Ready to begin repatriation: Government

MYANMAR is ready to launch the repatriation of refugees from Bangladesh despite a delay announced by Bangladesh authorities.

Under the agreement between Myanmar and Bangladesh, repatriation was slated to begin yesterday.

“We are ready to accept the first batch of returnees today as agreed, because under the agreement with Bangladesh, we must start the repatriation within two months and today is the day we slated to launch the repatriation,” said Dr. Win Myat Aye, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement at the press conference in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Myanmar has prepared two reception camps on its side of the border to take back up to 300 people per day.

“I want to reiterate that we are ready to accept the returnees from Bangladesh according to the list we sent to Bangladesh. To carry that out, we need international cooperation,” said U Myint Thu, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, left, greets Nai Htaw Mon, Chairman of the New Mon State Party, in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

New Mon State Party, Lahu Democratic Union agree to sign Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement

TWO more armed ethnic groups agreed yesterday to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), bringing the total number of signatories to 10 and allowing them to participate in the upcoming 21st Century Panglong Union Peace Conference.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received delegations from the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Lahu Democratic Union (LDU), both of whom agreed to sign the NCA, at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

The delegation from the New Mon State Party was led by its Chairman Nai Htaw Mon, and the delegation from the Lahu Democratic Union was led by its Chairman Kya Khun Sar.

SEE PAGE 3

SEE PAGE 7

Vol. IV, No. 282, 8th Waxing of Tabodwe 1379 ME
www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Wednesday, 24 January 2018
Pyithu Hluttaw discusses compensation for farmlands

By Kyaw Thu Htet and Hmwe Kyu Zin

SIX questions were raised and a bill was tabled during the fifth-day meeting of the seventh regular session of the second Pyithu Hluttaw meeting held yesterday morning.

U Mya Sein of Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) constituency asked about the plan to transfer the non-judge personnel of the court such as the bailiff, clerks and peons who are posted at a duty station for a long period.

Union Supreme Court Judge U Myint Aung replied that most of the courts do not have staff houses, except for the Yangon and Mandalay regions, so it would be difficult to transfer the court staff. As such, there is no plan to transfer the non-judge personnel of the court, said the Union Supreme Court judge.

Responding to a question raised by U Win Win of Minbu constituency on the plan to pay compensation to owners of farmlands through which the Pakkoko-Kyangin railroad passed and the planned Minbu-An railroad section, where the earthworks have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.5 million was paid for 31.66 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township.

The assessment and measurement of the farmlands affected by the Minbu-An railroad section in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and measurement of the remaining farmlands in the four affected village tracts are being made, and once the compensation is paid, the compensation will be explained, explained the Deputy Minister.

The assessment and measurement of lands which through which the Pakkoko-Kyangin railroad passed and the planned Minbu-An railroad section, where the earthworks have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.240525 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and measurement of the farmlands affected by the Minbu-An railroad section in Minbu (Saku) Township have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.240525 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and measurement of lands which through which the Pakkoko-Kyangin railroad passed and the planned Minbu-An railroad section, where the earthworks have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.240525 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and measurement of the farmlands affected by the Minbu-An railroad section in Minbu (Saku) Township have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.240525 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and measurement of lands which through which the Pakkoko-Kyangin railroad passed and the planned Minbu-An railroad section, where the earthworks have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.240525 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and measurement of the farmlands affected by the Minbu-An railroad section in Minbu (Saku) Township have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.240525 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and measurement of lands which through which the Pakkoko-Kyangin railroad passed and the planned Minbu-An railroad section, where the earthworks have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.240525 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and measurement of the farmlands affected by the Minbu-An railroad section in Minbu (Saku) Township have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.240525 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and measurement of lands which through which the Pakkoko-Kyangin railroad passed and the planned Minbu-An railroad section, where the earthworks have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.240525 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and measurement of the farmlands affected by the Minbu-An railroad section in Minbu (Saku) Township have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.240525 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and measurement of lands which through which the Pakkoko-Kyangin railroad passed and the planned Minbu-An railroad section, where the earthworks have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.240525 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and measurement of the farmlands affected by the Minbu-An railroad section in Minbu (Saku) Township have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.240525 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and measurement of lands which through which the Pakkoko-Kyangin railroad passed and the planned Minbu-An railroad section, where the earthworks have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.240525 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and measurement of the farmlands affected by the Minbu-An railroad section in Minbu (Saku) Township have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.240525 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and measurement of lands which through which the Pakkoko-Kyangin railroad passed and the planned Minbu-An railroad section, where the earthworks have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.240525 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and measurement of the farmlands affected by the Minbu-An railroad section in Minbu (Saku) Township have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks1.240525 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.
New Mon State Party, Lahu Democratic Union agreed to sign NCA

FROM PAGE-1
At a news conference at the meeting hall of the NRPC following the meetings, the State Counsellor expressed her delight at the progress made towards peace.

“I thank our ethnic national brothers and sisters and ethnic Mon and Lahu nationals for helping in the enduring existence of the union, peace in the union and development based on peace. I believe we are not doing this for ourselves but are taking the next step for the next generation.”, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said.

Ten other groups have not yet signed the ceasefire, including the Karen National Progressive Party; the Arakan National Council, the United Wa State Army and the Kachin Independence Army.

The NMSP and the LDU agreed to sign the NCA after meeting with the State Counsellor and the Tatmadaw’s Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing, said NMSP representative Nai Aung Min, reading from a statement.

Also present at yesterday’s meetings were the Union Minister for the State Counselor’s Office U Kyaw Tint Swe, Peace Commission Chairman Nai Htaw Mon and Deputy Ministers for the Ministry of the State Counsellor’s Office U Khin Maung Tin, and Deputy Minister for the President’s Office U Min Thu. Together with NMSP Chairman Nai Htaw Mon were General Secretary Nai Aung Min, Nai Layika Kaung, Nai Win Hla, Nai Banya Le, and Nai Aung Mangay, while LDU Chairman Kya Khun Sar was accompanied by Kya Solamon and Kya Sheh Bo.—Myanmar News Agency

NMSP, LDU to sign NCA
New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) released a Press Statement on 23 January regarding their intention to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). Following is the full text of the statement.

Press Release
A delegation led by New Mon State Party (NMSP) Chairman Nai Htaw Mon and a delegation led by Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) Chairman Kya Khun Sar met with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in Nay Pyi Taw today.

At the meeting, matters relating to signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and the peace process were cordially and openly discussed.

As a result of this meeting, NMSP and LDU announced that they would be signing the NCA soon.

New Mon State Party and Lahu Democratic Union
23 January 2018, Nay Pyi Taw

VP U Myint Swe receives Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai

VICE President U Myint Swe received Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Chairman of the Advisory Board for the Committee for Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State, and its members at the Hall for Envoys of the Presidential Palace, Nay Pyi Taw, on January 23 at 3 p.m.

They exchanged views on the implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State, stability and the peace process in the region; issuance of the immigration and national verification cards; relocation and development of socio-economic status; cooperation between international organizations and United Nations agencies; humanitarian assistance; resettlement; and the work processes of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine at the meeting.—Myanmar News Agency
Efforts underway to boost tourist arrivals to Myanmar’s natural islands

THE Ministry of Hotels and Tourism and relevant organisations are making collective efforts to boost international tourist arrivals to Myanmar’s natural islands.

Myanmar has several natural resources and countless attractions. Besides its cultural sites, Myanmar’s Mergui Archipelago, which is part of the Taninthayi Region and is in the Andaman Sea, is gaining popularity among luxury travellers in the international marketplace because of its natural value.

