Seven men, some of them foreigners, were arrested on Tuesday, bringing the total number of arrested men suspected of running a major illegal drugs ring in Yangon to 15. Nine men are still being sought, police said.

The latest arrests stem from a drug bust on 17 November 2016 by Yangon Police, where 1,110 kilos of crystal methamphetamine, also known as “ice”, and 622.3 kilos of Ketamine were seized. A lawsuit was filed that day against nine suspects, including Cai Jeng Ze and 16 suspects who had fled, including a man with numerous aliases known as Mr. Sue, Myint Aung and Lauk Da. The nationalities of the men were not revealed, but police said many were foreigners.

On Tuesday, a combined task force comprised of members of the Anti-Narcotics Force and the Border Task Force received a tipoff that one of the runaway suspects, Sun Chin, alias Yan Shin, would be returning to Southeast Asia. Police said they believed Binotti was living comfortably in Craigton, Scotland, a suburb of Glasgow, until a British newspaper, The Scottish Sun, disclosed his whereabouts.

A “red notice” had been issued for Binotti by Interpol last week.

The sudden and steady glare of the media and law enforcement apparently prompted Binotti to go underground. On his Facebook page, Binotti told friends: “Whoever did this, I hope your [sic] proud of yourself.” According to the Scottish Sun, “I’m sorry if you really are a true friend and this had nothing to do with you, but I can’t take chances anymore. Peace out, catch you in the next life.”

Binotti’s Facebook page has since been taken down. A source told the Scottish Sun how Binotti was furious after being caught with his girlfriend Elsy Devolder.

“He was not at all happy about being found by the Scottish Sun. It sounds like he might hide if he can. He doesn’t know who he can trust. He’s saying goodbye to the team and going it alone.”

Binotti, originally from Dumfries, Scotland, was not arrested by Scottish police because of what appears to be some miscommunication among international law enforcement agencies.
Seven more arrests, linked to huge 2016 drug bust

>> FROM PAGE 1

his Thakayta and Yankin houses after the Thingyan holidays. Six of the suspects, San Chin, Aung Ye Thwin, Zen Myat Htun, Myo Lwin, Moe Kyaw and Soe Naing, were ambushed by the joint task force in San Chin’s house on Market Street in Thakayta Township. Seized by police during the ambush were a .32 caliber pistol and 7 bullets, 198 tablets of amphetamines, 0.3 kilos of heroin and 4 vehicles.

The joint task force then proceeded to search San Chin’s other house in Kamachee Street, in Thakayta Township and seized 3,665 kilos of heroin, 2,145,800 tablets of amphetamines, 299.6 kilos of ‘Ice’ and a motor vehicle. Afterwards, the joint task force proceeded to runaway suspect Hnin Lin Aung’s house in ShweOhnPin housing in Yankin Township and seized 20,000 tablets of amphetamines, a 9mm pistol and 8 bullets.

Next, they went on to search runaway suspect Min Min’s house in ShweOhnPin housing and seized 14 tablets of amphetamines. The total number of confiscated drugs from the four households includes 3,965 kilos of heroin, 2,166,012 tablets of amphetamine, and 299.6 kilos of ‘Ice’ with a total value of Ks31.9455 billion, along with two pistols, 15 bullets and five motor vehicles. The suspects will be charged with violating the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law. The investigation continues, and the remaining 9 suspects are being sought.—Myanmar News Agency

Briton suspected of killing compatriot in Yangon last year goes into hiding

>> FROM PAGE 1

Scottish authorities have said Binotti could not be arrested because an arrest warrant had not been issued by Myanmar police. But Myanmar police said yesterday that an arrest warrant was issued within days of the discovery of Gary Ferguson’s body on 6 November.

The arrest warrant was translated into English, noted, and then sent to Myanmar police headquarters in Nay Pyi Taw, the capital, according to Police Major Toe Myo, the head of the Kyauktada police department. Kyauktada was the neighbourhood in Yangon where the murder took place.

Messages to Interpol, the global police organisation that facilitates cooperation among international law enforcement agencies, elicited a complex response.

“A Red Notice is a request to provisionally arrest an individual pending extradition issued by the General Secretariat upon the request of a member country based on a valid national arrest warrant. It is not an international arrest warrant”, a statement from Interpol’s press office said.

“The individuals concerned are wanted by national jurisdictions (or International Criminal Tribunals, where appropriate) and Interpol’s role is to assist national police forces in identifying or locating those individuals with a view to their arrest and extradition.”

The statement went on to say that interpretation of a red notice is left up to the country in which the suspect is found.

“Interpol cannot insist or compel any member country to arrest an individual who is the subject of a Red Notice. Nor can Interpol require any member country to take any action in response to another member country’s request. Each Interpol member country decides for itself what legal value to give Red Notice within its borders.”

The statement from Interpol’s press office said that many of Interpol’s member’s countries consider a Red Notice a valid request for provisional arrest, especially if they are linked to the requesting country via a bilateral extradition treaty. In cases where arrests are made based on a Red Notice, these are made by national police officials in Interpol member countries.

Gary Ferguson, 47, was found dead in Binotti’s Kyauktada apartment on 6 November with massive head and chest wounds. Binotti and Ferguson had been drinking together on 3 November before going back to Binotti’s apartment.

Neighbors in Kyauktada told reporters in November that they heard a loud ruckus in the early morning hours of 4 November involving two men and a woman.

They said Binotti and his girlfriend, Elise Devolder, had rented the apartment about three months prior.

Devolder, a Belgian national, was apparently living with Binotti in his Glasgow apartment until two days ago.

Ironically, Binotti and Devolder lived less than a mile from a police station in Glasgow, according to the Scottish Sun.

Gary Ferguson, originally from Bangor, Northern Ireland, leaves behind a wife and a four-year-old son.

His brother, Martin Fergus, said the delays in justice for his brother have been frustrating and, at times, infuriating.

“I very much want to get him (Binotti) off the streets,” Martin Ferguson told the Global New Light of Myanmar yesterday.—Aye Min Soe contributed to this report.
Vice President U Henry Van Thio starts working visit to the Netherlands

AT an invitation of Mr. Lodewijk Frans Asscher, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Social Affairs and Employment of the Netherlands, a Myanmar delegation led by Vice President of the Union of Myanmar U Henry Van Thio left the Yangon International Airport yesterday morning for the Netherlands to pay a working visit there.

The Vice President accompanied by the Union Minister for Transport and Communications U Thant Sin Maung and the officials were seen off at the airport by the Yangon Region cabinet members and officials.

The Vice President and party arrived at the Amsterdam-Schiphol International Airport (AMS) at 4:30pm local standard time and were welcomed by Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Myanmar Mr. Wouter Robert Marie Jurgens and responsible officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Myanmar Ambassador to the Netherlands U Paw Lwin Sein and officials from the Myanmar Embassy in Brussels.

—Myanmar News Agency

Amyotha Hlutaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than meets with Myawady residents

AMYOTHA HLUTTAW Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than who was in Myawady visited Palu village tract, Minletpan village yesterday at 9 a.m. met with the villagers in the Dhamma Hall of the Ywa Oo Monastery.

Hlutaw representatives, district, township and village officials were present together with the local people.

At the meeting, Mahn Win Khaing Than said that he was happy to meet with local ethnic brothers and sisters. He said attempts were being made to upgrade the education and health sectors according to the Union budget and that in fact more funds had been spent on the education and health sectors currently. There were plans to allocate more funds to these two sectors. As the economy of the country developed, the education and health sectors would become more adequately funded.

