Chief Minister: Yangon bus line will meet international standards by 2018

YANGON Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein said the Yangon Bus Service system will be upgraded to an international standard by the beginning of next year.

“The regional government is working on upgrading the system after a new city bus system was changed. We will have a system similar to what is being practiced internationally by January 2018,” he said at a press conference yesterday in the Yangon Region Government Office.

As a part of the upgrade, old city buses were replaced with modern vehicles, with GPS systems to be installed that will be operated by the Control Centre. Also, a prepaid card payment system will be practiced. All the buses will also be installed with CCTV.

The government is now bidding a tender to upgrade bus stops, according to the Yangon Region Bus Supervisory Authority.

“We are behind when compared to other countries. We see it as an opportunity to change the city bus system by getting the latest technology. In the card payment system, one card can be used in buses, trains, water transport and purchasing,” said U Phyo Min Thein.

The government is now assessing the YBS system for three months and will change to a public bus service in 2017.

“We all know how we will benefit from the bus service, as the demand is so high. I warn the bus owners who breach the rules, they could be terminated,” he warned.

5 million euro loan, tax bill discussed at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

BORROWING 5 million euros from Germany for the Myanmar Diesel Locomotive Factory (Ywartaung) and a Draft Law on the tax bill were the main issues discussed at the 2nd Pyidaungsu Hluttaw’s 4th regular session 7th day meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

U Thant Sin Maung, the Union Minister for Transport and Communications, and Deputy Minister U Maung Maung Win of the Planning and Finance Ministry presented the President’s project to develop the Myanmar Diesel Locomotive Factory in Ywartaung with 5 million euros borrowed from German KFW Development Bank.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Aung Min Aung Khin Than announced that Hluttaw representatives wanting to discuss the loan could register their names.

Afterwards, the Drafted 2017 National Tax Law was discussed by Dr Aung Khin of PyinOoLwin constituency, Daw Ei Ei Pyone of Ayeyarwaddy constituency (8), U Khin Maung Tha of Loilem constituency, U Myo Win of Mon constituency (8), U Zone Hlyan Htan of Chin constituency (4), Daw Khin San Hlaing of Pale constituency, Dr. Thet Thet Khang of Dagon constituency, U Ba Shein of Kyaukpyu constituency, U Win Htun of Pyapon constituency and Daw Wint War Tun of Shahtaw constituency.

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Office of the President
Notification 23/2017
16th February 2017
Formation of National Committee for Designating Minimum Wage

1. To designate a minimum wage for workers in accordance with Sub-section (A) under Section-3 of the 2013 Minimum Wage Law, the National Committee for Designating Minimum Wage is formed with the following persons:

(A) U Thein Swe
Chairman
Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population

(B) U Ilha Kyaw
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation

(C) U Myo Aung
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population

(D) Dr Khin Zaw
Member
Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation

(E) U Win Khanti
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Transport and Communications

(F) U Tun Tun Naing
Member
Ministry of Planning and Finance

(B) U Ilha Kyaw
Vice-Chairman (1)
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation

(C) U Myo Aung
Vice-Chairman (2)
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population

(D) Dr Khin Zaw
Member
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation

(E) U Win Khanti
Member
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Transport and Communications

(F) U Tun Tun Naing
Member
Ministry of Planning and Finance

SEE PAGE 10 >>
5 million euro loan, tax bill discussed ...

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Daw Khin San Hlaing of Pale constituency presented reports of foreign exports of raw jade, rubies, sapphires, diamonds, and raw emeralds that are taxed at 15 per cent and 10 per cent under the special trade tax sub code (B). She further stated that increased taxes on raw gems promotes production on high-value merchandise, and income tax on sales of gold products should be modified to 5 per cent, and as the trade tax is paid by the consumer the tax rate on gold merchandise should be reduced to 1 per cent, since tax has to paid by every citizen from birth till death an explanation is needed on why tax is reduced on gold merchandise purchased for decorative purposes resulting from a wealthy income.

Presented were findings that the Ministry of Planning and Finance could improve the stock market by removing or lowering income taxes on public companies listed in the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX). Though capital and development are needed on the stock market, exemption or lowering of income on listed public companies shall not be approved, respective companies wishing to receive exemptions should submit proposals. The calculated income from tax and GDP in the 2016-2017 fiscal year is 8.03 per cent and is predicted to be the lowest in the ASEAN region. Therefore, meeting the annual income tax quota, receiving expected income taxes by the government, and receiving full income tax according to regulations placed on taxes should be prioritised.

The importance of disseminating information on how taxpayer’s money is being used to support the country so that citizens shall responsibly pay their taxes and the importance of responsibly in utilising the leveraged taxes in projects should be provided good-service qualities to the citizens were also discussed.

Dr. Thet Thet Khine of Dagon Township presented findings that, while from a superficial look rewarding responsible taxpayers and civil workers may seem fair, closer inspection reveals this may create inequality between ministries and that the Union Government has assigned nine ministries to manage the 30 types of income taxes in the country. While a system of reward based on good performance is welcome among civil workers, this should be discussed and approved by all ministries concerned through a separate procedure, he said.

The annual national tax law should not be drafted inconsistently but a specific timeframe should be designated, and under Section 38 of the drafted tax law, Special trade code (22) sub code C, failure to pay tax will incur a penalty. And the system of rewarding 20 per cent of the penalty to the informant and 30 per cent to the prosecutor is the same as considering taxpayers as criminals and handing over the significant procedure of the tax committee’s task of examining to the taxpayers, reversing the progress of the current tax system. All laws drafted with good intentions should be carefully analysed and paired with practical procedures for its citizens, therefore the drafted special trade law should be reconsidered, Dr. Thet Thet Khine said.

U Win Htut of Pyayon constituency presented findings showing that the draft law committee has presented findings that, while from a superficial look rewarding responsible taxpayers and civil workers may seem fair, closer inspection reveals this may create inequality between ministries and that the Union Government has assigned nine ministries to manage the 30 types of income taxes in the country. While a system of reward based on good performance is welcome among civil workers, this should be discussed and approved by all ministries concerned through a separate procedure.

The draft tax law submittals by the Pyidaungsu Draft Law Committee and discussions between Hlutaw representatives and other Pyidaungsu committees will be continued in the next Hlutaw Meeting, announced the Pyidaungsu Hlutaw Speaker. The 2nd Pyidaungsu Hlutaw 4th regular session holds its 8th day meeting on February 20.

Thura U Shwe Mann receives Qatar Ambassador

CHAIRMAN of Pyidaungsu Hlutaw’s Commission for the Assessment of Legal Affairs and Special Issues, Thura U Shwe Mann received yesterday H.E Mr Hassan bin Mohamed Rafie Al Emadi, the Qatar ambassador to Myanmar at Hlutaw’s Hall 1-11 in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the talk, they exchanged views on matters related to the Commission for the Assessment of Legal Affairs and Special Issues and the relationship between the two countries and their stability, peacefulness and development.—Myanmar News Agency

Attorney-General urges courts to resolve cases in timely manner

U Tun Oo, Union Attorney General, addressed the 12th operational meeting where regional and state chief attorneys and judges were in attendance and said that judicial discretion given to the courts were conferred in order to allow independent judgments according to the doctrine of the separation of powers, to gear up rule of law and public trust on courts and to provide fairness to the public.

He said no one can practice their given mandate beyond to the law, and regulation, honesty and truthfulness are absolutely necessary in rendering judgment. The behavior of a judge can mirror the public trust on justice.

The Union Attorney General urged all courts to solve cases in a timely manner and in accordance with rules and regulations. Delays should be minimises to avoid backlogs, as the statistics of The Office of the Attorney General of Myanmar showed that the number of criminal and civil suits in 2016 sharply increased compared to 2015.

There were a total 364,975 criminal suits, 42,789 civil suits, 303 child cases, 32,233 urban-related cases and 134,447 traffic cases solved in 2016, though a few remained unsolved.—GNNL

Drug suspect eludes police pursuit and gunfire in northern Yangon

Zaw Gyi (PaNiTa)

A fugitive charged with drug counts and robbery fled a police search force Thursday in Yangon City’s Northern New Dagon Township. Police fired shots at the escaping suspect but missed. The suspect seems at large and continues to be actively pursued by police, according to reports by Yangon Region Police Force.

“The suspect rammed into the police expedition’s cars and fled, reported an official from the township’s police department.

On Thursday about 5:25pm, Win Yangon Region Head Police Force, Administration Company Criminal Investigation Squadron received news that Nagarlay, also known as Aung Nam, 30, son of U Win Naing of Northern New Dagon Township would be arriving with a grey Mitsubishi Pajero at a car workshop on Hlawga Street in Ward 20 in Northern New Dagon Township. Upon seeing police, the suspect rammed his vehicle into a police car and fled on foot. Police opened fire, but apparently did not strike the suspect.

“I did hear what sounded like three or four gunshots in the evening. We discovered half an hour later that police had come to the scene, and they said that shots were explained in pursuit of the fleeing criminal. I heard the suspect had fled towards the direction of Dagon Harbor. I didn’t even dare go out,” said a resident.

The suspect Nagarlay is still on the run. The police force is collaborating with police department in several townships to inquire about possible hiding places of the suspect. Searches will be conducted at the city gates and police checkpoints in an effort to apprehend the suspect.

The suspect has been charged with possession of Drugs and Hypnotic Drugs Code 15/19(A)/21/ Ethnic 512 by the Northern New Dagon Police Department-MaYa(Pa) 13/2016 and Penal Code 386/323/114/ Ethnic 512 by Lamunaw Police Department — (Pa)9/2016.

2,000 midwives to be appointed this year

NEARLY 2,000 midwives will be appointed around the nation before the end of this fiscal year, according to the Ministry of Health and Sports.