There are more than 800 islands in Mergui Archipelago. Some islands have been opened to visitors under an arrangement with the ministry.

The ministry is trying to implement marine tourism to promote the country’s smokeless industry, said a spokesperson.

Sustainable development of marine resources plays an essential role in implementing eco-tourism in the country, he added.

To raise public awareness on water pollution, departmental staff and officials from the Hotels and Tourism Ministry and related government departments on Sunday participated in a campaign to collect waste from Myinkha, Saytan, Aheapone and Zardatgyi islands. —Kyaw Soe (Kawthoung)

YBS route to be linked with water bus, circular train, airport schedules

THE Yangon Region Transport Authority (YRTA) is planning to link Yangon Bus Service (YBS) routes with water bus, circular train and airport schedules, according to YRTA.

“First, YRTA initiated the YBS on 6 January, 2017, abolishing the bus line control committee and its bus service system. As for the second project, we are trying to link YBS routes with water bus and circular train schedules,” said Daw Nilar Kyaw, the Region Minister for Electricity, Industry and Transport, at the first anniversary celebrations of the YBS, held in Yangon. Initially, a private company, Ht Kyaw Soe, will operate two YBS routes with 50 buses, which will run from the Hlaw Karr gate to Yangon Railways Station and from University of West Yangon to Yangon Railways Station.

Further, another private company, Batsone MyinKwin, will also operate a YBS route with 50 buses, which will run from Yangon International Airport to Yangon Railways Station. Currently, some 93 bus lines are operating with 5,300 buses through 22 operators. Nearly 1,000 new buses, bought by private companies and the government, have yet to start bus line operations.—GNLM

Five-storey ward in Yangon Central Women’s hospital to be complete in March

THE construction of a new five-storey ward in Yangon Central Women’s hospital will be completed in March, according to a report in the Myawady Daily yesterday.

The new ward is being constructed to accommodate the increased number of patients. The new five-storey ward will include an emergency treatment ward, a maternity ward, a room for chest X-ray equipment and laboratory disease detection devices; 12 special operation rooms; four office rooms; an anaesthetic room; and rooms for training, workshops, exams and conferences.

“Currently, it is an 800-bed hospital. However, more than 900 patients are being treated now. Upon completion of the five-storey building, the hospital will be able to accommodate more inpatients for medical treatment at the hospital,” said Dr Pa Pa, senior medical superintendent of the hospital.

The Yangon Central Women’s hospital is treating some 500 outpatients and more than 900 inpatients per day on average.—GNLM

Teenage girl killed in head-on collision in Thaton tsp

An 18-year-old girl was killed in a head-on collision between a car and a motorbike on Yangon-Mawlamyaing Road on Sunday (21 January).

The motorbike, which was headed towards Thayunna from Bein Town, hit a Hino Ranger car between mile posts No. 137/2 and 137/3 near Ngokoeto Village in the TadaU village-tract, Thaton Township, Mon State.

The motorbike, driven by Min Min Soe, 17, was trying to overtake a line of vehicles and crashed into a car driven by U Pan Aung, 43, coming from the opposite direction. Ma Hla Hla Ei, a Grade-9 student, was riding pillion and was thrown off the road on impact.

Using Min Min Soe, 17, who was driving the motorcycle, sustained serious injuries in the crash and is being treated at Theintseik cottage hospital. The police have filed charges against the two drivers for reckless driving, as defined in Section 304 (a)/(338 of the Penal Code.—Thet Oo (Thaton)
Myanmar-Korea trade reaches $510 million in current financial year

THE value of bilateral trade between Myanmar and South Korea exceeded US$510 million in the current financial year, according to the monthly trade report of the Ministry of Commerce.

The total bilateral trade value included $321 million in imports and $189 million in exports.

In November alone, bilateral trade was worth more than $51 million, including some $14.257 million in imports and $37.652 million in exports.

In the first eight months of this fiscal year (FY), Myanmar-East Asia trade exceeded $9.358 billion, including $4.269 billion in imports and $5.089 billion in exports.

Myanmar exports to Korea exceeded the quota set by China, the state also loses revenue as a result of illegal trade, an official from the Mandalay Region Rice Millers Association told City News. Traders say only genetic paddy is being exported for cultivation. However, it was found that they were exporting a huge volume to China.

Rice millers urge gov’t to prevent illegal paddy exports to China

RICE millers from the Yangon and Mandalay regions have submitted a complaint to the concerned ministries regarding illegal paddy exporters to China, according to a report in City News yesterday.

China does not allow some agro products, including rice, to be imported through its border gates. When rice exports exceed the quota set by China, the tax rate is exorbitantly high, leading to illegal rice trade. The state also loses revenue as a result of illegal trade, an official from the Mandalay Region Rice Millers Association told City News. Traders say only genetic paddy is being exported for cultivation. However, it was found that they were exporting a huge volume to China.

Chinese merchants visit the Mandalay Region and buy the paddy in bulk. This kind of trade started from last summer’s crop season. The direct export of paddy without milling is hurting the rice millers. Such trade can also indirectly affect the feed-processing businesses. There are some 1,100 rice millers in the Mandalay region.

Myanmar’s export value to EU countries is double import value

THE value of Myanmar’s exports to EU member countries, as of November in the current fiscal year (FY), reached US$1.51 billion, while imports from the European Union were worth some $512 million, totalling $1.01 billion, according to statistics released by the ministry of commerce last Friday.

Since April, among the EU countries, Germany had the largest trade value with Myanmar of some $385 million, followed by Britain with some $225 million, France with some $178 million, and Italy with an estimated value of $140 million.

Myanmar’s trade with the Netherlands reached some $133 million.

The value of bilateral trade with Spain was $114 million, while that with Belgium was $105 million. Trade with Denmark fetched more than $67 million. Trade values with Czech Republic, Greece, Cyprus, Sweden, Poland, Finland, Bulgaria, Romania, Luxembourg, Austria, Hungary, Estonia, Ireland, Portugal and Malta was less than $50 million each.

Beyond the regional trade regime, Myanmar has established trade links with European Union member countries.

The country mainly export rice, pulses, tea leaves, coffee, apparel from the garment sector on a cut-make-pack basis and fisheries, while cosmetics, food and beverages, and consumer goods were imported into Myanmar.

Myanmar reinstalled the European Union’s generalised scheme of preference (GSP) from July 19, 2013. Myanmar can enjoy GSP for the export of fisheries, rice, pulses, agro products, bamboo and rattan finished products, forestry products, apparel and finished industrial goods.

Trade value with EU countries was some $1.42 billion in the 2016-2017 FY, $653 million in the 2015-16 FY, $631 million in the 2014-2015 FY, $543 million in the 2013-2014 FY, $400 million in the 2012-2013 FY, and $404 million in the 2011-2012 FY.

EU member countries made investments in petroleum and natural gas enterprises, manufacturing, transport, hotels and tourism, and livestock businesses. — Ko Htet

Fuel price rises to record high in domestic market

FUEL prices reached a record high in the domestic market in the past three years, according to a report in the Sunday edition of Myanmar Daily. According to information provided by gas stations, fuel prices in the local market have returned to their highest level since 2014. In the market, 92 Octane was sold for Ks950 per litre on 19 January, while one litre of 95 Octane cost Ks850; diesel, Ks810; and premium diesel, Ks850.

The pump price for 92 Octane was Ks940 per litre, while one litre of diesel cost Ks950 in late 2014 in the retail market. After 2014, fuel prices reached a record low of Ks500 per litre for 92 Octane, while the cost of 95 Octane dropped to Ks600 per litre. Since mid-2017, the prices of fuel have been on the rise in the market.

