to see them as a way to burnish Modi’s credentials as a graft-fighter after he announced a series of measures to tackle illicit wealth. In another move that may catch the voter’s eye in the big battleground state of Uttar Pradesh this month, Jaitley bolstered rural and infrastructure spending.—Reuters

Japan PM Abe to hold two-day summit with Trump — sources

TOKYO — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and US President Donald Trump are planning to extend their summit meeting scheduled for 10 February by one day, two Japanese government sources with direct knowledge of the matter said on Thursday.

After meeting with Trump in Washington, officials are arranging for Abe to then meet Trump at his Mar-a-Lago private resort in Florida on 11 February, where they may even play golf, the sources said.

Trade and currency policy are likely to be high on the agenda during the summit. Trump has criticised the lack of access to the Japanese auto market for US producers and said Tokyo is using monetary policy to devalue its currency.

Japan is expected to defend its auto sector, which has built many manufacturing plants in the United States. Japan is also expected to emphasise that its monetary policy is intended to spur inflation and not trigger competitive devaluation.—Reuters

Anti-stroke, antibody experts given prestigious Thai medical award

BANGKOK — A Canadian neuroscientist, arguably the world’s leading expert on stroke and vascular dementia, and a British biochemist who pioneered antibody technology, have both received Thailand’s most prestigious medical and health award.

Vladimir Hachinski, based at Western University in Ontario, and Greg Winter, of the University of Cambridge, each received the 2016 Prince Mahidol Award from Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn at the Grand Palace in Bangkok on Tuesday evening.

Hachinski, the laureate in the field of public health, was recognized for his extensive contributions in vascular cognitive impairment, stroke and brain-heart interactions that have saved and improved millions of lives by delaying and preventing cerebrovascular disease and cognitive decline.

He also invented the term “brain attack” which is used globally to create the sense of emergency for stroke and stroke warning symptoms, while the preventive practices he initiated have become the standard of healthcare globally.

Speaking to Kyodo News, Hachinski said he was “surprised” and “delighted” to receive the award, saying it gives him a platform to advocate public awareness of stroke and dementia prevention practices.

As a result of the practices developed by Hachinski and others, who also deserve credit for it, the stroke rate in Ontario has dropped in the past 12 year, while the number of dementia cases has also fallen for the past six years.

“There is big news that we can prevent strokes and dementia right now,” he said.

Currently, Hachinski is engaged in research collaboration with Siriraj hospital, the oldest medical school in Thailand, and institutions in other countries such as Iran, Italy and Argentina to collect data and determine the cause of stroke in different regions around the world.

Winter, the laureate in the field of medicine, was recognized for his invention of humanized therapeutic antibody technology, namely a technique developed to genetically alter the molecules of antibodies to make them compatible with the human immune system.

The use of humanized antibodies as therapeutic drugs has provided new ways to prevent and treat several diseases such as immune disorders, degenerative diseases and different types of cancers.

Winter told Kyodo News that receiving the award makes him give greater consideration to the need to reduce the high cost of antibiotic drugs.

The Prince Mahidol award was established by the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej in 1992 to commemorate the birthday centenary of his father, Prince Mahidol of Songkla.

It is given annually to individuals or institutions which have exhibited an outstanding contribution to the development of the world’s medical and public health services. Each laureate will receive a medal, a certificate and 100,000.—Kyodo News
Development Plans Are Underway, Subject To Our Conscientious Contribution

Khin Maung Oo

S
ince we have set out on a journey, our ultimate desire is to reach our destination. On the way we may find many difficulties, sometimes so temporary and so small, sometimes long-lasting. However it is, we are to move forward towards our destination. Yet, there are some who wish to go back to their place of origin, yielding to difficulties and hardships encountered on the journey. Perhaps he may say that he is satisfied with arriving back home safely, without any harm. His thought may be right partially. Yet, he seems to neglect the fact that he may have pleasure, benefits and gains from the journey. By his inborn rights, he can decide by himself to do something or not to do it, if he can forgo fruits of the journey, knowing that the taste of Independence yet, to the full. Like other independent countries, we have not yet reached the status of a developed country. Our people are still living in poor conditions. Many are still unemployed. Our country needs many FDIs (Foreign Direct Investments) so that we can build many factories for creating jobs for our unemployed. We will yet try to open schools and make school-age children enter classrooms. Failing that, we will be wasting the potential contributions of many of our youths. What it worse, they can come as grunts. But because of them, we can live in peace in our country. For a soldier, going to frontier areas is his job.

Now, we have embarked on a difficult but exciting journey to our destination—A Federal Democratic Union. Since the time of gaining Independence, we have not had the chance to savour the taste of Independence yet, to the full. Like other independent countries, we have not yet reached the status of a developed country.

TRAINING FOR THE CIVIL SERVICES

BA THAN
(Continued from 2-2-2017)
Aids were granted to establish a new management library in the Public Administration Training Division, with latest published books on management, public administration and economics as an aid to public administration studies. (The library was later transferred to the Central Institute of Public Services (CIPS) in Phaungyi. The training programmes were actively pursued around 1959 in Chauwlingone Mass Education Camp where the gazetted officers’ courses were conducted. Additionally in a 3-week special orientation course for senior officials (Selection graders from civil, police and Defence Services) twenty participants sat together to pool their resources on their varied experiences. Lecturers from Defence Ministry, Home Ministry, Law, administration, and finance, talk on their experiences. They were also required to form syndicates and discuss topics of current interest and present a paper to the forum. Such experiments on advanced training were conducted from 1959 to 1963 with far reaching results, to foster harmony among many senior officials from various civil, police and Ministry of Defence. The ad hoc courses came to an end on 1963.

Around 1964 the Home Ministry made preparations to open a Central School of Public Service to train newly recruited and in-service gazetted officers, non-gazetted officers and ministerial staff in in-house nature. In 1965 the Central School of Public Services was opened to deliver central training for public services. Later around 1977 it was upgraded into a Central Institute.

