Maungtaw investigators travel to Bangladeshi refugee camps

U Zaw Myint Pe, Secretary of Maungtaw Investigation Commission, and its members — U Tun Myat, Dr Aung Tun Thet, Dr. Daw Thet Thet Zin, U Nyunt Swe, and Daw Kyein Ngai Man — met with villagers from 18 March to 22 March in the Cox’s Bazaar refugee camp in Bangladesh in an effort to fulfill their mission for a complete and thorough investigation. Thousands of residents in northern Rakhine fled across the border to Bangladesh after insurgent attacks on border police outposts in October and November, 2016.

Meanwhile, remaining members of the commission went to the Maungtaw District for the fourth time to monitor the progress of coordination work done by the commission in the villages that were harmed in the wake of the attacks, return of displaced villagers to their locations and peace and stability of the area.

The aim of Maungtaw Investigation Commission is to submit suggestions, practical solutions, and assessments of the problems.

SEE PAGE 3 >>

China suspends bank account of MNDAA

The Union government welcomed China’s move to suspend the bank account used by an armed group fighting the troops of the Tatmadaw, in a move to prevent potential damage to diplomatic ties.

“Very constructive move from China, as the stability and peace in the border area is of common interest for both sides,” said U Zaw Htay, the spokesperson of the government of Myanmar.

The move comes a day after the meeting with the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and the Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar. At the meeting, the two sides discussed cooperation for peace, stability and security of the border between the two countries.

Following the attack by the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) on 6th March, which killed at least 30 civilians, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, in her capacity as the chairperson of the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, strongly urged all the armed groups to abandon the armed attacks, saying that the violence would bring about nothing but sorrow and suffering for the innocent local tribes and races. She urged them to join the dialogue for national peace and march together with the people on the path of peace with unified strong spirit on the basis of equality. Reuters has revealed that an ethnic rebel armed group fighting Myanmar forces near the Chinese border had been openly soliciting funds via China’s giant state-owned lender Agricultural Bank Of China (AgBank). Over nearly two years, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) raised more than US$500,000, deposited directly in an AgBank account or sent via two mobile payment services - Tencent Holdings’ WeChat Pay and Alipay, part of Ant Financial, which is affiliated with U.S.-listed Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba.

SEE PAGE 2 >>
Weapons and ammunition seized near Yanlonekyaing

AIRGUNS and ammunition from MNDAA armed groups were discovered near Yanlonkeyaing in the Northeast of Shan State on Tuesday. Tatmadaw troops conducting clearance operations in Laukkai and surrounding areas discovered the arms in some buildings in the vicinity of Yanlonkeyaing police station around 10 in the morning. The arms included one Airpore Airgun (telescope included), 188 different varieties of bullets including some .22 LR bullets, 4 types of cartridges, and 4 hand grenades.—Myanmar News Agency

Uncut jade stones auctioned by open tender bid system

THE sales of jade lots and uncut jade stones in Myanmar currency, which is slated to kick off from 19 to 24 March, continued for the fourth day at Mani Yadana Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Myanmar jewelry merchants viewed the jade lots and put the price proposal forms for the jade lots to be sold by open tender bid system in tender boxes. The officials checked the price proposal forms for the 1,500 jade lots and announced the list of tender winners. Out of the 1,500 jade lots, the price proposal forms for Lot No (3,000) were put in tender box by the gems and jewelry merchants with the supervision of the central committee members and officials. It is learnt that the list of tender winners will announce tomorrow and Lot No (4,454) will be auctioned by open tender bid system.—Myanmar News Agency

P&G celebrates World Water Day in Myanmar

Procter & Gamble (P&G) and its international partners will celebrate the 24th anniversary of World Water Day in an effort to do their part to help end the global water crisis.

Through the P&G Children’s Safe Drinking Water (CSDW) Program, more than 15 countries will deploy campaigns designed to raise awareness to further CSDW’s ability to bring clean drinking water to those who do not have access.

According to official figures from the Ministry of Health and Sports and the World Health Organization (WHO), around 20% of Myanmar children dying under the age of five die from diarrhea—twice as much as global average and around the same as in Sub-Saharan Africa where water is often scarce.1 The Global Campaign is to raise funds to contribute 750,000 days of clean drinking water through World Vision Myanmar.—GNLM

Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker meets DCAF delegation

THE Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw U T Khun Myat met with the head of the Asia-Pacific Unit for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) Dr. Albrecht Schnabel and party at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

Matters on providing assistance by DCAF for ensuring security and rule of law in Myanmar’s reform process, reviewing legal framework for security sector in parliament and giving assistance for parliamentary affairs were discussed in a frank and transparent manner.—Myanmar News Agency

China suspends bank account of MNDA

A man walks past a branch of the Agricultural Bank of China in the town of Nansan, Yunnan province, China, March 12, 2017. Photo: Reuters

The account was suspended on Tuesday, shortly after Reuters had sent AgBank a list of questions regarding the transactions, which compliance experts said could point to a weakness in controls aimed at stopping the global financial system from being used to fund terrorism or facilitate crime.

There is no evidence that AgBank, or other financial entities that handled transactions for the MNDA, have broken Chinese law.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said she was not aware of the specifics about the decision on AgBank.

“We consistently persevere in not interfering in other countries’ internal affairs and respect the entirety of Myanmar’s sovereign rights and territory. We will not allow any group or individual to use China’s territory to undermine China-Myanmar relations and the border regions’ stability,” she said.

Earlier this month, insurgents from the predominantly ethnic Chinese MNDA attacked government troops in northeastern Myanmar.

Some 20,000 people fled across the border to China to escape the fighting, prompting Beijing to call for a ceasefire.—GNLM/Reuters contributed to this report
Myanmar attains medium human development status

IN a 2016 report on Human Development of the United Nations, Myanmar’s Human Development Index (HDI) for 2016 reached 0.556, an increase from 0.536 in 2014 when it ranked 148 out of 188 countries.

However, Myanmar’s HDI remains below the average for East Asia and Pacific (0.720). It was attributed to the fact that Myanmar is still performing below the average of Southeast Asia in such areas as maternal and child health, education, and inequality measures.

Myanmar’s ability to achieve the SDGs is linked to its continued commitment to improve human development for its people, the report said.

Almost 1.5 billion people, between 1990-2015 worldwide, lived in multidimensional poverty—reflecting acute deprivations in health, education and standards of living, according to the report.

In the previous 25 years, 1.1 billion of the world’s population have better levels of sanitation and 1.6 billion now have access to clean water. The worldwide mortality rate of children under 5 in the years between 1990-2015 has decreased by half. The report also stated medical cases concerning HIV, malaria and tuberculosis has also decreased significantly.—Ye Khaung Nyunt

Maungtaw investigators travel to Bangladeshi refugee camps

>> FROM PAGE 1
that occurred after the attacks last year, in a report to the Union Government. Hence, the commission went to the refugee camps with great difficulty, seeking the cooperation of the Bangladesh Government and respective international organizations that have taken over the responsibilities of the refugee camps.

