A Malaysian NGO aid ship carrying food and emergency supplies for northern Rakhine arrives at the port in Yangon yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Malaysian aid for Rakhine arrives in Myanmar

A ship filled with food and supplies from Malaysia docked in Yangon yesterday, with the aid to be delivered to two communities in conflict areas in northern Rakhine State, said Dr Win Myat Aye, the Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement.

“We will send the aid to northern Rakhine by navy ships and we will distribute the aid to conflict areas in cooperation with Rakhine Government,” said Dr Win Myat Aye at the press conference held shortly after the arrival of the Malaysian ship.

The delivery comes after the Malaysian ambassador in Yangon asked the government to accept the aid as they want to donate to the two communities in northern Rakhine, according the Union minister.

Shortly after the Nautical Aliya, which was carrying 2,300 tonnes of food, medicines, daily essential goods, bottled water, clothes and blankets worth more than US$247,900 from Malaysia, docked at the Thilawa Port in Yangon, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia Dato Seri Reezal Merican Naina Merican handed over the aid to Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye.

The Myanmar government has already expressed the country’s readiness to accept humanitarian aid, which comes to the country through diplomatic channels, urging the donors to deliver the aid to both communities in Rakhine in a fair and balanced manner.—Myanmar News Agency

Rubbish collection in Yangon to be privatised

Ko Moe

Rubbish collection in the Yangon Region will be handed over to private enterprises, according to U Maung Maung Soe, Yangon City Mayor.

Fees for rubbish collection may rise if leases are granted to private companies, but a condition that the cost will not be a great burden to the people has been imposed in the handover, it is learnt.

“In every developing country, governments are supporting in this sector. It will be better provided that taxes are collected accurately and these taxes are rightfully spent. There has been a plan to hand over the garbage collection works to private companies in the tenure of the new government,” said Mayor U Maung Maung Soe.

It is learnt that Yangon City Development Committee will perform in accord with working commitments in handing over the works to private companies that can efficiently run the tasks, ensuring that nepotism does not occur in the granting of the contracts.

The Yangon Region produces over 2,500 tons of rubbish daily, and YCDC is performing its daily garbage collection routines at a loss of about K 133 Lakhs per day.

Currently, YCDC is collecting monthly refuse disposal fees of Ks600 from each house in the municipal areas, Ks450 in related townships and Ks300 each in suburban areas.

The YCDC employs 4,000 sanitation workers who collect trash from over 8,000 dustbins and nearly 3,000 trolleys using more than 450 dust collecting vehicles.

Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye, left, welcomes Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia Dato Seri Reezal Merican Naina Merican, right, who was on board the Malaysian ship carrying aid for northern Rakhine. PHOTO: Reuters
Rural development programme proposed at the wrong time: MPs

U Thaung Aye, a Member of Parliament for Pyawbwe constituency, urged the Union Government to implement an all-round development programme for small and medium-sized enterprises, including livestock and agriculture, and to provide grants for housing so that poverty can be reduced and living standards improved.

“The vision for a higher standard of living for rural life is a long-term strategic procedure based on high productivity and economic development, so the first important thing to do is to generate more foreign income through high productivity,” said U Sein Win, MP for Maubin constituency to the question on the sixth day of the 2nd Pyithu Hluttaw’s fourth regular session. He also discussed the need for agricultural sector development, with resolution of land conflicts a priority before transforming to an advanced agricultural process from traditional agriculture.

U Sein Win also said that small and medium sized producers need to be upgraded based on modern agricultural methods and that the government is also planning for all-round development. U Zaw Thein, MP for Wakema Constituency, objected because he said the proposer should not urge the Union Government at the present period when it is making a great effort to establish priorities and additional requests could slow down the plan.

The focus of the country’s development is internal peace and national reconciliation, which was announced in the declaration after the election.

The 21st Century Panglong conference is being held nationwide means people desire peace and the government, the Hluttaw, the Tatmataw are working together as a priority task so that the government should not be asked for a rural development project through the Hluttaw, U Zaw Thein said.

The proposal drew 221 objections votes, 147 supporting votes and four neutral votes. — Myanmar News Agency

2nd Amyotha Hluttaw 4th regular session holds its 6th day meeting

U Kyaw Myo, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications replied to the question raised by U Naung Na Jua Tan of constituency 4 of Kachin State as to whether there have been plans for the State to build the embankment of Taionchaung bank flowing nearby Taion village in Tanan township, Kachin State. “For the protection of Taion village from erosion, stone-piled embankment with 1000 ft in length at the site of erosion and 135 ft in length nearby the upper side of the bridge, which will cost K 240 million in the fiscal year 2016-2017. And, tender bids were invited by water resources and rivers development department for 10 works of protection river banks from erosion to be implemented with the fund of Kachin State Cabinet in 2016-2017 financial year.

Out of them, two tenders won but it has not been implemented due to the security of the area and objection over the construction of the embankment by People’s Republic of China. Designated budgets for the two work sites have been transferred to 9 worksites that are still needed to be implemented. Out of designated budget K 2419.46 million, K 240 million will be used for protection Taion bank from erosion.” Afterward, U Mya Min Swe of constituency of Magwe Region, U Min Swe Naing of constituency 6, Kachin State, U Pe Tin of constituency 6 of Mon State raised questions respectively. Over the questions, U Kyaw Myo, deputy minister replied.

Then, the deputy minister submitted the proposal to discuss the bill on road transport board.

U Thein Lwin, Amyotha Hluttaw Drafting Committee member read out the report which included findings concerning bill on road transport board and notes on the bill. Speaker of the Amyotha Hluttaw announced to have their names enlisted if the representatives are interested to submit the amended motion over the bill, by describing paragraphs and sub-paragraphs needed to be amended, in detail with their signatures signed. —Myanmar News Agency.

Myanmar Gazette

Heads of service organization appointed

The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed the following persons as head of organizations shown against each on probation from the date they assume charge of their duties.

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>U Shwe Lay</td>
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Two suspects detained in An

POLICE detained two men as they were abandoned by an alleged human trafficker in An, Rakhine State, on Tuesday, according to the police.

Z Tuu and Baw Shiamud from Pauktaw Palaung Village in Kyauktaw Township left the village by motorcycle together with Kawn Maw after reaching a business agreement with Kawn Maw to transport them to Yangon.

The police found the two men while conducting an area clearance operation between the Mile Post 20/1 and 20/2 on An-Sittway Road at 9 pm on Tuesday.

The suspects will be handed over to a local police station for further interrogation. —Myanmar News Agency

Crime Awareness event held in Maungtaw

A CRIME awareness event conducted by Camp Commandant and Police Captain Kyaw Aye Hlaur and responsible persons was held yesterday near the clock tower junction in Maungtaw, Rakhine State.

The topics centered on reduction in child rape, overall crime, homicides and drugs. Also discussed were police services and procedures.

“We want the public to know about the punishment for committing crime and child rape. We are conducting awareness activities not only in the junction but also in schools, wards and villages. We want them to have such knowledge,” said Police Captain Kyaw Aye Hlaur.

Local resident Arshi Kumar said: “Such knowledge sharing is good and we gain knowledge and want to do frequently.” —Myanmar News Agency

JMC-U’s 9th meeting concludes

THE Union Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (JMC-U) decided yesterday to begin demarcation discussion starting from the state-level Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (JMC-S) and approved rules which would be exercised at the JMC-S offices.

Out of 45 Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), 10 were approved at previous meetings and two at the 9th meeting which ended yesterday at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in Yangon. During the three-day meeting, the members of the JMC-U discussed Terms of Reference-TOR, the budget for JMC-U and matters on arrangements for a visit to the Philippines, conducting mine clearance trainings and demarcation for the troops. “We will make further discussion on clearance of mines and the work is scheduled to launch in Kayin State,” said Col Wunna Aung, Secretary-2 of the JMC-U.—Zaw Gyi (Panita)
Maungtaw curfew hours relaxed

A less-strict curfew in Maungtaw, Rakhine State has been issued by the Maungtaw District administration for the next two months.

In the amended curfew, it is ordered that in the streets, paths, alleys, parks and marketplaces where the people of Maungtaw district gather, assembly of five persons and above is prohibited and going outside between 9pm till 5am the next morning is not allowed. The previous curfew prohibited going outside after 7pm until 6am the next morning. The new order is valid for two months in effect from today, it is learnt.

“The purpose of the new order is to improve peace and stability in the region, the time period for curfew was reduced, from 9pm till 5am the next morning instead of 7pm till 6am the next morning. The people are urged to effectively use the limited time and cooperate for the security of people’s lives,” said U Myint Khaing, Maungtaw township administrator.

Due to the events which tried to harm the security of the people and rule of law in June, 2012 in the Maungtaw region and the violent armed terrorist attacks on the No. 1 border guard control station (headquarters) and two police outposts, government troops and security forces still need to perform in accordance with the law for the security, peace and stability and rule of law in the region, it is learnt.

The new order was met with relief from locals. “We are very glad to have the curfew amended,” said Abdul Amm, a resident of Maungtaw. “Previously, we had to finish our works hurriedly before 7pm, but now we need not stay up late for finishing. We warmly welcome the order.”—Myanmar News Agency

SEZ must establish global trust and better relationships

THE most important part of the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is to establish a global relationship and global trust through the investors who have invested in the zone, the Vice President said yesterday.