“Fuel prices are not stable even in the international markets. This affects the local fuel market. Experts predict that fuel prices are expected to increase in the domestic market, as fuel prices usually rise in the high season,” a retailer said. —GNLM

Rice millers from the Yangon and Mandalay regions have submitted a complaint to the concerned ministries regarding illegal paddy exporters to China, according to a report in City News yesterday.

China does not allow some agro products, including rice, to be imported through its border gates. When rice exports exceed the quota set by China, the tax rate is exorbitantly high, leading to illegal rice trade. The state also loses revenue as a result of illegal trade, an official from the Mandalay Region Rice Millers Association told City News. Traders say only genetic paddy is being exported for cultivation. However, it was found that they were exporting a huge volume to China.

Chinese merchants visit the Mandalay Region and buy the paddy in bulk. This kind of trade started from last summer’s crop season. The direct export of paddy without milling is hurting the rice millers. Such trade can also indirectly affect the feed-processing businesses. There are some 1,100 rice millers in the Mandalay region.

Myanmar’s export value to EU countries is double import value

THE value of Myanmar’s exports to EU member countries, as of November in the current fiscal year (FY), reached US$1.51 billion, while imports from the European Union were worth some $512 million, totalling $1.01 billion, according to statistics released by the ministry of commerce last Friday.

Since April, among the EU countries, Germany had the largest trade value with Myanmar of some $385 million, followed by Britain with some $225 million, France with some $178 million, and Italy with an estimated value of $140 million.

Myanmar’s trade with the Netherlands reached some $133 million.

The value of bilateral trade with Spain was $114 million, while that with Belgium was $105 million. Trade with Denmark fetched more than $67 million. Trade values with Czech Republic, Greece, Cyprus, Sweden, Poland, Finland, Bulgaria, Romania, Luxembourg, Austria, Hungary, Estonia, Ireland, Portugal and Malta was less than $50 million each.

Beyond the regional trade regime, Myanmar has established trade links with European Union member countries.

The country mainly export rice, pulses, tea leaves, coffee, apparel from the garment sector on a cut-make-pack basis and fisheries, while cosmetics, food and beverages, and consumer goods were imported into Myanmar.

Myanmar reinstalled the European Union’s generalised scheme of preference (GSP) from July 19, 2013. Myanmar can enjoy GSP for the export of fisheries, rice, pulses, agro products, bamboo and rattan finished products, forestry products, apparel and finished industrial goods.

Trade value with EU countries was some $1.42 billion in the 2016-2017 FY, $653 million in the 2015-16 FY, $631 million in the 2014-2015 FY, $543 million in the 2013-2014 FY, $400 million in the 2012-2013 FY, and $404 million in the 2011-2012 FY.

EU member countries made investments in petroleum and natural gas enterprises, manufacturing, transport, hotels and tourism, and livestock businesses. — Ko Htet

Fuel price rises to record high in domestic market

FUEL prices reached a record high in the domestic market in the past three years, according to a report in the Sunday edition of Myanmar Daily. According to information provided by gas stations, fuel prices in the local market have returned to their highest level since 2014. In the market, 92 Octane was sold for Ks950 per litre on 19 January, while one litre of 95 Octane cost Ks850; diesel, Ks810; and premium diesel, Ks850.

The pump price for 92 Octane was Ks940 per litre, while one litre of diesel cost Ks950 in late 2014 in the retail market. After 2014, fuel prices reached a record low of Ks500 per litre for 92 Octane, while the cost of 95 Octane dropped to Ks600 per litre. Since mid-2017, the prices of fuel have been on the rise in the market.

“Fuel prices are not stable even in the international markets. This affects the local fuel market. Experts predict that fuel prices are expected to increase in the domestic market, as fuel prices usually rise in the high season,” a retailer said. —GNLM
Foreign Head of State sends felicitations to President U Htin Kyaw

The following is message of felicitations from Foreign Head of State / Government sent to President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Htin Kyaw, on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

From Mr. Pedro Pablo Kuczynski Godard
President of the Republic of Peru
Your Excellency Mr. President,

I have the pleasure of addressing Your Excellency in order to express to you, on behalf of the Republic of Peru and my own, my warmest congratulations on the occasion of the commemorations of the Seventieth Anniversary of the National Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

On this special occasion, I would like to express my commitment of my Government to continue working, both bilaterally and multilaterally, to strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation for the benefit and progress of our Peoples.

While reiterating my best wishes of prosperity and well-being for your noble Nation, I take this opportunity to express to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest and most distinguished consideration.

Thura U Shwe Mann receives Singapore’s Ambassador to Myanmar in Nay Pyi Taw

CHAIRMAN of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw’s Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission Thura U Shwe Mann received H.E. Ms. Vanessa Chan Yuen Ying, Singapore’s Ambassador to Myanmar, at the Hluttaw affairs building I-11 in Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday morning. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries, trade and investments.— Myanmar News Agency

MPF will manufacture new cancer drugs, HIV drugs

The following is message of felicitations from Foreign Head of State / Government sent to President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Htin Kyaw, on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

From Mr. Pedro Pablo Kuczynski Godard
President of the Republic of Peru
Your Excellency Mr. President,

I have the pleasure of addressing Your Excellency in order to express to you, on behalf of the Republic of Peru and my own, my warmest congratulations on the occasion of the commemorations of the Seventieth Anniversary of the National Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

On this special occasion, I would like to express my commitment of my Government to continue working, both bilaterally and multilaterally, to strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation for the benefit and progress of our Peoples.

While reiterating my best wishes of prosperity and well-being for your noble Nation, I take this opportunity to express to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest and most distinguished consideration.

Thura U Shwe Mann meets with Singaporean Ambassador H.E. Ms. Vanessa Chan Yuen Ying in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Thura U Shwe Mann receives Singapore’s Ambassador to Myanmar in Nay Pyi Taw

CHAIRMAN of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw’s Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission Thura U Shwe Mann received H.E. Ms. Vanessa Chan Yuen Ying, Singapore’s Ambassador to Myanmar, at the Hluttaw affairs building I-11 in Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday morning. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries, trade and investments.— Myanmar News Agency

MPF will manufacture new cancer drugs, HIV drugs

THE trial of two Reuters reporters charged under the Myanmar Government Secrets Act began yesterday morning in Yangon Region Northern District Court, at which the prosecution’s first of 25 witnesses, a high-ranking police officer, testified. Two reporters, Wa Lone, 31, and Kyaw Soe Oo, 27, were detained on 12 December after they had been invited to meet police officers over dinner in Yangon.

The reporters said they were arrested soon after being handed documents at a restaurant by two policemen they had not met before.

Police Lt-Col Yu Naing, Head of Yangon Northern district Police Force, told the court yesterday that authorisation was sought that evening from President U Htin Kyaw’s office to proceed with a case under the Official Secrets Act.

“The accused were arrested around 9 o’clock on the 12th, and the letter to ask permission from the president’s office was ready at 10 o’clock,” said defence lawyer Than Zaw Aung, referring to the court testimony of Police Lieutenant Colonel Yu Naing. A case was opened against the two Reuters reporters by Police Lt-Col Yu Naing on 10 January in Northern District Court.

An information officer for Yangon Region Northern District Court Deputy District Judge U Ye Lwin said an appeal for bail by the two defendants was also heard yesterday.