Union Health and Sports Minister Dr Myint Htway said the ministry continues to appoint midwives in FY2016-2017 as part of its effort to fulfill the basic requirements of public healthcare, especially in rural areas. There are 12,295 midwives appointed by the ministry, who are currently offering medical care mainly to rural communities. A rural health care branch is often staffed only by a midwife. A total of 1,778 rural health branches and health departments have been established in 63,938 villages across the country.—Myanmar News Agency
TV programme on government’s first year to be filmed, broadcast and published

A co-ordination meeting for broadcasting and publishing a programme about the performance of the new government during its first year was held at the meeting hall of the Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

According to a report from the Myanmar News Agency, the performance and transformation during the one-year period of the Office of the President, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw, the Office of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Ministries of the Union, the Office of the Union Attorney General, the Union Civil Service Board, Regions, States and Nay Pyi Taw Council will be filmed as of the last week of February and will be broadcast on TV and published in the Kyemon and Myanma Alin daily newspapers in March.

“It will reach the one-year mark since the new government has taken office. As for the government elected by the people, the new government’s public-oriented performances in political, economic and social transformations and newly extended performances must be reported to the people. To inform the people about the implementations of the respective pillars and the Ministries, those of Regions and States in the one-year period and future plans to be implemented in the future for the benefit of the people, arrangements to be filmed, published and broadcast were made,” said Dr Pe Myint, Union Minister, in his opening address.

At the meeting, U Myint Htwe, Director-General of Myanma Radio & Television, clarified the programmes to be filmed and broadcast, with the programmes to be described in newspapers clarified by U Kyaw Soe, Managing Director of the News and Periodicals Enterprise.

Representatives from Union-level organisations, Union Ministries and those from Regional and State Cabinets were present at the meeting, enquiring and discussing matters unclear and situations to be amended. Dr Pe Myint gave advice during the discussion and then made a closing address.—GNM

Tatmataw ends area clearance operations in northern Rakhine

FOLLOWING the end of area clearance operations, which had been frequently conducted after the violent attacks on the border outposts in northern Rakhine, the Tatmataw is currently cooperating with the police for continued stability and the rule of law in the area, according to a press release from the State Counsellor’s Office yesterday.

Meanwhile, the Advisory Commission on Rakhine led by former UN Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan, the three Investigation Commissions on Maungtaw separately led by Vice-President U Myint Swe, Lt-Gen Aye Win from the Tatmadaw and Police Brig-Gen Win Tun and coordination committees for security, the rule of law and development in Rakhine State led by Chief Minister of Rakhine State U Nyi Pu have all been probing into the human rights allegations outlined in a recent UN report.

While the area has returned to normalcy, a committee led by Maungtaw District Commissioner U Ye Htut was formed to carry out systematic resettlement of villages destroyed by fire.

The government has delivered aid from home and abroad to both communities in conflict areas in northern Rakhine.

The Tatmataw and police forces were conducting clearances as a military operations area after announcing the curfew order, following the surprise attacks on No. 1 border guard headquarters in Maungtaw, the Kotantauk police outpost and the Ngakhuya police outpost in Yatharwaung by hundreds of violent attackers in October 2016, said the press release.

In the attacks on police outposts, 67 guns, 10,930 bullets and 47 bayonets were lost and seven soldiers and 10 policemen were killed. Five soldiers, seven policemen and three civilians were injured.

During area clearance operations from 9 October, 2016 to February 9, 2017, fighting occurred between security forces and violent attackers about 20 times, according to the press release.

During the armed attacks, 69 violent attackers were killed and multiple weapons were seized. The terrorists captured and killed 13 civilians including a village leader, a librarian and a clerk and burnt down 10 houses.

Five-hundred and eighty-five attackers have been arrested and some are still under investigation. Among that group 39 are facing trial for killing people, destroying public property and communicating with illegal organisations.

The attackers were threatening locals to not cooperate with authorities, not to tell the truth and keep the people fearful, the statement from the State Counsellor’s Office said.

The Tatmataw and security forces were trying to maintain peace, security and the rule of law in the Maungtaw Region and recently relaxed the 7pm to 6am curfew to 9pm to 5am.—GNM

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
President’s Office

Order 2/2017
6th Waning of Tabodwe, 1378 ME
17 February, 2017

Appointment of Taninthayi Region Security and Border Affairs Minister

In accordance with the provisions stated in article 262 (a) (2), (b) (e) (f), article 264 (c) of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and section 19 (c), section 82 (c) of Union Government Law and Section 8 (a) Sub-section (2) (b) (i) (g), Section 56 (a) of Region or State Government Law, Colonel Zaw Lwin, Taninthayi Region Security and Border Affairs Minister, has been returned to perform the new mission.

Colonel Kyaw Zeya, No 12 Tatmadaw Advanced Training School, who has been appointed as Region Security and Border Affairs Minister.

U Ko Ko Naing appointed Ambassador of Lao People’s Democratic Republic

The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed U Ko Ko Naing, Director-General of the Protocol Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Lao People’s Democratic Republic.—Myanmar News Agency

Chief Minister: Yangon bus line will meet international standards by 2018

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Today, some city travellers still experience inconvenience in taking the bus, although the government introduced the new bus system on 16 January to reduce the heavy congestion in Yangon. “The night buses are travelling half of the route because they need more gasoline. I have difficulties when the buses rarely go to my destination,” said Ma Nu Nu Lwin, who lives in Shwe Pyi Thar Township on the outskirts of Yangon and regularly takes No. 65 bus.

There are currently 79 bus lines operated by 3,500 buses in Yangon to transport 2.5 million people daily. After changing to a new bus system, the government received 286 complaint letters in February, mostly about the No. 6 bus line, No. 36 lines and No. 65 bus line. Two-hundred thirty-four complaint letters were received, mostly about the No. 7 bus line, No. 40 bus line and No. 41 bus line.

Pindaya Zone fee to be risen to US$5 as of next FY

AUTHORITIES plan to raise the entrance fee in Pindaya Zone from US$2 to $5 beginning next fiscal year, aiming to promote health and education status of residents.

The authorities decided to increase the admission fees to get more funding for Danu Self-administered Zone in southern Shan State, said Daw Muya Myint, deputy head of the region administrative office (Pindaya).

Profits from the entrance fee will go to the region’s development fund to improve the health and education status of residents. Entrance fees are currently being collected $2 per foreigner. International travellers will have to pay $5 admission fee starting from the coming 2017-2018 FY.

Pindaya is always crowded with visitors from home and abroad. Located in the west of the state in Taunggyi District, Pindaya is a town in southern Shan State. It is also one of the towns that host an itinerant market every fifth day.

The region is famous for its limestone caves called Pindaya Caves, where thousands of Buddha images have been consecrated for worship over the centuries. It is a popular pilgrimage site for Buddhists.—200

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**Dakhkina district court opened**

DAKKHINA district court was formally opened in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday by Union Chief Justice U Tun Oo.

Nay Pyi Taw council chairman Dr. Myo Aung, Mandalay region’s Chief Justice U Soe Thein and Pyithu Hluttaw Legal Affairs Committee chairman U Khin Maung Win formally cut the ribbon to open the new district court building.

Union Chief Justice U Tun Tun Oo unveiled the signboard of the new district court building.

The Union Chief Justice and officials then inspected the new facilities. Dakhkina District Judge U Mya Hay Kyaw and Diamond City Company Chief engineer U Tin Aung presented information concerning the new building and handed over the documents related to the new building to the district judge.

The new building was designed by the Ministry of Construction. It is a two-storey reinforced concrete building that includes six courtrooms, one meeting room, a room to keep case files, two common rooms for law officers and lawyers, a witness lounge, a media room, an information counter, a room in which to accept cases and a temporary police lock-up.

—**Myanmar News Agency**

**Crime News**

**A fire broke out in Bhamo township**

A FIRE broke out in Hante village in Bhamo township in Kachin State at early morning 4 am.

The fire set started by over-heating of a water cooler uses in lunch hall of Tatoo Monastery in Hante village. Nine fire engines together with 80 villagers including village head, township police officers and 24 volunteer-fire fighters were trying to stop the fire and killed it in 5 am. No casualties were reported. The fire consumed two-story building, a lunch hall and three apartments near the monastery.—**Bhamo (IPRD)**

**7 ton of illegal logs were captured**

SEVEN ton of illegal logs carried by trucks were captured at the evening of February 15 in Mong Yu township Tarchilate District in eastern Shan State.

Investigation were led by Mong Yu township administer U Kyaw Swar. Police Officer Hein Wanna Maung, officer of the department of Forestry together with witness and found two six-wheel trucks carrying 7 ton of logs between Dunnwe village and Wanahway village, near south east of police station. The case is figured out as ownerless and file a lawsuit against it.—**Mong Yu (IPRD)**

**Two illegal motor vehicles confiscated in Thaton Township**

POLICE confiscated two illegal motor vehicles at Kyar Pan village toll gate, Thaton township, Mon State yesterday, said Thudamar police station.

“The police, while conducting a clearance operation, arrested the vehicle owners when they failed to produce any documents related to the vehicles,” said Inspector of Police Nay Myo Than from Thudama Wady police station. The police stopped a Toyota Alphard minivan en route to Thaton from Pha-an driven by Moe Htet Arkar, 26, from Myawady town and a Toyota Wish driven by Aung Zaw Htike, 30, from Thaton town and arrested both drivers when they failed to produce the documents concerning the vehicles. Local police have taken action against both drivers under section 8 of the export and import law.—**Myitmakha News Agency**

**Seed bank established in Nay Pyi Taw**

A SEED bank has been established in the Agriculture Research Department, Zawgyithar Township, Nay Pyi Taw in 1990 with the assistance of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

“The seed bank is established with the aim of maintaining sustainable Myanmar indigenous vegetable seeds, developing of agriculture sectors and ensuring of a sufficient food supply,” said Dr. Daw Ohnmar Saw, a research officer.

