Diplomats and UN agencies toured Rakhine State yesterday to observe the readiness for repatriation of returnees from Bangladesh. The delegation headed by U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation, visited two repatriation camps and one transit camp in Maungtaw, Rakhine State.

The trip’s primary aim is disseminating accurate information to international communities on the government’s efforts for repatriation. At Sittway Airport, Union Minister U Kyaw Tin briefed the delegation on the repatriation process and measures taken by the Union Government and the Rakhine State Government under the bilateral agreement with Bangladesh.

U Nyi Pu, Chief Minister of Rakhine State, also requested the diplomats and UN officials to cooperate with the government in sharing the true situation in Rakhine with international communities. He also urged the delegation to assist the Rakhine State government in its repatriation efforts and resettlement for returnees from Bangladesh and development in Rakhine State.

SEE PAGE-3
**Pyithu Hluttaw**

**discusses educational sector**

By Kyaw Thu Htet, Hmy Kyu Zin

The seventh session of the second Pyithu Hluttaw held its 16th-day meeting yesterday morning, where six questions were asked and answered, while a bill was discussed and approved.

At the meeting, U Aung Hlaing Win of Mingladon constituency raised a question about the plan to permit casinos on islands where only foreigners will be allowed to gamble. Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Ohn Maung said casinos on islands where only foreigners are allowed to gamble are not legally permitted. However, the ministries concerned are not averse to legalising this, and there might be a way to carry this process forward. After the gambling law is amended or relaxed, permission can be obtained from the ministries concerned to legalise gambling in casinos for foreigners, said the Union Minister.

A question by U Sai Ngaung Hsi Hnin of Maukmau constituency on the plan to construct a new school building for a basic education primary school in Hololin village tract, Konnatan Village, in the 2018-19 fiscal year was answered by Deputy Minister for Education U Win Maw Tun, who said a 60x30-square-foot single-storey building will be constructed.

Responding to a question put forth by U Min Thein of Taungdwingyi constituency on the plan to open a technical high school for students from towns such as Aunglan, Sinhaunggyi, Taungdwingyi, Myothit and Natmauk, U Win Maw Tun said that students from these areas were being permitted to attend technical schools in other areas as hostel students, and, thus, there was no immediate plan to open a technical high school in the area mentioned.

In response to a question by Dr U Aung Khin of Pyin Oo Lwin constituency on the plan to include vocational schools in the national education strategic plan to reduce unemployment in Myanmar, U Win Maw Tun said that this was included in the plan and was being carried out. In the future, this will be expanded further, added the Deputy Minister.

The Deputy Minister then responded to a question put forth by U Khin Maung Tha of Loilem constituency on the plan to upgrade the Loilem Township Myoma Maipun Basic Education Middle School (sub), and noted that it was only half a mile away from Myoma (Maipun), Basic Education High School, and as students could obtain a middle school education at Myoma (Maipun) Basic Education Middle School (sub), there was no plan to upgrade this school.

Responding to a question posed by U Ar Moe Si of Khaunglanphu constituency on providing sufficient qualified teachers in Khaunglanphu Township schools to raise the township’s passing rate in the matriculation examination, U Win Maw Tun said that there were two Basic Education High Schools in Khaunglanphu Township, where headmasters and teachers were conducting special classes and extra classes for the students. The Ministry of Education requires more than 30,000 teachers, and plans are underway to appoint over 10,000 teachers each year for three consecutive years. Based on the number of teachers appointed, they will be allocated to Khaunglanphu Township, said the Deputy Minister.

Proposals to amend the forest bill submitted by the natural resources and environmental protection committee were then discussed and the Hluttaw’s decision was taken.

**Amyotha Hluttaw**

**discusses health sector**

By Aye Aye Thant (MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY)

The seventh session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw held its 16th-day meeting in the Amyotha Hluttaw meeting hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning, where six questions were asked and answered. The Hluttaw’s approval was also obtained after a report on two bills was read and a bill was tabled.

First, U Chit Htwe of Magway Region constituency raised a question on the plan to build a rural health centre in the Magway Region, Natmauk Township, Htanpinkongyi Village. Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe replied that the Magway Region Public Health Department had recommended building a rural health centre in Htanpinkongyi Village. The requisite arrangements will be made to build this in the 2018-2019 fiscal year (FY), but if, for any reason, it is not done due to other priority works, it will be built in the 2019-2020 FY, said the Union Minister.