Foreign investment was required for the country’s economy to improve and the Hlutaw was having deliberations for the emergence of a comprehensive law required to increase foreign investment. Foreign investment would come in only if the law was logical and sound. More job opportunities would be created only if foreign investments came into the country.

In giving a briefing about the work of the Hlutaw the Speaker explained that the Hlutaw was an organization that enacted laws. It also had the responsibility of overseeing the work of the judiciary and executive branches of the government to ensure that there were checks and balances. In exercising the legislative powers entrusted to it, the Hlutaw had been enacting new laws, amending existing laws and removing outdated laws for the benefit of the country and the people.

He requested the local people to discuss with him candidly about the problems they were facing and he assured that he would take effective measures to resolve them while informing the people that action would be taken in a transparent manner. He added that the Union Government and the Hlutaw had been instituting changes and introducing reforms in the various sectors of the country to achieve the best results.

He said Peace was the key for the development of the country. Foreign investments would come in only when peace was achieved and the country would develop further only if foreign investments came in. He continued that under the leadership of the State Counselor, they had been striving to achieve eternal peace with Metta (Loving-kindness).

He concluded by saying that he hoped the local people would cooperate with strength and high spirits, and that they would do their respective tasks no matter what functions they were performing.

Afterwards, State Hlutaw representative provided explanations to the discussions on developmental requirements presented by the people of Minletpan village, Inginmyaing village and Kyaukkhlet village of Myawady Township.

Amyotha Hlutaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than then thanked the people for discussing about the regional development matters in an open and frank manner and said he would coordinate with officials concerned and take action accordingly regarding the matters that had been discussed.

The Speaker then visited the Minletpan Basic Education Middle School and inspected the status of laying a concrete road in front of the school that was built with the Union Hlutaw reserve fund.—Myanmar News Agency

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
President’s Office
Order 7/2017
8th Waning of Tagu, 1379 ME
19 April, 2017

Appointment of Deputy Minister

In accordance with the provisions stated in article 234 (a) (d) of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Section 16 (b) sub-section (9) of Union Government Law, U Aung Htoo, has been appointed as the Deputy Minister for Commerce.

Sd/ Htin Kyaw
President
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Housings for government employees to be constructed in regions and states

THE 2nd coordination meeting on construction of staff housing for government employees was held at the Ministry of Planning and Finance in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon, with Union Minister U Kyaw Win in attendance.

At the meeting, the Union Minister said that the incumbent government has been constructing fair price apartments and low-cost housings for the retirees in some regions and states to settle housing insufficiency. He added that the low-cost apartments were being sold on an installment basis for the convenience of the general public, saying the Ministry of Construction plans to build low-cost housings across the country in cooperation with the ministries, region and state governments, banks and the construction entrepreneurs.

The officials from Nay Pyi Taw Council and the ministries, regional and state ministers for construction, the chairman of Myanmar Construction Entrepreneurs Association and responsible personnel from Myanmar Banks Association took part in the discussions.

—Myanmar News Agency

The 2nd coordination meeting held at the Ministry of Planning and Finance in Nay Pyi Taw. Photo: MNA
A railway project to improve five important railroad sections, including the Yangon-Mandalay and Yangon-Pyay railroads, is the key priority under a master plan, according to the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

In the initial stage of the railway plan, the ministry will implement the upgrading of five major railroad sections which cover 80 per cent of the country — the 385-mile-long Yangon-Mandalay railroad, the 340-mile-long Mandalay-Myitkyina railroad section, the 176-mile-long Yangon-Mawlamyine railroad section, and the 160-mile-long Yangon-Pyay railroad section and the Yangon circular railroad. The cost for the project that will upgrade all railroad sections in the whole country is expected to reach approximately US$60 billion.

For the time being, the ministry is implementing the Yangon circular railroad project with the use of more than $200 million in Japanese loans and it is estimated to be finalised by the 2020-2021 financial year.

The Yangon circular railroad project includes preliminary engineering, embankment maintenance and a proper drainage system. The project will cut travelling time as well as improve rail safety for commuters, officials said.

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**Transport authorities prioritise railway project**

Htee Sekha Waterfall in Loikaw draws crowds

HTEESEKHA Waterfall, the most accessible and well-known waterfall in Loikaw Township, Kayah State, is drawing increasing numbers of visitors from near and far who come to see its unspoiled beauty.

Visitors to the magnificent waterfall have significantly increased from last year because of its beautiful landscapes and natural attractions, according to tour operators.

Situated in Htee Sekha Village in Loilinlay Village-tract, near the Shan-Kayah border seven miles from Loikaw Town, Kayah State and about 90 miles from Taunggyi, the capital of Shan State, the Htee Sekha Waterfall is a natural wonder surrounded by lush green forest. Swimming is possible in the clear, clean and cool stream.

Police carry out security checks around the waterfall area regularly for safety of visitors. Pagodas and a Buddhist monastery are located near the waterfall have similarly drawn increasing numbers of devotees and merit makers, especially during religious events.

The waterfall dates back many decades, but remained undiscovered until Saiygion from Htee Sekha Village came across the stunning scene in the summer of 2001. The waterfall then began to be known as a nice place to camp in the summer, with natural caves nearby that can be explored. The emergence of stupas, related religious structures, rest houses, restaurants and ornament shops have since increased.

— Ko Sai (Loikaw)

**Crime**

Yaba seized on Lashio-Mong Yaw road

AN anti-narcotic squad from Lashio searched a motorbike driven by EaikOo together with Ma Aye Aung on board into the entrance of Narpha village on Lashio-Mong Yaw road in Lashio on 18 April and found 800 yaba pills from Ma Aye Aung’s blouse. Police have taken action against EaikOo, 35, and Ma Aye Aung, 52, under the Anti-narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.

**Stimulant pills seized in Kalaw Tsp**

ANTI-DRUG squad from Taunggyi searched a vehicle driven by Sai Setai followed by Takyout on board and seized stimulant pills worth K 7.8 lakh packed with two plastic bags and one gunny sack including one handset which were put on the back-seat cushion of the vehicle near Bhawa Tantaya Bridge on the highway road of Taunggyi-Mekhtila in Heho, Kalaw Township yesterday.

The men are being charged under the Anti-narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.

**AD Van crashed into road-divider on Highway**

A white AD Van driven by Naing Naing Win en route from Nay Pyi Taw to Yangon hit a road-divider when the front wheel burst out on the early morning of 19 April between mile posts 97/3 and 97/4 on Yangon-Mandalay Highway.

No one was injured in the accident but the vehicle was damaged, losses amounting to Ks 2 lakh. Local police have taken action against the driver under section 279 of the Penal Code.

There were 17 car accidents on Yangon-Mandalay Highway during this Water Festival according to Police Major Yan Naing of Yangon Highway Police Force. The vehicles that met with accidents are one express, one light truck, eight privately owned vehicles and seven motorbikes. Four people were killed while 14 others injured in the accidents.
US dollar exchange rate dips with lower US dollar index

WITH the US dollar index weakening since 10th April, the US dollar exchange rate fell to Ks1,351 eight days later, according to the local currency exchange market.

The US dollar index reached 101.22 on 10th April and continued to fall. The dollar index was above 100 points before 13th April, then slipped to 99 points. The dollar index was on the rise as of early March in the global market. However, it was remarkably on the decline in late March.

Meanwhile, the US dollar exchange rate in the local currency market was around Ks1,360 between 16th and 27th March. The rate decreased to under Ks1,360 from 28th to 4th April.

The exchange rate was found to experience a downward trend later 6th April. After that, it reached three-month low of around Ks1,351 on 18th April.

The Central Bank of Myanmar scaled down a bit the US dollar exchange rate from Ks1,359 to Ks1,356 on 19th April.