There are 7,350 species of paddy, 2,220 species of other crops, 1,511 species of bean, 732 species of oilseed, 42 species of industrial raw crops, 175 species of vegetable and 184 species of wild heat that have been collect ed in the seed bank.

The crop seeds are kept between 10 °C and -5°C in refrigerated rooms. The crop seeds can be kept for between 20 and 25 years. The seed bank will keep seeds when the seeds are expected to be able to have 90 per cent of plant capacity.

The establishment of the seed bank will benefit seed experts, researchers, agricultural trainees and farmers and will cooperate with international seed banks.—**200**

**Pone Taung-Pone Nyar area expected to be designated as ecotourism site**

MEMBERS of the Pyithu Hluttaw submitted a proposal to designate the Pone Taung-Pone Nyar area in Gangaw township, Magwe region as an ecotourism site, it is learnt.

“Pone Taung-Pone Nyar area has great potential to be designated as an ecotourism site because the land is rich in biodiversity and visitors can ride elephants and watch birds of diversified species. Also, the region has fossils 40 million years old. So, the region is an attractive place for the tourists. The three ministries have to co-operate for designation of this area as an ecotourism site. I am in support of the proposal to Hluttaw to put it on record,” said U Ohn Win, Union Minister for Resources and Environmental Conservation on eighth day of the second Pyithu Hluttaw’s fourth regular meeting on Tuesday.

Experts from the Ministry of Resources and Environmental Conservation, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture and the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism will conduct a field inspection tour of the site for designation of the area as an ecotourism site.—**Myitmakha News Agency**

**Measures taken to protect crops against parasites**

THE agricultural department of Taungoo Township in introduced the integrated crop protection system to prevent summer paddy from parasitic infestation. On 17th February, staff officer U Naing Minn Hlaing and employees from the agricultural department laid 120 cards of Naji-Oo in the paddy field of farmer U Aye Lwin. U San Lin also talked about the protection methods.—**Shwe Win (017)**

**Over 30,000 students in Bago join ethnic language classes**

MORE THAN 30,000 students across Bago Region are attending ethnic language courses at government schools this academic year, according to Bago Region Karen Ethnic Affairs Ministry.

A total of 34,367 learners in 28乡镇ships join six different ethnic language and literature courses including Karen, Mon, Pa-O, Asho Chin and Shan being taught by over 1,100 ethnic teachers at almost 500 government schools. About 200,000 Karen people, 26,000 Shan people, over 30,000 Asho Chin people, 20,000 Mon people, 26,000 Kayah people and over 20,000 Pa-O people are living in the region. U Soe Thein, Chairman of Bago Region Mon Literature and Culture Committee, said the committee already submitted a proposal to relevant authorities to allow teaching of ethnic languages to middle school students within school hours.

Currently, ethnic students are taking mother-tongue teaching outside of school hours. Bago Region government plans to support Ks1 million each to ethnic literature and culture groups in the townships before this budget year, said Daw Naw Pwe Sae, region Karen Ethnic Affairs Minister.Different literature and culture groups also conduct language classes for learners in every summer.—**Myitmakha News Agency**
Winter beans and pulses sell well in Pyay

WINTER beans and pulses including Mung bean and pigeon peas are selling well in the Pyay bean market in Bago region. However, the supply of Mung beans is lower in the bean market when compared to pigeon peas. To fill this gap, neighbouring villages supplied 200 bags of Mung bean to the Pyay bean market every day. The Mandalay depot bought all available beans in the Pyay bean market.

The new pigeon pea beans were supplied to the local market starting in November. The new pigeon peas are high in demand, and sold well in December and January.

But the yield of pigeon peas was lower this month. Pigeon pea fetch Ks 29,500 per basket. Over 600 bags of Mung bean were supplied every day from Paung Talai, Pakkaung, Panduang and Kanma townships. The price of Mung beans declined to Ks 29,000 per basket because Yangon depots purchase Mung beans is every day. The price of Mung bean were stable in the local market this week. The prices of pigeon peas have also decreased in the local market because of high yield.

The lablab bean entered the market this week, but only a relatively small amount was sold. Buyers bought over 250 bags of lablab bean per day.

The price of Shwe Kyun bean fetches between Ks 29,000 and Ks 30,000 per basket, while Kannar bean fetches Ks 26,500 per basket.

The price of haricot bean sells for Ks 16,000 per basket, while the prices of green peas fetch Ks 24,000 per basket.—Myan Min

Yangon property prices declined by 25-30% in three years

PROPERTY prices in the commercial capital Yangon declined by 25-30 per cent over the past three years and real estate agents estimate that the prices will continue to fall.

The property market had boomed over the years. Since then, room, house, land and apartment prices have skyrocketed. But in late 2014, the market declined due to low demand.

The real estate market is active again in early 2017, but prices remain low. Some land and properties worth about Ks500 million and some permit lands in Dagon Myothit (East) and Dagon Seikkan townships are being sold at discount prices, local property agents say. To support the development of a more robust legal structure focused on the property industry, the government enacted the Condominium Law in early 2016. The new law, for the first time, allows foreigners to legally purchase condominiums in the country. Total foreign ownership in any one project, however, is limited to 40 per cent of the total project space.—200

Suzuki’s carry-branded Japanese minitrucks to export to Laos

SUZUKI Motor Corporation’s subsidiary, Suzuki (Myanmar) Motor Co., Ltd will continue to export its Carry-branded minitrucks produced at its plant in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone to neighbouring Laos.

For the first time, Suzuki (Myanmar) Motor Co on Wednesday sent a new Carry minitruck to Laos by sea, planning to boost the export market based on demand from the South-East Asian country.

This is the first step for the company to supply its product to Laos’ automobile market through KPCG & Nomura Trading, an authorized distributor. Suzuki produced over 6,000 Carry minitrucks in Myanmar between 1998 and January of this year. Suzuki’s Carry is one of the more popular products in the country’s small car market. The vehicle is powered by 1.0 L F10 Gasoline Engine.—200

Myanmar earns over US$12 million from rice exports by sea last month

MYANMAR received over US$12 million from the export of over 40,000 tonnes of rice mainly to China, and some European countries by sea in January, according to Commerce Ministry.

The country sent 40,333 tonnes of rice worth $12.212 million to its partner buyers last month, an increase of more than 17,000 tonnes compared with December of last year, when 22,639 tonnes of rice went to foreign buyers.

From 29 January to 4 February, $3.538 million worth white rice and parboiled rice were sent to neighbouring China and EU member countries.

According to the ministry, some 750 tonnes of Emata rice went to Papua New Guinea, 3,500 tonnes to Emata rice China, 2,090 tonnes of Emata rice and 550 tonnes of Ngeasen rice to Sri Lanka, 2,100 tonnes of Emata rice to Singapore, and 1,570 tonnes of Emata rice, 250 tonnes of Ngeasen rice and 573 tonnes of parboiled rice to the western nations.

The export of broken rice in January decreased by 11,069 tonnes compared to the previous month. The country earned $10.884 million from the export of broken rice weighing 40,576 tonnes.

Over the first ten months, the country exported 1.15 million tonnes of rice and broken rice to foreign partners. About 1.5 million tonnes of rice and broken rice were sent to those countries in 2015-2016 fiscal year.

Myanmar continues to export rice to over 50 countries, with 70 per cent of rice goes mainly to neighbouring China, the most-populous country in the globe.—Khine Khant

Vietnamese firms eye investing in Myanmar

VIETNAMESE small- and medium-sized enterprises are keen to explore investing in Myanmar, according to the Công Thương (Industry & Trade) newspaper.

Việt Nam is among the top 10 foreign investors in Myanmar, with nearly 80 businesses pouring in investment worth US$1 billion in the host country.

Major companies such as Hoàng Anh Gia Lai, Bank for Investment and Development (BIDV), and Vietel are operating in Myanmar. Myanmar’s Minister of Industry and Trade Trần Mỹнт said his country has huge opportunities to attract foreign investment.

Myanmar currently enjoys the Generalised System of Preferences for exports to the EU, the US and India, he said, adding that this will benefit foreign investors in the country. The Myanmar government has launched a programme for economic development, focusing on the private sector by modernising infrastructure and promoting global integration via the ASEAN Economic Community.

To attract foreign direct investment, the government has also promulgated a new investment law and reformed the tax system in line with international practices, facilitating the granting of investment licences for overseas businesses to operate in Myanmar.

Two-way trade between Việt Nam and Myanmar reached $536 million in 2016, surpassing the yearly target of $500 million.

Việt Nam exported goods worth more than $450 million to Myanmar in the year. These were mainly iron and steel products, means of transport and equipment spare parts, while it imported rubber material, wood and forest products, farm produce and seafood.

At a meeting with Minister Trần Mỹnt in January 2017, his Vietnamese counterpart Trần Mỹnt Anh said there is still plenty of room for the two countries to boost trade relations.

Both nations agreed to enhance trade promotion activities and make use of the East-West economic corridor to facilitate bilateral trade and reduce transportation costs.

They also agreed to maintain the meeting of the Việt Nam—Myanmar trade subcommittee, to promote the co-operation mechanism of Cambodia, Laos, Việt Nam and Myanmar, and contribute to the development of the ASEAN Economic Community.

Minister Trần Mỹnt Anh proposed Myanmar help Vietnamese businesses export cement and reduce import licences applied to Vietnamese products.—VNS
A-bomb survivors’ children sue govt’ for disqualifying them from aid

HIROSHIMA — Children of Hiroshima atomic-bomb survivors sued the central government on Friday, claiming it has denied them their constitutional right to pursue happiness by failing to provide them with financial support.