On 19 March, the commission met with Deputy Commissioner Mr MD Ali Hossain at the office of the Cox’s Bazaar Deputy Commissioner. The meeting was attended by representatives of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

In the afternoon, commission members Dr Daw Thet Thet Zin and Daw Kyein Ngai Man questioned 17 women at the Kutupalong Refugee Camp, with U Zaw Myint Pe and other members investigating men separately.

On 20 March, commission members went to the Balukhali refugee camp, interrogating five men and three women separately, with some men investigated in a group under the arrange- ment of IOM. In the afternoon, they proceeded to Leda refugee camp, where they spoke to five women and three men accord- ing to arrangements made by the IOM.

On 21 March, the commis- sion left for Dhaka, with commis- sion members U Tun Myat and Dr Aung Tun Thet meeting with representatives of IOM & UNHCR separately.

On the morning of 22 March, the Secretary and members of the Maungtaw Investigation Commission left Ban- glandesh by air, arriving at the Yangon International Airport in the afternoon.

It is learnt that U Myo Myint Tha, the Myanmar Ambas- sador to Bangladesh, and Embassy staff made advance ar- rangements for the Bangladeshi trip.—Myanmar News Agency

State Counsellor receives Japanese delegation

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi holds talks with Mr. Tadashi Ogura. Photo: MNA

MEMBERS of Parliament are required to follow rules and regulations, laws, and the constitution in working for regional development, the Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw told legislators in Mon State yesterday.

“The present time is a peri- od of democracy transformation. We have been trying to establish a federal Union to let democracy flourish so that the country will be peaceful and developed, said U Win Myint, Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw.

“When there are democracy rights, there will be rule of law and then safety security for the people. As there is rule of law, the country will be in stability and have internal peace,” he told Mon State’s members of parliament at a meeting held at the State Hluttaw’s Office in Mon State.

“Members of Parliament are required to follow the restric- tions, disciplines in the bylaw, and Hluttaw law when presenting the proposals or questioning. When making the law, it also required to amend those laws which need updating in accordance with time, reviewing the existing laws to be beneficial to the people and be the law for the benefit for the people.

Utilising legislative, executive and judicial power as sepa- rately as possible provides a sys- tem of checks and balances that must be worked out in accordance with rules and regulations, exist- ing laws and the constitution. When making checks and balanc- es, there will be serious attention not to be interfering beyond the restrictions, said the speaker.

“MPs are the legislators and should be aware to not be law breakers and have the rights to negotiate with local authorities for the development of each consti-ituency in accordance with the constitution.”

In the fourth regular ses- sion of the second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw recently, the Hluttaw approved Union Tax Law 2017, Union Budget Bill 2017, and the National Planning Bill for 2017-2018. Members of Parliament should work for the development of each area in accordance with the enacted law.

When we want to establish a democratic country, we all must work together with trust, understanding, cooperation, for- giveness, and being patient and generous for the people and the nation.

In a democratic country, the Hluttaw is the basic founda- tion for democracy and the people possess the central power in a democratic country. Thus, all members of parliament always make efforts to generate firmly the work process of Hluttaw.

We always pay attention to the ethnic unification and empha- sise working for the right of the nationalities. We have formed State level organisations and union-level organisations by ap- pointing ethnics in suitable positions. U Win Myint said we are consistently working to merge the federal policy and demo- cracy. Members of Parliament need cooperation to establish a demo- cratic federal union which has the right for self administration and self legislation.

After his speech, Members of Parliament presented the lo- cal developmental process and works in the Hluttaw and the speaker answered questions from the MPs. The meeting was also attended by Mon State Hluttaw Speaker Daw Tin Ei, Amyotha Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw rep- resentatives.—Myanmar News Agency
Beach hotels double prices during Thingyan

The rates of hotels during Thingyan holiday went up 50 per cent, as local travelers flocked to beaches, according to an announcement on Jovago.com.mm. The price doubled from advanced bookings, according to the website. The hotels at the beaches and Mvyek and Dawei areas are fully booked, said Mr. Frans Mass, managing director of Jovago.com.mm.

Despite the high rates, 70 per cent of the hotels at the country’s most popular beaches — Chaung Thar, Ngwe Saung, Ngapali, Mvyek and Kyaing Tong — are booked.

It is usual that high occupancy rates during holidays result in an increase in price. This year, the inbound tour is also highly demanded, said a tour operator.

Nevertheless, the hotel rates in Bagun, Inle, Taunggyi, Kalay, Toungoo remain steady, according to data from Jovago.— Ko Khan

Myanmar poised to ease foreign investment curbs

FACED with slowing foreign investment, Myanmar is poised to ease restrictions on direct investment from abroad, including in the oil and gas distribution sector as well as in the insurance segment.

“We will allow foreign investments in oil and gas retail distribution,” Union Planning and Investment Minister U Kyaw Win said last week. “We have planned to give permission to international companies to provide microfinance services and to have more freedom in insurance services.”

U Aung Naing Oo, secretary of the Myanmar Investment Commission, said foreign direct investment in the country has exceeded the expectation of $6 billion in fiscal 2016 ending March 31, but the amount is a far cry from the previous year’s record high of $9.4 billion.

The MIC organized a meeting with representatives of more than 200 foreign and local businesses last Saturday at a hotel in Yangon, with U Kyaw Win, who also chairs the commission, urging the foreign business community to invest in Myanmar on a long-term and sustainable basis.

Noting the government’s investment law amendment last year, the minister said foreign companies “will get opportunities to invest in Myanmar under simple, easy and quick regulations.” The government will promptly address difficulties and unnecessary restrictions on investors, he added.

U Kyaw Win stressed that foreign investors will also get the chance to invest in new sectors where foreign investment was not allowed previously, including in infrastructure, supply chains, logistics, communication and transportation.

As the government has become more flexible toward guaranteeing foreign investment protection, the minister encouraged overseas investors to make investment with long-term plans. “According to our new law, we allow land leasing of up to 70 years. So, investors should consider making long-term investment in Myanmar in responsible and sustainable ways,” he said.— Kyodo News

Domestic gold price on the rise from high global gold price

THE domestic gold price is on an upward trend with the global gold price rising, according to the local gold market.

The domestic gold price had fallen under Ks 900,000 starting from 1st March and the price was on the decline until 10 March, with over Ks 880,000 per tical. The global gold price jumped about 30 dollars on 15th March and remained on the rise until 20th March. In keeping with the increase in global gold price, the domestic gold price raised its head up again with Ks 883,600 on 15th March and Ks 893,100 on 16th March.