Replying to a question raised by U Kyaw Thaung of Sagaing Region constituency on the plan to provide surgical stainless steel rods at affordable prices to treat patients with broken bones, Dr. Myint Htwe said the Department of Medical Services had a profit margin of 10 per cent for high quality medicines, while a budget of Ks43.8 billion had been earmarked for the 2017-2018 FY to purchase medical equipment. Some 2,000 surgical steel rods are being bought for the 2017-2018 FY. A surgical steel rod is sold for between Ks130,000 and Ks150,000 and is bought from China and India. Surgical steel rods from America cost more than Ks500,000 and, therefore, are not used. Surgical steel rods from China and India are of good quality, while Myanmar was receiving assistance from other countries. For example, on 25 December, 2017, the Surgical Implant Generation Network, along with AMPA, donated 912 surgical steel rods to nine people hospitals and two military hospitals, explained the Union Minister. A question by Dr. Pyae Phyo of the Ayeyawady Region constituency on the plan to upgrade the Shwealan cottage hospital was also answered by Dr. Myint Htwe. Next, a report by the Amyotha Hluttaw bill committee on the findings and recommendations for a bill related to the protection of wildlife and the conservation of natural areas, sent back by the Pyithu Hluttaw with confirmed amendments, was read and explained by committee member Daw Nan Ni Ai Aye. In her explanation, she said the bill committee had conducted detailed discussions with the Amyotha Hluttaw representatives, relevant ministries, officials from World Wildlife Fund Myanmar, experts from the attorney general’s office, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, and the legal affairs and special cases assessment commission of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

She further asked the Amyotha Hluttaw to approve the bill, as it had been amended by the bill committee, along with its latest amendments (by Pyithu Hluttaw). After the Hluttaw’s agreement was obtained, the Amyotha Hluttaw speaker announced the approval of the bill. Later, a report by the bill committee on the findings and recommendations for a 2017 bill to amend the vacant, fallow and virgin lands management law was read by committee member Daw Kyin Ngike Mann. The Amyotha Hluttaw speaker then announced the approval of the bill, after the Hluttaw’s agreement was obtained.

A motion related to the bill was tabled by Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw. The motion was supported by U Maung Maung Latt of Sagaing Region constituency. The Hluttaw’s agreement to confirm the amendment was obtained, after which Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than announced the confirmation.

The 17th-day meeting of the seventh session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw will be held on 14 February.
Explanation of SWRR Ministry’s policy and work processes

Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (SWRR) Dr. Win Myat Aye explained his ministry’s policy and work processes that directly benefit the people to Hluttaw committee members in the Hluttaw compound’s Zabuthiri meeting hall yesterday.

Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U T Khun Myat said members of the Hluttaw, as elected representatives of the people, have a duty to pass laws as well as to conduct a check-and-balance function.

“All are urged to put their best efforts in conducting works that directly benefit the people”, he said.

The Deputy Speaker added that in the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) meeting that he attended recently, he was able to explain to an international audience the works done by the government for the Rakhine region by emphasising on the works of the SWRR Ministry. For this, he recognises and thanks the officials and staff of the SWRR Ministry.

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye spoke about being able to conduct more works that benefit the people directly when the government and Hluttaw work together. The ministry was able to provide a cash support system to mothers and children from birth to two years old, as well as a monthly social pension payment to elders above 90 years of age. Arrangements are now underway to expand the ministry from two departments to three departments, with the addition of the Department of Rehabilitation.

“As our ministry is responsible for social matters from conception to old age, it is important to set up policy that allows living a life in dignity and to develop safely. As the requirements of the people are best known by Hluttaw representatives who are always among the people, it is believed that working together with Hluttaw representatives would benefit the people the most. Works will be continued and implemented to obtain the strength of the people all over the country to free the country of conflict and become developed”, said the Union Minister.

Directors general from the three departments under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement then explained their work processes and future work programmes. Hluttaw representatives who are Hluttaw affairs committee members in attendance then discussed and suggested requirements of the people from their respective constituencies, availability of land for township offices, children’s affairs, women’s rights, the status of participating in natural disaster preparation works, drug rehabilitation, handicapped rights and old-age pensions, to which the Union Minister and officials provided answers and explanations.—Myanmar News Agency

Diplomats, UN officials observe Maungtaw repatriation work

FROM PAGE-1

Following the briefing, they flew to Taung Pyo Letwe camp, where displaced people who will return by road will be accepted.

At the camp, U Ye Htut, Maungtaw District Deputy Commissioner; briefed on readiness for providing accommodation, food and security and health care for the returnees.

Ministries concerned also opened offices at the camp to carry out scrutinisation.

The delegation toured Taung Pyo Letwe camp before they flew to Nga Khu Ya camp by helicopter.

Nga Khu Ya camp will be used for accepting those who return by waterway.

At the camp, 12 ministries opened their branch offices with more than 80 staff to carry out scrutinisation of returnees.

The delegation observed the steps for the scrutinisation process and the issuing of National Verification cards to the returnees.

In the evening, the delegation visited the Muslim community in Pantawpyin Village and viewed completion of houses by the Yangon Region Government.

In the visit to Pantawpyin Village, diplomats and UN officials asked the villagers about their security, education, health, economic and social situation.