In what the plaintiffs say is Japan’s first lawsuit over the radiation impact on survivors’ children, they are seeking a change to the financial aid program so that so-called second-generation hibakusha can also be covered under the Atomic Bomb Survivors’ Assistance Law.

Arguing that their parents’ exposure to radiation from the 1945 US atomic bombing of Hiroshima has affected their own health, the plaintiffs said the government pays them 100,000 yen each in compensation. The government currently provides qualified survivors with various forms of financial assistance and covers the full cost of their medical expenses. Such aid does not extend to their children.

The plaintiffs claim that although the government rejects the hereditary effects of the atomic bombing on the children of survivors, the possibility of such effects cannot be ruled out as some studies do recognize them. They also claim that the government has a responsibility to qualify them for support as they are living under constant fear that they may someday develop a radiation-linked disease.

“It is a historic first step,” Noboru Sakiyama, who heads a national association of second-generation hibakusha groups, said in a press conference after filing the lawsuit.

“Through the trial we will seek support for second-generation hibakusha,” he said. The plaintiffs claim that such aid does not extend to their children.

Sea waves hit the rocks as Kudankulam nuclear power project plant is seen in the background in Tamil Nadu in 2012. PHOTO: REUTERS

Japan to train staff if Malaysia-Singapore rail project won

KUALA LUMPUR — Japan is ready to train Malaysian and Singaporean staff involved in a high-speed railway project linking the two countries if the shinkansen bullet train system is selected for it, according to a senior Japanese diplomat.

“In addition to offering high-tech trains, indirectly we will also offer human resource development and employment opportunities for the peoples of Malaysia and Singapore,” Japanese Ambassador to Malaysia Makio Miyagawa said Thursday during the launch of “Project Shinkansen Exhibition” at a department store of the Isetan Mitsukoshi retail group in Kuala Lumpur.

The exhibition, running until 9 March, will allow visitors to take a close look at the shinkansen’s design, technology and history in the hope of informing the public about the Japanese railway system.

“After more than 50 years of operation in Japan, there has never been a fatal accident involving a shinkansen,” Miyagawa said. “We are excited to offer Malaysians and Singaporeans the most secure transportation system advanced through the shinkansen project.”

In July last year, Malaysia and Singapore signed a memorandum of understanding on the 350-kilometer railway linking Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

In addition to Japanese companies, firms in China, South Korea and some European countries are interested in winning the project, worth 60 billion to 65 billion ringgit ($13 billion to $14 billion).

—Kyodo News

India still keen to buy Westinghouse reactors despite Toshiba meltdown

NEW DELHI — India does not expect fallout from the financial meltdown at Toshiba Corp to halt plans to buy six nuclear reactors from the Japanese company’s US nuclear unit Westinghouse, a senior government official told Reuters on Friday.

Toshiba this week booked a $3.3 billion charge related to huge cost overruns at Westinghouse, forcing it to put its flash-memory chip business up for sale to stay solvent and pull out of nuclear power plant construction overseas.

India has been in talks to locate half a dozen Westinghouse AP1000 reactors in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh under its drive to expand nuclear generation, and scupper the economy off polluting fuels like coal.

Industry experts said that, if the project is still at all viable, the main logistical challenge would be to reallocate civil engineering work to other contractors while Westinghouse would only provide the reactors.

India has not yet signed a contract with Westinghouse, nor has cash changed hands. That means it does not face financial losses, but a delay or cancellation would make it harder to hit its already ambitious target of tripling its nuclear generating capacity by 2024.

It was not immediately clear when Westinghouse would send a team to brief the Indian side after Basu said on Tuesday it would send nuclear boss Daniel Roderick back to the US firm, where he was previously chief executive, to tackle the crisis there.

Westinghouse and NPCIL did not respond to requests for comment.

—Reuters
Samsung chief Lee arrested as South Korean corruption probe deepens

SEUL — Samsung Group chief Jay Y. Lee was arrested on Friday over his alleged role in a corruption scandal rocking the highest levels of power in South Korea, dealing a fresh blow to the technology giant and standard-bearer for Asia’s fourth-largest economy.

The special prosecutor’s office accuses Lee of bribiting a close friend of President Park Geun-hye to gain government favours related to leadership succession at the conglomerate. It said on Friday it will indict him on charges including bribery, embezzlement, hiding assets overseas and perjury. The 48-year-old, Lee, scion of the country’s richest family, was taken into custody at the Seoul Detention Centre early on Friday after waiting there overnight for the decision. He was being held in a single cell with a TV and desk, a jail official said.

Lee is a suspect in an influence-peddling scandal that led parliament to impeach Park in December, a decision that if upheld by the Constitutional Court would make her the country’s first democratically elected leader forced from office.

Samsung and Lee have denied wrongdoing in the case.

Prosecutors have up to 10 days to indict Lee, Samsung’s third-generation leader, although they can seek an extension. After indictment, a court would be required to make its first ruling within three months.

The judge rejected the prosecution’s request to also arrest Samsung Electronics (005930.KS), president Park Sang-jin.

Shares in Samsung Electronics fell Friday down 0.42 percent in a flat wider market.

Ratings agencies did not expect any impact on the flagship firm’s credit ratings, and said Lee’s arrest would accelerate improvements in management transparency and corporate governance.

While Lee’s detention is not expected to hamper day-to-day operations at Samsung firms, which are run by professional managers, experts said it could hinder strategic decision-making at South Korea’s biggest conglomerate, or chaebol.

Samsung is going through a restructuring to clear a succession path for Lee to assume control after his father was incapacitated by a heart attack in 2014.

Decisions that could be complicated by Lee’s arrest include deliberations over whether to reorganize the group under a holding company structure, as well as its plan to abandon its future strategy office, a central decision-making body that came in for criticism during the scandal.

Staff moves have also been in limbo. Samsung, which employs around half a million people, has yet to announce annual personnel promotions and changes, which it typically does in December.

Indonesia cut potash subsidy in potential blow to demand

MUMBAI — An Indian government ministry has proposed slashing potash subsidies by 17 percent in the next financial year to reduce the fiscal deficit, officials said, a move that would hit demand in one of the world’s largest importers of the fertiliser.

Although global prices have been falling, a reduction in government support in India would make potash relatively expensive for the companies that import it.

Some officials at those companies said that were the proposal to be adopted, they would look for alternatives when negotiating annual contracts with global suppliers and also raise retail prices charged to farmers, dampening demand.

Global producers including Uralkali (URKA.MM), Potash Corp of Saskatchewan (POT.TO), Agrium Inc (AGU.TO), Mosaic (MOS.N), K+S (SDFG.DE), Arab Potash APOT AM and Israel Chemicals (ICL.TA) have been hoping for robust demand to help counter weak prices.

Asian import prices have fallen around 10 percent in the last 12 months. India’s fertiliser ministry has proposed fixing the potash subsidy at 7,669 rupees ($114.61) a tonne for the 2017-18 fiscal year beginning in April, down from 9,280 rupees per tonne this year, said a senior government official.

He did not wish to be identified, because he was not authorised to talk to the media.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s cabinet has to decide on the proposal, said the official, who is directly involved in the decision making process.

If India were to import 4 million tonnes of potash in 2017-18, the savings from the proposed subsidy cut would equate to almost $100 million.

Two other industry officials confirmed the plan.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers declined to comment on the proposed changes.

India relies on imports to meet its annual potash demand of about 4 million tonnes, but higher prices are expected to limit how much its 263 million farmers use.

Viet Nam beefs up efforts to prevent A/H7N9 bird flu

HANOI — Viet Nam has recorded no infections of human A/H7N9 bird flu so far, however, the country is promoting efforts to prevent the entry of virus from neighbouring China.

According to the Preventive Medicine Department under the Ministry of Health (MoH) on Friday, Viet Nam’s long shared border with China and busy cross-border trade activities between the two countries pose a high risk of H7N9 virus to be transmitted into Viet Nam.

In order to prevent the disease, MoH recommended people not use poultry or poultry products with unknown origins, and ensure food hygiene.

Some Vietnamese people are told to immediately notify local authorities and veterinary units if they detect any sick or dead poultry.

— Xinhua
Opinion

Khin Maung Oo

Sexagenarians, Septuagenarians and those above the age of eighty, the country have all experienced various kinds of governments in the past. Accordingly, we have lived under good and evil deeds of those governments. As youths, during those days, we were undeniably happy and we did enjoy a happy and easy going life. Adults and youths who completed higher education had to join government offices and departments and corporations to earn a living. Some joined the army, whereas some eked out their living by running private businesses. In this way, some became rich and some remained poor, but most managed to live on their meager salaries. Generally speaking, it can be said that we did not find it difficult to support our families with our small salary. It will be a ridiculous thing if we say that the least salary—82 kyats per month was sufficient for a family with 3 family members for the whole month. That was attributed to the infinitesimal inflation rate in those days. The days are gone when a frugal family whose 500 kyats per month could buy one tical of gold monthly.

Power can ruin a person and absolute power can absolutely destroy him, his society and his world. On account of those who misappropriated power and authority conferred upon them, as if it were inheritable property, our country had deteriorated in every place. Bribery and corruption were everywhere on the move. People in power exercised nepotism and cronyism for their benefits, and concurrently imposed a glass-ceiling for their eternal survival. As a result, most people became morally bankrupt. Inflation rates are dreadfully skyrocketing. Crimes are increasing. We have had enough living under those kinds of governments that could not bring about any goodness for us, for our children and for our country. Being influenced by fear and anxiety, we lived for years, to be exact, since gaining our Independence, under the kind of government we deserved. Now, the incomparably well-qualified and broad-minded leader who can lead us to our edifice of hope has been given to us. A good leader needs good followers. Here, a handful of good followers are not enough. All people who love truth and want to build a better society should try to become good followers, if the society is to be viable. It must take time to change our society to the state we want. We should not forget that today’s youths will become the leaders of tomorrow. So, they are required to equip themselves with good qualities such as integrity and good character. Our broad-minded leaders are making efforts to fulfill these needs.