“If there is trust, there will be more investors,” said Vice President U Henry Van Thio.

He told the Central SEZ Management Committee meeting held in Nay Pyi Taw that the implementation of economic, trade and investment projects cannot be accomplished individually or by a country alone, as it is necessary to make the expansion from the domestic to the international market.

“The role of the Special Economic Zone is more important because the necessary economic development for the country cannot be attained without international investment, although we understand that we depend on our own efforts for economic development,” said the Vice President.

“There needs to be a smooth and simple legal framework and the establishment of an SEZ,” he said. By establishing such an SEZ, the region and the state where the SEZ is located will results in developing job opportunities, human resource development and vocational skills. Similarly, it can also build better transportation and trade improvement with other countries, the Vice President said.

“After we have constructed the Dawei SEZ, we will have better transportation mainly with our nation’s best trade partner, Thailand. Besides, basic infrastructure will rapidly emerge as a result of the ports at which ocean liners can dock and improve trade,” said the Vice President, who added that the Kyauk Phyu SEZ must also be implemented in the same smart way.

The new Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Central Management Committee and Central Working Committee was formed with instructions led by Vice President 2 U Henry Van Thio. The government is making efforts to operate SEZs successfully with four visions and 12 principles.

“Thilawa is a successful SEZ,” the Vice President said.

Tatmadaw releases reaction to OHCHR report

The Tatmadaw will form an investigation team to investigate whether there have been unlawful acts including violations of human rights.

The Tatmadaw will form an investigation team to investigate whether there have been unlawful acts including violations of human rights.” It is learnt that the investigation team will be headed by Lt. General Aye Win of Tatmadaw, investigation chief officer as chairman. Members of the investigation team will be: Brigadier Khun Than Zaw Htoo, Vice Adjutant-General, No. 9 Tatmadaw; Advanced Training School Principal Brigadier Aung Kyaw Ht and Major Hla Myo Kyaw Deputy Assistant Judge Advocate-General of West Command. Lt Colonel Myo Win Aung, Assistant Judge Advocate-General will serve as secretary, it is learnt.—Myanmar News Agency

State Counsellor receives Minister for Foreign Trade and Development of Finland

DAW Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, received a Finnish delegation led by H.E. Mr. Kai Mykkanen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development of Finland at 2 p.m. yesterday at the Minister’s Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the discussion, they exchanged views on promoting bilateral relations and co-operation between Myanmar and Finland, especially in the areas of trade and investment, democratic governance, the rule of law, natural resources, environmental governance and education.—Myanmar News Agency

Tatmadaw releases reaction to OHCHR report

The Tatmadaw true news information team released news in reaction to a report from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) yesterday.

The statement noted that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of the Union of Myanmar has issued a news release on Wednesday over “Interviews with Rohingyas fleeing from Myanmar since 9 October 2016,” issued on Friday concerning the investigation by the delegation to Bangladesh assigned by the OHCHR.

“The Government of the State had the investigation commission led by Vice-President U Myint Swe investigate the accusations. As regards other affairs in Rakhine State, security forces have been instructed to perform their duties in the framework of the law in accord with human rights and not to exercise force excessively. If sufficient evidence is found of violating human rights, the Government will take legal actions against anyone. As for the investigation, all the accusations including accusations on area clearance operations, will be examined, whether they are true or not,” according to the statement.

“On 9 October 2016, terrorists supported by foreign countries with financial aid made a surprise armed attack at the No. 3 border guard police outpost in northern Rakhine, killing 10 police and looting 65 firearms and ammunitions. That event not only harmed the sovereignty of the State but also threatened the people’s lives and properties, hence the operations to launch area clearance to find out attackers and to bring back firearms and ammunitions boosted. The Tatmadaw will form an investigation team to investigate whether there have been unlawful acts including violations of human rights.” It is learnt that the investigation team will be headed by Lt. General Aye Win of Tatmadaw, investigation chief officer as chairman. Members of the investigation team will be: Brigadier Khun Than Zaw Htoo, Vice Adjutant-General, No. 9 Tatmadaw; Advanced Training School Principal Brigadier Aung Kyaw Ht and Major Hla Myo Kyaw Deputy Assistant Judge Advocate-General of West Command. Lt Colonel Myo Win Aung, Assistant Judge Advocate-General will serve as secretary, it is learnt.—Myanmar News Agency
An official from Bayintnaung station area unveils Thandaunggyi Branch of Inwa Bank. Photo: MNA

**Thandaunggyi Branch of Inwa Bank opened**

THANDAUNGGYI branch of Inwa Bank branch held an opening ceremony yesterday in Ward 2, Thandaunggyi town in Kayin State as a gesture of honouring the 70th Anniversary Union Day. Major-General Myat Kyaw, Commander of Southern Command, staff officers from the Command, officials from Bayintnaung station area, Managing Director of Inwa Bank U Aung Ngwe Oo and bank staff as well as departmental officials from Thandaunggyi Township and locals attended at the opening ceremony. 

Commander of the Southern Command Major-General Myat Kyaw, Managing Director of Inwa Bank U Aung Ngwe Oo and a responsible official from Bayintnaung station area formally opened by unveiling a sign.

The 41st Inwa Bank branch is ready to offer financial services for local people and beyond. —Myanmar News Agency

**Telecoms networks to be expanded in remote areas**

PLANS are underway to extend telecommunications networks across the country, especially in far-flung regions, in the 2018-2019 fiscal year, said U Kyaw Myo, deputy minister for the Ministry of Transport and Communications. This development was learnt from the fifth day of the Pyithu Hluttaw session on 2 February.

Depending on the Universal Service Fund (USF) provid- ed by telecoms operators, the development of communication facilities will be installed in target states and regions according to the priority level, said U Kyaw Myo.

U Kyaw Myo replied to the query raised by MP U Lar Mar Lay from Hsawlaw Constituency every year. This year, 70 members of police have had departmental action taken, he added.

“Action has been taken because of complaints from the public about misappropriation, bribery and unlawful behavior,” said a police official from Ayeyawady region.

“Some policemen do not care about the young rape cases. They are standing on the offender’s side. The authorities should mete out punishment to such police exercising transparency,” said advocate U Robert San Aung. The Police Code of Conduct is now being enforced and deterrent actions are being taken against corrupt policemen. —Myitmaukha News Agency

**Minbya to have 24-hour electricity in February**

THE town of Minbya in Rakhine State will be supplied with electricity 24 hours a day from the national power grid starting in February, according to the town’s energy minister. “We have already installed the electric wires for five villages including Minbya and constructed 660 kilovolt ampere (KVA) sub-power stations in Rakhine State. Currently, we are waiting for expert electri- cians from the ministry of electrical power and energy to deliver electricity from the national power grid,” said U Khin Zaw, Minbya township engineering.

“We alone cannot deliver the electricity. The expert elec- tricians from the head office have to conduct it. We are waiting for them. They said that they will ar- rive in Minbya in the first week of February. But they informed us again that they will arrive only in the second week of February. As soon as they arrive, they will deliver electricity from the na- tional power grid for a test run. If the testing succeeds, Minbya town will receive 24-hour elec- tricity fixed,” he added.

The five other villages have not had digital meters installed yet.

“The local residents are very happy to receive 24-hour electricity. They are also wor- ried about the outbreak of fire caused by electric short-circuiting. Some houses have im- proper wiring system, using the flexible wires. I want the expert electricians to check such hous- es,” said a local from Minbya town.

Currently, Minbya town is receiving electricity from 6am to 10pm. There are 1,592 hous- es out of 32,931 that have digital meters installed in Minbya town.

The remaining villages will be supplied with 24-hour elec- tricity during the 2017-2018 fiscal year.—Myitmaukha News Agency

**1,583 fire outbreaks across the country in 2016**

THERE were 1,583 cases of fire in 2016 across the country causing losses amounting to Ks4,965,982,795, it is learnt.

The most common causes for the outbreaks of fire were short circuiting, negligence, cooking and arson. The police have taken action against a total of 1,580 offenders. There were 50 outbreaks of fire last year in Nay Pyi Taw with damages amounting to Ks4,432,750, 69 in Kayin state with damages amounting to Ks4,432,750, 69 in Kayin state with damages amounting to Ks2,721,474,000, 13 in Kayar state with damages amounting to Ks8,389,000, 24 times in Kayin state with damages amounting to Ks73,230,000, 24 times in Chin state with damages amounting to Ks75,430,500, 187 times in Sagaing with damages amounting to Ks91,079,150, 69 times in Tanintha- ti with damages amounting to Ks2,721,474,000, 137 times in Bago region with damages amounting to Ks112,579,250, 128 times in Magwe region with damages amounting to Ks10,977,000, 193 times in Mandalay region with damages amounting to Ks1,262,211,320 , 59 times in Mon state with damages amounting to Ks39,514,750, 97 times in Rakh- ine state with damages amounting to Ks293,790,955, 221 times in Yangon region with damages amounting to Ks36,421,146,100, 165 times in Shan state with damages amounting to Ks517,158,900 and 147 times in Ayeyawady region with damages amounting to Ks473,932,120.