The domestic gold per tical fetched Ks 894,000 on 17th, Ks 895,700 on 18th, Ks 896,000 on 19th, Ks 898,100 on 20th, Ks 897,500 on 21st and Ks 901,500 on 22th March, according to the gold and jewellery shops.— Mon Mon

43 YCDC-owned enterprises up for bidding for municipal lease

A total of 43 enterprises owned by Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) will be put out to tender for municipal lease at Yangon City Hall on 23rd March, said an official from Engineering Department (Buildings) under YCDC.

Those enterprises will be granted leases in the next fiscal year 2017-2018. The YCDC has called for bids with the tender rules so that the private businessmen can seek the rights for working those businesses: collection of vehicle entrance fees and public toilets at the markets, aquatic feedstuff business at Thway Say Lake and Hanthawady Golf Driving Range business, it is learnt.

Among the businesses are four from Pollution Control and Cleansing Department, two from Playground, Parks and Gardens Department and 17 from Markets Department.— 200

Microfinance Business Law under review

MICROFINANCE Business Law is being reviewed to be in line with the procedures of current microfinance businesses, said U Ko Ko Maung, the director of Financial Regulatory Department.

We will take measure in various sectors to realize whether Microfinance Business Law is to match the prevalence of procedures in this industry, he added.

“The Microfinance Business Law was instituted in 2011. The organisation and members are liable to prosecution. However, filing a lawsuit among the members is rare. We allow them to lend people only after practical considerations of their financial status and background”, he said.— 200

Trade value with ITC hit over K15 billion as of 20th January

TRADE value with the Individual Trading Card (ITC) reached over Ks15.48 billion as of 10th March in the current fiscal year 2016-2017, according to the statistics of the Commerce Ministry.

Export value with the ITC was over Ks1.08 billion, whereas import value with ITC hit over Ks14.4 billion.

Myawaddy and Kan Pike Tee border trade camps have the largest trade value using the ITC. The border trade values with ITC as of 10th March in this FY were over Ks811million in Tama, over Ks830million in Muse, over Ks8.91 billion in Myawady, Ks678million in Tachileik, over Ks27million in Lone, over Ks2.16 billion in Kan Pike Tee, over Ks381million in Kawthuung, over Ks674million in Rew, over Ks939million in Maw Taung and over Ks24million in Keng Tung and nearly Ks29million in Maese, it is learnt.

The Trade Department issued 292 cards from 21st Nov 2012 to 31st March 2013, 261 cards in 2013-2014 FY, 317 cards in 2014-2015 FY, 146 cards in 2015-2016 FY and 207 cards as of 10th March in this FY, according to an announcement released by the aforementioned ministry. A businessman can trade Ks3million a day with an ITC, and the trade department granted trade up to Ks15million a day, which amounted to a five-day-trade-value.— Ko Khant
Ministry of Hotels and Tourism: moving forward with success all along the road

The hotels and tourism industry has generated lots of job opportunities for the nation and her people. It is a business with ripple effect that benefits everyone from the airlines to the vendors. It has many more advantages than the businesses that need exploitation of natural resources. Its success opens the direct income source not only for the nation but for all its citizens.

It is difficult to calculate the actual earnings of the hotels and tourism industry as the money spent by the tourists in a host country flows into the coffers of many different industries, regions and people. The countries that stand as world’s tourism hot spots stand as world’s tourism hot spots stand abreast with its counterparts of the neighbouring and regional countries, to discover and establish new destinations and to extend research programs.

Community-based tourism


Of them three destinations — Majegan Village in Sale Township Magway Region, Hsoyawun Village in Kampaet Township in Chin State, and Kyaukthale Village-Tract in Twantay Township, Yangon Region, have already opened to tourists. More places in regions and states with high potentials for community-based tourism will be discovered and established as new destinations, according to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

ASEAN Award

At the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2017 held at Marina Bay Sands Expo & Convention Centre in Singapore from 18 to 20 January this year, the ASEAN Secretariat presented the ASEAN Community Based Tourism Award 2017 to Panpet and Taneela villages of Loikaw in Kayah State, Loikaw, Innai, Hitmei and Kekku villages of PaO Self-Administered Zone in Shan State, and villages in Myaing Township, Magway Region, of Myanmar as an acknowledgement of her community-based tourism activities.

Tourism development of Taninthayi Region

“Taninthayi Region is a breathtaking place as its natural features including mountains, forests and lakes remained intact and its ecosystem is still healthy as it is a less developed area. Because of its possession of a large number of islets and islands it has much potential to become an attractive tourist destination. So we are going to develop its tourism industry,” explained U Ohn Maung, Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism.

Hotels and Tourism Development Task Force was formed in Taninthayi Region on 2 January this year. Plans are under way to transform Kawkhoung Airport into an international portal in coordination with the relevant ministries.

The airport extension project is aimed at improving the social standard of the local people of Taninthayi Region, generating new job opportunities, and introducing tourism business in unspoiled islands of Taninthayi Region without harming their natural environment.

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In realizing the sustainable development of the whole region, the task force is responsible for drafting a major project after designating the main centre of the destination where most suitable areas for development projects in Myeik archipelago, possible restricted areas for natural conservation, and areas where development undertakings can be carried out with limitation are defined, explained the Union minister.

**International exhibitions**
The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism displayed the new destinations of Myanmar and facts and data in connection with the tourism business at international tourism exhibitions in the one-year period for further promotion of the industry in Myanmar.

The Ministry opened four booths at the Thailand Travel Fair 2016 held from 8 to 10 June last year in Chiang Nai, Thailand; and opened the grand Myanmar Pavilion where the Union minister participated in its tourism promotion activities, at JATA Tourism Expo 2016 in Tokyo, Japan, from 22 to 25 September last year.

The ministry also opened four booths at the tourism exhibition held by Asia-Pacific Travel Association-PATA held in Indonesia last year; three booths at ASEAN Tourism Forum 2017 held in Singapore from 18 to 20 January this year; and a 100-metre square pavilion at ITB Berlin held in Germany from 8 to 12 March this year. At ITB Berlin, Myanmar won the award “TO DO! 2017 - TO DO! International Contest Socially Responsible Tourism” for the display of her community-based tourism villages in PaO Self-Administered Zone of Shan State.

**Human resources improvement**
The Hotels and Tourism Service is a business that directly gets in touch with the public. It opened hotels and tourism courses and other related courses for 61 times from April last year to February this year with the aim of facilitating relations between visitors and the locals, having awareness of the language and culture, and disseminating knowledge on dos and don’ts. Over 2800 persons completed the courses.

It in cooperation with international organizations arranged domestic and foreign study tours and workshops, according to the ministry report.

42 hotels in a year
The ministry issued work permits for 42 hotels and guesthouses with a total of 1992 rooms during the period from April 2016 to February 2017. During the same period, the H&T Ministry also issued licenses for 112 hotels and guesthouses with a total of 5577 rooms 772 tourism services, 1842 transport services, and 825 tour guide services. It established an online service where application can be sent through the website http://elience.tourism.gov.mm with much convenience.