Veterans mean persons who have a lot of experience in a particular area or activity. Our youths can study all they need to know from these persons. Here, I deeply want to say that youths must be careful to assess their deeds and make self-criticism. Because, some veterans are excellent in their area but they are deep-rooted bad habits can cause a contagious disease in the minds of our youths. It is necessary for our youths to approach veterans who have good character and good qualifications.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor often says that the government and its services should always be at the service of the people, and need to try to be well-qualified to lead the country and to know the requirements of the people. At the time when we are all greatly desirous of a clean government and good governance, there are some who do not wish to see peace and prosperity in Myanmar. Attackers from outside can be seen easily, but subservive elements inside are difficult to be seen. While the government is performing its responsibilities, we also must take the responsibility to watch the dangers of these subservive elements.

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com with your name and title.

Due to limitation on space we are only able to publish “Letters 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.

Find out to remove subservive elements around us!

Tommy Pauk

Nowadays, the global people attain the tremendous benefits from the ICT. Every day events or occurrences around the world can be seen or read on the screens of T.V., smart phones and i-phones vividly. Even then, all the live TV broadcasts of some events or occasions or celebrations can be viewed by the global viewers. Due to advance technology and the noble contribution of the ordinary people, we can learn both foreign and local news on the internet and social media websites timely and freely. Actually, there are no specific codes of ethics for the citizen journalists and they are not paid to contribute to the all forms of media, showing sincere goodwill to the public who wish to learn good news or bad news both locally and internationally. In fact, they contribute voluntary service in citizen journalism. Due to the development of ICT, mass communications are much easier than before and the information can be accessed to the desired destination in the world. The citizen journalists need to win the public trust and should abide by the code of ethics in journalism instead. There are not only news but also bank of knowledge is available on the internet. The global people heartily welcome the citizen journalists who normally reveal the true and unbiased news and information to the general public. The citizen journalists usually collect true news, valuable news items and knowledgeable information in good faith of the general public.

As for the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, media freedom has been granted in the country by abolishing press censorship, permitting the publication of private daily newspapers and enacting a new media law in line with international norms and practices. This reform is highly appreciated by the general public. Due to affordable prices of hand phones and sim-cards (Subscriber Identity Module) people can share or spread information or news or messages to the fellow citizens or press or media groups. Myanmar citizens can have chances to participate in citizen journalism for the interest of the general public. They are proud to be citizen journalists or voluntary correspondents. They have goodwill intention to contribute to all sorts of media or to assist the ordinary journalists in collecting confirmed and reliable news precisely. The social media network is a huge source of collecting latest news with the related photos. The citizen journalists ought not to spread any false news or fabricated news or rumors. This can be regarded as an ethical conduct. No matter they do not know the journalism ethics precisely, they must behave nicely to the public by conveying information or updated or latest news. If they are behaving correctly and sincerely, they can be regarded as good citizen journalists. They need to contribute with the reliable news to the ordinary journalists, aiming to convey the true news to the general public timely. ICT has been introduced in Myanmar recently, but Myanmar citizen journalists are smart enough to join or participate in the social media network. Therefore both urban and rural people can find or see the news brought to them by citizen journalists. In fact, the social media network has to rely on the efforts of the citizen journalists as well. Media is regarded as the fourth pillar in establishing a genuine democratic state. Myanmar citizens are already given en rights to enjoy media freedom and can participate in Citizen Journalism independently. However, the way the citizen journalists write and comment on the news must be decent. They should avoid using harsh language in their writing or criticism on certain topics. Those who involved in citizen journalism must be very helpful for social media and even for the law enforcement. Recently, in Myanmar, the citizen journalists have cooperated with police forces in investigating or inquiring criminals at large. The police force requested the citizens to spot the whereabouts of criminals on face book, a social media net work. Then, the citizen journalists could have given the correct and precise information about the whereabouts of culprits. Thus, the criminals had been brought down to justice with the help of citizen journalists. There was a record that the police could have arrested the culprits with the help of citizen journalists. Such praise-worthy and dutiful citizens should be honored and recognized officially. Myanmar Police force has honored and commended the citizen journalists. Nobody can ignore the work of citizen journalism as their work is beneficial to the society and community. In addition, Myanmar people are very fond of giving information and directing the way to those who are in need of such things. For example; When the strangers or foreign tourists looking for the directions to get to their desired destination, the local Myanmar people direct or show the right way to reach the right destination. This is Myanmar innate character which is always willing to help the travelers or globetrotters.

All Myanmar citizen journalists are needed to abide by the ethics of media. Normally, shoddy journalism or substandard journalism undermines the public trust. Nevertheless, the goodwill and contribution of the citizen journalists toward media or ordinary journalism must be honored and recognized officially. Therefore the role of citizen journalists is important as they make efforts in searching reliable news and sharing knowledge. While performing the voluntary service, they should learn ethics of journalism so that they will be awarded a greater credit by the general public.
Public Contribute Students Democracy Party presents policies and programmes

So, we vow to serve the interests and feelings and emotions of the people.

As our party is formed with the priority our country of today is the country and the people are the strength of the Tatmadaw. If there may be harmful effects on one of the 135 nationalities, our party will prevent this together with the people for non-disintegration of the national solidarity.

We will compete with other parties whose policies are common with us.

We will cooperate with other parties whose objectives and attitudes are common with us.

We want to serve the people hands to hold together with the existing winning party. We wish to emphasize political activities in Hluttaw more than outside political activities. In this way, we can serve the people with might and main, and we want to contribute to the Hluttaw which is carrying out its works randomly. We hope wishfully the assignment to be given by the people.

I would like to conclude my speech by saying “Support the white peacock” by putting a seal on it without hesitation.

May all of you health and happiness.

(Unofficial Translation)
Formation of National Committee for Designating Minimum Wage

>> FROM PAGE 1

(G) U Yi Mon
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Hotels and Tourism
Member

Service Provider
Representative of employers organisations
Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs’ Association

(H) Daw Aye Aye Win
Director-General
Directorate of Industrial Supervision and Inspection
Ministry of Industry
Member

U Lu Maw Mui Maw Maung
Member

Agricultural Business
Representative of employers organisations
Myanmar Rice Merchants Association

(I) U Aung Naing Oo
Director-General
Directorate of Investment and Companies
Administration
Ministry of Planning and Finance
Member

Dr Khin Hlaing
Member

Livestock business
Representative of employers organisations
Myanmar Livestock Federation

(J) U Aung Thwin Oo
Director
Consumers Affairs Department
Member

Dr Than Win
Member

Ministry of Finance
Myanmar Development Resource Institute

(K) U Win Zaw
Trader
Economic Research
Member of the employers organisations
All-Myanmar Labour Federations

Dr Myo Myo Myint
Member

U Khin Maung Nyo (Economics)
Member

U Naw Aung
Manufacturer
Representative of labour organisations
Myanmar Industry and Services

Dr Khin Hlaing
Secretary
Directorate of Labour
Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population

(M) Daw Khun Zo Aung
Service provider
Representative of labour organisations
All Myanmar Labour Affairs Organisation
Member

Director-General
Factories and Labour Law Inspection Department
Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population

(N) U Naiing Thein Aung
Agricultural Business
Representative of labour organisations
Federation of Myanmar Farmers, Agriculture Farmers and Foodstuff Labour Unions
Member

Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population
Director (Rtd)
(U) Win Shien
Joint-Secretary

(M) Daw Khun Zar Aung
Service provider
Representative of labour organisations
All Myanmar Labour Affairs Organisation
Member

Director-General
Factories and Labour Law Inspection Department
Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population

(N) U Naiing Thein Aung
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Federation of Myanmar Farmers, Agriculture Farmers and Foodstuff Labour Unions
Member

Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population
Director (Rtd)
(U) Win Shien
Joint-Secretary

(M) Daw Khun Zar Aung
Service provider
Representative of labour organisations
All Myanmar Labour Affairs Organisation
Member

Director-General
Factories and Labour Law Inspection Department
Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population

(N) U Naiing Thein Aung
Agricultural Business
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Federation of Myanmar Farmers, Agriculture Farmers and Foodstuff Labour Unions
Member

Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population
Director (Rtd)
(U) Win Shien
Joint-Secretary

Announcing revised notification on the approval of the Union Government for at least one time every two years after scrutinising in accord with changing situations after distinguishing working skills and risks on the job, fixing minimum wage rates.

(Y) Director-General
Secretariat
Region or State Committees to discuss and coordinate, and re-submit the minimum wage rates that should be fixed, to the Union government after scrutiny of the tripartite committees of the national committee for fixing minimum wage rates.

5. Opinion on the proposal presented by the employer representatives and the representatives of the employers associations and professionals for the fixing of the minimum wage.

(G) There are objection over the proposed minimum wage rates of the national committee, ask the tripartite representatives comprising respective Union Area Committee, Region or Local Council, and special meetings of the national committee in accord with changing situations after distinguishing working skills and risks on the job, fixing minimum wage rates.

(K) Submitting the working performances of the national committee to the State Government, occasionally, Notification 91/2013 dated on 20th December 2013 issued by the Office of the President of the State is governed and abolished by this notification.

(1) President
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
(Unofficial Translation)

Ridership on circular trains continues to rise

THE number of prepaid tickets for railway passengers has topped 8,000 soon after the Yangon Bus Line Service (YBS) was introduced in Yangon city, said an official from Myanmar Railways.

There were only about 3,000 prepaid users per day at the beginning of the prepaid ticket system. The daily average commuters totaled 5,000 by the end of 2016. But the number of train passengers started to substantially increase in January and has reached over 8,000 in February.