Another essential and no less important sector governing the Public Administration and Civil Services is defining the role of the Civil Services and conditions of services regulating various sectors such as appointment, rules and regulation defining their functions, conditions of service, promotion, punishment and final retirement. Such conditions were laid down in 3 main documents viz: Civil Service Regulation (CSR), Fundamental Rules (FR), Supplementary Rules (SR), D and AR (Discipline and Appeal Rules) and “G” Circular 15, Departmental Enquiries etc. Some say these Rules are the bible for services to be followed to the letter. However the author has other reasons contrary to the above dictum. Rules are essentially meant to be followed. But if certain rules and regulations are contrary to standing condition they will be amended by proper Rule Administering Authority. By inference Public Administration Department was designated the Rule administering authority. As such with competent power concerning interpretation of service rules and regulations.

Many reports and presentation papers were published on Public Administration and Civil Service all these years. If I may recall what had been left in my aging faded memory are: the Interim and Final Report of the Administration Reorganization Committee; The Public Service Enquiry Commission Report etc. A research documentation Book on the Public Service Commission of South East Asian Region is also valuable reference, which the author had translated into Myanmar during his tenure of office in public service affairs department of PSSTB. A Report of the high level study tour on public services training to India, Indonesia and Singapore may also prove to be handy. During his study and observation tours to the Training Institutes in India, Indonesia and Singapore, the Delegation had opportunities to visit the IAS (Indian Administrative Service College in Hyderabad). The IAS Administrative Commission in Jakarta, Indonesia; and the Civil Service College in Singapore. During the visits, the curriculum content and subject matter were drawn from contemporary studies in Public Administration, Management, Human Resources, economics, law and service regulations mainly of civil and academic nature. The Central Institute of Public Services however prescribed military training as one of its continua tions which persisted from 1965 to 2016. The author had read from the article by author Oak Hla Ng; that the redesigned curriculum content of Civil Service Academy seems to be in line with the contemporary training institutions of the ASEAN the work of which framed during the new government is highly commendable.

The above history of training presented by the author was borne out of personal involvement and study during his active years of government service from 1951 to 1991. It was recalled purely out of memory after years of retirement, awakened by the inauguration of the Civil Service Academy in 2017. There may certainly be lapses, slips, errors and omissions which the author humbly tendered his presentation apology. The message to convey here is that recruitment and training of civil servants is an ongoing nature complementing each other, to be continued by succeeding generations, with industry, vigour and vision because these functions are integral to governance in the civil society. The opening of the Civil Service Academy (CSA) with its specialized curriculum design, subject matter content and training methods will go a long way out par with peer training colleges and academies of ASEAN in the future.

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.

Opinion

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reviews please email er@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com with your name and title. Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish “Letters to the Editor” that do not exceed 500 words.
All Mon Regions Democracy Party presents policy and programs

NAI Win Htut (a) Nai Mya Win, Central Committee Member of All Mon Regions Democracy Party presented the policy, outlook and future plans of their party on Radio and TV on 2 February 2017. The text of his presentation is given below.

I hereby respectfully greet all ethnic nationals, living in the Mon Region by saying, “Mingalar bar.” All Mon Regions Democracy Party was formed on 7 April 2010 in accord with the desires of the Mon Reverend Sayadaws and Mon nationals were all desirous of having a Mon political party to represent all Mon nationals and that there should be only one party to take part in the general elections to be held under the 2008 Constitution.

I will present the policy and political outlook of the AMRDP. For all citizens to enjoy democracy and human rights to the full.

1. To build national unity based on equality and self-determination.
2. To build national unity based on equality and self-determination.
3. For the emergence of a genuine multi-party democracy system.
4. For the emergence, consolidation and perpetuation a genuine Federal Union.
5. To fight against bribery and corruption.
6. To work for social and economic progress.
7. To work for the development of a peaceful global community.

AMRDP will represent all Mon nationals through free, just and fair elections held in accord with the democratic practices. AMRDP contested in 2010, 2012 and 2015 elections and it will again contest in the 2017 by-election.

Following the 2015 general election, the National League for Democracy won and informed the government. The incumbent government is continuing to hold the political and ceasefire talks which had been initiated by the previous government. Internal armed conflicts which had started since 1948 have not yet ended but are still continuing up to this moment. The armed conflicts which have been going on for four years have claimed many lives and destroyed enormous amounts of properties. As known by all citizens, the dignity, essence, that of women and children had been greatly harmed.

The only way to escape from these sufferings and worries is to build internal peace and to maintain eternal peace. The only way to solve the root cause of the internal armed conflicts is to build internal peace and eternal peace. This is none other than to have in place a nationwide ceasefire and from that stage to work towards eternal peace through political dialogues, which is a new political culture.

Inequality among ethnic groups and among Regions and States, lack of ethnic and regional rights, lack of rights for self-determination, lack of recognition and preserve national identity of ethnic nationals, inequality in enjoying the benefits natural resources, lack of right to self-rule, lack of equality in sovereignty, preponderance of Big race chauvinism and narrow-minded racial views have been the causes for the emergence of armed conflicts. Though arms have been used to solve internal armed conflicts for nearly 70 years, the goal of ending conflicts is still far away.

Due to failure to reach the state of all-inclusive dialogue for nation-wide ceasefire, inability to hold national level political dialogues, in performing the existing nationwide ceasefire process, peace and eternal peace must be said to be still far away. As long as peace and eternal peace are still not within our reach, we will be far from building a Union based on federalism and democracy which will guarantee equality that ethnic nationals and the State has longed for. As long as we are still far from building a Federal Union, we will be far from peace and eternal peace.

AMRDP will co-operate with all other nationals and ethnic national groups for building a federal union which has peace, eternal peace and self-determination.

Various kinds of ethnic national have lived together in our country since time immemorial. AMRDP will try to establish a federal union with less central control. Simultaneously, re-drafting of the true federal union constitution that Mon nationals, people living in Mon Region and other nationals longed for, compiling Mon State Constitution, sending equal parliamentarians from States and Regions into Aminyo Hluttaw, attaining more rights to legislate ethnic and State affairs in Aminyo Hluttaw, forming State Cabi-nets under the leadership of Chief Minister chosen by majority votes from local representatives, acquisition of rights to act within the framework of law, concerning national affairs, languages, literature and culture of ethnicities, especially, designating ethnic language and literature, inter alia, as the official ones, will be performed. And we will work for the right to use the Mon language during school hours in schools in Mon State under the constitution.