The ministry is also issuing temporary licenses to prevent the occurrence of delays in the work process.

**Regional cooperation**
As for the development of hotels and tourism industry in Myanmar, the Four Countries One Destination Conference was held with the participation of four CLMV countries in July last year. The conference served as the venue where the four countries exchanged and shared their experiences and knowledge on the industry, initiated market promotion activities in cooperation, and further cemented friendly ties among them.

Myanmar and Thailand signed the MoU on bilateral tourism cooperation at Myanmar/Thai Tourism Cooperation meeting held this year. The Japan-Myanmar friendship cherry planting ceremony was held in Nay Pyi Taw in January this year. At the ceremony, 100 cherries of the total target of 1000 were planted, according to the ministry.

Myanmar hosted the First China-Myanmar Tourism Cooperation Forum in Nay Pyi Taw this March, and discussed promotion of the cooperation in cross-border tours between the two countries and development of tourism in towns along the Mekong River in both countries.

**Finance for tourism promotion**
H&T Ministry will apply various means for the emergence of standard hotels which are the infrastructure for sustainable development of the industry, the improvement of roads, the intellectual and technical advancement of the human resources, and the establishment of attractive tourism destinations. The means under consideration include the submission of the financial allowance from the Union Budget, the collection of necessary taxes, the provision of financial allowance based on the percentage of the industry’s contribution to the nation’s GDP, and the establishment of private trust funds. Of them the best possible means will be applied for the promotion of the industry, said the Union minister.

Till now the budget for the promotion of the industry is too small. Even in ASEAN member states, Viet Nam spent USD 3.54 million, the Philippines USD 10.4 million, Thailand USD 22.2 million, and Malaysia USD 89.6 million respectively.

Myanmar’s current Tourism Promotion Budget is low when compared with her ASEAN counterparts. Only about USD 0.3 million was allowed for development of the hotels and tourism sector in the fiscal year 2017-2018.

During its one year period, the government in office launched activities that benefited the hotels and tourism industry. It is making coordination for the launching of Myanmar-Laos-Cambodia-Viet Nam cross-country tour next year and opened a night market at Kyauktawingwin grounds of Nyaungshwe, famous for its Inlay Lake.

Apart from its programs for the sustainability of Inlay Lake, the ministry has also set up the E-mail booking system. Additionally, it is seeking means that may improve the standard of joint-venture hotels, ensure success of their operations and increase income and profits of both the government and the private sector.

**Delicacy**
The hotels and tourism industry in fact is one of the serviced industries of the State, and at the same time it is the most delicate business of all. All efforts for the industry’s development will be in vain amidst the lack of national peace and stability and nation’s weak image, and in the presence of natural disasters and epidemics.

“We have promoted the hotels and tourism industry to the most possible extent within a one-year period. The government will seek and set up new destinations all along its remaining term. The ministry will move forward while disseminating knowledge, techniques, and language proficiency skills and amending the rules and regulations,” promised Union Minister U Ohn Maung.

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is in a mission of turning Myanmar into a new popular tourist destination of the world while protecting the natural environment and ancient cultural heritages with all out efforts.
China denies reports of building on disputed shoal

BEIJING — China’s Foreign Ministry on Wednesday denied reports that China will begin preparatory work this year for an environmental monitoring station on disputed Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea.

China seized the shoal, which is northeast of the Spratly islands, in 2012 and denied access to Philippine fishermen. But after President Rodrigo Duterte visited China last year, it allowed them to return to the traditional fishing area.

Earlier this month, Xiao Jie, the mayor of Sansha, said China planned to begin preparatory work this year to build environmental monitoring stations on a number of islands, including Scarborough Shoal.

Sansha City is the name China has given to an administratively-backed area that the Communist-ruled country said should serve as a warning to others spreading dissent.

“According to the relevant bodies in China, the reports you mention that touch upon building environmental monitoring stations on Scarborough Shoal are mistaken, these things are not true,” she added.

“With regards to Scarborough Shoal, China’s position is consistent and clear. We place great importance on China-Philippines relations.”

Xiao Jie’s comments about the plans as quoted by the state-backed Nanhai Daily had been amended to remove mention of the shoal in the paper’s online version when checked by Reuters on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, the Philippines formally asked China’s embassy in Manila to explain news reports about building plans for Scarborough Shoal.

“We have sought clarification from China on reported plans on Scarborough Shoal,” Charles Jose, foreign ministry spokesman, said in a text message sent to news organizations.

In a radio interview later, Jose said it is important for the Philippines to strengthen its defence and maritime domain awareness.

He said the Philippines should also step up cooperation with its allies and regional partners who share the country’s position in maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea, resorting to peaceful settlement of disputes and adherence to rule of law.

“We should maintain the civilian nature so as not to escalate tensions,” he said, reacting to some suggestions the Philippines deploy warships to Scarborough Shoal to assert Manila’s claim on the rocky outcrop.

— Reuters

Three French schoolchildren hurt in London attack

PARIS/RENNES, March 22 (Reuters) — Three French schoolchildren were hurt in the attack near London’s Westminster Parliament on Wednesday, French officials said.

The three students from the Concarneau Lycee in Brittany, western France, were on a school trip there, a foreign ministry spokesman said in a statement. The statement did not say how serious the injuries were.

“A total of 90 students from the school were in London, about a dozen of which were in the area of the attack, an official at the school told Reuters.

“As the centre of London was hit by a cowardly attack, France assures the British people of its solidarity,” the foreign ministry statement said, adding that French authorities were in contact with their British counterparts.

A report in Le Telegramme newspaper cited a fellow student who was at the scene of what British police have described as a terrorist incident, saying the three were hit by a car that was involved whilst walking on Westminster Bridge. One of them landed on the hood of the car, the Telegramme said.

— Reuters

Viet Nam detains two bloggers for anti-state propaganda

HANOI — Viet Nam has detained two bloggers for posting anti-state comments on which the Communist-ruled country said should serve as a warning to others spreading dissent.

Bui Hieu Vo, 55, known as “Hieu Bui” on Facebook, and Phan Kim Khanh, 24, were detained for investigation of “propaganda against the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam”, the government said on its Facebook page on Wednesday.

Despite sweeping reforms in Viet Nam’s economy and increasing openness towards social change, the Communist Party retains tight media censorship and zero tolerance for criticism.

The government said Vo posted “fabricated, distorted and defamed” information on Facebook and “deliberately spread hostile information”. Khanh was similarly accused of spreading harmful information on YouTube channels.

Neither Vo nor Khanh were available for comment.

Viet Nam last week also called on all companies doing business in the country to stop advertising on YouTube, Facebook and other social media until they had found a way to halt the publication of “toxic” anti-government information.

The government said both bloggers worked with the United States-based Viet Tan, or Viet Nam Reform Party, which Hanoi has declared a terrorist group, and that any Vietnamese found to be involved would be regarded as co-conspirators and punished.