“Yangon city travellers have found it not convenient to take the bus, as the YBS system was introduced without enough buses. So the travelers rely more on the circular trains,” the Myanmar Railways official said.—200

(2) Htin Kyaw

Humanitarian Assistance after R.U Attacks (October 9 Attack) in Rakhine State
(YBS System was introduced after the attack)

2.00

Commuters are expected to increase in the future as the circular trains continue to expand. The system is expected to increase the number of passengers, who previously traveled by bus, to use the train system.

(YBS System was introduced after the attack)

2.00

Humanitarian Assistance after R.U Attacks (October 9 Attack) in Rakhine State
(YBS System was introduced after the attack)

2.00
UN must take lead in resolving Syria crisis

BONN, (Germany) — Countries opposed to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, including the United States, backed efforts by the United Nations to broker a political solution to the civil war in Syria, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said on Friday.

“It is clear that all who meet a political solution... and that this political solution must be achieved in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations and that there cannot be any parallel negotiations,” Gabriel told reporters after a meeting that included the United States, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, France and Britain.

Gabriel said US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had played an active role in the discussions about how to end the war in Syria, which took place on the sidelines of a meeting of G20 foreign ministers.

All eyes have been on the United States and its approach to ending the violence in Syria, given promises by US President Donald Trump to build closer ties to Russia, which has supported the Syrian government under Assad.

Speaking alongside Gabriel, French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said Geneva would ultimately fail if Russia did not use its influence on the Syrian government and Iran to stop la-belling all those opposed to Assad as “terrorists.”

On Thursday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the United States supported Russian-sponsored parallel peace talks on Syria in the Kazakh capital of Astana. Those talks ended on Thursday with no joint statement and no agreement on Syrian groups exchanging angry tirades.

Russia proposed a series of parallel intra-Syrian negotiations in coordination with Turkey and Iran last year in Astana to reinforce a shaky ceasefire.

It has tried to expand the scope to cover political aspects, a move that has been criticised by Western and Arab states, who argue that UN efforts are the only credible track for a political solution.

The United Nations special envoy on Syria, Staffan de Mistura, is convening a new round of peace talks among Syrian factions in Geneva on 23 February after negotiations collapsed almost nine months ago.

A spokesman for de Mistura said he was still finalising who would come to the Ge-

nena talks but there were already positive responses to invitations that had gone out.

—Reuters

UN must take lead in resolving Syria crisis

Gabriel
**German Social Democrat candidate would beat Merkel in chancellor vote**

BERLIN — Martin Schulz, the German Social Democrats’ candidate for federal elections in September, would beat Chancellor Angela Merkel if balloting was based on a direct leadership vote, a poll showed on Friday.

The poll carried out by Forschungsgruppe Wahlen for broadcaster ZDF showed 49 percent of Germans wanted former European Parliament President Schulz to be their chancellor while 38 percent would prefer Merkel to stay in office.

That marks a turnaround compared with the end of January, when the same poll showed Merkel had 44 percent support compared to Schulz’s 40 percent, ZDF said.

Earlier this month another poll also showed Schulz had overtaken Merkel.

The SPD, junior partner in Merkel’s ruling coalition, has trailed her conservative bloc for four years in opinion polls until the nomination of Schulz sparked a revival in support for the party, which last won an election under Gerhard Schroeder in 2002.

By party, the poll showed the SPD up 6 percentage points at 30 percent — its highest level of the current parliament in that survey.

**Europe must not bow to US spending demands on NATO — EU’s Juncker**

MUNICH — European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said on Thursday that Europe must not cave in to US demands to raise military spending, arguing that development and humanitarian aid could also count as security.

US President Donald Trump has raised questions about his commitment to the NATO defence alliance if European countries do not raise defence spending to 2 per cent of economic output. The United States puts up 70 per cent of alliance funds.

US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis warned North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies on Wednesday that they must honour our military spending pledges to make sure the United States does not moderate its support.

“It has been the American message for many, many years. I am very much against letting ourselves be pushed into this,” Juncker said in a speech on the sidelines of the international Munich Security Conference.

He said he knew that Germany could no longer have a budget surplus if it increased defence spending to 2 per cent of GDP from 1.22 per cent.

“I don’t like our American friends narrowing down this concept of security to the military,” he said, arguing it would be sensible to look at a “modern stability policy” made up of several components.

“If you look at what Europe is doing in defence, plus development plus humanitarian aid, the comparison with the United States looks rather different. Modern politics cannot just be about raising defence spending,” he said.

“Europeans must bundle their defence spending better and spend the money more efficiently,” he added. — Reuters

**Cyprus peace talks interrupted by old plebiscite row**

ATHENS — Face-to-face talks between both sides of divided Cyprus broke off on Thursday, sources at the meeting said, after the Greek Cypriot parliament angered Turkish Cypriots by honouring a 1950 plebiscite seeking union with Greece.

The meeting between Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades and his Turkish Cypriot counterpart, Mustafa Akinci, ended abruptly about an hour after it started, after which a go-between had to shuttle between the two to keep the peace process on track.

“Both leaders very strongly said they are committed to this process, and nobody sees this process as over, or terminated, or suspended,” said Espen Barth Eide, the United Nations special envoy who is overseeing the peace negotiations which have been ongoing for almost two years.

The talks aim to end the division of the island, for decades a source of tension between NATO allies Greece and Turkey and an obstacle to Turkey’s bid to join the European Union.

Cyprus’s parliament, comprised solely of Greek Cypriots, adopted a resolution on 9 February commemorating a 1950 unofficial referendum where more than 95 per cent of that community voted for “enosis”, or union, with Greece.

The anger that caused among Turkish Cypriots reflects the historic sensitivities on the island which was split in a Turkish invasion in 1974 triggered by a brief Greek Cypriot coup by elements of the military seeking union with Greece.

The two sides gave differing accounts of what happened on Thursday.

Anastasiades said he took a short break and returned to find Akinci gone. Akinci said Anastasiades walked out, slamming the door.

“Enosis” has always been a deep source of resentment among Turkish Cypriots, and was partly the cause of inter-communal clashes in the 1960s shortly after the island gained independence from Britain.

The notion of unification with Greece has, officially at least, been abandoned as a concept for decades. The Mediterranean island has been a member state of the EU since 2004.

Last week’s vote was proposed by a small nationalist party. Anastasiades’s conservatives abstained and the left-wing party voted against it. — Reuters

**Some 500 migrants cross border into Spanish enclave of Ceuta**

MADRID — Around 500 sub-Saharan African migrants crossed the fenced border surrounding Spain’s North African enclave of Ceuta from Morocco early on Friday, emergency services said.

Dozens of migrants, many with wounds from climbing over the 6-metre barbed wire fence, celebrated in the streets in the early hours of the day with some shouting “freedom”, TV footage showed.

Police and local government officials in Ceuta were not immediately available to give further details.

The Red Cross was treating some 400 migrants at its centre there and had dispatched five ambulances to help. Ceuta’s emergency service said on its Twitter page.

Spain’s two enclaves in Morocco, Ceuta and Melilla, are often used as entry points into Europe for African migrants, who either climb over their border fences or try to swim along the coast.

In January, around 1,100 migrants tried to cross into Ceuta although most were eventually turned back. — Reuters
Scientists explore the impact of global warming on Japan’s sea life

LONDON — British and Japanese scientists are conducting innovative research to discover how Japan’s marine ecosystems could be affected by global warming.

They are looking into the potential side effects of rising acidity in the atmosphere, which is known to lower the pH of the ocean, making it more acidic.

Previous studies in the Mediterranean have shown increased acidification can disrupt the growth of some sea organisms and this, in turn, could have long-term implications for the marine food chain.

Researchers are hoping their findings will inform politicians about the importance of cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

Scientists believe the heating up of the world’s oceans will impact on marine ecology, but less is known about a second by-product of global warming — acidification.

The world’s oceans are absorbing higher levels of CO2. This dissolves into the seawater and reacts with the water to produce a weak carbonic acid.

It reduces the pH, and the ocean gradually becomes less alkaline and the level of carbonate is reduced. However, this calcium carbonate is required by organisms, such as corals and shellfish, to build skeletons and shells.

Although the oceans will never become acid and drop below pH7, some estimates suggest they have become 30 per cent more acidic since the Industrial Revolution. And if CO2 continues to be emitted at the same rate by 2100, acidity will increase by about 150 per cent.

In order to examine the effects of CO2, the team has sent divers to a spot off Shimoda, Shizuoka Prefecture, where there are several underwater volcanoes that pump out CO2 from vents.

Jason Hall-Spencer, a professor of marine biology at Plymouth University who works in a team at the University of Tsukuba, Ibaraki Prefecture, said similar studies in Europe showed the “corrosive” effects of CO2.

Around the vents at high levels of the gas, the diversity in marine organisms declines with none exhibiting the usual array of bright colors due to lower levels of carbonate in the seawater. Instead, there are fewer species and they tend to be brown or green.

In addition, corals, which can be an important component in the marine food chain, are not present around the vents because there is not enough carbonate to build their skeletons. As the diversity of plankton and organisms declines, so does the diversity of fish higher up the food chain, scientists believe. Studies have also shown that shellfish tend to get smaller at higher CO2 levels. However, some marine life actually prospers, including: seaweed, anemones, jellyfish, algae and sea grass.

Hall-Spencer said the seawater chemistry is changing in Japan, as elsewhere, but Japan has been doing tests on the effects to the biology.

Colder and deeper waters naturally have lower levels of carbonate than shallower, warmer areas. The changes in seawater chemistry have never happened this way before.

There is sufficient concern amongst Japan’s marine scientists about this issue. We don’t know what it’s going to do to coastal organisms such as jellyfish and bacteria. But corals and the fish that rely on them are easily impacted.

“Among the effects of ocean acidification is that shellfish have become 30 per cent more acid, but some marine life actually prospers, including: seaweed, anemones, jellyfish, algae and sea grass. This is due to the changes in seawater chemistry which have never happened this way before.”