In conclusion, AMRDP will try hard to cooperate with all nationals and for achieving peace and eternal peace, and simultaneously to build the Union based on democracy and federalism that will guarantee equality. With our deep respect, we hope that our best to build the Union in future, which is the true federal union in which all the respective States have their respective national identities. In conclusion I request you to vote for me, a candidate for Chaungzon constituency.

I send my heartfelt wish to you all to have mental and physical happiness.

(Official Translation)

Workshop on rights of indigenous peoples held in Nay Pyi Taw

A national-level workshop for the study of the UN declaration of the rights of international indigenous peoples was held in Nay Pyi Taw Thursday morning.

“This year, the 10th anniversary of the UN Declaration of the Rights of International Indigenous Peoples coincides with 10th anniversary of the signing of the important declaration in the General Assembly of UN by Myanmar. Our country is comprised of various kinds of national ethnics with traditions and cultures closely related with each other. Thus, we are required to co-exist peacefully and in harmony. By understanding the UN declaration of the rights of international indigenous peoples, we can build a peaceful and harmonious society without discrimination,” said Naing Thet Lwin, Union Minister for Ethnic Affairs. “The Ministry of Ethnic Affairs was formed in accord with the law protecting the rights of national ethnics and for national people to enjoy equal rights, to protect the rights of nationals and for all nationals to have respect for the differences of each other. One of the major objectives of the law protecting rights of the nationals is for all the national ethnics in Myanmar to have equality. Laying down plans to draft laws, rules and regulations on protecting rights of nationals coincides with the time of implementing matters included in the declaration.”

Mr Pablo Barrera, the UN Resident Coordinator, said the workshop aims to preserve the cultures of often-under-represented groups and promote understanding.

“We are grateful of all to take a right to hold such an important occasion. Indigenous peoples are only 5 per cent of the global population, the least populous group. The UN Declaration of the Rights of International Indigenous Peoples was enacted in 2007 with a view to performing the greater development process and conservation of their edifices, cultures and traditions, by conserving and controlling natural resources & land area, to protect cultures and languages of the indigenous people from disappearing. We firmly believe that acknowledging the rights of nationals and respect for the dignity of people will have many advantages for establishing a cooperative relation between the State and indigenous peoples, based on justice, democracy, respect of human rights, living in equality and good will,” Mr Barrera said.

The workshop was also addressed by Salai Zaoaklein, project manager of Chin Human Rights Action Network (CHRAN), local representative of Interna-tional Fund for Agricultural Development and Mr Raja Deva-stash, Vice-Chairman of UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

The discussion will end on 3 February.—Myanmar News Agency

Squatters blocking factory gates want more money

Ko Moe

SEVERAL people who have erected shanties in front of the factories in the Hluttaw Industrial Zone are trying to extort money, factory owners claim, saying they are owed compensation for the land on which they worked and lived before being asked to move.

“They are blocking the way to the factory’s gate. We asked them to move, but they said they cannot move because (the land) is theirs,” said U Tun Naing, the owner of Ever Plastic Factory.

The owner complained to the township police to remove them, but it became necessary for owners to file a lawsuit. Although the owner has sued, nothing will occur for the next four days, they said. The factory owner said he has already paid compensation — initially 25 lakhs for the shanty owners to move and then 100 lakhs to be paid at a later date.

“They demanded Ks200 lakhs from us and we made a compromise with 125 lakhs,” said U Tun Naing.

Seven factories in Shwe Lin Pan Industrial Zone in Hlaing Tharshio have also experienced similar issues about farmer trespassing and demands for compensation from the factory owners. Daw Sanda Min, Member of Parliament and the president of Yangon Region Parliament’s Finance, Planning and Econom-ic Committee, said the case has been submitted to the Yangon Region government.

“We received two complaint letters and inspected the industri-al zone. Sadly, we found seven cases,” she said.

The money extortionists, so-called farmers, cannot produce documents that they are the land owner. It is unacceptable for such action of blocking the factory gate,” she added.
Foreign Heads of State send felicitations to President U Htin Kyaw

The following are messages of felicitations from Foreign Heads of State / Government sent to President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Htin Kyaw, on the occasion of the 69th Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 4 January.

From H.E. Mr. Joachim Gauck, President of the Federative Republic of Germany

Mr President,

Please accept my warmest congratulations on the occasion of Independence Day in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

The year 2016 brought the people in your country the democratically elected government for which they had longed for many years. I wish you and your Government strength and patience in tackling the large number of tasks with the inclusion of all parties and groups. Achieving reconciliation between all ethnic groups and ensuring peaceful coexistence between the various groups in your country will require further great efforts.

I wish you and your compatriots the best of luck for the future. Germany will be a reliable partner for you.

From H.E. Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Your Excellency,

Please accept my sincere congratulations and wishes on the occasion of the National holiday of Your country – the Independence Day.

I have the honour to express my confidence that by our joint efforts friendly relations between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar will develop henceforth.

Taking this opportunity I wish to Your Excellency strong health and new successes in Your responsible state performance, prosperity and welfare – to the citizens of Myanmar.

Foreign Heads of State send felicitations to State Counsellor

The following are messages of felicitations from Foreign Heads of State / Government sent to State Counsellor, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, on the occasion of the 69th Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 4 January.

From H.E. Mr. Linas Antanas Linkevičius, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania

I would like to convey my warmest greetings to you and to the people of your country on the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. I sincerely wish you and your beloved Burma all the success and peace.

The relations between our countries are becoming more intensive and stronger each year. I am convinced that the recent accreditation of the Ambassador Ina Marčiulioytė to Myanmar will greatly contribute to the deepening of our bilateral ties.

We believe that the visit of the President of the Republic of Lithuania, H.E. Dalia Grybauskaitė to Myanmar would be a positive impetus for further strengthening cordial relations between our countries.