— Reuters

N Korea fails in attempted missile launch

TOKYO/SEOUL — North Korea attempted to launch a missile on Wednesday morning but failed, according to authorities in several countries including South Korea and the United States.

The South Korean Defence Ministry said North Korea appeared to have unsuccessfully tried to launch one missile, adding that it is still determining the type.

A US Pacific Command spokesman said the US military detected a launch attempt, with the missile appearing to have exploded seconds after launch. According to a Japanese government source, the Defence Ministry is analyzing the possibility the missile may have been an intermediate-range Musudan, potentially capable of reaching targets in Japan. The source said the launch is thought to have taken place at an area near Wonsan in east North Korea at around 7 am.

North Korea launched six Musudans between April and June last year from an area near Won-san, with all but one exploding in midair. While refraining from confirming whether Japan had detected a missile launch or attempt, the Japanese government said there is no immediate threat to the country’s security.

“We have no confirmation of missiles headed toward this country,” Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a regular press conference. The launch attempt came after US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson discussed from the threat from North Korea with his counterparts in Japan, South Korea and China last week.

In South Korea, Tillerson said the US policy of “strategic patience” toward North Korea has ended, and it is exploring possible new responses to the threat.

The Associated Press reported Tuesday that the US military expected another North Korean missile launch “in the next several days,” citing several US defence officials. The officials said the United States has increased surveillance over North Korea and has seen a missile launcher moving as well as construction of VIP seating in the eastern coastal city of Wonsan, according to the AP.

North Korea launched four missiles in Japan’s direction on 6 March, three of which landed in the exclusive economic zone around Japanese waters. Those missiles, fired from an area near Tongchang-ri in northeast North Korea, are thought to have been of the Scud-Extended Range variety, which has a maximum range of 1,000 kilometres. Last year saw North Korea conduct two nuclear tests and more than 20 ballistic missile tests.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un claimed in a New Year’s address that the country is ready to test-fire an intercontinental ballistic missile, which could reach targets on the US mainland.

— Kyodo News
Opinion

Interrelation of 3 Pillars of Sovereignty

Khin Maung Myint

A few days ago, I had written an article in anticipation of the water shortage problems that could be faced during the summer. In that article I cited the examples of water management in Thailand, as to how they solved those problems with various long term plans. In doing so I am not pointlessly praising the Thais, but because I believed that as we are lagging behind others in the region, we have to try and catch up as quickly as possible. To do so, copying the good examples of those who had proven successful is the fastest and easiest way to do it.

When considering ways and means to develop the country, most of our people have the tendency to always look at Singapore as a good model. I agree that Singapore is undoubtedly the most developed in the region, but as we are lagging behind regardless of its size should not be influenced by any of the world powers. In other words, the 3 pillars of sovereignty—legislative, executive and judiciary pillars need to be strengthened to the extent that there cannot be found any weakness. Once one pillar is broken the other two will be ruined. Hence, all countries need to understand what constitutions to use as the guiding principles in ruling their countries. Even the advanced countries that abound with experienced legislators in writing constitutions cannot make a perfect constitution in one time. To meet the demands of the changing times, countries are required to amend the necessary parts of the constitution, if ever. If a disease is not cured in time, it will claim only the life of the patient. But, if a constitution needs to be amended or modified but remains unchanged, it will claim many lives.

Today, in our civilized world, countries are connecting with each other in various spheres such as the economy, politics, health, education and so on. They are trying to build up a peaceful world, sharing knowledge, experiences and technology. Yet, in some places of our world there are still arguments, conflicts and battles. Superficially speaking, we may consider that opportunists and ultra-opportunists are creating these undesirable situations. Partly, it is right. On careful analysis however, these violent situations such as greed, anger and ignorance are the main scourses. We were born into the world with empty hands and we must leave the world in the same way. We use our own efforts to gain wealth and fame, but some triumphs, gains and successes went to the wrong places, selfish plans and mischievous deeds. In these events, some became dead and others are left standing. I am not pointlessly praising the Thais, but because I believed so I am not pointlessly praising them every year to solve the water crises. I would like to emphasize that water shortage is a major issue and provisions of water for human consumptions only, in times of need through donations, is not a solution. They may keep our unharmed by subervise elements from inside and outside. For successful management of all the affairs, we must have, if not even a flawless then at least the least flawed constitution. Whenever there appears a need to amend, we must modify our constitution. Failing that, destructive elements and ultra-opportunists will exploit the lapses of those constitutions. For example, if a breast-cancer patient whose breast must be removed in time for life refuses to undergo medical operation, she must be said to have committed suicide. Likewise, if we refuse to amend or modify our constitution with some weak points, we will automatically become culprits or villains of history who destroy our nation and our future.

Contrariwise, we have an opportunity to have ourselves named as nation-builders. If we will willingly to take part in the construction of our nation, we must remove all the unnecessary stumbling blocks and our national brethren will no longer be displaced from their homes and we, the whole populace can live in peace under the protection of the law. I would not like you to be reluctant to decide what to do now.

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 er@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com with your name and title.

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

A MUSEUM which will include a lecture hall will be built in Lon Ton village behind Indawgyi lake during the next fiscal year to help preserve Indawgyi lake and wildlife sanctuary, which is located in Mohnyin township in Kachin state, with the assistance of Spree World Biosphere Reserve from Germany and Fauna & Flora International (FFI), said U Ngwe Lwin, the project manager from FFI.

The designation of Indawgyi lake as a Ramsar site will help maintain the services and benefits that the site provides for over 50,000 people from 39 villages and the environment.

The main problems are illegal gold digging, illegal farm extensions, felling trees on a commercial scale, hunting, and extreme fishing,” said U Maung Win, an administrator of Indawgyi lake and wildlife sanctuary.

“Illegal gold prospecting along the Khaungton creek has made for silt deposits on the bed of the lake. Sediments have caused the degradation of the lake.

In order to mitigate the damages caused by sedimental deposits, six experts from Germany arrived here to conduct a field inspection trip,” he added.—Salai Mang Ngu

Vaccination to prevent cervical cancer to be administered in 2019

The ministry of health and sports has planned to administer vaccinations to prevent cervical cancer caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) beginning in 2019, according to the infectious diseases prevention and control division under the ministry of health and sports.

The ministry plans to implement this vaccination programme so that cervical cancer can be prevented as part of 2017-2021 National Health project.

The ministry will provide the vaccines against cervical cancer to girls between 9 and 13-years of age. They will also monitor whether women develop cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer, the most common form of cancer in Myanmar, is caused by a virus called HPV that is usually transmitted by sexual intercourse.

Vaccination is one of the preventive measures against HPV, an infectious disease. Diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and chronic respiratory diseases are noninfectious diseases.