Yangon region topped the list of the most fires in Myan- mar.—Than Oo (Laymyethna)

**Departmental action taken against over 70 policemen in Ayeyawady**

SEVENTY police officers in Ayeyawady region have had depart- mental action taken against them in the 2015-2016 fiscal year, disclosed Police Col Tun Min from Ayeyawady region police command. “There are at least 70 or 80 cases of dismiss- al and imprison- ment every year. This year, 70 members of police have had departmental action taken,” he added.

“A action has been taken be- cause of complaints from the public about misappropriation, bribery and unlawful behavior,” said a police official from Ayeyawady region.

“Some policemen do not care about the young rape cases. They are standing on the offend- er’s side. The authorities should mete out punishment to such police exercising transparency,” said advocate U Robert San Aung. The Police Code of Conduct is now being enforced and deterrent actions are being taken against corrupt policemen. —Myitmaukha News Agency

**Crime NEWS**

**Raw opium, stimulant tablets seized in Kalaw**

AN anti-narcotics squad from Taunggyi searched a motorcycle ridden by Tan Khan at the Thazi combined inspection gate in Kal- aw on 8 February and seized 12 kilos of raw opium from him. Police also inspected a Swan passenger vehicle driven by Kyaw Soe Win with Bo Bo Zin on board. The police searched the vehicle travelling between Namsan, Taunggyi and Yangon at the Thazi inspection gate and found 8,000 stimulant tablets in a parcel bag in the vehicle.

Interrogation of the two sus- pected led police to arrest Nyan Myint, the person-in-charge of Ngwe Kyalsin gate, and Moe Kuang Ward in Aung Pan. Police have taken action against them under the Anti-narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—Myanmar Police Force

**4,000 jobs available at Junction City Shopping Center**

JUNCTION City Shopping Center, which will be opened at the corner of Shwedagon Pagoda road and Bogoske Aung San street, Yangon, will create 4,000 job oppor- tunities, it is learnt.

Those interested can apply for the jobs by bringing a CV to Junction Square in Kamayut between 10am and 5pm on 7 and 8 Febru- ary. "The center is expected to open in March, but we are invit- ing applications starting now. We will hold a job fair and applicants will have job opportunities for ho- tel and office positions when the centre is opened," said Ma Thwe Kay Zin, a public relation executive from Junction City. The opening of the Junction City Shopping Center will create positions at jew- ellery shops, fashion shops, home lifestyle shops, food and beverages shops and the cinema. For further details, please call: 0997830928. —Myitmaukha News Agency
LOCAL

Business

Ywangan in Shan State achieve designation protecting its name

YWANGAN, the township in Shan State that has become known for its coffee, has achieved a Geographical Indication (GI), the same designation that protects the Champagne region in France from copycats. Companies that want to produce and sell coffee products under the name of Ywangan coffee will now be charged a fee, following Ywangan coffee’s achievement in gaining GI, which specifies geographical origin and expertise, according to the Myanmar Coffee Association.

Ywangan coffee is expected to get GI designation this year and the association will then proceed to acquire a copyright, it is learnt.

“Ywangan residents should hold a copyright of Ywangan. We will take charges for those companies which will produce the coffee products under the name of Ywangan. If we do not hold a copyright of Ywangan, all varieties of coffee produced from all over Myanmar can be in Ywangan name,” said U Win Aung Kyaw.

The facts concerning Ywangan coffee have been jointly researched by the Ministry of Education (Science and Technology), Civil Service Organizations (CSOs) and the experts.

A GI is a specific intellectual property right that designates a product from a specific region and whose characteristics result in both the natural conditions of its origin and the expertise of local producers. Champagne, for instance, is among the oldest GIs, arguably the most famous and prestigious one.

It is in the Champagne vineyards, a region located 150 kilometres east of Paris, France that Champagne growers have been producing the famous sparkling wine, for more than three centuries under stringent regulations. With 309 million bottles shipped to 180 countries in 2012, Champagne wines are enjoyed by a growing number of consumers worldwide.

The commercial success and fame of Champagne attracted many imitators and copycats. The counterpart to the Myanmar Coffee Association in France is Comité Champagne, which represents the Champagne growers and houses and relentlessly endeavours to protect the name Champagne and ensure that only wines that benefit from the geographical indication are called Champagne.

Ywangan coffee beans are of the Costa Rican variety and are grown as a substitute for poppy. The coffee is currently rated at a level of 85 in the global market under the recommendations from American Coffee Specialists. Any grade of 80 and above is considered a specialty coffee.

Over 700 tonnes of coffee are produced from the Green Tea coffee plant located in Ywangan Township in Southern Shan State.

Out of 125 villages in Ywangan Township, about 90 are engaged in coffee plantation, with 7,300 acres of coffee farms, it is learnt.—GNLM

Shareholders of FPB asked to sell stocks due to financial situation

SOME businessmen have been found to manipulate the shares, prompting the First Private Bank to call on its shareholders to sell stocks depending on financial requirements, according to an announcement released by FPB.

In a bid to prevent selling of stocks by illegal or transparent means and manipulation of the share price, FPB requested its share holders to look for a long-term benefit, instead of selling out the shares with only little profit.

FPB commenced stock trading on 20 January on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX), with a base price of Ks39,000 per share. However, FPB’s shares fetched only Ks34,000 and the share trading hit its lowest rate of Ks30,000 on 2 February.

Currently, there are four listed companies at YSX: First Myanmar Investment (FMI), Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings, Myanmar Citizens Bank and FPB. The share prices on 7 January were Ks1,400 for FMI, Ks34,100 for MTSH, Ks9,100 for MCB and Ks3,100 for FPB at closing time. A total of 15,919 shares worth Ks 142,316,900 were traded, with share volumes of 2,154 from FMI, 11,634 from MTSH and 2,131 from FPB and no shares traded by MCB.—Mon Mon

Group from China to inspect, certify rice mills

A certification and inspection group from China will inspect rice mills in Myanmar, which depends heavily on the neighboring country for its rice exports.

Currently, the exportation of rice from Myanmar to China accounts for about 80 per cent of rice exports, according to U Khin Maung Lwin, assistant secretary of the Ministry of Commerce.

Only when the inspection group from China inspects the quality of the rice mills will we know what we should do and how we can adapt to the market. And we will accompany them to the rice mills of high-quality owned by private entrepreneurs.

Nowadays, we have many high-quality rice mills in our country. U Khin Maung Lwin added.

This year we can export a lower volume of rice. “The rice export market is dependent on the demand from China. Muse border trade station rejected exported rice because it contained pesticide residue. Although the rice merchants are trying to export the high-quality rice, the farmers still need awareness of the modern cultivation techniques and manufacturing skills,” said rice mill owner U Han Tha Myint.

Although there are many rice mills in our country, most of them lack proper techniques. We also need to have access to big rice markets. And we are weak in producing high-quality rice.

So, we need to seek greater assistance from the government to be able to produce high-quality rice. Myanmar Rice Federation has requested the government to lend to rice mill owners short and medium term loans.—200

US exchange rate jumped to over Ks1,369 on 8th Jan

THE US dollar exchange rate that was fluctuating between Ks1,354 and Ks1,362 in recent days jumped to Ks1,369 on 8 February, The purchasing US dollar price is Ks1,367, whereas the selling price is Ks1,371 on 9 February, according to a local private bank.

After the dollar index reached a recorded high of 103.78 point in the global market on the evening of 3 January, the rate dropped slightly. On 7 February, the rate rose to a high of 100.14, then reached the 100.54 point on the afternoon of 8 February.

The dollar price is currently unstable in the global market, which is directly related to the domestic market. The greenback exchange rate hit a high of Ks1,438 on 16 December, then plunged down to Ks1,346 on 16 January. The rate has varied between Ks1,354 to Ks1,362 from 20 January to 7 February.

The exchange rate climbed up to Ks1,369 on 8 February with the rise in global currency market, it is learnt from local currency exchange market. The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) set the exchange rate at Ks1,350 from 31 January to 6 February. The rate on 7 February was at Ks1,355 until CBM increased the rate to Ks1,360 on 8 and 9 January.—Ko Khaung

Workers dry coffee beans under the sun in Ywangan. Photo: COMMUNICAFFE INTERNATIONAL.
Myanmar-China (2+2) high-level consultations held

The Second Round of Myanmar and China (2+2) High-Level Consultations led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Defence was held on 7th February 2017 in Kunming, Yunnan Province, China. The meeting was attended by the Myanmar Delegation led by U Kyaw Tin, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Lt. Gen. Tun Tun Naung, Ministry of Defence and the Chinese Delegation was led by Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Major General Shao Yuan Garden, Deputy Chief of the Joint Staff Department of the Central Military Commission.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on border-related issues focusing on China’s constructive support for the peace process of Myanmar, promoting peace and tranquility along Myanmar-China border, stabilization of the situation of Northern Myanmar, confidence-building measures and development of border areas to promote the interests of the population in these areas.