I would like to use this joyful occasion in express my sincere wish to welcome you in Lithuania at your earliest convenience. I believe that a great opportunity for this could be a SASEM conference “Women’s Economic Empowerment: Creating Equal Opportunities in the World of Work”, which we will host in Vilnius on 25-26 of May this year.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

From H.E. Mr. Mikheil Janelidze, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Republic of Georgia

Excellency,

It gives me a great pleasure to extend to You my warmest and sincere congratulations on the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Georgia attaches high importance to promoting friendly ties with Myanmar, which have considerable potential for successful cooperation in the various spheres.

On this notable day for your country I would like to convey my willingness to closely work with You for exploring new avenues of cooperation in the areas of mutual interest. Let me also express confidence that the bilateral partnership, as well as efficient cooperation on the International arena will continue to actively grow in the coming years.

Once again, Excellency, let me congratulations You upon this remarkable occasion and wish You and the People of Myanmar continued peace success and prosperity.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives delegations

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with Mr Thomas J Valley.

Photo: MNA

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received a delegation led by Mr Thomas J Valley, the senior adviser on Southeast Asia for the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and Myanmar-based Proximity Designs at the Bayintnaung Guest House yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting, the senior general discussed efforts to maintain stability on the current political trends, the ultimate need to end armed conflicts, steadfast stand of the Tatmadaw regardless of government changes and the cooperation of the Tatmadaw with the government for the stability of the country.

Afterwards, Mr Valley talked about attitudes on the peace process of Myanmar, discussions at the OIC meeting in Indonesia and Rakhine State issues.—Myanmar News Agency

More than 190,000 amphetamine pills seized in Maungtaw

MORE than 190,000 amphetamine tablets were seized in a village in Maungtaw Township, Rakhine State, yesterday.

A local anti-drug squad discovered the drug haul hidden an extra wheel at the back of a Pajero Car during a search at a house owned by Kawri Mullah in Kayintan (Myoma) Village in the township.

Kawri Mullah managed to escape from the scene but Mamauk Karsein, who was found in the house, was arrested on suspicion of drug trafficking. The anti-drug squad has opened a file against the two suspects at Maungtaw (Myoma) Police Station.—Min Min Zaw (MNA)

Deputy Prime Minister Dr Samkid Jatusripitak pays homage to Jade Buddha Image at the Shwedagon Pagoda.

Photo: MNA

A THAILAND delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister Dr Samkid Jatusripitak visited Shwedagon Pagoda yesterday evening.

The visiting delegation signed in the visitors’ book and contributed cash to the fund of the pagoda through the pagoda’s board of trustees.

During the visit, the delegation offered flowers and lit candles and paid homage to the Shwedagon Pagoda.—Myanmar News Agency

Violent attacks suspect dies of stomach inflammation

A MAN who was detained on suspicion of involvement in the violent attacks in October and November last year in northern Rakhine State died on Wednesday at the hospital in Buthidaung, Rakhine State, while receiving medical care for inflammation of the stomach.

Mammud Rawphi, also known as Mummad Arlaung, was sent to the hospital by security forces at 7 pm on Monday after he complained of stomach pain.—Myanmar News Agency
Syrian army dash to al-Bab risks Turkey clash

BEIRUT/ISTANBUL — A rapid advance by the Syrian army towards the Islamic State-held city of al-Bab risks sparking a confrontation with Turkey as Damascus seeks to stop its neighbour penetrating deeper into a strategically important area of northern Syria.

Northern Syria is one of the most contested battlefields of the multi-sided Syrian war, with Islamic State now being fought there by the Syrian army, Turkey and its rebel allies, and an alliance of US-backed Syrian militias.

In less than two weeks, Syrian army units have moved to within 6 km (4 miles) of al-Bab, a city that is also being targeted in a campaign waged by the Turkish military and its allies, groups fighting under the Free Syrian Army banner.

A source in the military alliance fighting in support of President Bashar al-Assad told Reuters on Wednesday the Syrian army aimed to reach al-Bab and was ready “to clash with the FSA fighting” alongside the Turkish army if necessary.

However, the source, a non-Syrian, said the main aim was to frustrate Turkey’s ambitions “and to acquire a strong hand in the game unfolding on that front”, rather than to provoke an all-out confrontation.

If a clash does occur, it would be the first time Syrian government forces have confronted the Turkish army on the ground in northern Syria since Turkey launched its operation in August.

Russia, Assad’s most powerful ally, has carried out air strikes targeting Islamic State in the al-Bab area in support of both sides, underlining big shifts in the diplomatic landscape.

The non-Syrian military source spoke on condition of anonymity as he was not an official spokesman for the pro-Assad alliance.

The attack is led by the army’s elite Tiger Force, with intelligence support from a command centre in Aleppo staffed partly by Iranian advisors, the pro-Assad source said. The army campaign was receiving Russian air cover “when asked for”.

Assad has been backed in the war by an array of Iran-backed Shia militias, including Hezbollah, and the Russian air force.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based group reporting on the war, said on Wednesday the Turkish-backed forces had made new advances to the southwest of al-Bab, calling this an effort to halt the gains by Syrian government forces.

Turkey launched its campaign in Syria, “Euphrates Shield”, in order to secure its frontier from Islamic State and halt the advance of the powerful Kurdish YPG militia. Helping rebels to topple Assad is no longer seen as a priority for Ankara.

The Euphrates Shield campaign has carved out an effective buffer zone controlled by Turkey-backed rebel groups, obstructing the YPG’s plans of linking up Kurdish controlled areas in northeastern and northwestern Syria. —Reuters

Suspect in Canada mosque shooting sought money, scouted site

QUEBEC CITY — The suspect in the shooting rampage at a Canadian mosque visited the site before Sunday’s massacre, asking for money and scouting the scene before returning with guns and killing six men as they prayed, a member of the mosque said.

Alexandre Bissonnette, 27, was charged in court on Monday with six counts of premeditated murder and five counts of attempted murder with a restricted weapon after Sunday evening’s massacre at the Centre Culturel Islamique de Quebec.

Members of the mosque were shocked to find the man that had been seen twice outside the centre in the days before the shooting was the same slightly built French-Canadian that police said was the lone attacker in the shooting. “I remembered his face,” L’houssine El Manoug said on Wednesday, recalling his reaction when the suspect’s image was broadcast across Canada after the massacre.