—Mon Mon

High global gold price hikes up domestic gold price

THE domestic gold price reached a record high of about Ks912,000 per tical as the global gold price has risen since 18th April, according to the local gold market.

The gold price continued to rise quickly during April in the global market, ranging from US$1,256 to 1,289 per ounce between 11th and 18th April. The domestic gold price is fluctuating, aligned with world market. The price fell under Ks900,000 per tical in early March, then back to above Ks900,000 per tical, in keeping with a hike in global gold market.

With a slump in global gold price, the domestic gold price again slipped to below Ks900,000 between 31st March and 3rd April. The local gold price remained on the rise to around Ks900,000 on 4th April. After the Thingyan festival holidays, the gold price hit a high of about Ks912,000 per tical on 18th April, according to the gold and jewellery shops. —Mon Mon

Local grapes cannot compete against imported varieties

LOCAL grapes are offered at a reduced price compared to those imported from China and Thailand in the market.

Prices for locally produced grapes declined by about one third against the foreign varieties. In a bid to compete with the imported grapes in the market, grapes of quality and high market demand should be grown, said a vineyard owner of Sae-palaegon village in Yame-thin Township, Mandalay Region.

“We need to grow only grapes of good quality in order to grasp a firm market. We need to switch to better grape varieties. Growing techniques with the use of seeds is still lacking in Myanmar. Efforts are being made to produce grapes by grafting in the coming grape season. Only grapes of good quality can compete against the product from Thailand and China in the domestic market”, he added.

Black Queen, Big Black, Shweni, Cardinal and other grape varieties are cultivated in Myanmar. Currently, there are about 5,000 acres of grape farms across the country.

—200

Available @

Market Place by City Mart (6.5 Mile)
Market Place by City Mart (Damasidi Road)
City Mart (Aung San Stadium)
City Mart (47th street)
City Mart (Yankin)
City Mart (China Town)
City Mart (FMI)
City Mart (Junction Square)
City Mart (Junction Maw Tin)
City Mart (Sule Square)
City Mart (Star City - Thanlyin)
City Mart (Waizayandar)
City Mart (Hledan)
City Mart (Myanmar Plaza)
Ocean North Point (9 mile)
Ocean Shwegonedine

Grapes are seen at a farm in Yamethin Township, Mandalay Region on 13 April 2017. Photo: Mektila MK

Gold jewelry seen at shop in downtown Yangon. Photo: GNLM/Phoe Kanar
Performances in One-Year Period

Introduction

This article is based on the statistics sent by data collection board, but it mainly depended upon my own findings and hypothesis, hence the need to assume that critics and conclusions included in the article should be regarded to be the assumption of the writer.

Only if there has been progress in the sector of social affairs, has a country or a race achieved development. The progress of a country or a race can be assessed by using the progress of its social affairs as a criterion. Progress in peace and stability, economic progress and political progress can drive the progress of social affairs to its success, but it cannot make an effect directly. Provided that law and order restoration & rule of two develop, social affairs can develop. Yet, whenever the former develops, the latter cannot be said for sure to become developed. As regards politics and economy, it is in the similar way. It is worse as there are not any standardized criteria for assessing the progress of politics, economy and social affairs. It will be a big question, as to who can say that there has gained the above-said progress, if any kinds of progress have emerged.

Economy at the very first step

Undeniably, social existence is really connected with economy. But, social existence of the public (social life) and economy of the country are not in the same way all the time. As regards this, the necessary explanation will be made in the following paragraph. Because, we have to answer the question as to whether the public will be full of basic needs if the country’s economy becomes better, for now. For answering the question, we must reassess by which criterion the economy of a country can be measured. Generally, it is commonly used the Gross Domestic Production. If and when our currency is devalued or commodity prices inflate or there includes fabricated statistics or the country depends upon foreign loans as the government statistics or the country depends upon foreign loans as the government, it cannot make an effect directly. It will be a big question, as to who can say that there has gained the above-said progress, if any kinds of progress have emerged.

Looking into the Progress of Social Affairs in One-Year Period

Kyaw Saw Min

Upper left, a child peeks in on Pa’O women attending a class as part of the literacy campaign. PHOTO: MNA

As regards the politics, we should be well convinced that there are two parts in politics— the affair of the country and the party politics.

Politics at the middle step

In the country with unstable politics or in the country with stable-but conditionally re-strained-politics, the people may be full of their needs in every way but they will partially live in anxiety or in dissatisfaction. Such a person under the said situation cannot be named the citizen with high status in social affairs. A good political system gives a good administrative one. Its upper reach is the Constitution. If there is a hole of toxin, there will be no good places along the river. Had equality and enjoying human rights been broken in some way or other, there can arise impacts in the social class of taking people’s finances, that is, government servicemen and citizens residing in the country. Such impacts are apt to lead to social conflicts.

As regards the politics, we should be well convinced that there are two parts in politics— the affair of the country and the party politics.
In my opinion, central control center is urgently needed for these rescue works. From the establishment of a website to opening Facebook arrangements are needed to have been done broadly. Relations must have been made with all the philanthropic teams from home and abroad. If emergency cases happen, news and information are required to have been made known to people in accord with changing times. Needs for transport and news on route clearance must have been made known to rescue teams as well as the people. Sometimes, rescue teams are apt to assemble at some places only with no one seen in many places. Had the government arranged for these giving ways of selling things donated from foreign donors and making fabricated information that donations were done by the government, the situation might have been different.

Our country can be likened to a runner who is going to start for the race on the run-way for the progress but instead of running not an easy work for the one-year-old government left with a legacy of complicated problems such as political and economic problems, empty vaults, and wasteful anxieties in in un-peaceful state and violation of rule of law, to keep pace with social development of fellow countries from neighboring countries. For these reasons, I hereby will make suggestions instead of blaming and disclose the truth instead of praising.

A Country of Grandeur

If a country has good governance and every citizen has rights of equality, it may be the one of grandeur. Only if there exist peace and rule of law in the country will social sufferings alleviate. Provided that modernized industrial society can be built up, the economy will develop and campaigns for social affairs from education to literature and culture can be extended. Our country will become the one of great grandeur only if every individual can enjoy respectable human rights.

What are respectable human rights? It can be said we can make an initiative to an access to respectable human rights if we come to possess rights to express freely, honestly, and without anxiety. There are only a few nations which can guarantee all 30 rights included in the declaration of human rights as member states of the United Nations. Hence, there is a scarcity of countries with full percent respect as regards human rights. However, in the era of the well-wishing government appointed by the people, we can move on our destination step by step. Without social development, dignity of all subjects residing in the country drops. If so, dignity of the country does similarly. So, it is to avoid things which will make the citizens’ dignity plunge.

During one-year period when the new government has been in power, it has been a good performance to have enacted the elderly-related law to provide special rights and protections for elderly individuals. The main objective of Myanmar News and Media Council Law & Communications Law enacted in the reign of the previous regime but sharply applied only in the present government’s rule is to protect people’s rights. It is the responsibility of the people’s government to protect people by controlling spreads of fabricated news as every individual is within in the reach of communication websites. Yet, it will take time to amend restrictions by regulations in some laws. TV broadcastings and the public-owned newspapers under the ministry of information have been found to have changed remarkably. It reaches the public in the most effective way, assumed to increase visions and outlooks for the freedom and human rights and simultaneously to reduce feelings of disappointment and worries. And I assume that there should be an organization that will adjust the broadcasts of private media. If scrutiny and suggestion concerning from place of management of advertisements to ways to dress and speak can be made, it will be like leading to the cultural destination of the country.