More people die of noninfectious disease rather than infectious diseases. —200

Increasing gate fees can decrease tourist arrival

The number of trekking tourists to Pindaya town could decrease if the entry fees are increased to US$5, said U Zaw Hay Aung, chairman of the Myanmar Hotelier Association (Tatungyi Zone).

The Danu Self-administered Zone planned to increase Pindaya gate fees beginning in April. Authorities said that they will increase the gate fees to raise funds for the development of the region.

“Pindaya does not have many places to visit. But the visitors have to pay Ks3,000 to visit the Pindaya cave. Some tourists visit Pindaya for trekking only. Now, the number of tourists could decrease if they have to pay US$ 5 for gate fees,” said U Zaw Hay Aung.

The increase has not been officially announced yet, but officials said they will start to collect the new gate fees starting 1 April.

Most of the Danu ethnic people live in the southern part of Shan State. According to the 2008 constitution, the government designated Danu as a Self-administered Zone because it has more than 100,000 ethnic people. Ywangan is also an SAR.

There are 130 villages in Pindaya township and 90 villages in Ywar Ngan township. —Min Min

Rare Species of Tapir Handed Over:

COLONEL Naing Tin Nwe, tactical operations commander, handed over an endangered species of tapir to U Tin Tun, deputy director of the Kawthoung district forestry department on Wednesday morning at Aung Thu Ra Hall, Kawthoung military area.

While clearing ground for cultivation, U Soe Htike, a farmer of Ayemya Tharyar village, Khamaukkyi, Kawthoung District on March 13 found an animal assumed to be a tapir and its young. The mother tapir ran away out of fear, leaving her offspring behind. U Soe Htike handed over the baby tapir to the nearby tactical operation command of Kawthoung on March 18. The tapir is a large, herbivorous mammal similar to a pig.

The male tapir is 32 inches long, 18 inches high and 23 inches wide, with black-and-white striped skin similar to a tiger.

The district forestry department of Kawthoung district will keep it temporarily and will hand it over to Nay Pyi Taw zoological garden, it is learnt.—Kyaw Soe (Kawthoung)

Crime

Two trains collide in Kanbalu township

TWO trains on the Mandalay-Myitkyina railroad collided head-on near Leik Htoo village, Kanbalu township, Sagaing region on Wednesday.

The No. 42 down train en route to Mandalay from Myitkyina crashed with the No. 41 up train between mileposts 493/1 and 493/2, on the Mandalay-Myitkyina railroad.

An official from Myanmar Railways said that although the No. 41 up train had to stop in Kanbalu Railway station, it did not stop and went on at high speed only to crash with the No. 42 down train.

The accident damaged both locomotives.—MNA

A head-on collision on Mandalay-Myitkyina railroad. PHOTO: MNA
Thailand shows interest in purchasing Russian armoured vehicles

South Korea, US conduct air power exercise involving B-1B bomber

Japan commissions another helicopter-carrying destroyer

JapaneseSelf-Defence Force purchased Russia’s Mi-17-5 helicopters in the past. Some media reports said that Bangkok is satisfied with its operational experience. In light of this, Thai representatives expressed willingness to purchase a few more of them.

The Mi-8MTV-5/Mi-17-5 helicopters are intended for transporting both manpower and cargo. They can be used during rescue operations and are also capable of carrying armaments.—TASS
Performances in One-Year Period

Rice basket is on right track

The Ayeyawady Region, rice basket of Myanmar, which was struck by the Cyclone Nargis in 2008, has recovered the right track to development with mushrooming industries apart from its agriculture.

According to the statistics, per capita output of goods and services in the Ayeyawady Region reached about K1.4 million in the 2016-2017 fiscal year and it is estimated that the output can reach more than K1.5 million in 2017-2018 FY.

Investment Sector

There are 21 investments with K190 billion by Myanmar nationals and 20 foreign investments with US$370 million in the garment and services sectors in Ayeyawady Region.

For the development of Small and Medium Enterprises, rice mills and salt mills in the region have been provided with technical assistance. The Ayeyawady Region Government issued SME member cards to 700 SMEs and assisted 70 business persons to get loans from the CB Bank through the CGI system.

Meanwhile, with the arrangements of the Ayeyawady Region Government, about 360 private industries have registered and boilers and power supply system at more than 2,300 mills and workshops were inspected for worksite safety, according to the Industrial Supervision and Inspection Department.

Three industrial zones

Establishment of industrial zones are underway in Pathein, Maubin and Nyaungdon in Ayeyawady Region.

“When these industrial zones are ready in Pathein, Maubin and Nyaungdon in Ayeyawady Region, people from Ayeyawady Region working in foreign countries will come back home and get jobs,” said Mahn Jonny, Ayeyawady Region Chief Minister.

The government is also trying to build a port in the coastal area of the Ayeyawady Delta.

Timely disbursement of more than K180 billion last fiscal year

Success in agricultural sector is depending on quality seeds and inputs. The Ayeyawady Region Government disbursed more than K480 billion to farmers in the 2016-2017 fiscal year, with more than K160 billion increase compared to the previous fiscal year.

Besides, the government has issued the certificate land ownership to more than 4.1 million acres.

The government gave more than K2.2 billion to farmers as a compensation for grabbing their land when it built Pathein-Kyangin Railroad, Hinthada-Zalun Railroad and Salsan-Htawpaing-Amar road. The government has also returned 6760 acres of farmland to the owners after the projects last year.

Summer paddy and winter crops

Preventive measures against erosion along the Ayeyawady River was accomplished in the one-year period of the government, benefitting Myanaung, Hinthada, Zalun, Ingapu, Danubu, Nyaungdon and Maubin in the region and preventing more than 300,000 acres of farmland from flooding.

The Ayeyawady Region Government issued SME member cards to 700 SMEs and assisted 70 business persons to get loans from the CB Bank through the CGI system.
In the communication sector, 274 mobile communications stations were constructed in six districts in Ayeyawady Region. Initially, 150 mobile communications stations were operated, while 3,300 primary school teachers and 440 Education staff members have been appointed.

In the 2016-2017 academic year scholarships have been awarded to primary and secondary students and 26 university entrance exam centers were successfully opened, while 3,300 primary school teachers and 440 Education staff members have been appointed.

In the 2016-2017 academic year scholarships have been awarded to 145 middle school and high school students and 1,900 stipends for education were awarded to primary, middle and high school students. Further, 305,000 dozen of exercise books and 190,000 school uniforms were given to the students, while the Pathein Education University was able to raise around 2,300 educators.

In the Ayeyawady Region, 3 Chief District Health departments, 460 clinics, 401 religious edifices and more than 2,300 lamposts to install solar panels in the one-year period.

At the same time, the government has extended installation of cables linking with the national grid and built sub-power stations and the electrification plan.

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Russia ready to continue work on 5th generation fighter with India

LANGKAWI (Malaysia) — Russia is prepared to push ahead with efforts to develop the Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA) in collaboration with India, the director for international cooperation and regional policy at Russia’s defence industry conglomerate Rosoboronexport said on Wednesday.