El Manoug said he recalled meeting the man just three days before Sunday’s shooting. The suspect showed up at the mosque between 7:45 pm ET and 8 pm ET (0045-0100 GMT) on Thursday, the same time as the attack on the mosque Sunday night.

He was dressed in a black coat and carried a school bag, El Manoug recalled, adding the suspect said a strange thing: “I love Allah. I’ve seen photos of Allah.”

El Manoug suspected the man did not know anything about Islam, but he saw nothing to tip him off to the suspect’s evil intentions.

“I thought he was someone who was simply ignorant,” El Manoug said. —Reuter

Iran confirms missile test, drawing tough response from Trump aide

Iranian Defence Minister Hossein Dehghan delivers a speech as he attends the 5th Moscow Conference on International Security (MCIS) in Moscow, Russia, on 27 April 2016. Photo: Reuters

DUBAI — Iran said on Wednesday it had tested a new ballistic missile, prompting a tough response from a senior adviser to US President Donald Trump.

Iran’s defence minister said the test did not breach the Islamic Republic’s nuclear agreement with world powers or a UN Security Council resolution endorsing the pact.

Iran has test-fired several ballistic missiles since the nuclear deal in 2015, but the latest test was the first since Trump entered the White House. Trump said during his election campaign that he would stop Iran’s missile programme.

“The recent test was in line with our plans and we will not allow foreigners to interfere in our defence affairs,” Defence Minister Hossein Dehghan told Tasnim news agency. “The test did not violate the nuclear deal or (UN) Resolution 2231.”

Trump’s national security adviser, Michael Flynn, said the United States was putting Iran on notice over its “destabilising activity” after it fired the missile.

“As of today, we are officially putting Iran on notice,” Flynn said without explaining exactly what that meant.

Flynn said the missile launch defied the UN resolution that called on Iran not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

A US official said Iran had test-launched a medium-range ballistic missile on Sunday and it exploded after travelling 630 miles (1,010 km).

The Security Council held an emergency meeting on Tuesday and recommended the missile testing be studied at committee level. The new US ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, called the test “unacceptable”.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Tuesday that Tehran would never use its ballistic missiles to attack another country.

Some 220 Iranian members of parliament reaffirmed support for Tehran’s missile programme, calling international condemnation of the tests “illogical”.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is against weapons of mass destruction, so its missile capability is the only available deterrent against enemy hostility,” the lawmakers said in a statement carried on state media on Wednesday.

The state news agency IRNA quoted Ali Shamkhani, head of Iran’s National Security Council, as saying Iran would not seek “permission from any country or international organisation for development of our conventional defensive capability”.

The Security Council resolution was adopted to buttress the deal under which Iran curbed its nuclear activities to allay concerns they could be used to develop atomic bombs, in exchange for relief from economic sanctions.

The resolution urged Tehran to refrain from work on ballistic missiles designed to deliver nuclear weapons. Critics say the resolution’s language does not make this obligatory.

Tehran says it has not carried out any work on missiles specifically designed to carry nuclear payloads.

The test on Sunday, according to US officials, was of a type of missile that had also been tested seven months ago. —Reuters

Turkish warplanes kill 51 Islamic State militants in Syria — military statement

ANKARA — Turkish warplanes killed 51 Islamic State militants in operations over the last 24 hours, the military said in a statement on Thursday.

Warplanes destroyed 85 Islamic State targets in the areas of al-Bab, Tabid, Kabbasin and Bzagah, including buildings and vehicles. They launched an operation, dubbed “Euphrates Shield”, to drive jihadists away from the Syrian border more than five months ago and has been besieging the Islamic State controlled town of al-Bab for weeks. —Reuters
NEW YORK — In the midst of a furious Middle East war nearly 70 years ago, a group of Israeli and Egyptian officers put down their guns, ate lunch together and discussed the prospects for peace in the region, according to a documentary film that premiered in New York last month.

The group included two men who would become leaders of their respective countries and fierce rivals — Yitzhak Rabin of Israel and Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt. But on that day, the young officers interacted warmly and forged at least a modicum of trust.

The details emerge in a 1994 interview with Rabin, then prime minister, that is the centerpiece of “Shalom Rabin,” director Amos Gitai’s new film about Rabin’s bid for peace with the Palestinians.

In the film Rabin says that based on the chance encounter with Nasser months after Israel’s founding in 1948, he had high hopes Nasser’s overthrow of Egypt’s monarchy in 1952 would lead to Arab-Israeli peace. Rabin says Israeli officers invited their Egyptian counterparts after surrounding their brigade at the Fa-houja enclave. Rabin was a leader of the elite Palmach fighting force.

“He (Nasser) was a major. I was a lieutenant-colonel,” Rabin says. “We offered them to come and have lunch at (Israel’s) Kibbutz Gati and they came.”

The Israelis gave their word the Egyptians would return to their brigade safely. “Nasser was sitting next to me. He looked at the emblem of the Palmach and asked me what it meant and I explained. Then he told me the war we are fighting is the wrong war against the wrong enemy at the wrong time. And I remembered that, because he didn’t say it in private.”

“And I believe at that time that we were very close to peace,” Rabin says.

“The wrong enemy of a country is the enemy of that country,” Rabin says. “We fought for peace while we were there. Now that they already are fighting, we must consider the peace. And I believe at that time we were very close to peace.”

“Following the collapse, we dispatched police and other teams to rescue people trapped under debris of the building. The rescuers pulled out 21 people in injured condition, out of which four succumbed and 17 were hospitalized,” said National Disaster Response Force, state police, fire services and officials from local administration, besides locals are making efforts to rescue the trapped workers.

Authorities have also rushed in four columns of Indian army to the spot to reinforce rescue work.

**Italian translation of Haruki Murakami novel wins Japanese award**

TOKYO — Antonietta Pastore, who translated a 2013 Haruki Murakami novel into Italian, has won a Japanese publisher’s award for outstanding translation of Japanese literature.

Translating the popular novelist’s “Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage” into Italian, Pastore is the recipient of the 21st Noma Award for the Translation of Japanese Literature, established by Kodansha in 1989.

Pastore’s award was announced on Wednesday at the ceremony held in Tokyo.