Moreover, the two sides agreed, among others, to step up collaboration through bilateral mechanisms and cooperation in various areas such as Myanmar-China border management, combating narcotic drugs, and preventing illegal entries and illegal trade; to adhere to the Boundary Treaty in constructing river banks; maintenance works to prevent river banks’ erosion along the Boundary Rivers and to jointly develop guidelines for construction of retarding walls along the river banks.

On 8th February 2017, the Minister of State called on Mr. Chen Hao, Communist Party Secretary of Yunnan Province at Huieng Garden Hotel and discussed in a friendly and cordial manner on various issues including promoting peace and stability along the border areas and strengthening bilateral cooperation for border areas development. Following the meeting, Myanmar Delegation attended the dinner hosted by Mr. Chen Shan, Vice-Governor of Yunnan Province.

The (2+2) High-Level Consultations Meeting led by Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence at the central level was established in the cooperation in security and management in the Myanmar-China border areas more effectively. The First Myanmar and China (2+2) High-Level Consultations led by Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence was previously held on 25th November 2016 in Nay Pyi Taw.—MOFA (Minister Office)

Union Day ceremonies, peace programme to be broadcast live Sunday

The 70th anniversary of Union Day Ceremony (Paunglong) and the Paunglong Peace Talks programme in which the State Counsellor and ethnic youths will participate in Paunglong, Shan State will be broadcast live on MRTV and the Myanmar State Counsellor Office’s Facebook Page start at 9:20am on Sunday.

The Paunglong Peace Talks will take place under a banyan tree, the same place where General Aung San read a book while he was attending the original Paunglong Conference.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Su Kyi, who signed Paunglong Contract, will attend the 70th anniversary of Union Day Ceremony, according to the state counsellor office’s information committee.—Myanmar News Agency

50 more tube-wells to be emerged in Kyaukse Tsp before summer

The irrigation programme targets 20 villages in the township, with plans to build three tube-wells per village, said U Ye Min Tun, an MP from Kyaukse Township Constituency.

Currently, the residents in the township have sufficient drinking water but villages located near the bottom of mountain and the edge of the dam have an urgent need for water to irrigate farmlands.—Myanmar News Agency

Empowering women through self-reliance groups nationwide

FACILITATED by the United Nations Development Programme, the Ministry of Rural Development and the Myanmar Rural Women’s Network (SRGs), focusing on providing access to credit to rural women and economically empowering them to develop their capacities and enhance their well-being.

The network now has about 22,000 members in 2,000 villages in 31 townships in project areas, including delta and arid regions as well as Chin, Kayin, Kayah, Mon, Rakhine and Shan states, Daw Cho Aye said.

The SRGs are joining hands with other local development organisations, authorities and the private sector to raise public awareness on healthcare, education, human trafficking and various forms of gender-based violence, providing livelihood support to women in need.

UNDP invested considerable resources into strengthening the capacity of the SRG members, especially women, who have been provided with knowledge and skills development.

There are more than 5,000 SRGs in Myanmar facilitated by UNDP through its projects.—200

Two-storey building to be constructed in Kalewa hospital

A TWO-STOREY building will be constructed in the compound of Kalewa township general hospital, Sagaing region with the use of funds from the Union budget. The construction of the new building is expected to be completed at the end of March, it is learnt.

A two-storey building is being constructed with the aim of upgrading the 25-bed Kalewa hospital.

“Kalewa township general hospital is a 25-bed hospital. Actually, we are using the old building which does not have enough beds for the patients. The government provides enough hospital equipment. The new hospital will be able to provide better health care,” said Dr. Tin Cho Cho, the medical superintendent of Kalewa general hospital.

A ground-breaking ceremony was held at 9am yesterday. Present at the ceremony were U Aung Than Kyaw, Regional Hluttaw representative, the medical superintendent of the hospital, departmental heads and members of the township NLD.

The government will also construct staff quarters beside the two-storey building in fiscal 2016-2017, also using funds from the Union budget.—Myanmar News Agency
UK plans to remove insurance barriers for self-driving cars

LONDON — Britain plans to introduce new insurance rules to ensure victims of accidents involving self-driving cars are compensated quickly in a bid to remove a major obstacle for the nascent industry.

The introduction of self-driving cars has been hampered by legal hurdles in several countries as insurers and legislature try to establish who would ultimately be responsible in the event of an accident.

“We must ensure the public is protected in the event of an incident and this week we are introducing the framework to allow insurance for these new technologies,” said transport minister Chris Grayling.

A single insurance product will be available to cover a driver when a vehicle is being used conventionally, as well as when the car is being used in autopilot mode, the transport ministry said in a statement.

The British government wants to encourage the development and testing of autonomous driving technology to build an industry to serve a market that could be worth about 900 billion pounds ($1.1 trillion) worldwide by 2025.

Recent accidents involving a self-driving Google car and a Tesla model in autopilot mode have raised concerns among some members of the public just as more autonomous cars are being tested on Britain’s streets.

Japanese carmaker Nissan is due to test autonomous cars in London later this month after initial tests on public roads in the southern English town of Milton Keynes late last year.

Britain will also set out plans to improve infrastructure such as charging points for electric vehicles, the fastest growing sector for new car sales in the country and key to meeting environmental targets.

Toshiba receives bids as high as $3.6 billion for chip business stake: source

TOKYO — Toshiba Corp has received bids ranging from 200 billion yen to as much as 400 billion yen ($1.8-3.6 billion) for a 19.9 per cent stake in its flash memory business, a person directly involved in the deal told Reuters on Thursday.

The Japanese conglomerate is seeking to raise around 300 billion yen from the sale, said the person, who was not authorized to speak with media and so declined to be identified.

A sale at that price would help Toshiba offset a multi-billion dollar writedown on its US nuclear business, which investors worry could wipe out shareholder equity.

Suits for the Japanese company’s chip unit include rivals SK Hynix Inc and Micron Technology Inc, data storage firm Western Digital Corp and financial investors such as Bain Capital, people told Reuters earlier this week.

Toshiba favors bids from investment funds because it could conclude a deal quicker than with industry peers that may have to seek permission from competition regulators before any acquisition, another person close to the matter said earlier.

A Toshiba executive has said the company will consider not just the offer price when selecting a bidder but other conditions as well.

A Toshiba spokeswoman said the company could not comment on specifics of the sale process.

Shares of Toshiba fell 6.7 per cent in Tokyo trade on Thursday, a day after Mizuho Securities pointed to the possible market impact of Toshiba being demoted to the second section of the Tokyo stock exchange or even delisted.

The Nikkei business daily, early on Thursday, also reported market concerns that Toshiba could delay its third-quarter earnings release, without citing sources.

A Toshiba spokesman said the company would announce earnings on 14 February as planned.

On reporting earnings, Toshiba also plans to reveal the writedown on its US nuclear business that people earlier told Reuters could be as much as 700 billion yen.

Microsoft offers patent troll defence for cloud customers

SAN FRANCISCO — Microsoft Corp has thought up another way to attract potential customers to its cloud computing service: deterrent against patent trolls.

Companies new to the cloud are vulnerable to non-practicing entities, which do not make any products themselves but use their arsenal of broad technology patents to sue other firms in order to extract royalties or a cash settlement.

The new offering could appeal to companies new to the cloud arena, needing a service such as Microsoft’s Azure to store their data or host their mobile app.

It was not clear that it alone would be enough to draw customers away from the market leader, Amazon.com Inc’s Amazon Web Services.

Under a plan unveiled on Wednesday, Microsoft said customers of its cloud service could rely on any of 10,000 Microsoft patents free of charge to deter legal threats against them.

The Redmond, Washington-based company also said it would extend its existing promise to defend any customers sued over Azure to include the freely available or ‘open source’ technology incorporated into its cloud service.

The protection is designed to appeal to an automaker, for instance, which may have car-related patents but has no such cover for its mobile apps and other cloud-based products, making it a target.

“They haven’t had years to build up that patent portfolio,” said Julia White, Microsoft corporate vice president, in an interview. "Cloud innovation is far too important to be stifled by lawsuits.”

—Reuters

Takata to set aside $864 million as part of US DOJ settlement

TOKYO — Japan’s Takata Corp (7312.T) said on Thursday it will set aside 96.93 billion yen ($864.4 million) as part of a $1 billion settlement with the United States Justice Department over the world’s largest ever auto recall.

In a regulatory filing, the auto parts firm also said it would book and additional 3.5 billion yen special loss over recall-related costs in the third quarter. Takata added that it expects currency related gains of 4.07 billion yen in the April-December period.

Takata has been looking for a sponsor to lead its turnaround, with sources saying Key Safety Systems had been selected, fanning concern that a court-led restructuring was on the cards.

It will report its third quarter earnings on Friday.