Kazuo Inaba, director of the Shimoda Marine Research Center which is part of the University of Tsukuba, said, “I really want politicians to know about ocean acidification and what we think will happen in the future. However, it’s important not to alarm and spread any misinformation. A lot of people in Japan rely on the fishing industry. One of the major concerns is that increased acidification could disturb some aspects of the marine food chain and impact on the fish and mollusks, for example.”

—Kyodo News

Smartphone photos of x-rays provide diagnosis as effective as original film: Aust’n study

SYDNEY — Smartphone photos of x-ray images can help medical professionals diagnose lung problems as effectively as in the original films, Australian research has found.

The study, published by Melbourne’s Royal Women’s Hospital on Friday, examined how standard films of babies suffering from a suspected collapsed lung compared to photos of the films taken on a smartphone.

Jennifer Dawson, the lead researcher of the study, said that the research would have significant implications for patients in rural Australia who would be able to be diagnosed quickly and accurately with the new method.

“The findings give doctors confidence to quickly send X-ray images to specialists based in another location, and receive a quick diagnosis, advice on treatment and recommendations to transfer babies to specialist care if needed,” Dawson told the Australian Broadcast Corporation (ABC) on Friday. The study found that there was no difference in the accuracy of detecting collapsed lungs between the photo and the films with the smartphone images even resulting in a slightly higher rate of accurate diagnosis than the traditional films.

Doctors involved in the research focused on pneumothorax, a condition where air leaks into the space between the lung and the chest wall. Marta Thio, a consultant neonatologist, said that an x-ray, pneumothorax could easily be misdiagnosed and treated incorrectly, causing the condition to worsen. “This research shows we can make a diagnosis far more quickly while maintaining accuracy, simply by using smartphone images in conjunction with speaking to the doctor,” Thio said. —Xinhua

Storm Dineo kills at least seven people in Mozambique —government

MAPUTO — Tropical Storm Dineo has killed seven people in Mozambique since it hit the eastern coast on Wednesday, the government’s disaster centre said on Thursday.

The storm, which brought heavy rain and winds of up to 160 km an hour (100 mph), raising the risk of flooding and crop damage in the impoverished southern African country, Mozambique’s emergency operational centre said in a statement about 130,000 people living in the Inhambane province, 500 km north of the capital Maputo, had been affected by the storm. About 20,000 homes were destroyed by heavy rains and fierce winds.

“One of the world’s poorest countries and also in the throes of a financial crisis, Mozambique is prone to flooding. It is especially vulnerable after a major drought last year as soils are degraded or hardened by dry spells do not easily absorb water.

“The system will pose a great risk for the next 36 to 48 hours, particularly in terms of further exceptionally heavy rainfall and resultant flooding,” the South African Weather Service said in a statement.

The Mozambican government said the situation was less severe in Gaza, which has the popular resort town of Xai-Xai as its capital and is near the border with South Africa.

The government said however that it feared flooding in the area due to the torrential downpour. —Reuters
SYDNEY — Australian rock band Midnight Oil announced on Friday they will play their first world tour in 20 years, vowing to continue their political activism during the six-month, fifty-show world tour.

The tour, scheduled to begin in mid-April, will take the band to 14 countries, including the United States, Canada, New Zealand and to countries in Europe and South America.

The band’s frontman Peter Garrett — a former Australian government minister between 2007 and 2013 — said the group would not shy away from speaking their mind, taking a swipe at a new US President Donald Trump.

“Healthy democracies sometimes need to react against craziness and ugliness and selfishness and stupidity,” said Garrett.

“You’ve got that in ample abundance in President Trump,” said the Midnight Oil frontman.

The band is no stranger to controversy. An impromptu lunchtime protest performance in front of Exxon Mobile Corp’s New York offices criticized the company for its role in the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1990.

In 2000, when playing at the official Sydney Olympics closing ceremony, the band performed while wearing clothes emblazoned with “sorry”, a direct reference to the then Australian prime minister John Howard’s refusal to apologize to indigenous Australians for their historic mistreatment.

In 2008, then Australian prime minister Kevin Rudd issued an apology to the country’s marginalized Indigenous people, which aimed to herald a new era in race relations.

Midnight Oil has released 17 albums, with sales of more than 10 million worldwide.

— Reuters

BOOK TO CHRONICLE DREAM GIRL’S JOURNEY

NEW DELHI — Dream Girl Hema Malini’s incredible journey from an actor, a danseuse and filmmaker to a politician is being chronicled in a new book which will hit stores on her 69th birthday this October.

Billed as an authorised biography, “Hema Malini: Beyond the Dream Girl” is penned by author-columnist Ram Kamal Mukherjee.

“In an industry where the male star has always driven the commercial success of films, Hema Malini was an exception, with her name alone sufficing to ensure a film’s box-office glory,” publisher HarperCollins India said.

A truly multi-faceted personality, Hema Malini has been a filmmaker and producer, directing films and television series, a Member of Parliament from Mathura, and has also performed the classical dance ballets Draupadi, Radha Krishna and Durga.

This year she will be seen in Ramesh Sippy’s unusual love story “Shamla Mere” with Raj Kumar Rao.

The book will be published on her birthday on 16 October.

— PTI

PINK FLOYD’S WATERS, MASON HOPE TO DELIGHT FANS, HONOR CREWS IN NEW EXHIBIT

LONDON — Pink Floyd co-founders Roger Waters and Nick Mason hope an exhibition in May documenting the rock band’s 50 years in music will give fans a sense of their live work as well as honor those who helped fulfill their artistic visions.

“The Pink Floyd Exhibition: Their Mortal Remains” opens at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum in May, the same venue which previously housed a David Bowie retrospective.

On display will be more than 350 artifacts, including letters, sketches, handwritten lyrics as well as footage of the band’s live performances.

“I think what (fans) will get...is a real sense of the scale of some of the live work that we did, some of that theatrics that we developed over the years,” Waters told Reuters on Thursday.

“Hopefully there’s personal memorabilia that people are interested in because they’re interested in the history of it.”

The exhibition comes 50 years since the release of Pink Floyd’s first single “Arnold Layne”. Known for its experimental music, the band went on enjoy worldwide acclaim, namely with “Dark Side of the Moon” and “The Wall”.

“What you realize is that it’s literally hundreds and hundreds of people who’ve worked with us as sound engineers or road crew, technicians, inventors or graphics or whatever,” Mason said.

“And to go ‘we’ve got through a lot of work by getting help from these people’ - that’s a really nice aspect of it.”

Released in 1979, “The Wall” is one of the most successful albums of all time. Asked about US President Donald Trump’s proposal to build a wall on the border with Mexico, Waters said: “The building of walls between nations and between religions and between races and between different groups of people with different beliefs is invariably counterproductive.”

“We should be past a time when we’re wanting to make enemies of the other. Unfortunately we’re not.”— Reuters

IT’S IMPORTANT TO STAY REAL TO WORK ON TRUE STORIES: PANNU

NEW DELHI — Taapsee Pannu believes that the reason her acting has been considered “natural” and “believable” so far is because she makes a conscious effort to stay connected to the real world.

“It’s extremely important to be disconnected and stay real and get outside because if all the time you are going to live around the industry people, how are you going to know what reality is or the real people, whose story you are going to tell on the big screen,” Taapsee told PTI.

“That is why it has always been a conscious effort on my part. I can count on my fingers the number of friends I have. It’s all because I really want to keep it real on screen and the fact that people find me very real and natural and believable on screen is because I’m connected to the real world,” she adds.

The actress rose to prominence with her role in Neeraj Pandey’s “Baby” but it was “Pink” which earned her critical acclaim in Bollywood and she says the Anuruddha Roy Chowdhury-directed thriller “was my biggest pay back to Delhi girls.”

Taapsee, a Delhiite herself, says there has always been a big misconception about Delhi girls that they are loud, abusive and sometimes fake which is not true.

“We always have a typical notion about a Delhi girl like this is how she dresses up, very loud all the time. She always has this wannabe accent. She’ll always be abusive. No, I’m a hardcore Delhi girl and I’m not ill mannered that way.

“There’s always a certain kind of fierceness that comes with us because we’re supposedly more street smart. We know the realities of life. We’ve walked the path, from DTC buses to auto rikshas. We have done it all,” she says.— PTI

MARK PERSANSON (R-L), ACTRESS KIM MINEH, DIRECTOR HONG SANGSOO AND DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY PARK HONGYEOL PROJECT “ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT ALONE” AT THE 67TH BERLINALE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL IN BERLIN, ON 16 FEBRUARY 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

ACTRESS WHO HAD HEART BROKEN BY FILMMAKER PORTRAYED IN BERLINALE MOVIE

BERLIN — A young actress flees across the world trying to get over her affair with a married movie maker — the plot of a Korean film in competition at the Berlin Film Festival whose director says is one of his most personal, if not autobiographical.

Hong Sang-soo’s “On the Beach at Night Alone”, which was screened on Thursday, shows the female protagonist wandering through the parks of Hamburg, trying to make sense of her feelings, before returning to Korea where she drinks with old friends and vents her anger about men and love.

“Compared to other directors’ films it’s quite personal,” Hong told reporters after the screening. “Maybe with the ‘Right Now, Wrong Then’ I made a few years ago, maybe the most (personal), yes.”

“Right Now, Wrong Then”, also about a relationship between a film director and a young woman, won the Golden Leopard at the Locarno Film Festival in Switzerland in 2015.

“On the Beach at Night Alone” involves a lot of self-criticism in its portrayal of flawed manhood, Hong said, adding that he always draws on his own experiences in his movies.

“I try to use the material which I see in an honest lens. But I had to be honest about myself, too. I always put some material from myself when I use the material from others.”