The biennial prize, established in 1989, is aimed at promoting understanding of Japanese culture abroad. An award ceremony will be held in Tokyo’s Inokashira Park on 7 April.

**Israeli minister visits grave of Japanese diplomat who saved Jews**

YOKOHAMA — Israeli Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon visited on Wednesday the grave of the late Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara who saved thousands of Jews from Nazi persecution during World War II, in Kamakura, southwest of Tokyo.

Kahlon visited the grave in Kamakura, southwest of Tokyo, along with Ambassador to Japan Ruth Kahanoff and Sugihara’s fourth son Nobuki.

While working as an acting consul in Lithuania, Sugihara defied orders from the Japanese Foreign Ministry and issued transit visas to Jews who were trying to escape the Holocaust, and is credited with saving 6,000 lives.

Although he was pressured to leave the ministry upon his return to Japan, his act was praised by Israel and the United States.

**Notice**

Myanmar Citizens Bank (MCB) released a Request for Proposal (RFP) to prospective Core Banking Vendors to provide a Core Banking System (CBS). The responses to the RFP should be received at our Yangon Office by end of day 24th February 2017.

For inquiries please contact Ms. Niang Muan Kim via email address niangmunkim@mcbycom.mm or phone number +959767800362 before end of business day on 7th February 2017.

MCB reserves the right to release the said RFP upon evaluation of information provided.
Ex-nuclear plant worker seeks damages from TEPCO, Kyushu Electric

TOKYO — A former nuclear plant worker who helped to combat the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster sought a court in northeastern Japan (around $524,000) in damages from plant operators for his subsequent suffering from leukemia at the first hearing of his trial at the Tokyo District Court on Thursday.

The 42-year-old man from Fukushima Prefecture is the first to have been recognized by labor authorities with an illness linked to workplace radiation exposure after Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc.’s Fukushima Daiichi plant suffered meltdowns following the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

In March 2011, Tokyo Electric, known as TEPCO, and Kyushu Electric Power Co., which ran the plant was also the plaintiff’s workplace, asked the court to reject his claim, questioning the connection between his radiation exposure and leukemia.

Deep sea canyons at risk from human activities: New Zealand scientist

WELLINGTON — New Zealand’s extensive under-water canyons are under threat from human activity and need better protection, says a government scientist who worked on an international study of the marine ecosystems.

There were about 10,000 large submarine canyons, major features of the world’s oceans, around the world with at least 230 off New Zealand, according to the study by the International Network for Submarine Canyon Investigation and Scientific Exchange.

Recent studies of canyons had considerably increased understanding of their ecological role, the goods and services they provided to humans, and the impact of human activities on them. Their ecological condition, said marine ecologist Ashley Rowden, of the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research, who worked on the study. Pressures from human activities included litter, fishing, dumping of land-based mine tailings, and oil and gas extraction, Rowden said in a statement Thursday.

Aid group joins Massachusetts lawsuit over Trump travel ban

BOSTON — A US anti-poverty group said Wednesday it is joining a Massachusetts lawsuit to strike down President Donald Trump’s travel ban, as the law has blocked overseas partners from meeting with officials in Washington.

Boston-based Oxfam America joined the ACLU of Massachusetts and state Attorney General Maura Healey in challenging the order which bars refugee resettlement for 120 days and travel into the United States by people with passports from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen for 90 days.

Trump is facing legal challenges from four states — Massachusetts, New York, Virginia and Washington state — saying the order targets Muslim-majority countries and violates the US Constitution’s guarantees of religious freedom. The White House says the order is necessary for national security.

Oxfam provides humanitarian aid to families in five of the countries on the travel ban list — Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, and Sudan.

Oxfam had to cancel a meeting in the next 90 days because it cannot bring its country director to Washington to brief State and Treasury Department officials.

An Oxfam spokeswoman declined to say which of the countries the person was based in, citing security concerns.

The group was also planning to bring representatives from Syria for meetings in March but the order will also prevent those trips.

The US Justice Department is due to argue the case in the US District Court in Boston on Friday.

In New York on Wednesday, hundreds of protesters gathered in Foley Square and marched in Lower Manhattan, chanting “No hate, no fear, immigrants are welcome here.”

Many in the crowd carried signs, flags and banners, including some placards written in Spanish and Arabic.

Protestor Selma Khan, a 23-year-old graduate from York College, said she feared her sister’s husband, who is a Pakistani national, may have trouble coming to the United States in the future if the travel ban is expanded.

“It is depressing and it’s tearing families apart, Khan said.— Reuters

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

MV SINAR BALI VOY. NO (021)
Consignees of cargo carried on MV SINAR BALI VOY. NO (021) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 3.2.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: M/S SILKAGO LOGISTICS PTE LTD
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

MV PIYA STAR VOY. NO ()
Consignees of cargo carried on MV PIYA STAR VOY. NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 3.2.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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Beyoncé’s surprise twins announcement goes viral

LOS ANGELES — Pop superstar Beyoncé said on Wednesday that she and her husband, rap star and entrepreneur Jay Z, were expecting twins, sending social media into a meltdown.

“We would like to share our love and happiness,” Beyoncé, 35, posted on her Instagram page. “We have been blessed two times over. We are incredibly grateful that our family will be growing by two, and we thank you for your well wishes.”

The announcement came with a photo of the “Crazy in Love” singer stripped down to her lingerie, caressing a noticeable baby bump, and wearing a veil over her head.

The news became the top trending item on Twitter with more than 50,000 tweets within the first hour. The birth of the couple’s first baby, Blue Ivy, caused a paparazzi storm in 2012 with New York’s Lenox Hill hospital shutting down one of its maternity wings to accommodate music’s royal couple.

Beyoncé did not say when the twins were due but her 30th birthday is on Sept. 4. She did not give any details about her pregnancy.

The news came less than a year after the release of Beyoncé’s album “Lemonade,” in which she appeared to address long-standing rumors of trouble in her eight-year marriage.

The lyrics of several songs spoke about being cheated on, and regretting being married. But Beyoncé made clear in the final tracks of the album and in music videos featuring Jay-Z that she had decided to stay in the relationship.

The couple have never directly addressed the rumors.