—Reuters

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—Reuters
Opinion

Khin Maung Oo

Immature but up-and-coming YBS

Maha Saddhamma Jotika dhaja Sithu
Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

The festivals of the month Tabodwe

T he eleventh month of My- anmar Lunar Calendar Tabodwe, approximately corresponds with February. Although the tenth month Pyatho [January] is the peak of Myanmar cold season, Tabodwe can beat Pyatho in chilliness depending upon place, climate condition and time. There are old Myanmar sayings regarding the chill of Tabodwe. In Tabodwe, the tips of bula- loes’ horns shiver with cold. [ကျိုးကျိုး နီး နီး နီး] In Tabodwe, we have a running nose [ဗားဗား ဗားဗား ဗားဗား]. In Tabodwe, ripen plum fruits open up [ပျင်ပျင် ပျင်ပျင် ပျင်ပျင်]. “Kon” or Kumbha [Aquari- us] is the astrological name of Tabodwe with a zodiacal symbol of a water bearer. Pauk [Butaca] and Lei or Let pan [Silk cotton tree] [Bombex Malabaricum] are the traditionally designated flowers of Tabodwe. Pauk flowers are orange coloured profused on bunches. Lei or Let pan trees are big and tall. The entire tree after shedding all old leaves, produces buds and blooms of scarlet colour from all branches. Against the blue sky on the golden sun lights these pauk and let pan flowers create fantastic natural paintings. Let pan flowers produce silken cotton wool they are also a good vegetable which Myanmar herbalists recommend for folk dishes because of their curative properties. At night when the sky is clear, Maga asterism of 4 stars and the Moon appear above.

Philologists give two different meanings of Tabodwe. Tabo and Twe 2 words combined. Tabo means “yoke” and “Twe” means “hung up”. In this month, all agricultural activities are over. Farmers and peasants give rest to their agricultural implements including yokes. Yokes are hung up on the walls. So it is the month of “yokes” [Tabo] being hung up [ကြီးလီး]. The month of “yokes being hung up”. The second meaning is Tabo is Ithun or spadix of a toddy palm tree from which the sap is tapped. “Twe” means to hang down. It is the month in which toddy palm climbers press spadixes to hang down to tap the sap. After they have consume fresh toddy juice in the morning or fermented juice in the evening, they boil them to get balls of toddy sugar called အောင်ထောင်ကျီး [gagary] or toddy chocaret- traditional preserved food used in many ways, medicine, dishes and even in moon shining country liq- uor.

Of many festivals held in this month, the one common, wide spread and traditionally designated festival is the bon-fire festival. Bon fire is made by burning sandal or similar fragrant wood in a terra cotta brazier and taken to the Buddha temple to offer to the Buddha Images. This religious custom of bon fire offering originated in the lifetime of Lord Buddha. While Lord Buddha was residing at the Pabunyayon monastery in the King- dom of Mahalawka Marittama, in Tabodwe evening he happened to be standing on a hill side. It was so cold that Lord Buddha kept his back in the warmth of the sun rays. But as the sun set down and as it was out in the open, the chill of the night was too much for the Buddha who was wearing one robe. As the night advanced, cold intensified. So Lord Buddha put on the second robe to resist the cold. By midnight he had to wear the third robe. By dawn three robes were not enough and the fourth robe was worn over the third. By the rule of Vinaya [Priestly Discipli- ne] only three robes are permit- ted for each monk. So to silence the criticism of some laymen, the last two robes were stitched to gather to become the third robe called “Dukat”. In the extreme cold of Tabodwe night Lord Bud- dha made his hands and feet warm by keeping them on a furnace.

In commemoration of that event the Buddha devotees made offering of bonfire to Buddha im- ages in Tabodwe especially when the full moon night, to gain religious merit. In Loka Byu Har Inyone Sardon [Treatise on Court ceremo- nies and festivals compiled by Tha- ri Uzana, minister of Inyone] the festival of bonfire in the time of Myanmar Kings was described as follows:- “On the 8th waxing day of Tabodwe, a ceremonial procession of gathering fire woods took place. In the front of the procession were the Sanmyaung [the Officers to announce the imperial presence of the King] accompanied by the mu- sic of drums, followed by 250 fire wood cutters recruited from Shy Win [East Guard at the Palace]. 250 fire wood cutters from Letya Win [Guard on the right side of the Palace] 250 fire wood cutters from Leti Win [Guard on the left side of the Palace] and 250 fire wood cutters from Anaik Win [West Guard at the Palace]. Behind them 1000 body guards followed. Behind them 1000 equestrian soldiers with helmets followed. Behind them two knights on horseback, wearing helmets and ceremonial gowns of their rank followed.

When the procession reached Maha Myat Muni Temple, music was kept playing. The body guards "and fire wood cutters went into nearby jungles and woods to cut and gather fire wood. The proces- sion returned following the same procedure. When it reached Shy Yone [East Office] the body guards put fire woods on the stands, and bound them into bun- dles. On the 14th waxing moon day the clerks carried the bundles of fire wood into Shy Yone. The Minister of Royal Treasury brought 1000 braziers”.

"At 4 O’clock in the evening, princes, princesses royal grand- children, ministers and courtiers wearing ceremonial dress and or- naments of their rank came out to attend the ceremony at Shy Yone from 4 O’clock in the evening till 1 O’clock at night. Then they de- parted”.

"The minister of Royal Granary took 1000 pots of Yagu [rice porridge], 1000 stands of fire wood, and 1000 braziers borne by Thwethauksu Shwe Pana-pan equestrian soldiers and temples and offerings for Buddha images”. On pages 544-545 of Konbaung Set Maha Wun Tawkyi [Great Chronicle of the Konbaung Dynasty] volume 3, a graphic ac- count of the bon fire festival held in Konbaung Period is given thus: (To be continued)
People Democracy Party presents policy and programs

DR. Than Htike Oo, People Democracy Party presented the policies, attitude and programmes of his party on 9 February 2017, on Radio and TV programmes.

The full text of his presentation is given below:

Esteemed voters,

I wish you physical and mental well-being. May you all be blessed with auspicious events. I wish you all from the political parties treading on the democratic political path of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, public service personnel, Tatmadawmen in the line of national defence duties and police, law officers and judges performing the duties for ensuring security of the public life and the rule of law joining hands in building a new, lawful, genuine democratic state.

I am the founder of People’s Democracy Party and have myself formulated the party’s policies, attitudes and programmes, and invited those interested in founding a political party. I am Dr Than Htike Oo, the founder of the party.

People Democracy Party presents policy and programs of People’s Democracy Party. I’ve benefited the people. I’ve contributed towards emergence of the law to ensure systematic running of privately owned motor vehicles in Kachin state, Sagaing region, Mandalay region and Shan State. My effort has enabled the transportation businessmen to have legal protection in accordance with the market economic system.

Concerning foreign policy, independent and active foreign policy will be assumed. The policy is within the framework of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence laid down at Bandung.

Regarding defence policy, I’ll cooperate with the Tatmadaw in its defence against internal and external enemy who infringe on the national sovereignty, for enforcement of peace, and for Tatmadaw to become really strong, modern and possessed with full capacity.

Concerning peasants’ policy, effort will be exerted to effectuate the socio-economic development of the peasants based on ownership of land.

Concerning cultural policy, national cultural characters will be preserved, and the decadent culture that damages the national pride will be uprooted.

To be able to implement the party’s policies, three programmes have been laid down. They are: national cause programme, political programme and defence programme. As the programme to implement the national cause, effort will be made to enable all indigenous races inhabiting the union to enjoy equal rights according to the law. Nationalization of land and businesses will be prevented. And equal development for all indigenous races will be implemented with the use of the revenue earned through the sale of the natural resources owned by the indigenous people.

As a political programme, we will ensure that the power shall come down from the people, who are our voters. I’ll also encourage all armed ethnic groups to abandon the armed line and establish legal political parties above ground in order that they can be engaged in politics from within and without the state. They will be brought to the round table discussions to achieve peace. I’ll co-operate with all representatives form Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw, Regional and State Hluttaws in fulfilling the needs of the people we represent. I mean I’ll co-operate with them all for enabling the enactment of the laws of public benefit. As the thinking of law-abiding executive and legislative pillars are needed to conduct check and balance between and among them – police, law officers and judges, Tatmadawmen – we’ll do our utmost to avoid illegal exertion of pressure. In this juncture, the fourth pillar is needed to be strengthened i.e. I’ll bring about the development of media sector.

Esteemed voters,

In regard to national defence programme, I’m in favour of Tatmadaw’s being only one defence force, which will not back whatsoever political party according to the constitution.

Esteemed voters,

Concerning the public service personnel, our attitude is for the public service personnel to bring to the fore the interests of the nation and the people and to be law-abiding and well-disciplined.

Esteemed voters,

Our policy is very simple. Even if I am chosen to become a people’s representative, I’ll continue to be engaged in outside Hluttaw politics.

Should I become a people’s representative, I’ll submit proposals to the Hluttaw to ensure the rule of law, and if I’m not fortunate enough to be a member of parliament, I’ll continue with the status of ex- hluttaw candidate and will continue to be engaged in outside Hluttaw politics.

May I conclude my speech by making a solemn vow that I’ll accept the voters’ decision regardless of being elected or otherwise. If elected, I’ll be engaged in Hluttaw politics; if not elected, I’ll continue to do outside Hluttaw politics. Please think of voting for me. I make my earnest request to all voters from Monywa townships to cast your votes and make my wish come true.

Mary Chapman to provide free sign language course for locals

THE MARY CHAPMAN School for the Deaf will open its sign language training to locals free of charge this month, aiming to bridge the gap between people with hearing loss and people who can hear, according to the school.