It must be put on record of the concerted effort of the archaeology department under the ministry of religious affairs and culture for the work of finding out traditional culture. It has been learnt that 289 collapsed stupas and pagodas due to earthquake had been renovated by the people under the leadership of the country, with 224 out of them finished.

In maintaining ancient cultural heritages, it is vital for not losing national heritage, but if the industry is diverse based on the area the country’s economy will develop, as will that of the area. For that, dubious businesses in the region must be strictly prohibited. Construction of hotels and golf clubs in the midst of pagodas can harm the national image. In assessing the progress of social affairs of a country, the commonly used index is Human Development Index (HDI). Though not being a perfect index, it is mostly used, as it is measured depending upon life expectancy, education, literacy and per capita income. According to HDI collect in (March 2017), Norway 0.949, Australia 0.939, Singapore 0.925, America 0.9 2d and Japan 0.903 were enlisted in the top list whereas our country still stood at the lowest level, gaining 0.4.

Inequality adjusted HDI is the index of social affairs acquired by adjusting the favorable advantages of each country such as differences of buying capacity of currency between countries. On account of calculation in such a way, Norway went to 0.898 HDI, standing first, with America to 0.796, China 0.727, Thailand rising up over 0.7. Myanmar rose up 0.536, still standing 3rd of the 10 least HDI & at the bottom of ASEAN countries.

The situation is the position we undeniably must hold. To rise up to a higher level, in other word, to become a dignified one, the people and philosophers from the region and abroad must help the government to develop the social life of citizens, systematically. In the reign of the new government it has been learnt that health, education and communication for rural development were developed, according to the statistics received. We can see how much effort the ministries and regional governments had exerted. There is a principle that a government need not be praised if it performs the responsibility which is worth doing, but it must be blamed critically unless it does its duty it should carry out. Under the above-said principle, the new government overcame the barrier of being criticized. In the phase of culture, there can be ways and means to revive Myanmar Puppet, Saing Waing (Myanmar Orchestra Group), Anyeint, Kwesei and Zat before its demise, with no need to spend too much money like spending for the Myanmar’s national performing arts competition.

Individual existence of the citizens

Individual existence of the citizens is related to the social life of their family and political life. Skyrocketing commodity prices, weakness in giving service to public health, wrong concept of education and exercising bias on the responsibility which is worth doing, but it must be blamed critically unless it does its duty it should carry out. Under the above-said principle, the new government overcame the barrier of being criticized. In the phase of culture, there can be ways and means to revive Myanmar Puppet, Saing Waing (Myanmar Orchestra Group), Anyeint, Kwesei and Zat before its demise, with no need to spend too much money like spending for the Myanmar’s national performing arts competition.

To rise up to a higher level, in other word, to become a dignified one, the people and philosophers from the region and abroad must help the government to develop the social life of citizens, systematically. In the reign of the new government it has been learnt that

Ariel view of the completed Panzine Creek Bridge connecting Yatheudang and Buthidaung Townships. Photo: MNA

the social development. I firmly believe that Hluttaw must accomplish the task of developing hilly regions and flat land equally.

Conclusion

Usually, social conclusion follows economic and political conclusions. I hope readers to notice that this conclusion is not the one assessed on social viewpoint alone.

In the countries that rule by elections, respectable constitutions, what are the most important things are 3 “Chote” & one “Oat”. 3 Chotes are Union Attorneys and Union Chief Justice and Union Auditor General whereas one Oat is Chairman of the Central Bank. Provided that their skill, sharpness, dignity and good experiences, constitution, politics, economy and social affairs of the country will be high.

Besides HDI, EQ (Emotion Quotient) has been used to be easier to assess. Happiness and Healthiness of citizens are categorized under the system. In fact, it is not easy as expected. EQ does not represent rightfully for a social class or a country, though it may be easy for a person. If we really want social progress, the government has an actual authority and power.

I want to assert that we will be able to stand tall only if peace comes. For doing the word, “peacock” I do not want you to think that I mean NLD. In the Yadanarbon Era.

Time to return home, as the daylight becomes gloomy.

Peacocks are screaming,
Send a person to pick me up
No more peacocks scream.

Peacocks will fight against our yellow-robed lad.

It was once very popular. Here peacock means a coin with the symbol of a peacock. It is a poem composed about young monks persuaded by paying money in an accident. Only if the economy of the country makes progress, will more budget be able to be used for social welfare activities. So, it is necessary for peacocks to scream, that is, the country will be more powerful only if it is wealthy.

Although the civilian government was left with a legacy of empty finance vaults it has been trying its best for the development of social progress with its meagre amount of finance.

Yet, it is still necessary to cultivate the culture of welcoming forces of philanthropist groups. We hope it will be able to perform emergency rescue works, plus education, health and survival of displaced nationals, long term plans.

The journey to proceed is still far away. As it is, we have our feet far away. As it is, we have our feet
A Temporary Escape from the Hustle-Bustle of City Life

Dr. Soe Min Aung

Monks and novices are collecting alms-meal in their alms-bowls. Poetry: Dr. Soe Min Aung

We approve your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or suggestions, please email report-problems@globalnewslife/myanmar.com with your name and title.

Global News Life Myanmar
One Landmine Explodes in Mansi

AT 5:05 pm on 19 April, one landmine exploded at map index (289), east of Mansi, in Bhamo District, Kachin State, hitting 3 daughters of U Wai I Brahan and Daw Alemee residing in Pyin Oo Lwin Ward while going to hillside cultivation. Out of them, Ma Htu Taung aged 9 was killed with the whole body wounded, it is learnt. Ma Jursaitan aged 22 was injured on her left thigh, left chest and right calf, with Ma Jipan aged 15 wounded under her left arm, waist and left thigh. It is learnt that they were hospitalized at the Mansi general hospital for medical treatment.—District IPRD

Organic markets to open in townships of Yangon

ORGANIC vegetables and organic produce shops will be opened in townships in Yangon Region. Shares will be also invited by the organic market implementation committee for emergence of the organic markets in all townships.

People can buy shares at a price of Ks 0.5 million per unit. The organic shops will be opened in every township in Yangon Region with an aim to ensure good national health, to sustain the environment and to create the organic markets for organic vegetal farmers. Currently, selling the organic products is meant for keeping good health of the public. After opening the organic shops in townships in Yangon Region, the organic market implementation committee is planning to open similar shops in other regions and states.—District IPRD

Loilem paints itself a rosy picture

THAE NAING OO (Myanmarsar)

WITH its many twists and turns, the road to Loilem is flanked by views so breathtaking that it makes me forget how tired I am.

This is the first time for me to visit Loilem, though I visited nearby Taunggyi many times. I became refreshed again when I saw the Myakantar Lake, which is situated in Namhsan, on the way to Loilem. In fact, Loilem and Myakantar Lake are inseparable.

Loilem connects eastern and western Shan State and is a peaceful city with Shan, Pa-O and other ethnicities living in harmony. In the past a five-hour trip from Taunggyi to Loilem could only be made twice a day with a security convoy. But now with technological advancements that have allowed mountain roads to be paved and rays of peace to shine, the roads are filled with endless numbers of travelling vehicles. Travelling from Taunggyi to Loilem now only takes 2 hours, and it’s only 15 minutes from Loilem to the historical city of Panglong six miles away, where one can view the Panglong memorial pillar commemorating the signing of unification of the nation. The three cities of Panglong-Loilem-Namhsan are developing into economically beneficial areas.

With a total population of over 5.8 million and an area of 61,000 square miles, Shan State is home to various national races — Shan, Danu, Intha, Palaung, Padaung, Pa-O, Kokang, Wa, Kachin, Bamar, Aikhar, Lahu, Lisu and others.