A ruling on the bail application for Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo will be announced at the court’s next hearing on 1 February, defence lawyer U Khin Maung Zaw said. — Zaw Gyi

MPF will manufacture new cancer drugs, HIV drugs

MYANMAR Pharmaceutical Factory (MPF), formerly known as Burma Pharmaceutical Industry (BPI), will manufacture new cancer and anti-HIV drugs in the 2018-2019 fiscal year, said U Ko Ko Aung, Managing Director of MPF.

He was speaking at the media conference held in the meeting hall of MPF Insein factory on 23 January.

“We are planning to manufacture new products in the coming fiscal year. We will conduct research for production, especially on medication to relieve pain from cancer and anti-HIV drugs. By increasing the number of medicines bought from abroad,” he added.

There are two pharmaceutical factories in the country: MPF Insein and Kyaukse. MPF is producing some 148 products this fiscal year (FY). Its production value increased up to Ks50 billion this FY.

The Ministry of Health and Sports has bought products worth Ks32 billion from MPF. Also, MPF distributed products worth Ks18 billion to the Ministry of Defence; Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population; and other sales representatives.

MPF has constructed a new building to manufacture more products and meet the World Health Organisation’s guidelines on genetically modified organisms. Besides this, MPF has changed the packaging on its BPI-brand pharmaceutical products.

The media conference was attended by officials of MPF, the Ministry of Health and Sports, professors and office superintendents, as well as doctors and officials from the food and drug administration. — Min Thit (MNA)
Advisory Board for Implementation of Recommendations on Rakhine State, Committee for Implementation of Recommendations on Rakhine State hold meeting

The advisory board for the implementation of recommendations on Rakhine State, led by former deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs of Thailand, and the committee for implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State, led by Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye, met in the meeting hall of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday morning.

The meeting was attended by Union Ministers Lt-Gen Ye Aung, U Kyaw Tint Swe, U Thaung Tun, U Win Khaing, Dr. Myo Thein Gyi and U Kyaw Tin; Deputy Minister Maj-Gen Than Htut, secretary of the committee for implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State; Deputy Minister U Soe Aung, joint secretary of the committee; Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development (UEHRD) in Rakhine Chief Coordinator Dr. Aung Tun Thet; and members, permanent secretaries, directors general, managing directors and officials of the committee.

At the meeting, Union Minister for Office of the State Counsellor U Kyaw Tint Swe said the stability, peace and development in Rakhine State depends not only on the people of Myanmar but the entire human society, especially the two societies in Rakhine State. With regard to the events in Rakhine State, the country had formed an inquiry commission, led by Vice President U Myint Swe, and an advisory commission on Rakhine State, led by former UN Secretary-General KoF Annan.

In addition to this, a committee for the implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State, led by Dr. Win Myat Aye, was also formed. Suggestions and support of the advisory board for implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State are also welcome, said the union minister.

Next, Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, leader of the advisory board, said the members of the advisory board included people from the political and economic sectors. The advice and experiences of the advisory board will be provided to the committee. This will be an opportunity to exchange experiences on Rakhine State events, and the advisory board will be able to work together with the committee, said the leader.

Further, Dr. Win Myat Aye, chairman of the committee, explained about the committee’s works and the UEHRD in Rakhine. Chief Coordinator Dr. Aung Tun Thet explained about humanitarian assistance in Rakhine State, the resettlement works and the development project committee.

The advisory board and the committee then discussed the status of implementing recommendations on Rakhine State.

Later in the evening, the committee for implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State hosted a dinner for the advisory board in M Gallery Hotel, Nay Pyi Taw.—Myanmar News Agency

Ready to begin repatriation: Gov’t

FROM PAGE 1
“We have heard the news that the Bangladeshi side is not ready. As we have not received any official word, we contacted the Bangladeshi Embassy in Yangon and they said they have many steps to be taken,” U Kyaw Tin, Minister of International Cooperation, told reporters in Nay Pyi Taw.

Under the Physical Arrangement for Repatriation signed by the two sides in Nay Pyi Taw on 16 January, Myanmar will receive verified returnees at Taung Pyo Letwe and Ngakha reception centres, while adding Hla Pho Kaung as a transit camp for the returnees.

“We will increase the number of returnees depending on the situation. We will review the repatriation process within three months,” said U Thaung Tun, Union Minister for the Office of the Union Government.

Asked about coordination between the two governments, Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye said Myanmar will carry on the repatriation process after seeking agreement with Bangladesh when the neighbouring country offers coordination.

“The governments of the two countries are trying to solve this issue, but some are trying to complicate this issue so that they can get international attention,” said Union Minister U Kyaw Tin.

He also said that Myanmar sent forms to be filled out by returnees with the help of UNHCR and Bangladesh signed an agreement with UNHCR to carry out the repatriation process on their side and they need to take time to carry out several steps on the ground.

Asked if a time limit is set for the repatriation, Dr. Win Myat Aye said the government is fully carrying out repatriation efforts and were ready to receive the returnees as of Tuesday.

“The repatriation is targeted to be accomplished within two years, or, it can finish before the two-year-time frame, or it can take longer than the set time,” said Dr. Win Myat Aye.

Regarding access to Rakhine State by reporters, Union Minister U Thaung Tun said journalists would get freedom of access to information, but safety is considered first in conflict areas and authorities are managing the situation there so as not to create unnecessary problems.

Seventeen journalists will soon go to Rakhine State along with the Rakhine Advisory Board, he added.—Myanmar News Agency

Dr. Pe Myint receives Singapore Ambassador and experts from French Communications

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint separately received Singapore Ambassador to Myanmar Ms Vanessa Chan and experts from French Communications, Ms Florence Bonetti and Mr SP Henri Cleorme, at the Ministry of Information guest hall yesterday afternoon.

At the meeting with Ms Vanessa Chan, Dr. Pe Myint discussed matters related to library works conducted in the two countries, the upgrade of libraries in Myanmar to community centres and community libraries, Singapore’s solution to preventing the spread of hate speech on social media and the status of media works in the two countries.

At the meeting with the two experts from French Communications, ways to engage in effective public relations were discussed.

Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun and other officials also attended the meeting.—MNA
If someone commits an attempt to incite the Union Government, Region and State Cabinet including ward or village-tract administrative bodies that is, any person or persons in authority in any part of the country, he is committing sedition deeds.

Either Abuse or Deception of National Flag is a crime

By: Tommy Pauk

The citizens of every nation salute their own National Flag. National Flag is a symbol of unity to the people of the concerned country. In order to show respect to the country, the foreigners have to salute the national flag of the country in which they are living. This is an obligation of having respect for the world pay tribute to the national flag of respective nations in order to express gratitude and respect for the identity of Union States. Every country has enacted laws or regulations to protect the design of the national flag. Anyone, regardless of race and sex, who violates the national flag shall be punished in accordance with the law.

However, it somehow fails to respect it or desecrates it, if we consider that as an insult or disrespectful act. Furthermore, if anyone violates the provisions of The Union Flag Law (Law No. 1 of 2010), he or she will have to be dealt in accordance with the Penal Code.

Chapter IV Prohibitions and Penalties

No. 1 Shall carry out any of the following in the respect of the Union Flag:

(a) writing, painting, fixing or printing anything such as word, number, picture and symbol on the Union Flag;
(b) causing destruction of the colour, size, shape or proportion;
(c) putting it in offices, places, regions, and purposes which have not been allowed;
(d) applying anything;
(e) hosting any flag of local organizations above or at the same level of the Union Flag.