In order to raise sign language awareness among people so they can communicate with hearing-impaired persons, the 10-day course will start on 13 February at the school on Thamantian Street in Ahlong Township, Yangon, said Daw Nyunt Nyunt Thein, principal of the school.

She added that the course will be limited to only 20 trainees of all ages.

Five children with hearing loss studying sign language at Chinese University in Hong Kong plus a hearing-impaired child will teach the sign language, an effective method of communication using a combination of symbols and hand movements that provides a hearing-impaired person with a way to interact with the world.

Learning of sign language is not only for the hearing impaired, it is also for those who are interested in being able to communicate with the people with hearing loss.

According to the 2014 nationwide census, 4.6 per cent of the country’s total populations of over 51 million people are people with disabilities, 1.3 per cent of whom are deaf.

The Mary Chapman School for the Deaf was established in 1920 by Miss Mary Chapman, a British missionary. Its main source of revenue comes from individual donations. The majority of children attending the school are from very poor families. — 200
Three-day meeting on combating nuclear terrorism begins in New Delhi

NEW DELHI — An international meeting under the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism began Wednesday in New Delhi, aimed at preventing weapons of mass destruction and related materials from falling into the hands of terrorists.

Around 150 delegates from dozens of countries and several international organisations are participating in the three-day meeting on the Implementation and Assessment Group of the GICNT, which was launched in 2006 jointly by the United States and Russia.

The IAG oversees the work of the three GICNT working groups: the Nuclear Detection Working Group chaired by Finland, the Nuclear Forensics Working Group chaired by Australia and the Response and Mitigation Working Group chaired by Morocco.

In the past 10 years, the GICNT has grown to include 86 partner nations and five official observer organisations.

In announcing the New Delhi meeting last Saturday, India’s External Affairs Ministry warned that the possible use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists “is no longer a theoretical concern.”

“A breach of nuclear security may lead to unimaginable consequences. Such an event would have a global impact. It is imperative to strengthen international efforts to combat such threats,” it said, adding, “This meeting is therefore timely and important and would further enhance our vigil.”

The initiative seeks to improve accounting, control, and protection of nuclear material, to assure denial of safe haven and resources from terrorists seeking to acquire such material, and to promote information sharing to prevent and respond to acts of nuclear terrorism.

Japan, which has actively engaged in discussions on the technical aspects of nuclear forensics and on improving security for nuclear materials, will in June host the GICNT’s annual plenary, co-chaired by the United States and Russia.—Kyodo News

Indonesia urges airlines to expand routes to new tourism destinations

JAKARTA — Indonesian Tourism Ministry has asked airlines to open routes at newly-developed tourism destinations to help lure holidaymakers visiting the areas, a senior official said on Thursday.

The call was made as the tourism ministry has been developing 10 new tourism resorts called “priority tourism destination” across the archipelago county.

“I beg the opening of new route is not only prioritized in an area with high passenger rate,” said Suprasetyo, director general for Civil Aviation of the Transport Ministry.

“Should an airline submit a request for a license to open a new route at such area, we will enclose it with a license for opening a route at low passenger rate area so that the number of passengers visiting the site will rise,” he said.

The director suggested airlines to apply a cross-subsidy scheme if the opening of a route in the low-passenger-rate area is not economically beneficial for business. Indonesia eyes 12 million foreign tourists this year and last year, and expects it to jump to 20 million in 2019.

In 2015, a total of about 10 million foreign visitors visited Indonesia. —Xinhua

Fire under control after China chemical plant explosion, no injuries

BEIJING — A fire after an explosion at a chemical plant in Tongling city in the eastern Chinese province of Anhui was brought under control and no injuries were reported, state media said on Thursday.

The official Tongling Daily said on its microblog that the blast happened late on Wednesday evening, sending flames shooting into the sky.

“At present there are no injuries or deaths,” it said. “The fire caused by the explosion has been effectively controlled.”

Deadly accidents are relatively common in industrial plants in China. China has vowed to improve safety at such facilities. President Xi Jinping has said authorities would learn the lessons paid for with blood after chemical blasts in the port city of Tianjin killed 165 people in 2015.
South Korea on high alert as second strain of foot-and-mouth disease confirmed

SEOUL - South Korea raised the country’s foot-and-mouth disease alert status to the highest level as a second strain of the disease was confirmed three days after a first outbreak was reported, Seoul’s agriculture ministry said on Thursday.

The A-type strain of the disease was discovered at a dairy farm in Yeoncheon, less than 50 miles north of the capital, said Kim Kyung-kyu, deputy minister for food industry policy. Reacting shortly after an outbreak of the O-type strain was confirmed in southeast Korea, the ministry raised the alert status one notch to the maximum.

“We are raising the alert level as foot-and-mouth cases occurred at different parts of the country and a second type of the disease emerged,” Kim said at a briefing. As of Wednesday, 826 cattle had been culled, the ministry said.

South Korea last raised the country’s foot-and-mouth disease alert status to the highest level in 2010, when the country grappled with its worst-ever outbreak. Since the first outbreak was discovered on Monday, Korea has taken emergency measures including a nationwide vaccination and a movement control order designed to contain the spread of the virus. The ministry had re-vaccinated all cattle in the country against the O-type virus, and the country’s livestock would need to be inoculated against the A-type strain, Kim said.

Oh Soon-min, a senior agriculture ministry official in charge of animal health, said the ministry was seeking to import more vaccine stocks from manufacturers such as Merital as Korea’s inventory of “O+A type” vaccines — which allow livestock to be vaccinated for both strains at the same time — was in short supply.

“We first have to check the company’s inventory and we are thinking to bring in as many (supplies) as we can,” he added.

Korea regularly inoculates its cattle and hogs against three types of foot-and-mouth diseases. It has around 3.14 million cattle and 10 million hogs nationwide.

The agriculture ministry is weighing whether or not to vaccinate hogs again, as cases of infection have so far only been found among cattle, said Park Bong-kyun, commissioner of the Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency.

Korea has also slaughtered 33 million farm birds since late last year as it tries to contain an outbreak of viral bird flu. — Reuters

Job Vacancies At The Global New Light of Myanmar

The Global New Light of Myanmar, the country’s oldest continuously published English-language daily newspaper, is looking for experienced journalists to join its expanding editorial team. Applications should be sent no later than 21 February, 2017.

The GNLM currently has openings for a chief editor, two editors, five translators and reporters for its newsroom in Yangon.

1. Candidates for the chief editor (Male, Myanmar national) position must have the following qualifications.
   • He/she must have extensive editorial experience with editing and must possess at least an MA English degree.
   • He/she must have at least 15 years experience with print media in positions at the management level and possess good computer skills.
   • He must be in good health and willing to work night shifts.
   • He must be aged between 40 and 60.
   • Salary is negotiable.

2. Candidates for two expatriate editors (Male/Female) must have following qualifications.
   • He/she must be a native English speaker and must be a university graduate with a specialisation in journalism.
   • He/she must have editing experience at newspapers or online publications.
   • He/she must be in good health and willing to work night shifts.
   • Age should be under 40, but those over 40 will be considered if he/she possesses excellent skills.
   • Salary is negotiable.

3. Candidates for two senior translators (Male) must have the following qualifications.
   • He must be a university graduate.
   • He must be able to quickly translate and rewrite multiple stories from Myanmar to English, with at least 10 years experience in translation.
   • He must be in good health and willing to work night shifts.
   • Salary is negotiable.

4. Candidates for three junior translators (Male/Female) must have following qualifications.
   • He/she must be a university graduate.
   • He/she must be able to translate from Myanmar to English, with at least five years experience in translation.
   • He/she can work night shifts.
   • Salary is negotiable.

5. Candidates for three senior reporters (Male/Female) must have following qualifications.
   • He/she must be a university graduate.
   • He/she must be fluent in Myanmar and be able to write clear and concise copy in Burmese.
   • Those who can write news stories in English will be preferred candidates.
   • He/she must have experience with writing for an English-language newspaper or online publication. This will be a major advantage.
   • He/she must have at least three years experience in print or online media.
   • Salary is negotiable.

6. Candidates for junior reporters must have following qualifications.
   • He/she must be a university graduate.
   • He/she can write news stories clearly in Burmese.
   • Salary is negotiable.

For further information, please call or email the following contacts. Applicants should send a cover letter and CV to No.130 Nga Hla Thi Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, or email: gnlmdaily@gmail.com, dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com or call (01) 8604529, 09-428120866, 09-49445545.
Exiled Maldives leader to stand for 2018 presidency

COLOMBO — Exiled Maldivian leader Mohamed Nasheed said on Thursday he would return to the troubled Indian Ocean archipelago to contest a 2018 presidential election and called for international pressure on the government to allow him to run.

The Indian Ocean island nation has been mired in political unrest since Nasheed, its first democratically elected leader, was ousted in 2012. He was later sentenced to 13 years in jail on terrorism charges after a widely denounced trial.

Nasheed, who had been released to go to Britain for medical treatment, said the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD) had ruled that his detention was unlawful and politically motivated, allowing him to contest any elections.

“I hope to win the ticket as the party candidate of choice for the Maldivian presidential elections,” he told reporters in Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka that has become a base for the exiled opposition.