I got a chance to talk to local ethnic people at a reception marking the opening of Kanbawza Bank in Loilem.

Among the people in attendance was U Tung Wai, a resident who runs a publishing house and a sports gear shop.

“We thought our Loilem was under a curse for lagging behind in development. But, today we can transfer money to towns nationwide with the opening of Kanbawza Bank in our town and our businesses are on the road to booming,” said U Tun Wai.

Locals including civil service personnel and businessmen in Loilem no longer need to go to other towns to transfer money to other areas.

It was a pleasant moment for U Nyo Myint, Senior Executive Director of the KBZ Bank Ltd, who inaugurated the bank in Loilem. U Nyo Myint grew up in Loilem, attending kindergarten to matriculation at the Basic Education High School-1 in Loilem.

Speaking on the occasion, he also took pride in the KBZ’s Brighter Future Myanmar Foundation’s achievements in fighting water scarcity in Loilem.

A drilling in Loilem, which had been experiencing water scarcity due to a lack of access to water sources, struck water five days after the work started last year.

The water gushed out of the well being drilled at the Dattaw Pagoda road. — The mirror

Energy management courses to be provided free by experts

ENERGY system optimization and energy management system courses will be provided free of charge by experts from America and Denmark, according to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The Steam Energy System Optimization (SSO) user level two-day training course No.7 will be opened free of charge in the training hall of Yangon Region Industrial Supervision and Inspection Department on Kaba Aye Pagoda road on 2 and 3 May. The experts from America will promote the need of steam system optimization, Thermodynamics and Heat Transfer, and the use of Steam Best Practices Software Tools among others.

The applicants must be holders of Bachelors in Engineering or have minimal two-year experience working with boilers and be able to communicate in English language. The applicants have to download the form from www. iemyanmar.com/ and submit it to email: AZIN@unido.org, T.OO@unido.org not later than 27 April.

Moreover, Energy Management System (En MS) user level two-day training course No9 will be opened on 15 and 16 May and EnMS user level two-day training course No 10 on 18 and 19 May free of charge in the training hall of Yangon region Industrial Supervision and Inspection Department on Kaba Aye Pagoda road. — The mirror

Local people in Maungtaw enjoy the last day of Rakhnine traditional Thingyan festival on 19th April. PHOTO: TIN SOE

Rakhine traditional Thingyan festival in Maungtaw ends

Rakhine traditional Thingyan festival in Maungtaw was successfully completed yesterday. Rakhine traditional Thingyan festival in Maungtaw started on Myanmar New Year Day (April 17) and a closing ceremony was held on the last day, yesterday afternoon, with performance of dance troupes. Afterward ethnic Rakhine vocalists entertained the huge crowd and the Rakhine traditional Thingyan festival in Maungtaw was successfully concluded at 6:30 p.m.

District and township officials, military and civil authorities, ethnic Rakhine vocalists, dance troupes, local elders and revelers from Maungtaw district attended the closing ceremony.

—Yamanya

Alaungdaw Kathapa to be closed because of bad weather

ALAUNGDAW KATHAPA will be closed beginning from 21 April because of erratic weather, said an official from Yimmabin township government administration department.

The Alaungdaw Kathapa was opened to pilgrims on 27 January. On 20 April, the presiding monks and members of the pagoda board of trustees will discuss their progress of work as well as the future plans.

The ovadacarita sayadaws and eminent monks from four townships will recite partitas at the closing ceremony of Alaungdaw Kathapa on 21 April.

During the rainy season, the path leading to Alaungdaw Kathapa becomes muddy and dangerous. The number of local and foreign visitors coming to Alaungdaw Kathapa has increased this year.

Alaungdaw Kathapa can be visited via Monywa town. Currently, Thayaw Kyin village section of the road is being up-graded and not completed yet.

Most of the Europeans visit Alaungdaw Kathapa. —200
On freight trains, migrants in Greece seek new routes north

THESSALONIKI, Greece — It was Mohamed Khaleuf’s third attempt to cross the Greek-Macedonian border hiding in a freight train and he had no plans to give up trying.

“I promised myself I would try five times. If I’m not successful, I will try to cross from somewhere else,” said Khaleuf, a migrant from Morocco in his early twenties.

Khaleuf is among dozens of migrants, mostly young Moroccans, Tunisians and Algerians, who arrived in Greece in the last year and found shelter in old rusting carriages around a station in the outskirts of Greece’s northern city of Thessaloniki.

From there, they monitor freight trains heading to central Europe. Whenever trains stop in the station, migrants try to sneak into their compartments or jump in between wagons.

If they’re lucky, they make it across unnoticed. Some said they plan to get off before the border and continue on foot. Often, they are arrested by Macedonian guards and sent back to Greece. No one can say how many have made it. A Greek government spokesman was not immediately available for comment.

More than a million refugees and migrants arrived in Europe in 2015, landing in Greece and then streaming through the Balkans, heading north to Germany or Austria.

But that route shut in March last year following an agreement between the EU and Turkey, standing about 60,000 people in makeshift and formal camps across Greece.

In the abandoned trains where Khaleuf and others live, conditions are grim, with electric wires or water pipes running overhead. In a nearby camp in a former toilet factory, miners and改进 learning. Students of delivering the curriculum and system which will lower the cost "smart-classroom" project. Rwanda education through a Microsoft Corporation to digitize entered an agreement with Mi-

KIGALI — Rwanda has announced plans to digitize education system to further innovation, social inclusion, job creation, education quality and national competitiveness, the education minister said Wednesday.

Musafiri Papias Malimba told reporters that the country entered an agreement with Microsoft Corporation to digitize Rwanda education through a “smart-classroom” project.

"We are at adopting digitized based education system which will lower the cost of delivering the curriculum and learning materials to schools and improve learning. Students in schools across Rwanda will be exposed to an education system that emphasizes computers and internet use in classrooms to impart knowledge," he noted.

Malimba stated that digitization will provide plenty of alternatives to address the socio-economic challenges facing many emerging economies, particularly in terms of improving access to education.

In 2014, the ministry of education entered a partnership with Microsoft to incorporate information and communication technology into various aspects of the education sector, ranging from helping students access computers and basic Microsoft software such as Word and Excel to digitizing subject content delivered in schools.

It is planned under the partnership that by the year 2020 all schools in the country will have two smart classrooms and all subjects will have been digitized, according to the ministry.

The ministry further said the first batch of the schools will be having smart classrooms by the end of 2017.

Available statistics from the Rwanda Education Board indicate that only 9 per cent or 55 schools in Rwanda currently have access to the Internet.

In 2010, the small central African country rolled out more than 3,000 kilometres of fibre optic cable across the country to enable better access to internet services. The optic cable seeks to boost access to various broadband services, including applications such as e-governance, e-banking, e-learning and e-health.

It was expected to become a key enabler of the digital economy for Rwanda to achieve the middle-income status by 2020.

The 2015 global ICT report released by the World Economic Forum ranked Rwanda among top ten countries in Africa that are most dynamic performers when it comes to ICT development.

Rwanda plans to establish an ICT park that will be a base of technological investments, including training, industries, research and development— Xinhua

Venezuelan opposition to hold ‘mother of all marches’ against Maduro

CARACAS — Venezuela’s opposition says it will stage the “mother of all marches” on Wednesday, accusing President Nicolas Maduro of resorting to dictatorial measures to quash popular outrage over a deepening economic crisis.