No. 2 No one shall throw or spit at the Union Flag:

(a) he or she shall report the violating, holding, and applying the Union Flag;
(b) he or she shall report the Union Flag at half mast without the order of the Government of the Republic of Union of Myanmar;
(c) he or she shall report the Union Flag except in burial by the State or the Union Flag except in burial by any authority of the concerned country. In order to show respect to the country, every citizen or foreigner who abuses or violates the national flag, must be punished in accordance with prescribed law. The importance of the usage of National Flag should be seriously taught at school, and all citizens of Myanmar ought to abide by the Union Flag law.
Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief receives NMSP and LDU chairmen

TATMADAW Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received New Mon State Party (NMSP) Chairman Nai Htaw Mon and Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) Chairman Kya Khun Sar separately in Bayint Naung Hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The NMSP and LDU agreed yesterday to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). The Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief said Mon State has a good foundation for regional development. “The NMSP joining with the Government and the Tatmadaw on the peace path will bring more opportunities for regional development. Removing suspicions and walking on the peace path will make the country develop more. People will also be welcoming this with much joy. The biggest desire of the Tatmadaw is stability, peace and development of the country and the Tatmadaw is ready to cooperate”, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said.

NMSP (Mon) group chairman Nai Htaw Mon said his group has accepted the agreements reached at the 8th meeting between the Delegation of Political Negotiation (DPN) of the United Nations Nationalities Federation Council (UNPC) and Union Peace Commission (PC) and decided to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). The group requested the assistance of the Government and Tatmadaw for the smooth signing of NCA and to conduct future works. “The group will work for peace in the country; protect the life and property of the people and work for the benefit of the people”, said the NMSP group chairman.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing also received LDU Chairman Kya Khun Sar and party in Bayint Naung hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

At the meeting, the Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief explained about increasing regional development for Lahu ethnic nationals, matters relating to education, health, eradicating drugs, and assistance from the Tatmadaw.

The LDU Chairman spoke about the trust and reliance he and his group has with the Tatmadaw.—Myanmar News Agency

600 tonnes of illegal timber seized in Mon State last year

MORE than 600 tonnes of smuggled wood were seized in Mon State in 2017, according to a report in the Myawady Daily on Monday.

According to official statistics provided by the Mon State Forest Department, authorities confiscated 47.2 tonnes of teakwood, 492.37 tonnes of hardwood and 73 tonnes of other wood varieties, totalling 613.53 tonnes, throughout the year.

Usually, the confiscated timber and logs are sent directly to Myanmar Timber Enterprise, where the authorities sell them to private entrepreneurs through a bidding system, said U Min Thein Myint, head of the forest department.

There are some 277 lumber mills in Mon State. Forest authorities conduct regular monthly inspections at timber production workshops across the state as part of their plan to eliminate the unlawful extraction of wood.

The department seized wood and timber weighing more than 583 tonnes in 2016.—GNLM

Paper reading on anti-corruption concludes in Yangon

THE second day of the paper reading on anti-corruption was held at the Park Royal Hotel in Yangon yesterday morning.

The paper reading on anti-corruption was jointly organised by the Anti-Corruption Commission and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, with the title “Promote Integrity to Counter Corruption.”

During the session, U Aye Lwin and U Nyunt Wai read papers on “Fighting against Corruption and Uplifting Morality.”

U Zeya Thu read a paper on “Overtaking Jail,” and U Win Myint Than read a paper on “Overtaking Singapore.”

In the afternoon session, the moderators conducted reviews of some 26 papers.

Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission U Aung Kyi delivers the speech at the 2nd day of the paper reading on anti-corruption held in Yangon. PHOTO: MNA
Israel accuses UN rights forum of bias over Palestinians

GENEVA — Israel accused the United Nations on Tuesday of continuous discrimination against it over its treatment of Palestinians and called for reforms of its human rights body.

The Human Rights Council’s regular examination of Israel’s record, the first since 2013, comes after US President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem last month as the capital of Israel, angering Palestinians, Middle East leaders and world powers.

Aviva Raz Shechter, Israel’s ambassador to the UN in Geneva, told the Human Rights Council that her country had always stood up for human rights and democratic values.

“It has done so while facing serious threats to its security, and while needing to integrate diverse communities and religious groups,” Shechter told the Geneva forum.

The Council has taken a strong position against Israel’s occupation of territory seized in the 1967 Middle East war, its treatment of Palestinians there, and its building of Jewish settlements.

Israel withdrew soldiers and settlers from Gaza in 2005. Most countries consider the settlements, in areas of the West Bank and Jerusalem the Palestinians see as part of an eventual independent state, illegal, but Israel disputes this and continues their expansion.

An “unparalleled number of one-sided biased and political resolutions adopted regularly by the automatic majority of its members testify not only to the unfair treatment of the State of Israel, but also to the deficiencies of the Council itself and its agenda,” Shechter said.

“...this theater of the absurd cannot go on forever.”

Washington says the Council is stacked with opponents of Israel and US ambassador Nikki Haley told the Council last June that it was reviewing its participation given what it sees as its “chronic anti-Israel bias”.

Israel considered its relations with the Palestinians to be “of the highest priority” and it would continue to seek a lasting solution that would enable the two peoples to live side by side in peace and security, she said.

Jordan’s diplomat Akram Harashsheh, speaking first in the three-hour debate, condemned what he said were “attempts to prejudice the identity of occupied Jerusalem” and called on Israel to withdraw from all territories occupied since 1967. —Reuters

UAE military ordered not to escalate Qatar crisis: official

ABU DHABI — A military official in the United Arab Emirates said on Tuesday its forces had instructions not to escalate an ongoing diplomatic crisis with Qatar.

UAE military aircraft would also fly alternative routes over Saudi Arabia to avoid the possibility of interception by Qatari warplanes, air force brigadier general Helal Saeed al-Qabaisi told reporters at a news conference in the capital Abu Dhabi.

The UAE said on Monday that Qatari warplanes had twice intercepted its civilian aircraft during routine flights to Bahrain, but Qatar called the claim “completely untrue”.

Qatar said the UAE allegation followed incidents on 21 December and 3 January in which it accused UAE military aircraft of violating its airspace. Abu Dhabi denies the charges.

The UAE is one of four Arab countries, along with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt, that imposed travel, diplomatic and trade sanctions on Qatar in June 2017, accusing it of supporting terrorism. Doha denies the charges. —Reuters

Turkey seeks no clash with Russia, Syria, US, but will pursue Syria goals: minister

ANKARA — Turkey seeks to avoid any clash with Syrian, Russian or US forces during its operation in northern Syria but will take whatever steps it needs for its security, Turkey’s foreign minister was quoted as saying on Tuesday.

The United States and Russia have both urged Turkey to show restraint in its military campaign, Operation Olive Branch, to crush Kurdish YPG control over the Afrin district on its southern border. Syria has condemned the incursion.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, who says the YPG is an extension of a Kurdish group waging a decades-long insurgency inside Turkey’s borders, has also pledged to drive Kurdish fighters out of the mainly Arab town of Manbij.

Manbij, to the east of the Afrin region, is part of a far larger area of northern Syria controlled by mainly Kurdish forces. Any attack there would raise the prospect of protracted conflict between Turkey and allied Free Syrian Army factions against the US-backed Kurdish fighters.

“Terrorists in Manbij are constantly firing provocation shots. If the United States doesn’t stop this, we will stop it,” Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu was quoted as saying on Tuesday.

“Our goal is not to clash with Russians, the Syrian regime or the United States, it is to battle the terrorist organisation,” broadcaster Haberturk quoted him as saying.

“I must take whatever step I have to. If not, our future as a country is in jeopardy tomorrow. We are not afraid of anyone on this, we are determined... We will not live with fear and threats,” Cavusoglu said.