“We are awaiting the Indian side’s decision on the FGFA project. We are fulfilling our obligations and are prepared to continue work,” said Viktor Kladov who heads the joint delegation of Rosetc and state arms exporter Rosoboronexport at the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA-2017) in Malaysia.

Yuri Slyusar, President of Russia’s United Aircraft Corporation, earlier said that Russia was honoring all its commitments concerning the development of the FGFA fighter.— TAXI

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LOS ANGELES — Grammy award-winning hip hop artist Wyclef Jean said he was handcuffed and “treated like a criminal” when he was briefly detained on Tuesday by law enforcement officers in Los Angeles as they investigated a robbery.

In tweets and video of the incident posted to his Instagram and Twitter feed, the Haitian-born former Fugees singer said he appeared to have been the victim of “another case of mistaken identity” and threatened to sue. “I was treated like a criminal until other police showed up and pointed out they had wrong person,” Jean, 47, wrote on Twitter. “I am sure no father wants his sons or daughters to see him in handcuffs especially if he is innocent,” he added.

Jean blamed the Los Angeles Police Department for the incident, which occurred around 1 am PDT (0800 GMT), but in fact it involved sheriff’s deputies, the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department said. The sheriff’s department told NBC in Los Angeles that Jean was briefly detained while deputies were looking for a suspect matching his description who had carried out an armed robbery at a gas station in West Hollywood. The singer was placed in handcuffs and released without charge when it was determined he was not the suspect, a spokesman told NBC. — Reuters

Wyclef Jean arrives at the 42nd American Music Awards in Los Angeles, California on 23 November, 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

Singer Jason Derulo discusses acting ambitions at ‘Swalla’ launch

LOS ANGELES — Hip hop artist Jason Derulo has big ambitions to break into movies and television but when it comes to auditions, the singer said they are not his thing. Speaking at the launch of his latest music video for his song “Swalla,” Derulo, 27, said he wanted to find on-screen roles that appealed to him and “build a team” to bring the projects to life.

“I was going out on auditions and stuff like that, I don’t think that’s my kind of fit,” Derulo told Reuters TV. “The role has to be perfect for me, the storyline has to be perfect for what I’m trying to portray first and maybe it’s not the lead first and maybe it’s not the lead.”

Derulo has dabbled in television with small roles in hip hop saga “Empire” and the reboot of buddy-cop action series “Lethal Weapon.”

“Swalla,” featuring rappers Nicki Minaj and Ty Dolla Sign, is the first single from Derulo’s upcoming untitled fifth studio album, expected later this year.

The “Swalla” music video features dancers on vibrant sets, and has registered more than 6 million views on YouTube since its Friday release.

“My videos allow my music to be visual and people are really drawn to my videos and I’ve got a lot of views because of YouTube,” Derulo said.— Reuters

Swedish singer Zara Larsson performs during the Bambi 2016 media awards ceremony in Berlin, Germany on 17 November, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Swedish singer Zara Larsson seeks to build US fan base

NEW YORK — Swedish pop star Zara Larsson may have racked up more than 1 billion streams on music service Spotify within a few days of her new album’s release, but the 19-year-old knows she still has some work to do in the American market.

“I feel so good to have my record out - that I can actually go here and tell people, ‘Check out my album’ and stuff,” Larsson said in an interview on Monday.

“It feels so good to have my record out - I can actually go here and tell people, ‘Check out my album’ and stuff,‘ Larsson said in an interview on Monday.

“Because it’s so big — it’s really, really big,” she said, referring to the American market.

Larsson gained fame in her home country at the age of 10, when she won the Swedish talent show “Talang” in 2008. Last month, she was named artist of the year at the Grammys Awards, Sweden’s equivalent of the Grammy Awards.

Larsson said she tried to accomplish a couple of things on her new, 15-song album. “My kind of picture for it was just to create a really good collection of pop songs,” she said. “It’s fun, it’s positive, it’s uplifting and empowering.”

Larsson also likes to add her voice on social media to discuss politics and women’s rights. “I just grew up in an environment that allowed me to really question everything all the time,” she said. “I was always the one who was like, ‘Is it really that way, is it really that way?’”

The singer will tour North America with British electronic music group Clean Bandit from April to May before heading to Europe, where she will perform at several festivals.— Reuters

Swedish singer Zara Larsson arrives at the Creative Arts Emmys in Los Angeles, California on 10 September, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Spice Girl Mel B files for divorce from husband of nearly ten years

LOS ANGELES — Spice Girl Melanie ‘Mel B’ Brown filed for divorce from her husband after nearly 10 years of marriage, citing irreconcilable differences.

Court papers filed in Los Angeles Superior Court on Monday show that British pop star Brown, 41, and husband Stephen Belafonte, a TV producer, have been separated since December.

Brown requested joint legal and physical custody of the couple’s daughter, five-year-old Madison Brown Belafonte.

Representatives for Brown did not immediately respond to Reuters for comment and efforts to reach Belafonte were unsuccessful.


Brown has two other children from previous relationships.— Reuters

Singer Jason Derulo. PHOTO: REUTERS
Vincent van Gogh which were stolen from the Van Gogh Museum in 2002, is pictured at the Van gogh Museum in Amsterdam, Netherlands, on 21 March 2017.

Vincent van Gogh which were stolen from the Van Gogh Museum in 2002, is pictured at the Van gogh Museum in Amsterdam, Netherlands, on 21 March 2017.

The other canvas depicting the church in the southern province of Brabant where Van Gogh’s father was minister. After his father died, Van Gogh added black-clad mourning figures to the painting in tribute.

“The children are safely returned now and they really are safe,” said Rueger, after pulling back a screen to show the paintings encased behind a thick glass frame. “They will remain here for many generations to come.”

Italian investigators believe Imperiale is living in Dubai and running a construction business there. The arrests of 11 members of his alleged ring last January, including one man who turned state’s witness, led investigators to the paintings. They vanished in 2002 after thieves climbed a ladder on to the museum roof and broke into the building in a heist that took only four minutes. They escaped by sliding down a rope.

The sea view suffered minor damage, with a thick glass frame rippling from its frame, losing a piece of backing paper from the bottom-left corner.

It was a “miracle” the paintings suffered no further harm over the following 14 years, Rueger said. The other items were uncovered in last September’s raid, including a private plane.

One investigator noticed an unusual-looking wall, behind which the paintings were found wrapped in cloth.

—Reuters

NEW YORK — Long-running children’s television show “Sesame Street” is welcoming a new kid to the block — a Muppet with autism called Julia.

“A redhead who loves to sing and remembers the words to lots of songs, Julia will debut on the show for preschoolers on April 10 after a five-year outreach effort to families and experts on autism, Sesame Workshop said on Monday.