“In his fear to contest me if he does not, President Yameen bars me from contesting the elections, then of course his presidency will lack the necessary legitimacy,” Nasheed has said.

Nasheed has to get his sentence for the alleged abduction of a judge in 2011 revoked to be able to contest the polls as election laws bar candidacy of those jailed for more than a year for a criminal offence, for three years.

Nasheed, 49, hopes the government will let him contest the 2018 polls in which President Abdulla Yameen is expected to seek re-election for a second five-year term.

In its September 2015 ruling, UNWGAD urged Yameen’s government to take the necessary steps to release Nasheed immediately and accord him an enforceable right to compensation. However, Yameen did not adhere to the rulings.

Nasheed urged the international community to engage more robustly with Yameen’s government and said a number of countries were working behind the scenes.

“We will continue to work with our international partners to see how they may be able to impress up on President Yameen the need to have an all inclusive elections,” he said.

The Maldives left the Commonwealth in October, weeks after the organisation warned the tropical island nation famous for its beaches and coral reefs, could be suspended because of its lack of progress in promoting the rule of law and democracy.

Yameen’s administration has arrested most opponents who might challenge him in 2018. The opposition alleges the administration is trying to cover up corruption including money laundering, accusations the government has denied.

The largely Muslim island chain with a population of 400,000 has other looming problems that belie its reputation as a tourist paradise.

Significant numbers of radicalised youths have been enlisting to fight for Islamic State militants in the Middle East.

— Reuters

Polls show French far-right Le Pen winning first round, but losing knockout

PARIS — Far-right leader Marine Le Pen looks set to win the first round of France’s presidential election in April, according to a new survey issued on Thursday, with other polls indicating she will lose the runoff to centrist Emmanuel Macron. Harris Interactive said a poll of voting intentions for the April 23 first round indicated that Le Pen, who heads the anti-immigrant and anti-EU National Front, would get 24 per cent, with Macron taking 21 per cent. — Reuters

Campaign leaflets for France’s far-right National Front (FN) leader Marine Le Pen, candidate in the French 2017 presidential elections, is seen at the National Front local offices in Lucne near Chartres, France, on 2 February 2017. Photo: Reuters

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

MV ARCA VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ARCA VOY. NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 10.2.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT (SPORE) PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

MV DAEWI STAR VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV DAEWI STAR VOY. NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 10.2.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S CONTINENTAL SHIPPING LINE PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

MV MALACCA STAR VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MALACCA STAR VOY. NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 10.2.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT (SPORE) PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

MV ANAN BHUM VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ANAN BHUM VOY. NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 10.2.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GLOBE SEA PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

MV EVER ALLY VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV EVER ALLY VOY. NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 10.2.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of the Port of Yangon.

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S EVERGREEN SHIPPIING PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301185
BATON ROUGE, (La.) — Some 31 people were reported injured after six tornadoes tore through New Orleans and other parts of Louisiana, pounding across highways and streets and leaving trees, power lines and homes leveled by Wednesday morning.

Federal and state damage assessment teams on Wednesday began working to see if Louisiana can qualify for federal assistance, Mike Steele, communications director for the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, said.

Governor John Bel Edwards declared a state of emergency throughout Louisiana, as search and rescue teams scoured the landscape for survivors from Tuesday’s tornadoes.

“The width of the devastation was unlike any that I have seen before,” Edwards told a news conference on Tuesday. “When you see it from the air you’re even more impressed that so few people were injured and that nobody’s life was lost.”

The storm system battered New Orleans and suburban Baton Rouge, marking the fourth time in a year the state has been jolted by natural disasters.

A string of tornadoes struck in February 2016 and four people died in widespread floods in March. Louisiana was then devastated by major flooding in August, when more than 60,000 homes were damaged or destroyed in 20 parishes, or territorial districts, marking the state’s worst disaster since Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

One twister carved out a swath of destruction about two miles (3 km) long and about half a mile (1 km) wide, affecting an area with 5,000 properties, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu said.

“It’s devastating and a lot of families have lost everything that they have,” Landrieu said.

Thirty-one injuries have been reported, according to the mayor’s office.

Six of them were moderate or severe injuries, and there have been no reported fatalities, the office said in a statement.

At least 8,100 customers were without power in the New Orleans area by early Wednesday, according to Entergy New Orleans Inc (EYNOO.PK). About 150 workers from the energy company assisted in recovery efforts on Wednesday.

Nancy Malone, communications director for the Red Cross of Louisiana, said damage was reported in about six parishes, where the Red Cross was assisting first responders.

“While this was not expected, communities in Southeast Louisiana have been affected numerous times in the last 12 months,” Malone said. “Here we are again.” — Reuters
**Prince, George Michael to get Grammy tributes**

LOS ANGELES — Prince and George Michael will be honored at the Grammy Awards on Sunday with separate tributes, but organizers did not say on Wednesday which musicians will perform them.

Recording Academy President Neil Portnow said “Purple Rain” singer Prince, and British star Michael, who both died suddenly in 2016, were “pop icons who showcased rare musical genius and otherworldly charisma.”

“The passings of two such creative innovators were a huge loss for the creative community; The Recording Academy is working to pay homage to their tremendous legacies on the Grammy stage,” Portnow added in a statement.

The Recording Academy said it was not announcing details of the tributes and who will participate.

Prince, a seven-times Grammy winner, was found dead at his Minneapolis studio complex in April. An autopsy revealed the 57-year-old died of an accidental overdose of the pain-killer fentanyl.

Michael, 53, known for songs like “Last Christmas” and “Freedom,” was found dead at his British home on Christmas Day. The double Grammy winner’s manager said the singer died of heart failure, but the official cause is still being investigated.

David Bowie, who died in January 2016, was honored at last year’s Grammys in a tribute performed by Lady Gaga.

Bowie’s final release, “Blackstar,” is competing for four Grammys at the awards show in Los Angeles on Sunday, including best alternative album.—Reuters

**Witherspoon, Kidman debut female-centric ‘Big Little Lies’**

LOS ANGELES — Two of film’s biggest names, Nicole Kidman and Reese Witherspoon, have come together on screen to champion female empowerment in HBO’s “Big Little Lies.”

The Oscar-winning actresses both star in and executive-produce the seven-part limited TV series, based on the 2014 novel of the same name, after seeing the opportunity to put diverse women on the screen.

“It’s powerful, you know, when you actually connect with women and reflect back to them their lives and they see themselves on film,” Witherspoon, 40, told Reuters at the show’s Hollywood premiere this week.

Kidman, 49, currently Oscar-nominated for “Lion,” said she was “committed” to supporting female talent and young actors.

“It’s a lovely place in the world right now to be able to throw whatever power, whatever support I can be behind that,” she said. “Big Little Lies,” debuting on HBO on Sunday, sees Witherspoon, Kidman and Shailene Woodley playing three mothers and also stars Zoe Kravitz, Laura Dern, Adam Scott and Alexander Skarsgard.

Set in the tranquil California seaside town of Monterey, the series explores society’s myth of perfection and the contradictions that exist beneath the idealized facade of marriage, sex, parenting and friendship.—Reuters

**Daniel Radcliffe talks comedy, nerves in return to London stage**

LONDON — “Harry Potter” star Daniel Radcliffe has plenty of stage experience — famously appearing nude in “Equus” — but the British actor still gets nervous before each performance.

“[I] get a bit twitchy and nervous,” Radcliffe said. “You need nerves, you need that. If you don’t feel that then you’re not there and that’s exciting. That’s fun.”

Taking inspiration from “Hamlet”, Radcliffe, 27, will return to the London stage in a 50th anniversary bratory production of Tom Stoppard’s “Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead” later this month.

The play is a mind-bending situation comedy in which two minor characters, Rosencrantz (Radcliffe) and Guildenstern (Joshua McGuire), stumble in and out of the action of Shakespeare’s iconic drama, all while having an identity crisis.

“They don’t know who they are, where they are, what they’re doing,” McGuire said in an interview with Reuters about the two characters. “They know something is going on with Hamlet and they don’t want to die.”

“It is like this incredible canvas for amazing ideas to be discussed - ideas about fate and chance and do we control our own fate or is it all just chaos,” Radcliffe said.

“Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead” opens at the Old Vic Theatre in London on 25 February and runs until 29 April.—Reuters

**Priyanka lends voice to neglected dogs with Tom Hardy**

LOS ANGELES — Actress Priyanka Chopra has joined actors like Tom Hardy and Casey Affleck to voice their concern for the ill-treatment of dogs around the world.

The 34-year-old actress is one of the celebrity narrators in the video by PETA fieldworkers, which shows the life of canines when they are left fend for themselves and neglected by their owners, from their own perspective.

“Did you know that as I got old and stiff and achy, I couldn’t get comfortable no matter how hard I tried... you would let me suffer, alone and in pain?” narrates Priyanka.

The video begins with a shot of a chained dog sitting in the snow, alone when Hardy’s voice over floats in, “When you first got me, did you know that you were going to chain me up and leave me outside? Even in the cold and snow?”

Towards the end, the 39-year-old actor says, “… If you did then why did you get me at all?” with Casey Affleck and Priyanka joining in, saying, “Why did you get me at all?”