In the culmination of a fortnight of violent demonstrations that killed five people, marchers around the country will demand the government present a timeline for delayed elections, halt a security crackdown on protests, and respect the autonomy of the opposition-led legislature.

Maduro, who says recent protests have been little more than opposition efforts to foment violence and topple his government, has called on sympathizers of the ruling Socialist Party to hold a competing march in Caracas.

“This is a government in its terminal phase,” two-time presidential candidate Henrique Capriles told Reuters on Tuesday morning.

“This is going to escalate... and force Maduro, and his regime, to hold free and democratic elections.”

Venezuelans have for years been furious about a collapsing economy in which basic food products are a struggle to obtain and triple-digit inflation is steadily eroding consumer spending power.

But a Supreme Court decision in March to assume the powers of the opposition-led Congress sparked a wave of protests that have not ebbed, even though the court has partly reversed the measure in the face of international condemnation.

Further spurring outrage was a decision by the national comptroller’s office earlier this month to disqualify Capriles from holding office for 15 years, dashing his hopes for the presidency.

The elections council, which is sympathetic to the government, has delayed votes for state governors which were supposed to take place last year. The opposition says this is because the ruling Socialist Party is likely to fare poorly in such a vote.

Eleven Latin American countries issued a joint statement this week calling on authorities to set a time frame for elections to “allow for a quick solution to the crisis that Venezuela is living through.”

Marches have repeatedly ended in clashes between demonstrators and security forces, with rock-throwing youths squaring off against tear-gas lobbing security forces in confused melee that drag on well into the evening.

The opposition will congregate at more than two dozen meeting points around Caracas and attempt to converge on the office of the state ombudsman, a guarantor of human rights.

Previous efforts to march there have been blocked by the National Guard, resulting in clashes.

As has become common in recent weeks on protest days, Venezuelan authorities will close 27 metro stations and likely set up checkpoints to slow entry to the city.

Socialist Party officials dismiss the opposition marches as efforts to destabilize the government, pointing to protests as tactics to incite violence and vandalism, and which have called on sympathizers to rally around Maduro.

“Let’s all go conquer the peace, defend the fatherland, the constitution, the revolution.”

But pro-government marches no longer have the fervor or numbers of those of Maduro’s predecessor.

Opposition leaders also accuse the government of infiltrating marches with violent protesters as a way of discrediting them.— Reuters
**Pence shows willingness to cut trade deficits with Japan**

TOKYO — US Vice President Mike Pence showed a willingness to cut trade deficits with Japan on Wednesday while also expressing hope to launch bilateral free trade negotiations.

The United States “seeks a strong and more balanced bilateral relationship with Japan,” Pence said in a speech at a meeting with Japanese business leaders.

He also said President Donald Trump has made it “clear our administration strengthens international trade relationships using a bilateral approach.”

Pence, who was visiting Tokyo to attend the first meeting on Tuesday of a high-level economic dialogue between the two countries, underscored that the talks are an opportunity to deepen bilateral economic ties.

The countries agreed Tuesday to discuss a bilateral framework for trade and investment rules, with Pence raising the prospect of a free trade agreement.

They said in a joint statement that they will intensify talks on three aspects of the relationship, including trade and investment rules, at a time when the new US administration is seeking bilateral rather than multilateral deals.—Kyodo News

**Slovenia ombudsman asks court to examine new migration law**

LJUBLJANA — Slovenia’s human rights ombudsman asked the country’s top court on Wednesday to rule whether some changes in laws related to foreigners, passed in January, are in line with the constitution.

The changes “are making foreigners an object rather than a subject of the (migration) procedure”, the ombudsman, Vlasta Nussdorfer, said in her request to the Constitutional Court, and she believes they breach human rights.

The government claims the changes are needed to endure another large influx of migrants, particularly since its northern neighbour, Austria, and other west European states were closing their doors to migrants.

The legal changes have not been used so far because it had not seen any significant illegal migration through Slovenia in recent months, the government said. It also said the changes are in line with the Slovenian and European legislation.

The Constitutional Court did not say when it would rule on Nussdorfer’s request, but its procedures usually take several months.—Reuters

**Indian bus crash kills 44 after plunge off mountain road**

NEW DELHI — A bus fell off a mountain road in a northern Indian state and plunged into a river on Wednesday, killing 44 people, officials said.

There were just two survivors from the 46 on board, its conductor and a passenger who jumped off just before the mishap in the state of Himachal Pradesh, said Anil Chauhan, a local government official.

Rescue efforts have been launched at the accident site near Nerwa, a town about 110 km (68 miles) from Shimla, the state capital, he added.

Deadly traffic accidents are common in India, where driving standards are poor and roads and vehicles badly maintained, but Wednesday’s crash was unusual for its heavy death toll.

India has the world’s deadliest roads, with almost 150,000 people killed in accidents in recent years of financial austerity.

The quest for environment-friendly agriculture, industry and alternatives to nuclear and carbon-based power is an opportunity France and Europe must seize, he says; hence the pledge to spend much of his 100 billion euros stimulus on new power projects.

Instead of the free trade agreements he denounces, Melanchon advocates alternative forms of cooperation. His manifesto lauds a Latin American accord under which Chavez sent oil to Cuba and Castro dispatched eye-doctors to treat thousands of Venezuelans blinded by cataracts.

A distrust of traditional media has led him to rely heavily on social media to reach out to voters. He boasts a bigger YouTube following than US President Donald Trump has during the race to the White House.

He uses hologram technology worthy of Star Trek movies to address rallies, usually sporting a hybrid of traditional proletarian jackets, while a virtual-reality Melanchon does the same job at rallies elsewhere.

Born in the Moroccan port city of Tangiers, Melanchon attributes his feisty character to his Mediterranean roots.

He is naturally more muted about his rise to fourth place in polls, days from the 23 April opening vote. He surged in the same way in 2012 but was knocked out with a less impressive score on voting day.

—Reuters

**Melencion: France’s feisty Castro fan and would-be president**

PARIS — He admires the late Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro and Venezuelan former president Hugo Chavez, and he has little time for German Chancellor Angela Merkel: Jean-Luc Melencion, French would-be president, is a true tax-and-spend leftist.

If elected, the 65-year-old leader of the small Left Party says France would spend 100 billion euros of borrowed money on vast housebuilding and renewable energy projects to stimulate economic growth and job-creation.

He would impose a 90-per cent supertax on earners of 400,000 euros a year upwards, reject EU rules on deficit reduction and call a “Frexit” referendum to quit the European Union if Merkel and other leaders refuse to radically change course, notably by turning their backs on years of financial austerity.

If French voters pick any of the other three top contenders in a presidential vote that comes to a head on 7 May, Melencion warned a rally on 12 April: “You’ll be coughing blood.”

The rivals are centrist Emmanuel Macron, favourite in polls, Francois Fillon, a right-winger who wants to slash public spending and the public employment workforce, and Marine Le Pen, whose biggest difference with Melencion is her stand against foreigners.

Like Le Pen, he is a member of the European Parliament, but no fan of the direction the European Union has taken. Poverty and poor economic growth, he says, are a result of laissez-faire economics and an allergy to deficit-spending that he blames on Merkel’s Germany.

By spending heavily and hiking public sector wages, he says, the French economy will grow faster, knocking the jobless rate from 10 per cent to six percent by end of term in 2022, buoying tax income for the state and social services.

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They said in a joint statement that they will intensify talks on three aspects of the relationship, including trade and investment rules, at a time when the new US administration is seeking bilateral rather than multilateral deals.—Kyodo News

He wants to devalue the euro to boost trade competitiveness. He promises to veto free-trade pacts, end European Central Bank independence from politicians, quit the International Monetary Fund and pull France out of the NATO military alliance.