The film is one of 18 competing for the Golden and Silver Bears at the ‘Berlinale’ festival. The winners will be announced on Saturday.— Reuters
WASHINGTON — Washington’s National Zoo will lavish its giant panda Bao Bao with exotic treats and mementos of her time in the nation’s capital before she departs for China next week, as part of a breeding programme to diversify the gene pool of the vulnerable species.

The 3-year-old panda, the first surviving cub born at the zoo since 2005, will leave the National Zoo on Tuesday, in keeping an agreement with the Chinese Wildlife Conservation Association, the zoo said in a statement on Thursday.

The programme calls for panda cubs born at the zoo to be sent to China before they reach the age of four. Bao Bao is the first to make the trip under the current agreement, signed in 2015.

Giant pandas, which are native to China, are classified as a vulnerable species. There are about 1,800 of them living in the wild and another 300 in captivity. Bao Bao achieved international fame as the star of the zoo’s ‘panda cam,’ which documented her birth and childhood for millions of fans worldwide.

Michelle Obama, the former first lady, sent a video message to Bao Bao on 23 August, 2013, the panda’s birthday. Before Bao Bao’s departure, her handlers will treat her to an assortment of special snacks that range from dumpplings to a heart-shaped ice cake. She’ll also receive a cake of mementos from zoo officials to remind the panda of her birthplace.

The National Zoo received its first pair of giant pandas in 1972 as a gift from the Chinese government to commemorate President Richard Nixon’s landmark visit to China, the zoo said on its website.

Lang-Ling and Hsing-Hsing lived at the National Zoo for more than 20 years and produced five cubs, none of which survived.

Bao Bao is the offspring of Mei Xiang and Tian Tian, the National Zoo’s second pair of giant pandas, loaned from China in 2000.

The couple produced the zoo’s first surviving cub on 9 July, 2005, named Tai Shan, who left for China’s Wolong Nature Reserve some four years later.

The National Zoo’s agreement with China to exchange giant pandas for research and breeding will run until December 2020.

In addition to watching Bao Bao enjoy her treats, fans of the panda will be able to view live videos from the sendoff party.

The videos will include footage of the panda’s handlers packing for Bao Bao’s trip, as well as a training session in which the panda is taught how to behave during veterinary exams.—Reuters

WASHINGTON — Wash-

At New York Fashion Week, it’s all about breaking the rules

NEW YORK — New York Fashion Week ended with a flourish on Thursday after a parade of innovative shows that gave an affectionate nod to the 1980’s, with designers mixing power suits, chunky furs and metallic fabrics into lavish new looks for both day and night.

During the February rendition of the twice-annual fashion week, embellished fabrics, deconstructed shirts and sparkly tops were prominent on the runway, with a palette that ranged from muted tones to bold colors, including fuchsia and cobalt blue.

“It can never be too shiny or too glittery,” said Avril Graham, executive fashion and beauty editor for Harper’s Bazaar. “It is the major story of this season in New York.”

Designer Marc Jacobs closed the week with his fall 2017 collection of fur-trimmed tweed jackets, mini skirts, shimmery tops and oversized hats at the Park Avenue Armory, where the runway show extended from inside to outside the building.

After the show as the audience left, the models, still standing or seated on the closed-off sidewalk, pulled out their cell phones and took photos.

—Reuters

Japanese delicacies promoted on Thai TV food show

TOKYO — Japanese delicacies are being promoted on a popular TV food show in Thailand as part of a Japanese government-backed export promoter’s partnership with a local TV network aimed at boosting demand for Japanese food.

The food show, called “Dish of Fate” in Thai, features various ingredients, such as seafood and Wagyu beef. Guests on the show can eat a dish served by a top-rated local chef if they correctly guess which dishes the audience likes the most.

The dishes showcased on the program are also offered at a restaurant in the Isan department store in Bangkok. The 13-episode show, which began airing in January, is set to run through April.

For the promotional campaign, the Japan External Trade Organization has teamed up with Kan-tana Japan Corp., a Tokyo-based joint venture owned by movie distribu-
tor Nikkatsu Corp., Nippon Television Network Corp. and Thailand’s Kantana Group Public Co., which has a major TV production firm in the Southeast Asian country.—Kyodo News

WASHINGTON’S NATIONAL ZOO...
Hat-tricks for United’s Ibrahimovic, Roma’s Dzeko

LONDON — The goals continued to flow for Manchester United’s Zlatan Ibrahimovic and AS Roma’s Edin Dzeko as they bagged hat-tricks to help their teams take commanding leads in the first legs of their Europa League last 32 ties on Thursday.

United swept aside St Etienne 3-0 at Old Trafford and Roma made light work of last season’s semi-finalists Villarreal with a 4-0 win in Spain, leaving their sides with little work to do in next week’s return encounters.

Tottenham Hotspur’s Europa League campaign, however, got off to a frustrating start as they were beaten 1-0 at mid-table Belgian outfit Gent, while Olympic Lyonnais beat AZ Alkmaar 4-1 away and Fiorentina edged Borussia Moenchengladbach 1-0.

St Etienne will be totally sick of the sight of Ibrahimovic as the Swede took his tally against the Ligue 1 side to 17 goals in 14 games, having terrorised Ligue 1 Verts during his four years at Paris St Germain.

“Every time I’ve played against St Etienne, with hard work there has been a couple of goals. I’ve scored a couple of goals tonight and hopefully I can do the same next week,” Ibrahimovic told BT Sport.

He opened the scoring with a deflected free kick in the first half and added two more — a tap-in and a late penalty — after the break as United quelled the visitors’ early enthusiasm.

The match was billed as a battle of the Pogba brothers with younger sibling Paul facing St Etienne’s Florentin for the first time in a competitive encounter.

It was the 35-year-old Ibrahimovic who stole the show, however, grabbing his first United hat-trick and taking his tally in a remarkable maiden season at Old Trafford to 23.

Dzeko is in a similarly rich vein of form at Roma, who swatted aside a Villarreal team who had already topped their group.

Roma went two goals clear in the first half, added two more — a goal tonight and hopefully I can do the same next week.”

The pressure on Wenger is mounting as Arsenal look certain to exit the Champions League at the first knockout stage for the seventh season in a row after the 5-1 defeat against the Belgians.

Wenger has now won just one of their last 10 matches in all competitions.

Emerson Palmieri gave Roma the lead after 32 minutes and then Dzeko took over after the break, netting for the seventh straight game to double the lead in the 65th minute before adding two more goals to take his tally for the campaign to 28.

Spurs had already arrived looking to restore pride in north London after Arsenal were thrashed 5-1 by Bayern Munich in the Champions League on Wednesday but were stifled in a poor performance and were lucky to escape with a one-goal deficit.

After Perbet scored, Gent, eighth in the Belgian league, had a golden chance to double their lead but Daniel Milicevic’s effort was tipped onto the post by keeper Hugo Lloris.

Gladbach came into their encounter with Fiorentina on a hot streak having won their last four games and they dominated possession and made several chances against the Italians.

The Serie A side were resilient at the back, however, and grabbed the only goal when Federico Bernardeschi fired home a fine free kick in the dying seconds of the first half.

Lyon will take a commanding lead into their second leg against AZ Alkmaar after teenager Lucas Tousart scored his first senior goal and Jordan Ferri rounded off the scoring in stoppage time either side of Alexandre Lacazette’s double.

Alireza Jahanbakhsh had reduced the deficit for AZ with a 68th-minute penalty.

Schalke 04’s Klaas-Jan Huntelaar netted his 50th European goal to round off a 3-0 win at PAOK Salonika while Anderlecht overcame a sluggish Zenit St Petersburg, playing their first competitive game in 10 weeks, to win 2-0 in Belgium.

Elsewhere, Shakhtar Donetsk won 1-0 at Celta Vigo with a 27th-minute goal from Gustavo Blanco Leshchuk, while Sparta Prague were thrashed 4-0 at Rostov and FC Krasnodar beat visitors Fenerbahce 1-0.

— Reuters

Asian Games: Japanese try to grit their teeth for ‘Asian challenge’

SAPPORO — Having achieved its main objective of the season by qualifying for next year’s Olympics, the women’s national ice hockey team, Smile Japan, turns its attention to the Asian Winter Games.

On Sunday, the women completed a clean sweep of their final Olympic qualifying pool by beating Austria, France and the previously higher-ranked Germany to qualify for next year’s Winter Games.

In Olympic qualifying, Smile Japan are lower ranked or not but never about whether our opponents are higher ranked or not but who we’re trying to get to the Olympics.

“We’re changing lines to get a balanced team that can play different strategies,” head coach Hanae Kubo said. “Part of our strength is how we are able to change our lines. We have these games and we have to make good use of them.”

“Every time I’ve played against St Etienne, with hard work there has been a couple of goals. I’ve scored a couple of goals tonight and hopefully I can do the same next week,” Ibrahimovic told BT Sport.

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— Reuters

Wenger to decide on Arsenal future with in two months

LONDON — Arsene Wenger said he will decide whether to extend his 20-year spell at Arsenal in March or April but that whatever he decides he will be managing a team next season.

The pressure on Wenger is mounting as Arsenal look certain to exit the Champions League at the first knockout stage for the seventh season in a row after the 5-1 demolition by Bayern Munich in the round of 16.

Wenger’s future is now decided, with the Gunners owner Stan Kroenke insisting last month that the Frenchman would remain in charge for another year.

However, the pressure on the 67-year-old is mounting as Arsenal have blown two-goal leads at home to both Monaco and Barcelona.

When asked if his future at the end of the season Wenger told reporters: “Yes, I will decide (my) future in March or April, but I don’t know when.”

“I speak to the board but I don’t want to speak about how they view my future. What’s important is the club, not my future. No matter what happens, I will hopefully manage next season. Whether it is here or not, that is for sure.”

— Reuters