Preventing Turkey from driving Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the US-backed umbrella group dominated by the YPG, out of Manbij is a central goal for Washington, US officials say.

The United States hopes to use the YPG’s control in northern Syria to give it diplomat muscle it needs to revive UN-led talks in Geneva on a deal that would end Syria’s civil war.

Ankara has been infuriated by US support for the YPG, which it sees as a domestic security threat, one of several issues that have brought relations between the United States and its Muslim NATO ally close to breaking point.

“The future of our relations depends on the step the United States will take next,” Cavusoglu said.

He said Turkey, which carried out a seven-month military operation in northern Syria two years ago to push back Islamic State and YPG fighters, would continue to act where it thought necessary.

“Whether it is Manbij, Afrin, the east of the Euphrates or even threats from northern Iraq, it doesn’t matter,” Cavusoglu said.

“If there are terrorists on the other side of our borders, this is a threat for us,” —Reuters
Facebook says it can’t guarantee social media is good for democracy

SAN FRANCISCO — Facebook Inc (FB.O) warned on Monday that it could offer no assurance that social media was on balance good for democracy, but the company said it was trying what it could to stop alleged meddling in elections by Russia or anyone else.

The sharing of false or misleading headlines on social media has become a global issue, after accusations that Russia tried to influence votes in the United States, Britain and France. Moscow denies the allegations.

Facebook, the largest social network with more than 2 billion users, addressed social media’s role in democracy in blog posts from a Harvard University professor, Cass Sunstein, and from an employee working on the subject.

“I wish I could guarantee that the positives are destined to outweigh the negatives, but I can’t,” said Samidh Chakrabarti, a Facebook product manager, in his post.

Facebook, he added, has a “moral duty to understand how these technologies are being used and what can be done to make communities like Facebook as representative, civil and trustworthy as possible.”

Contrite Facebook executives were already fanning out across Europe this week to address the company’s slow response to abuses on its platform, such as hate speech and foreign influence campaigns.

US lawmakers have held hearings on the role of social media in elections, and this month Facebook widened an investigation into the run-up to Britain’s 2016 referendum on EU membership.

Chakrabarti expressed Facebook’s regrets about the 2016 US elections, when according to the company Russian agents created 80,000 posts that reached around 126 million people over two years.

The company should have done better, he wrote, and said Facebook was making up for lost time by disabling suspect accounts, making election ads visible beyond the targeted audience and requiring those running election ads to confirm their identities.

Twitter Inc (TWTR.N) and Alphabet Inc’s (GOOGL.O) Google and YouTube have announced similar attempts at self-regulation.

Chakrabarti said Facebook had helped democracy in ways, such as getting more Americans to register to vote. Sunstein, a law professor and Facebook consultant who also worked in the administration of former US President Barack Obama, said in a blog post that social media was a work in progress and that companies would need to experiment with changes to improve.

Another test of social media’s role in elections lies ahead in March, when Italy votes in a national election already marked by claims of fake news spreading on Facebook. —Reuters ■

One dead, eleven injured as volcano erupts near ski resort in Japan

MAEBASHI, Japan — A Japanese Ground Self-Defence Force member died and 11 other people were injured as a volcano erupted on Tuesday morning near a ski resort in eastern Japan, spewing Cinder and possibly causing an avalanche, the government and local authorities said.

Mt Motoshirane in Gunma Prefecture erupted around 9:59 am, and an avalanche reportedly followed shortly after, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. While a separate peak comprising the same Mt Kusatsu-Shirane erupted in 1983, Mt Motoshirane had been dormant for the past 3,000 years.

The GSDF said a 49-year-old male member died, while Defence Minister Itsunori Onodera said five other members were seriously injured and two more sustained minor injuries, all due to raining volcanic stones. The GSDF earlier said they were likely hit by an avalanche.

The affected were among a group of about 30 GSDF members taking part in ski training in the area. The GSDF said it is still investigating what happened.

Volcanic stones also hit a gondola lift at the ski resort and injured at least four people on board with shattered glass and stones also crashed through the roof of a rest house to where about 100 people had evacuated, rescuers said.

Local officials said Taiwanese and British tourists were among people temporarily stranded at a nearby mountain peak.

A police source said at one point that the number of injured totaled 12, with two of them in serious condition, adding they included GSDF members.

In the afternoon, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said one person died and 11 others were injured, and that the government has not learned of additional casualties or people missing.

Video footage taken at the ski resort and uploaded on the internet showed black smoke and what appear to be volcanic stones falling as well as snow sliding down the hill.

Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc said a power outage occurred near the ski resort.

Following the eruption, the weather agency raised the volcanic alert status to 3, a level that restricts entry to the mountain, while warning of large amounts of ash flying in the area. —Reuters ■
Indonesia looks to US to relax limits on its special forces

JAKARTA — Indonesia said on Tuesday it was pinning its hopes on US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis to help ease American limitations on ties with an elite Indonesian special forces unit, imposed over human rights abuses in the 1990s.

The United States announced in 2010 that it had lifted its outright ban on US military contacts with the Indonesian special forces unit, known as Kopassus, which was accused of rights abuses in East Timor as it prepared for independence.

But legal restrictions meant to ensure the US military does not become entangled with rights abusers prevented contacts with Kopassus from advancing beyond preliminary levels, US officials say. “For a while there have been sanctions against Kopassus ... Mattis will try to remove this,” Indonesian Defence Minister Ryamizard Ryacudu told reporters in Jakarta, following talks with the US defence chief.

“One of the sanctions is clearly that they are not allowed to go to America. They don’t do training together, and he will reopen this,” Mattis expressed hope for deepening defence ties with Indonesia but he did not directly address Kopassus in his remarks to the press after talks with Ryacudu in Jakarta. US officials told reporters travelling with Mattis that they were exploring possible ways to expand contact with Kopassus, while complying with US law. Mattis’ trip came as Indonesia, a vast archipelago of 17,000 islands, appears increasingly ready to assert its sovereignty in the contested South China Sea.

Indonesia has clashed with China over fishing rights around the Natuna Islands, detaining Chinese fishermen and expanding its military presence in the area in recent years.

In July, Indonesia renamed the northern reaches of its exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea as the North Natuna Sea, a move seen as a significant act of resistance to China’s territorial ambitions in the South China Sea.

— Reuters

Indonesian office workers flee as quake shakes capital

JAKARTA — Office workers fled high-rise buildings in the Indonesian capital on Tuesday after a strong earthquake shook the city, but there were no immediate reports of deaths or injuries.

The relatively small quake of magnitude 6 struck off the island of Java, the US Geological Survey said, and authorities ruled out the risk of a tsunami.

Many people ran along the streets of downtown Jakarta, pointing at the buildings above them, witnesses said. Metro TV showed patients being evacuated from a hospital.

The quake struck about 104 km (64.62 miles) west of the city of Sukabumi, at a depth of 33 km (21 miles). Jakarta is about 100 km (62 miles) away.

“‘We felt the earthquake for three to five minutes,’ said Rudy Togatrop, 35, who works at the Chilean embassy.

I was just sitting down, then I felt the building swaying. The emergency stairs were very narrow. I was worried if something would happen.”

Indonesia is regularly hit by earthquakes in one of the world’s most quake-prone regions. In 2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami killed 226,000 people in 13 countries, including more than 120,000 in Indonesia.