It was not clear whether the pregnancy would affect plans for the Grammy Awards on Feb. 10, where Beyoncé has a leading nine nominations, mostly for “Lemonade,” and would be expected to perform.

She is also due to headline a concert at the Coachella music festival in southern California in April.—Reuters

Jay-Z presents the Video Vanguard Award to Beyonce as he holds their daughter Blue Ivy during the 2014 MTV Video Music Awards in Inglewood, California in 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

Lady Gaga takes Super Bowl spotlight, but how will she do it?

LOS ANGELES — As Lady Gaga prepares to take America’s biggest stage at the National Football League (NFL) Super Bowl halftime show on Sunday, much of the country is speculating whether the outspoken singer will grab the opportunity to speak out on women’s rights, immigration or U.S. politics and be expected to perform.

She use it?

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British singer Vera Lynn to release new album for 100th birthday

LONDON — British singer Vera Lynn will celebrate her 100th birthday by releasing an album of remastered classic songs next month, which could make the wartime singer the first centenarian to hit the UK charts.

The artist known as the “Forces sweetheart” will release “Vera Lynn 100,” which will include hits such as “We’ll Meet Again” and “Sailing” set to new orchestral accompaniment, on 17 March, three days ahead of her milestone birthday.

“It’s truly humbling that people still enjoy these songs from so many years ago — and it’s so wonderful for me to hear my songs again so beautifully presented in a completely new way.”

Through her songs, Lynn became a symbol of hope for British and Allied soldiers fighting Nazi Germany and she was given the title of Dame in 1975 for her work. In 2009, aged 92, Lynn became the oldest living artist to land a UK No.1 album with a compilation release called “We’ll Meet Again: The Very Best of Vera Lynn.”

The album also made her the only recording artist to have spanned the pop charts from the 1940s to the 21st century. —Reuters

Islands, chateau, art: Johnny Depp’s lifestyle laid bare in lawsuit

LOS ANGELES — Johnny Depp took himself to the brink of financial ruin by spending tens of millions of dollars on homes, art, cars, a yacht and Hollywood memorabilia, according to a lawsuit filed by his former business managers.

The suit filed in Los Angeles Superior Court on Tuesday by the Mandel Company, which handled Depp’s affairs for 17 years, alleged that being fired in March 2016, was a counterclaim to the actor’s $25 million lawsuit last month accusing the firm of fraud and financial mismanagement.

The court papers detailed Depp’s spending as including $75 million on buying or improving 14 residences, including a French chateau and a chain of islands in the Bahamas. He also bought 45 luxury vehicles, amassed a 200-piece art collection with works by Andy Warhol and Amedeo Modigliani and has 12 storage units full of memorabilia associated with Marilyn Monroe, Marlon Brando and other celebrities, the lawsuit said.

The actor, whose career took off after the first “Pirates of the Caribbean” movie in 2003, also spent more than $3 million to blast the ashes of author Hunter Thompson over Aspen, Colorado, from a cannon, the lawsuit alleged.

Depp’s lawyer Adam Waldman responded to the lawsuit with a statement saying: “How cataloguing alleged spending by Mr. Depp of his own money could somehow absolve the defendants of a large and multi-faceted mosaic of wrongdoing will ultimately be determined by the court.”

Last month Depp’s divorce from actress Amber Heard was finalized, ending their 15-month marriage. Depp, 53, agreed to pay $7 million to Heard that she said will be donated to charity.

The Mandel Company, which is seeking $560,000 in damages and fees owed by Depp, said it had done “everything possible to protect Depp from his own irresponsible and profligate spending” to no avail.

“Depp, and Depp alone, is fully responsible for any financial turmoil he finds himself in today,” the lawsuit said. “He has refused to live within his means.” Forbes magazine ranked Depp as Hollywood’s highest paid actor from June 2009 to June 2010 with earnings of $75 million. In December, the magazine named him the most overpaid actor for a second straight year as films such as “Alice Through the Looking Glass” and “Mortdecai” did not fare well.—Reuters

Johnny Depp. PHOTO: REUTERS

Second World War British forces Sweetheart Vera Lynn attends the Battle of Britain commemoration outside the Churchill War Rooms in London in 2010. PHOTO: REUTERS

Lady Gaga sings the U.S National Anthem before the start of the NFL’s Super Bowl 50 between the Carolina Panthers and the Denver Broncos in Santa Clara, California in 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

**Fit for an emperor — a virtual reality tour of Nero’s golden palace**

ROME — Emperor Nero, a technology enthusiast, would have loved it: his over-the-top golden palace in Rome is about to get the virtual reality treatment.

From Saturday, visitors to the buried Domus Aurea (Golden House) will be able to don headsets to get a closer look at the frescoes on its 12 meter (40 ft)-high walls.

The palace was built in 64 AD after fire swept through the city, the one through which the man himself is — probably apocryphally — said to have fled.

“We believe it is fundamental to get visitors to understand what the Domus Aurea was really like,” said the site’s special superintendent Francesco Prosperetti.

“We wanted to let them experience it even better than Nero himself.”

Named after the gold leaf covering some of its walls, the palace was the centerpiece of a complex that once included an artificial lake where the Colosseum now stands.

The exhibitionist emperor indulged his penchant for clever contrivances with benign inventions like a revolving dining hall inside the palace and more sinister plans such as, according to legend, a collapsing ship to carry his mother to a watery grave.

Filled with ruble by the later Emperor Trajan, who built his baths on top, the palace was rediscovered in the 15th century. It has been undergoing restoration in recent years.

The complex used to attract 1,000 visitors a day before leaking water put the underground chambers at risk of collapse and prompted its closure. Rome’s archaeological authorities decided to open up the palace in 2014 to small groups of visitors, partly to show people how the state-funded restoration was progressing.

The site superintendent’s office has estimated reinforcing the palace will cost 31 million euros ($33.39 million).—Reuters

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**Legoland Japan holds ceremony for completion ahead of April opening**

NAGOYA — A ceremony was held Thursday to celebrate the completion of the first outdoor Legoland amusement park in Japan ahead of its opening on 1 April.

At the ceremony, Legoland Japan President Torben Jensen said the new Lego-block theme park in Nagoya, central Japan, offers fun for all the family for a whole day.