The quest for environment-friendly agriculture, industry and alternatives to nuclear and carbon-based power is an opportunity France and Europe
US VP Pence says working with allies to put pressure on N Korea

TOKYO — US Vice President Mike Pence said on Wednesday that Washington would work with its allies and China to put economic and diplomatic pressure on North Korea but added that America would defeat any attack with an “overwhelming response”.

Pence arrived in Tokyo on Tuesday from South Korea and reassured Japan of US commitment to reining in North Korea’s nuclear and missile ambitions in a series of meetings with Japanese leaders, including Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Speaking aboard the USS Ronald Reagan, a Nimitz-class aircraft carrier undergoing scheduled maintenance at its home port of Yokosuka, Pence said US intentions remained unwavering in the face of the threat posed by the reclusive North, which has conducted a series of missile and nuclear weapons tests in defiance of UN sanctions, most recently with a failed missile launch on Sunday.

“Those who would challenge our resolve or readiness should know, we will defeat any attack and beat any use of conventional or nuclear weapons with an overwhelming and effective American response,” Pence said to loud applause, reiterating that all options are on the table in dealing with Pyongyang.

Pence made his remarks as the US and Japan stepped up pressure on North Korea over the location of the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier strike group that US President Donald Trump said last week had been sent to the South China Sea, where Beijing is intensifying its claims.

Washington is trying to strengthen alliances and financial and economic pressure on North Korea, which has been called a major threat by the US, Japan, and their allies in the region.

South Korea to keep importing eggs despite bird flu downgrade

SEOUL — South Korea is set to keep importing eggs from overseas for the next few weeks despite downgrading the country’s worst-ever bird flu outbreak by one notch from the highest level.

The downgrade was introduced from Wednesday as no new cases of the virus have emerged for about two weeks, but government sources said egg imports would keep pouring into the country as it would take time for domestic output to recover after more than a fifth of the nation’s total poultry population was culled.

An agriculture ministry official said local supply would return to normal in the second half of the year, but that in the meantime imports would continue, mainly from Australia.

The official, who asked to remain anonymous, said the government was also looking to clear egg imports from Thailand. Shipments from the United States were halted after a bird flu outbreak.

South Korea is importing eggs mainly from Australia and the United States, an industry source said.

China relaxes some cross-border capital curbs as yuan steadies — sources

SHANGHAI — China’s central bank has relaxed some of the curbs on cross-border capital outflows it put in place just months ago to shore up the yuan currency, banking sources said on Wednesday.

The first easing of the measures comes as China’s leaders and financial markets feel more confident that pressure on the yuan and the country’s foreign exchange reserves has diminished, thanks largely to a pullback in the surging US dollar.

The yuan slumped around 6.5 per cent against the dollar last year, but has firmed nearly 1 per cent in 2017, defying — for now — many analysts’ expectations of further depreciation.

Indeed, a Reuters poll earlier this month indicated investors likely increased their bullish bets on the yuan to the most since July 2015.

With less incentive for capital flight and the economy on steadier footing, China’s foreign exchange reserves have clawed back above the closely watched $3 trillion level.

Premier Li Keqiang said on Tuesday that market confidence in the yuan has significantly improved, Xinhua news agency reported.

As of last week, the People’s Bank of China (PBOC) is no longer demanding that banks match outflows with equal inflows, the sources said.

The South China Morning Post first reported the relaxation of the capital controls earlier on Wednesday.

There was no immediate comment from the People’s Bank of China when contacted by Reuters. The State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) did not have an immediate response to Reuters’ questions on the SCMP report.

Expectations of further yuan depreciation have eased in recent months, opening a window for authorities to relax recent measures, but Beijing is not likely to let go totally, said Raymond Yeung, chief economist at ANZ in Hong Kong.

In addition to checking exchange rate expectations, the authorities were also using capital controls to control where Chinese money flows, limiting investments in foreign sectors deemed undesirable, he noted.

“The current macro environment obviously favours an easing of the (rules on) fund flows, but that doesn’t mean that it is going to have solved the structural issue of the mismatch between the corporate desire to go out versus the central government’s centrally-driven approach when they talk about offshore investment,” Yeung said.

While the world’s second-largest economy still has the largest stash of forex reserves by far, it had burned through over half a trillion dollars since August 2015 trying to support the yuan.

The government reacted by intensifying capital controls late last year, making it harder for individuals and companies to move money out of China.

Those measures are credited with quashing speculative outflows and helping to stabilise the currency, but have also hammered legitimate outflows as China Inc goes more global.

Reuters
Kevin Spacey to host Broadway’s Tony Awards for first time

NEW YORK — Stage and screen actor Kevin Spacey will step up to host Broadway’s Tony Awards, organizers said on Tuesday, less than two months before the national broadcast of the annual theater honours.

It will mark Spacey’s first time hosting the Tonys, which will take place in New York on 11 June, broadcaster CBS said.

Recent hosts Neil Patrick Harris, Hugh Jackman and James Corden all won raves from critics but apparently were unavailable to do the honours again this year, prompting a wry bit of self-deprecating humour from Spacey.

“I was their 2nd choice for ‘Usual Suspects’, 4th choice for ‘American Beauty’, and 15th choice to host this year’s Tony Awards. I think my career is definitely going in the right direction,” he said.

“Maybe I can get short-listed to host the Oscars if everyone else turns it down,” he added.

British actor and talk show host Corden, who helmed the show a year ago, went on to host the Grammy Awards in February. Spacey, 57, himself a Tony winner for “Lost in Yonkers” as well as a two-time Oscar winner, currently stars in the Netflix political drama “House of Cards.”

Actress Jessica Chastain

LOS ANGELES — Actress Jessica Chastain says before accepting any role in the film she always makes sure to ask the producers and concerned people about how much her male counterpart is getting paid for the same movie.

In an interview with Variety, the Oscar-nominated actress spoke candidly about how she negotiates her contracts to make sure her wages are on par with her male co-star.

“I’m not taking jobs anymore where I’m getting paid a quarter of what the male co-star is being paid. I’m not allowing that in my life. What I do now, when I’m taking on a film, I always ask about the fairness of the pay.

“I ask what they’re offering me in comparison to the guy. I don’t care about how much I get paid; I’m in an industry where we were overcompensated for the work we do. But I don’t want to be on a set where I’m doing the same work as someone else and they’re getting five times what I’m getting,” Chastain said.

The 40-year-old actress says she may be losing a lot on money by not accepting some offers but is glad that she has created a “boundary”, which will educate people in how to treat female actors.

“There was something huge that I recently turned down. For me, it was about the money; it was an old-fashioned problem of the wage gap. I turned it down, and they didn’t come back.

“I remember afterwards I was like, ‘What did I do? Maybe it was a mistake.’ But it wasn’t, because everyone in the studio heard what I did. So what you’re doing is creating a reputation. Don’t bring Jessica something where she’s not being fairly compensated compared to the male actor. Even though I lost that film, I’ve created a boundary.” —PTI

Drake profits are sought in New York lawsuit

NEW YORK — The record label Cash Money Records was sued on Monday by Drake’s former label for a share of the profits from the Toronto rapper’s first six solo albums, potentially totaling tens of millions of dollars.

Aspire Music Group, which claimed to have signed Drake in 2008, said it has received only “a few modest advances” from Cash Money and co-owners Bryan “Birdman” Williams and Ronald “Slim” Williams, despite a 2009 contract to let Drake record for that label in exchange for one-third of album profits.

The complaint filed in a New York state court in Manhattan also accused Cash Money of inducing Drake to break his exclusive artist agreement with Aspire by signing a competing agreement, depriving Aspire of more than $10 million.