In December, a quake of 6.5 magnitude killed at least three people when it hit Java, Indonesia’s most densely populated island, at a depth of 92 km (57 miles), and buildings in Jakarta swayed for several seconds. Tuesday’s quake was at a depth of 44 km (27 miles). The World Bank reckons natural disasters cost Indonesia 0.3 per cent of its GDP annually, but a 2015 report on disaster risk management prepared by Indonesia’s government said a major earthquake, occurring once every 250 years, could cause losses in excess of $30 billion, or 3 per cent of GDP.—Reuters

Office workers leave a building following an earthquake in Jakarta, Indonesia on 23 January, 2018. PHOTO: REUTERS

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V SIMA PERFECT VOY. NO. ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SIMA PERFECT VOY. NO. ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 24-1-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of HPT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V ARCA VOY. NO. ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V ARCA VOY. NO. ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 24-1-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.L.T.T.M.LP where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT (S’PORE) PTE LTD
Phone No: 2301185
China takes aim at hip-hop, saying ‘low-taste content’ must stop

BEIJING/SHANGHAI — China’s censors have a new target in a widespread clamp-down on popular culture: the country’s nascent hip-hop scene, which resonated with Chinese youth last year on hugely popular television show “Rap of China.”

Hip hop artists Wang Hao, known as “PG One” and Zhou Yan, known as “GAI” — the two winners of the show — have been sanctioned in recent weeks for bad behavior or content at odds with Communist Party values. GAI was pulled from hit show “The Singer” last week.

The crackdown on hip-hop, still very much a new genre in China, reflects a broader squeeze on popular culture as the country’s stability-focused leadership looks to rein in potential platforms for youthful dissent.

Beijing is eager to use popular culture to shape public opinion, including co-opting rap artists ahead of its five-yearly congress last year. With state support comes the insistence that Party values must take center stage in the artists’ work.

The latest cleanup started when PG One was forced to apologize for lewd lyrics, which critics said were insulting to women and encouraged the use of recreational drugs.

The official Xinhua news agency wrote that PG One “does not deserve the stage,” and that “we should say ‘no’ to whoever provides a platform for low-taste content.” Other official media and companies quickly followed suit; the rapper’s tracks were soon pulled from most online sites.

GAI, who had been in third place on The Singer, broadcast by Hunan TV, was cut from the program last week with no reason given. Rapper Vava was hastily edited out of the same station’s flagship variety show “Happy Camp” because of her association with hip-hop culture.

“Hip-hop’s prospects in China seem dim after Chinese rappers removed from TV shows,” read one headline from influential state-run tabloid Global Times on Sunday.

The same paper this month said hip-hop — which it called a “tool for people to vent their anger, misery, complaints” — did not suit China and “cannot thrive” here. The campaign underscores a broader clean-up of cultural content from video games, online streaming and even performance art amid a drive to make cultural products adhere to mainstream socialist core values.

PG One, Vava and Hunan TV could not immediately be reached for comment. GAI, who had tried to make his act more Party-friendly — including an impromptu performance in which he sang the words “long live the motherland” — did not respond to requests for comment. Chinese news portal Sina reported on Friday that China’s broadcasting watchdog had said immoral and vulgar content should be kept off the air, including hip-hop and even tattoos.

The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television did not respond to a telephone request for comment from Reuters on Monday.

This is not the first time Chinese musicians have run afoul of local censors. In 2015, China’s culture ministry banned 120 songs — mostly rap — for “promoting obscenity, violence, crime or threatening public morality.”

In July last year, Beijing’s Municipal Bureau of Culture said it was “not appropriate” for Justin Bieber to tour in China because previous performances there had created “public dissatisfaction.” —Reuters

Acting started coincidentally for me, says Dakota Fanning

LOS ANGELES — Actor Dakota Fanning, who has floored cinema goers with her performances since she was six, says she never thought she would take up acting as a full-fledged career.

The 23-year-old actor said although she liked playing dress up as a child, she unknowingly ventured into Hollywood as her mother sensed her disinterest in studies, Entertainment Weekly reported.

“It all started so coincidentally for me. I did this commercial and I had a good time so I did another one, then I did a TV show which turned into a movie and then I was an actor all of sudden.

“I wasn’t a kid that was like, ‘I want to be in the movies.’ Not at all. I just liked to play around the house and make up scenarios and my mom kind of noticed that I was disinterested in all of the lessons she put me in. I just wanted to play at home so she put me in a drama camp to see if I liked doing that,” Fanning said during Vulture and TNT’s “The Alienist premiere” Q&A session at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival. —PTI

Leaving Thor a scary thought, says Chris Hemsworth

LOS ANGELES — “Thor” star Chris Hemsworth is officially done with playing the superhero and the actor says leaving the character behind is a “never-ending” event.

“The end seems like) a scary thought,” Fanning said that, “Contractually, right now — yeah, this is it. I’m done. I won’t be playing the character again. The end seems like) a scary thought. This really seemed like this never-ending thing. And now it’s potentially finishing,” Hemsworth told USA Today.

The actor, who last reprised his role in “Thor: Ragnarok”, is already ready to take the part forward in the film franchise if things transpire in the future.

Hemsworth will next be seen in “Avengers: Infinity War”, alongside other MCU veterans, such as Chris Evans, Robert Downey Jr, Scarlett Johansson, Mark Ruffalo and Jeremy Renner. Also in pipeline is next year’s “Avengers 4”.

“She who knows?” There are 76 cast members in these two Avengers films. They will be the biggest films of all time, far bigger than my character. It’s a conversation for further down the road, if it was going to happen,” he said. —PTI
Manga cafes, capsule hotels increasing their female focus

TOKYO — Manga cafes and capsule hotels in Japan are generally considered the domains of men, their cramped, dark spaces not particularly alluring to female customers.

But with businesses realizing they are forgoing 50 per cent of their potential customer base, some have introduced new offerings designed to appeal to women, offering a relaxed, and most importantly, safe environment.

“This is my first time here,” said a woman who visited Hailey’s Cafe in Tokyo’s Shibuya Ward recently. “It’s bright and fashionable. It changes the image of a manga cafe.”

Her boyfriend said, “The interior design, using timber materials, makes it a relaxing atmosphere.”

The couple, both university students, used one of the manga cafe’s “theater rooms” where customers can enjoy movies on a large screen with sound pumped through a high-quality audio system. The manga cafe allows people to enjoy drinks and snacks while reading various comic books and magazines of the genre as well, allowing them to access the internet for gaming and to watch videos on a pay-by-the-hour basis.

Hailey’s Cafe in Shibuya opened in last August. Its operator made an effort to ensure his establishment threw off the dark and oppressive image of the typical manga cafe, a decision the manager said has led to a higher-than-normal proportion of female customers.

It offers small, private rooms that users can lock with a key card. The spaces are all non-smoking, sound-proofed and allow the temperature and lighting levels to be controlled individually, with aroma oils provided for free.

With the minimum charge of 540 yen ($4.90) per hour, “about 50 percent of our customers are women, as opposed to 20 per cent in general at other manga cafes,” the manager said. “They are also relatively young. About 70 per cent of our female customers are in their 20s and 30s.”

Some customers have begun to use the cafe in ways that not even the owners envisioned.

A group of women, for instance, booked a room so they could watch videos of artists whose concert they have tickets to, getting themselves ready for the live performance.

The cafe also sees students come to work on internet-based study programs in its private rooms. Bay Hotel Akihabara, a capsule hotel in the Akihabara electronics district in central Tokyo, meanwhile, focuses specifically on a female clientele.

A capsule hotel, also known as a pod hotel, is inexpensive accommodation that offers tiny, enclosed sleeping spaces stacked in a large shared room. Only a few such hotels are open to women only. Built at a location several minutes walk from the Akihabara railway hub, it is often booked out on weekends by women going to nearby events and concerts, according to its manager.