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German right-wingers angry about Syria monument in Dresden

BERLIN — Right-wing activists in the eastern German city of Dresden have protested against a work by a Syrian artist designed to show solidarity with the people of Aleppo, saying it belittles the memory of the city’s own bombing in World War II.

The installation, consisting of three busses standing on end, was placed in a square in front of the Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady), destroyed by British and US bombers in World War II and rebuilt as a symbol of reconciliation.

The work evokes a scene from 2015 when rebels in the Syrian city stood three buses on end to shield a street from government snipers.

It is part of commemorations for the 72nd anniversary of the obliteration of much of Dresden with firebombs in February 1945, three months before the end of the war in Europe. The raids killed 25,000 people and destroyed historic Baroque churches and palaces, and continue to evoke resentment in Dresden, cradle of the anti-Muslim PEGIDA movement, which drew some 20,000 supporters to weekly marches in 2015.

Right-wing campaigners boomed Dresden mayor Dirk Hilbert at the opening ceremony on Tuesday and shouted “Garbage!”; “Get out!”, “Shame on you!” and “Traitor!”. He has also received death threats, German media say.

Artist Manaf Halbouni, a German-Syrian, told Reuters TV he was shocked by the protest: “The aim of this installation was to foster dialogue between people so that we can all discuss things together and try to solve problems together.” On his website, he says his work links the suffering of people in Syria and Europe “but also the hope for reconstruction and peace.”

After decades as a ruin, the Frauenkirche was reconstituted in 2005.

The Dresden branch of the anti-immigrant AfD, which has enjoyed a surge in popularity since an influx of over a million refugees, many from Syria, in the last two years, called the installation “an insult to the citizens of Dresden”.

Last month, a senior member of the AfD caused an outcry in Dresden by saying that a memorial to the victims of the Nazi Holocaust in Berlin was a scandal, and that history books should be rewritten to focus on German victims.—Reuters

Sheep shearsers race to be fastest at world championships

WELLINGTON — The World Shearing and Woolhandling Championships kicked off in New Zealand on Wednesday with hundreds of competitors from around the world.

Held for the first time on the country’s South Island in Invercargill, the championships see people competing in six categories including traditional blade shearing, machine shearing and wool handling.

“Never before have we had a venue like this with so much seating, so big with the facilities around it, with corporate boxes and it’s pretty, pretty amazing,” said New Zealand shearer David Fagan. New Zealand are the favourite in many of the events, with nations like Japan trying to get on the scoreboard.

“We have only ten thousand, fifteen thousand sheep, but we still have to shear them, so we started running shearing for fun,” said Japanese competitor Shun Oishi.

On the second day of this year’s competition, Scottish contestant Gavin Mutch was one of four to win a place in the final, buying at auctions, antique

LONDON — One of the world’s largest collections of “Alice in Wonderland” memorabilia, featuring over 3,000 items, was sold at an Oxford auction house on Wednesday for around 70,000 pounds ($88,000).

The collection, which features memorabilia of the fantasy novel by Lewis Carroll - also known as Charles Lutwidge Dodgson - was owned by late antiquarian book and prints dealer Thomas Schuster and his wife Greta.

The couple built the collection over 25 years, buying at auctions, antique

‘Alice in Wonderlend’ collection fetches 88,000 dollars at auction

LONDON — A Chinese film festival that will travel the length and breadth of Britain was announced Wednesday in Manchester. Manchester Airport, along with Chinese company Hainan Airlines, is launching the festival to celebrate movies and culture from China.

Each event is free of charge, and everyone that attends will go into a competition to win a pair of flights to Beijing direct with Hainan Airlines.

Starting in Manchester on 22 February, the Chinese film festival will run until 11 April and take place in 12 British cities, films being shown include “Hero”, “Operation Mekong” and “Call of Heroes”.

A spokesman at Manchester Airport said “Hainan Airlines started its direct service from Manchester to Beijing four times a week in June last year, and the festival has been arranged to showcase the vibrant culture of China, which thanks to the route, is much closer and accessible for British residents.” The route makes Manchester the only airport outside of London with a direct service to the Chinese mainland, taking just 10 hours.—Xinhua

Manchester airport, Chinese airlines launch Chinese film festival across Britain

10 February 2017

Global New Light of Myanmar

LIFESTYLE 15
Pyeongchang marks one-year countdown to Winter Games

GANGNEUNG, (South Korea) — Pyeongchang has waited a long time to host the Winter Olympics, suffering two failed bids before securing success, but on Thursday the South Korean alpine town’s dream came a step closer with the one-year countdown to the 2018 Games.

Located in the mountainous Gangwon Province, some 180 kilometres east of Seoul, Pyeongchang will host Asia’s first Winter Games outside Japan and kick off an Asian Olympic cycle that reflects the region’s growing influence on world sport.

With Tokyo hosting the 2020 Summer Games and Beijing staging the 2022 Winter Olympics, Pyeongchang organising chief Lee Hee-beom said Asia’s strength was evident.

“We can see the era of Asia in sport is taking place,” said Lee at a news conference in the coastal town of Gangneung, which will stage the ice hockey, curling, figure skating, speed and short track skating events.

“It’s Pyeongchang’s vision to open a new horizon of winter sports in North East Asia and the world.”

The build up to the Games has been anything but plain sailing with organizers forced to overcome initial reluctance from corporate sponsors as well as a political influence peddling scandal that threatened to taint the Games. Concerns from the international community about the security threat posed by North Korea were also raised at the news conference, but POCOG chief Lee sought to ease concerns.

“Any athlete from any country is allowed to participate in the Games as long as they promote peace,” he said. “North Korea is no exception.”

“I don’t believe tensions have been rising on the Korean peninsula. North Korea has a right and a responsibility to participate in the Games - if they love peace.”

Lee also conceded that while the ongoing political crisis involving President Park Geun-hye had had some negative impact he said preparations had not been hindered.

Park was impeached over accusations she colluded with long-time friend Choi Soon-sil to pressure big businesses to donate to two foundations set up to back the president’s policy initiatives. Reports in local media suggested contracts for the Pyeongchang Games had been tainted by the scandal but Lee rejected the accusation.

“I know people expressed some concerns about the current political situation and how it might affect the Olympics,” Lee said. “But it hasn’t had an impact on our preparations.”

Lee added that Korea’s National Assembly has passed resolutions in November to encourage government bodies to do their utmost to support the Games.

Taking place 30 years after Seoul claimed its place on the global sporting stage with the 1988 Summer Games, the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics will see South Korea join an elite group of countries to complete the “hosting grand slam.” —Reuters

Sharapova handed Madrid Open wildcard

BARCELONA — Former world number one Maria Sharapova has been invited to play at the Madrid Open in May, which takes place less than two weeks after her 15-month doping ban expires, tournament organisers said on Wednesday.

The five-time grand slam winner has been given a wildcard for the event, which begins on 5 May.

It is scheduled to be her second comeback tournament after her suspension for doping, with the Russian set to return to action at the Stuttgart Grand Prix in April.

“Sharapova requested an invitation to play... (She) is one of the best players of the last 15 years and also a past winner of our tournament,” said event director Manolo Santana.

“In Madrid she always plays well and I’m sure she will come back to the courts highly motivated and hoping to do well.”

Following a positive test for the drug meldonium at the 2016 Australian Open, the Russian was suspended for two years by the International Tennis Federation (ITF).

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) cut the ban by nine months last October, allowing her to return from 26 April.

Her case divided opinion in the sport.

The Florida-based Sharapova, who turns 30 on 19 April, had called the ITF’s original ruling “unfairly harsh” because she had not intentionally violated anti-doping rules.

Meldonium was only added to the World Anti-Doping Agency list of banned substances at the start of 2016 after mounting evidence it boosted blood flow and enhanced performance.

CAS cut Sharapova’s suspension but said she “bore some degree of fault” by relying on agent Max Eisenbud to check the banned list for changes and failing to ensure he had done so.—Reuters

I will never feel great again, says Woods

NEW YORK — Former world number one Tiger Woods has accepted that he will “never feel great” again after suffering a number of back and knee injuries in recent years.

The 14-times major champion returned to action in December following a 15-month layoff but was forced to pull out of the Dubai Desert Classic last week after the first round due to a back spasm.

“There were a lot of times I didn’t think I was going to make it back. It was tough, it was more brutal,” Woods told Dubai magazine Vision.

The 41-year-old American has racked up 79 PGA Tour victories in his career but has won a major championship since 2008.

“There have been plenty of times when I thought I would never play the game again at the elite level,” Woods, ranked 674th in the world, said.

“It was tough, it was more than brutal. There were times I needed help just to get out of bed. “I feel good, not great. I don’t think I will ever feel great because it’s three back surgeries, four knee operations,” he added.

Woods is hoping to play in the US Masters in April, the first major of the year. “I’m always going to be a little sore. As long as I can function, I’m fine with that,” he said. —Reuters

Tiger Woods tees off the 5th hole during the first round of the Farmers Insurance Open golf tournament at Torrey Pines Municipal Golf Course, La Jolla, CA, USA, on 26 January 2017. Photo: REUTERS