“Defendants have brazenly engaged in a systematic and pervasive effort to cheat plaintiff out of its contractual entitlement to tens of millions of dollars in profits and royalties, and to its one-third ownership interest in the copyright to Drake’s first six albums,” the complaint said.

A lawyer for the defendants did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Drake, whose given name is Aubrey Drake Graham, is not a defendant.

Aspire is represented by Marc Kasowitz, a longtime lawyer for US President Donald Trump.

The six Drake albums are “So Far Gone,” “Thank Me Later,” “Take Care,” “Nothing Was the Same,” “If You’re Reading This It’s Too Late” and “Views,” and the last five entered the Billboard 200 list of popular US albums at No 1, the complaint said.

Drake’s current album, “More Life,” also entered that list at No 1, and is in its third week there.

The case is Aspire Music Group LLC v Cash Money Records Inc et al, New York State Supreme Court, New York County, No 652029/2017.— Reuters

Drake performs “Hold On, We’re Going Home” during the 2013 MTV Video Music Awards in New York on 25 August, 2013. PHOTO: REUTERS

I always ask about the fairness of the pay: Jessica Chastain

LOS ANGELES — Actress Jessica Chastain says before accepting any role in the film she always makes sure to ask the producers and concerned people about how much her male counterpart is getting paid for the same movie.

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Universal Studios in Osaka unveils world’s biggest Minion area

OSAKA — Universal Studios Japan on Wednesday unveiled the world’s largest amusement area featuring the popular animated movie characters the Minions ahead of the area’s official opening on Friday. The Minion Park, the Osaka amusement park’s newest movie-themed area built on about 8,400 square meters of land at a cost of some 10 billion yen ($92 million), features a street show and a ride dubbed “Despicable Me Minion Mayhem” as well as the requisite merchandise store and food area.

The park is “filled with fascination and is the only place where one can enjoy the world of the Minions,” local TV personality Shofukutei Tsurube told guests and members of the media at a ceremony. “Everyone, please come and visit.”

Around 1,500 fans of the diminutive yellow creatures from the “Despicable Me” movie franchise were invited to attend the ceremony.

“I love the movie. I want to meet the Minions as soon as possible,” said Hiara Nishiyama, 7, who visited from Wakayama Prefecture as a guest. USJ Co, which operates Universal Studios Japan in Osaka’s waterfront area, opened an amusement area based on the “Harry Potter” movie series in July 2014.

—Kyodo News

Summer-like conditions sweep across eastern Japan

TOKYO — Temperatures rose to around 30 C for the first time this year in parts of eastern Japan on Tuesday as the northwards passage of a rapidly growing low-pressure system brought warm air from the south, the weather agency said. The temperature rose as high as 30.6 C in Takasaki, Gunma Prefecture, marking this year’s first “mid-summer day.”

Highs of more than 30 C were expected for semi-tropical regions of Japan’s southwestern island chains of Okinawa and Amami, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

Multiple locations in central and eastern Japan also saw summer-like conditions, with the temperature hitting 29.3 C in Otsuki, Yamanashi Prefecture, 27.7 C in Shimizu, Shizuoka Prefecture, and 25.7 C in downtown Tokyo, temperatures normally seen only in late June to early July, according to the agency.

In northern Japan, the low-pressure system which is heading northeast over the Sea of Japan is expected to bring a cold air mass, with the weather agency warning of heavy rainfall Tuesday evening along the Pacific coast.

—Kyodo News

UK’s Prince William says shock of mother’s death lingers 20 years on

LONDON — Britain’s Prince William has said the shock of losing his mother Princess Diana two decades ago still lingers within him, days after his younger brother Harry spoke about his own struggles coming to terms with her death.

Diana was killed in a car crash in Paris in August 1997 when William was aged 15 and Harry was 12. The princes’ comments this week have been their most intimate to date on the subject of their grief for their mother.

“The shock is the biggest thing and I still feel it 20 years later about my mother,” William said in a BBC documentary to be aired on Thursday about mental health sufferers who will be running the London Marathon.

“I still have shock within me. People go ‘shock can’t last that long’ but it does. You never get over it, it’s such an unbelievably big moment in your life that it never leaves you. You just learn to deal with it,” William said in excerpts released on Wednesday.

Both royal brothers have spoken out as part of their campaign to raise awareness of mental health challenges and to encourage people to speak openly rather than bottle up their emotions.

On Tuesday, William released a video chat with US pop star Lady Gaga, who has battled post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after she was raped aged 19, and warned British men that keeping a “stiff upper lip” and not speaking about their feelings was detrimental to mental health.

Harry said in a newspaper interview on Monday that he had come close to a “complete breakdown” on several occasions and had sought counselling in his late twenties to help deal with the grief of losing his mother.—Reuters
Madrid see off Bayern in controversial thriller to reach semis

LONDON — Middlesbrough are not one of the three worst teams in the Premier League despite languishing at 19th in the standings, midfielder Adam Clayton has said.

With six games to play, Middlesbrough are six points adrift of safety after Monday’s 2-1 defeat by Arsenal at the Riverside Stadium.

Following a spirited display against the North London side, Clayton still harbours hopes of top-flight survival despite the club’s winless run of 15 league games.

“If you asked the other teams ‘Are Middlesbrough one of the three worst teams in the league?’, I don’t suppose many would say we are,” the 28-year-old told reporters.

“We’ve played against teams and we have been in most games and have been pipped by that extra bit of quality that we need to have.

“There are more points to play for and nobody in the bottom three is pulling up trees and running clear...you have to keep believing.”

On Saturday, Middlesbrough visit 16th-placed Bournemouth, who have won 13 of 15 league games.

“The Premier League is a very, very hard league and we have been in most games and have been pipped by the quality of other teams.”

— Reuters

Boro better than Premier League position suggests — Clayton

Murray back from layoff to reach Monte Carlo round three

PARIS — World number one Andy Murray beat Luxembourg’s Gilles Muller 7-5, 7-5 to reach the third round of the Monte Carlo Masters as he made his return from a five-week injury layoff on Wednesday.

The Briton, who had a first-round bye, had not played competitive tennis since injuring his elbow in March.

The 29-year-old Murray dropped serve twice but was still a cut above in the first European claycourt tournament of the season, with the 28 May-11 June French Open already looming.

Three-time grand slam champion Murray next takes on 15th seed Albert Ramos.

Sixth seed Dominic Thiem of Austria lost only four first service points as he beat Robin Haase 6-3, 6-2 to set up a meeting with Belgian 10th seed David Goffin.

First seed Marin Cilic of Croatia destroyed France’s Jeremie Chardy 6-3, 6-0 and Swiss third seed Stan Wawrinka sur

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Leicester’s Champions League dream over as Atletico power into semis

LEICESTER, England — Leicester City’s fairytaile Champions League journey came to an end at the King Power Stadium on Tuesday when they were held to a 1-1 draw by Atletico Madrid, who reached the semi-finals for the third time in four seasons with a 2-1 aggregate win.

A first-half goal by Saul Niguez proved enough to ease the Spanish side through to the last four despite Leicester’s spirited revival in the second half when Jamie Vardy equalised on the night.

Diego Simeone’s side, who won the first leg in Madrid 1-0, had the better of the opening exchanges, but after Leicester finally found their feet, Shinji Okazaki firing over from close range, Saul extended Atletico’s overall lead in the 26th minute, heading home powerfully from Filipe Luis’s superb cross.

The Premier League champions, in their first Champions League campaign, responded strongly, dominating the second half and Eng

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