With the basic rate starting from 3,800 yen per night, it has 130 capsules — each 2-metres deep, 1-metre wide and 1-metre high. Bags are kept safely in lockers and some capsules have televisions. Showers and powder rooms with cosmetic and hair care products are available, making the capsule stayover experience almost like that of a normal hotel. “Guests feel relaxed, unconcerned about other guests” because they are all female, the manager said, and the female factor also extends to providing a sense of security.

Often reservations are made by parents of high school students taking college entrance exams or those of university students who are job hunting in central Tokyo, the manager said, allowing the families to know that the young women have a safe, if small, space of their own.—Kyodo News

In Year of the Dog, Malaysia plays down, skirts dog decorations

KUALA LUMPUR — Some Malaysian businesses are skirting around or playing down the portrayal of canines in Chinese New Year decorations this year, wary of offending the country’s Muslim majority in the Year of the Dog.

Dogs are considered “unclean” under Islamic tradition and Muslims are required to carry out a ritual of washing themselves if they are in contact with the animal.

Multicultural Malaysia has seen an increasing intolerance towards activities considered insulting to Islam, reflected in protests in recent years of beer festivals and concerts.

While Muslim Malays are the biggest ethnic group among Malaysia’s 32 million people, Chinese make up the second-biggest group with 23 per cent of the population.

One shopping mall in the popular Kuala Lumpur tourist area of Bukit Bintang did not depict dogs in its decorations ahead of the new year in February, focusing instead on the 10th anniversary theme of the centre, Pavilion Kuala Lumpur.

Director of Marketing Kong Suan Ai said religious and cultural sensitivities were a determining factor in conceptualising decorations. The mall attracts three million people of various backgrounds each month, she said. “One of the considerations we take in when we work on decoration concepts for Pavilion KL is to create something highly experiential... and also to be socially accepting for all,” she said. Twelve animals, including a dog and a pig, another animal Muslims consider as unclean, make up the traditional Chinese zodiac.

Malaysian Muslim leaders have been vocal about events that involve dogs before. After the 2014 Commonwealth Games opening ceremony in Glasgow, when athletes paraded with a Scottish terrier donning their country’s name, local politicians aired their disapproval, calling the stunt “disreputable”.

In 2016, religious authorities asked popular pretzel chain Auntie Anne’s to change the name of its “Pretzel Dog” to “Pretzel Sausage”.

At MyTOWN, another Kuala Lumpur shopping centre where half the visitors are Muslims, the mall downplayed the depiction of dogs in its decorations. “We have the dogs but it’s in how we (display) them. They are not the main object.”—Reuters

Princess Eugenie to marry long-term boyfriend

LONDON — Britain’s Princess Eugenie has got engaged to her long-term boyfriend Jack Brooksbank, Buckingham Palace said on Monday, with the pair set to marry later this year.

Eugenie, 27, is a granddaughter of Queen Elizabeth and eighth in line to the throne. She is the second daughter of Prince Andrew, the queen’s third child who is known as the Duke of York.

“The Duke and Duchess of York are delighted to announce the engagement of Princess Eugenie to Mr Jack Brooksbank,” Buckingham Palace said in a statement.

“Her Royal Highness and Mr. Brooksbank became engaged in Nicaragua earlier this month.”

The wedding will be held in the autumn at St George’s Chapel in Windsor — the same venue where her cousin Prince Harry will marry American fiancee Meghan Markle in May.—Reuters
Britain’s Edmund beats Dimitrov to reach semis

MELBOURNE — Britain’s Kyle Edmund bludgeoned his way past third seed Grigor Dimitrov 6-4, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 on Rod Laver Arena on Tuesday to reach the Australian Open semi-finals.

The unseeded 23-year-old, playing in his first grand slam quarter-final, showed no nerves as he blazed away with his fearsome forehand to subdue a nervy Dimitrov.

The Bulgarian struggled to reproduce the form that saw him beat home favourite Nick Kyrgios in the previous round, with his serve especially vulnerable.

Edmund broke decisively at 4-4 in the opening set with a thunderbolt forehand off a weak second serve. Edmund broke again for a 5-4 lead to serve for the match. A tense final game saw Edmund double-fault but an ace brought up match point and then Dimitrov sliced a backhand long which was confirmed by Hawkeye.

Edmund is the only British man in the main draw after three-times grand slam champion Andy Murray withdrew to have surgery on his hip.— Reuters

North Korea participation to highlight opening ceremony

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — North Korea’s participation at the next month’s Winter Olympics will form an integral part of an opening ceremony that will highlight a key message of peace, Games organizers said on Tuesday.

The 2018 Winter Olympics is being held in the mountainous resort town of Pyeongchang, 80 km (49.71 miles) from the heavily-fortified inter-Korean border, and kicks off with the opening ceremony on 9 February.

Song Seung-hwan, who is serving as the executive creative director for the Pyeongchang ceremonies, said peace had been set as the main motif of the opening gala even before North Korea decided to join the Games.

“We have worked on all of our scenarios under the theme of peace,” Song, a renowned actor and producer, told a news conference in Pyeongchang. “Although North Korea’s participation was decided belatedly, we think this will serve as a good opportunity for us to convey our message more clearly.”— Reuters

Aung La N Sang and Phoe Thaw showcase skills in front of media at one: quest for gold open workout

The largest global sports media property in Asian history, One Championship (ONE), recently held on Open Workout at the Myanmar Plaza last 23 January, featuring reigning ONE Middleweight World Champion and hometown hear “The Burmese Python” Aung La N Sang, as well as ONE featherweight athlete Phoe Thaw.

The two martial artists showcased their incredible skills to media in attendance.

Both Aung La N Sang and Phoe Thaw are scheduled to appear at ONE QUEST FOR GOLD, which is set to take place on Friday, 23 February at the Thawunna Indoor Stadium in Yangon, Myanmar. In the main event, ONE Middleweight World Champion “The Burmese Python” Aung La N Sang of Myanmar will compete against Alexandre Machado of Brazil for the vacant ONE Light Heavyweight World Championship. Phoe Thaw is set to face Sor Sey on the main card.

Aung La N Sang, ONE Middleweight World Champion, stated: “Winning the ONE Middleweight World Championship was the greatest moment of my career, and I will do everything in my power to make the people of Myanmar proud. The opportunity to become a dual weight world champion, and to win the ONE Light Heavyweight World Championship is a huge deal for me. It is an honor to perform in front of my hometown fans, and it is my pleasure to showcase my skills. Thank you everyone for coming out and for all the support. I will see everyone at the event.”

Phoe Thaw, ONE Athlete, stated: “Martial arts is growing rapidly in Myanmar and I am glad to be part of the movement. My last bout was incredibly difficult and I was tested fully, against my own countryman, so that just shows everyone that martial artists from Myanmar are very talented. I have to constantly work very hard to keep sharp and at the top of my game. Thank you to all the fans who have shown love and support for my career: I will continue to give my best.”

Aung La N Sang is Myanmar’s most successful athlete in history, whose impressive submission skills has earned him the moniker of “The Burmese Python”. Born in Myitkyina in the mountainous Kachin State, he belongs to an ethnic minority known as the Kachin, Aung La N Sang captured the ONE Middleweight World Championship with a unanimous decision victory over Vitaly Bigdash in June of 2017. In his most recent bout, Aung La N Sang needed less than one round to finish heavyweight kickboxing champion Alain Ngallani in ONE’s first ever Open Weight Super-Bout.

Next up, Aung La N Sang takes on Alexandre Machado for the vacant ONE Light Heavyweight World Championship. —GNLM