The 9.3-hectare park has seven different themed areas, with 17 million Lego blocks and 10,000 Lego models featuring dozens of rides and other attractions, according to the operator.

A one-day pass is 5,300 yen ($47) for children aged 3 to 12 and 6,900 yen for those aged 13 or older.

Children aged 2 or younger can enter the park for free.

Indoor Lego-block parks operate in Tokyo and Osaka.

—Kyodo News

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**Ancient sunken warship found in southern Sweden**

STOCKHOLM — A naval ship has been found in southern Sweden some 400 years after it went missing.

Swedish Television reported on Wednesday.

The Blekinge naval ship was the first to set sail from the Karlskrona naval base in southern Sweden in 1682 and is considered to have marked the launch of Karlskrona’s famed shipbuilding history.

With its 70 canons and 450-strong crew, Blekinge was used in the bombing of Copenhagen and King Karl the Twelfth’s landing in Denmark in 1760. Later, the ship fell into oblivion.

Last year, the Blekinge county in southern Sweden got hold of old maps of Karlskrona where the ship was clearly marked out.

Diving expeditions were carried out and it was confirmed that an old shipwreck was indeed buried in thick layers of sediment at the bottom of the sea.

Now, all evidence seems to point to it being the Blekinge warship and it seems it was deliberately sunk, with the intention of using it as a blockhouse.

The ship will likely not be salvaged, however.

“We don’t quite know how much remains of the ship, but there is a theory that one deck is intact,”...
**Man City dazzle as United held by Hull**

LONDON — Manchester City turned on the style to dismantle West Ham United 4-0 and revive their fading Premier League title aspirations as Manchester United’s hopes suffered a potentially fatal blow with a goalless home against struggling Hull City on Wednesday.

City produced a scintillating first-half display, scoring three times before the break through Kevin De Bruyne, David Silva and new boy Gabriel Jesus, before Yaya Toure’s penalty capped a one-sided romp at the London Stadium.

Clinical finishing was in short supply at Old Trafford, however, where United came up against an inspired performance from Hull keeper Eldin Jakupovic, who made a string of superb saves to keep Jose Mourinho’s side at bay.

While City’s victory moved them level on 46 points with fourth-placed Liverpool and kept leaders Chelsea just about in their sights, United’s slip-up left them sixth, four points adrift of City and 14 off the summit.

Hull’s unlikely point moved them off the foot of the table while Stoke City and Everton drew 1-1.

It has not been plain sailing for City manager Pep Guardiola in recent months and he came into Wednesday’s game facing the prospect of losing three successive top-flight away matches for the first time in his managerial career.

City had already beaten West Ham twice this season with an aggregate score of 8-1 and they were returning to the London Stadium less than a month after thrashing their hosts 5-0 in the FA Cup third round.

De Bruyne started and finished off a swift counter to put them ahead after 17 minutes and with the home side in disarray, City turned the screw.

Sane gave Silva a tap-in at the far post four minutes later, before Jesus grabbed his first for the club.

City’s January signing side-footed in Raheem Sterling’s pass six minutes before the break and when Sterling was felled by Jose Fonte, making his West Ham debut, Toure stepped up to thump his penalty into the net.

Jesus caught the eye with his high-energy display and as part of a youthful front three with Sterling and Sane, had City boss Guardiola purring.

“Gabriel Jesus is a fighter with an instinct for the goal,” Guardiola told the BBC. “We played a front three with an average age of 20. I like the fans to be excited. Those players are the future of the club.”

United, facing Hull for the third time in 23 days after their League Cup semi-final, were thwarted by a determined Jakupovic, who saved well from Zlatan Ibrahimovic and even more impressively from substitute Juan Mata.

Daley Blind, Marcus Rojo, Marcus Rashford and Ibrahimovic missed further chances as United dominated, although they almost suffered a stunning defeat when Lazar Markovic hit the post for Hull.

Stoke’s Peter Crouch dusted off his robot dance after opening the scoring against Everton with his 100th Premier League goal after seven minutes, finishing on the stretch after Marko Arnautovic had broken the offside trap.

At 36 years and two days, the former Liverpool and England forward is the oldest player to reach his Premier League century.

The lead lasted until six minutes before the break when Ryan Shawcross deflected Seamus Coleman’s shot into his own goal. — Reuters

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**Tiger Woods takes another comeback step, glad he can take any**

NEW YORK — Tiger Woods will take the next step on his comeback this week at the Dubai Desert Classic, a step that just a few months ago he was not at all sure he would be able to take.

He had not played on the PGA Tour since August 2015 and went though back surgery in September and again in October of that year. His recovery was long and painful.

“It was tough. It was more brutal,” Woods said in a video interview released in conjunction with the Desert Classic event. “Because there were times when I physically didn’t know if I could get out of bed.”

In the 15 months before Woods next played in a tournament - the Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas in December 2016 - he slid to 666th in the world rankings, having enjoyed a total of 683 weeks as number one.

Now 41, Woods has not won on the PGA Tour since 2013. His last major championship triumph was in 2008. But the American is glad for the chance to change that this week, at a tournament he won on two occasions — Reuters

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**Suarez, Messi wonder strikes give Barca edge at Atletico**

BARCELONA — Luis Suarez and Lionel Messi scored stunning goals to edge Barcelona towards a fourth consecutive King’s Cup final with a 2-1 win at Atletico Madrid on Wednesday, although the holders were lucky to survive a late onslaught from the home side.

Suarez opened the scoring with a breath-taking individual goal in the seventh minute, carving Atletico open with a thrusting run from the halfway line and producing a crisp low finish before Messi smashed in off the post from outside the area in the 33rd.

Atletico vastly improved in the second half and after Antoine Greizmann’s header reduced the deficit in the 59th minute they laid siege to the Barca area, but the equaliser remained elusive.

The return leg at the Nou Camp takes place next Tuesday although neither Barca forward Neymar nor Atletico captain Gabi will be able to play through suspension after picking up bookings.

“It would be absurd to think you can come to the Calderon and not suffer. We did everything to try and survive their waves of pressure and for now we can enjoy the result,” Barca coach Luis Enrique told reporters. — Reuters