“For years, families of children with autism have asked us to address the issue,” Dr. Jeanette Betancourt, senior vice president of US social impact at the nonprofit Sesame Workshop, said in a statement.

One in 68 American children is currently diagnosed with autism, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an increase of some 119 per cent since 2000.

Autism is a developmental disorder present from early childhood, characterized by difficulties in communicating and forming relationships with other people and in using language and abstract concepts.

Stacey Gordon, the puppeteer who will perform the role of Julia, and Christine Ferraro who wrote her part, both have family members who are on the autism spectrum.

“It’s important for kids without autism to see what autism can look like,” Gordon told the CBS show “60 Minutes” in a preview on Sunday.

“Had my son’s friends been exposed to his behaviors through something that they had seen on TV before they experienced him in the classroom, they might not have been frightened. They might not have been worried when he cried. They would have known that he plays in a different way and that that’s okay,” she added.

The show will see Julia interact with favourite characters like Big Bird and Elmo but sometimes get overexcited or flap her hands.

The character will be supported with books and videos in both Spanish and English on the sesame-street.org website and costumed character visits to community events.

Since its launch in 1969, “Sesame Street” has tackled issues such as divorce, racial and death alongside its role in teaching very young children to read, count and learn colours.

“Sesame Street” is seen in either the United States on PBS and HBO, or local TV versions in more than 150 nations and has won multiple awards for its educational content and its message of inclusion.

—Reuters

Fireworks, burning sculptures wrap up Spain’s Fallas festival

VALENCIA, Spain — Fireworks and the burning of colourful puppet-like sculptures wrapped up Valencia’s Fallas festival on Sunday night after nearly week-long festivities in the Spanish Mediterranean city. Each year, residents make “ninots”, or dolls, from paper mache for the celebrations, which commemorate Saint Joseph, the patron saint of carpenters, and are said to have evolved from pagan rituals marking the end of winter.

The sculptures are put on display beforehand, with the public voting to save their preferred figure from the flames. —Reuters

Figures of a Fallas monument are burning during the finale of the Fallas festival, which welcomes spring and commemorates Saint Joseph’s Day, in Valencia early, on 20 March 2017. Photo: Reuters

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—Reuters
Sport

Ferguson urges Manchester United to aim for Europa League glory

LONDON — Manchester United should focus on winning the Europa League this season, which would bring the club a trophy they have never won and secure qualification for next season’s Champions League, former manager Alex Ferguson has said.

United are fifth in the Premier League and sit four points behind fourth-placed Liverpool, though they have two games in hand on the Merseyside club.

A top-four finish would ensure Champions League qualification but Ferguson, who was in charge at Old Trafford for some 27 years, believes United have a great opportunity to qualify by winning Europe’s second-tier club competition.

“The thing is, we’ve never won the Europa League,” he told ESPN. “We’ve never won UEFA Cup, what it used to be. And we’ve got a great draw. I’m not saying it’s a certainty, but they’ve got a great chance.

“It’s still a European trophy. And if you win it, you get into the Champions League. The incentive is greater to do that.”

English clubs have failed to win a European title since Chelsea won the 2012 Champions League, but Ferguson, who won two Champions League trophies and a Cup Winners’ Cup at United, said success on the European front is cyclical.

“In the ’70s, Ajax and Bayern Munich; ’80s, Liverpool; ’90s, Italy, AC Milan. And then England had a great spell,” the 75-year-old Scot added.

“At the moment, the cycle is with the Spanish teams. And they’re best, that’s why they’re winning it.

United visit Belgian outfit Anderlecht in the first leg of their Europa League quarter-final on 13 April before hosting the return a week later.”— Reuters

CHICAGO FIRE SIGN SCHWEINSTEIGER FROM MANCHESTER UNITED

CHICAGO — Manchester United’s German midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger has signed a one-year deal to join Chicago Fire, the Major League Soccer club announced on Tuesday.

The 32-year-old World Cup winner, who joined United at the start of last season, has ended a difficult spell under coach Jose Mourinho, having fallen out of favour since the Portuguese arrived at the club at the start of the current campaign.

“I am sad to leave so many friends at Manchester United,” Schweinsteiger told the club website (www.manutd.com).

“But I am grateful to the club for allowing me the chance to take up the challenge at Chicago Fire.

“I have enjoyed working with the manager, the players and staff here and wish them all the best in the future. But I have to reserve special thanks to the United fans — whose support has been a very special part of my time in Manchester.”

Fire’s general manager Nelson Rodriguez believes the club are getting a proven winner in the former Germany midfielder, who must pass a medical and get a visa before joining.

“This is a historic moment for our club,” Rodriguez said on the official Fire website (www.chicago-fire.com).

“Bastian’s talents, attitude, and character will be a perfect complement to our squad as we continue building a championship programme.”— Reuters

Hard work, tough decisions will improve Southgate’s England

LONDON — Gareth Southgate is determined to ensure England have a successful 2018 World Cup campaign but knows that “challenging conversations” are needed to help the side move on from recent set-backs at major competitions.

Southgate, who was part of the last England side to reach the semi-finals of a major tournament at Euro 96, has urged his players to learn from high-profile defeats, including the shock loss to Iceland at last year’s European Championship in France.

“That (World Cup) has to be the ultimate aim because then that drives your behaviour,” Southgate told the reporters ahead of Wednesday’s friendly against Germany in Dortmund.

“The tournaments haven’t gone so well recently. I’m part of that... I’ve been involved in tournaments as a player, so it’s not all down to these guys.

“It will be a lot of hard work and it might need some more challenging conversations and difficult decisions on my part but that is why we are in elite sport.”

The former Middlesbrough boss has praised Manchester United’s English striker Marcus Rashford ahead of this week’s internationals, suggesting England are now producing young players with world-class potential.

“I know there has been a lot of talk about Germany and their system but I think ours is starting to produce a different type of player,” he added.

“I thought Marcus was excellent in the game against Chelsea (a 1-0 FA Cup loss) last week.

“He makes powerful runs in behind defenders and you can ask (Chelsea defender) Gary Cahill how much of a problem that is.”

Following the friendly in Dortmund, UEFA Group F leaders England face Lithuania in a World Cup qualifier on Friday.

“Players and coaches have tried to come up with a plan (to stop him) before, but top players figure it out and affect the game anyway.

“You want to play with the best and against the best, and we’ll have a chance on Friday because Bale is up there with some of the top players in the world.”

Bale, who was instrumental in Wales’ surprise run to Euro 2016 semi-finals in France, has netted four goals so far in the World Cup qualifying campaign.

“The basic advice to any player... is to get to him (Bale) as quick as you can, don’t let him get his head up like he does at Real Madrid,” Keane added.

“Don’t give him space in behind because the boy can run. Tackle him. Hit him... fairly.”

Group D leaders Ireland, who have two-point lead over second-placed Serbia, can extend their advantage over the third-placed Welsh side to seven points with a win in Dublin.— Reuters