The delegation includes Dato Paduka Haji Abdur Rahman bin Dato Paduka Besir, Patron of the Diplomatic Corps in Myanmar, Mr. Bob Robert Rae, Former Ontario Premier of Canada, ambassadors and diplomats from Canada, Brunei, the Czech Republic, the EU, Turkey, Indonesia, Australia, France, Japan, Nepal, the Philippines, Timor Leste, Russia, US, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Republic of Korea and representatives from UNHCR, World Bank, FAO and WFP.—Myanmar News Agency
Fisheries Department, WCS to conduct research on Ayeyawady dolphins

THE Fisheries Department and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) of Myanmar will conduct a survey and research on the activities of Ayeyawady dolphins from Mandalay to Bhamo in Ayeyawady river on 6 February. The trip is scheduled to take place over 10 days.

During the trip, the Fisheries Department and the WCS will provide awareness on dolphin conservation, as well as convince local villagers not to catch fish using electric-shock methods. They will also set up signboards to warn and increase awareness among people,” said U Han Win, who is in charge of Ayeyawady dolphin conservation under the Fisheries Department.

“We will know the exact number of dolphins only after conducting the survey. Currently, we cannot say that the number of dolphins has reduced because of the mortality rate of dolphins. However, reproduction has occurred among the dolphins. Normally, conservation and research trips are held in February every year, he added.

Data on the dolphins will be collected with the use of a small boat and a ship. To locate the dolphins, we will use the GPS system, 7x50mm lens, a depth meter, a sounder and cameras. “Ayeyawady dolphins come to the water surface every 30 to 60 seconds and do not jump like sea dolphins, but only swim slowly,” he added.

According to data collected in February 2017, there were 23 dolphins living in a 72-kilometre stretch between Mingun and Kyaukmyaung, 43 dolphins living in a 117-kilometre stretch in the Bhamo area and 68 dolphins living between Mandalay and Bhamo. —Rhine Set Wai

Over 150 tonnes of illegal timber seized in Sagaing’s Pale Township this FY

THE police seized more than 150 tonnes of smuggled wood and 15 vehicles in Pale Township, Yinnabin District, Sagaing Region, in the current fiscal year (FY), and arrested 14 people involved in the cases, according to statistics provided by the township Forestry Department.

The Forestry Department, the police and the township administrative committee are collaborating to make effective plans to combat unlawful extraction, smuggling and transport of forest products in the region. As a military operation, the combined team will continue to fight against smuggling of forest products in the region. Between last April and this January, the authorities seized some 152,286 tonnes of illegal wood and timber, including 3.03 tonnes of teak logs, 13.39 tonnes of teak timbers, more than 120 tonnes of hardwoods and other varieties of wood.

The forest authorities are accelerating efforts to eliminate the illegal trading of wood by raising awareness among the rural community through educative talks and seminars. —Township IPRD

Fish maws are selling well in Pyapon

FISH maws are emerging popular in the Pyapon market since January because of the high demand abroad, according to a report in City News yesterday.

“Fish maws are selling well in Pyapon these days. Earlier, we sent fish maws to Yangon. However, since January 2018, we are exporting fish maws abroad. The price of fish maw has not changed, and yet, the demand is high abroad,” said Daw Kyu Khine, a fish maw trader from Pyapon town.

“Since the demand is high abroad, we dry the fish maw of sea fish,” he said.

Fish maws are exported to China, Thailand, Japan and Singapore through border trade camps.

Fish maws are mostly used in hotels and restaurants in curries.

The price of dry fish maw varies depending on the type of fish.

Fish maw from gold fish costs Ks110,000 per viss, while fish maw from Natkataw fish costs Ks550,000 per viss.

The price of fish maw from Yang is between Ks18,000 and Ks21,000 per viss, while the price of fish maw from soldier croaker fish is Ks165,000 per viss. —GNLM
Myanmar-Korea Investment Promotion Seminar held at Lotte Hotel

May Thet Hnin

THE Myanmar-Korea Investment Promotion Seminar, coordinated by the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) and the ASEAN-Korea Centre, was held at Lotte Hotel on Thursday.

Officials from MIC explained the existing Myanmar Investment Law and Myanmar Companies Act, as well as the relief and tax incentives under the law. Similarly, officials from the transport, power, electricity and construction sectors detailed the current projects being executed in their respective sectors and the investment opportunities available.

Dr. Myo Nyein Aye, Deputy General Manager from the ministry of transport and communications, discussed matters concerning the condition of the transport sector, and railway, road, air and ports projects.

The transport sector offers investment opportunities in the river ports establishment (Ayeyawady-Chindwin) project; new Mandalay-Muse railway development project; new Tamu railway development project; new Yangon-Thanlwin railway development project; new Yangon-Thilawya railway development project; multi-modal logistics hubs in Yangon, Mandalay and Bago; container switching stations in Myawady; as well as in three pagoda passes and city truck terminals in Yangon, Magway, Pyay, Mawlamyine, Dawei, Thanbwe and Heho, said Dr. Myo Nyein Aye.

The telecommunications sector offers investment opportunities in postal services, telecommunication services, the production and distribution of satellite communication items, production and distribution of radar communication items and related equipments, production and distribution of radio communication items, and the production and domestic marketing of mobile handsets and telephones, he stated.

“MYANMAR’s transport sector lags behind ASEAN. Sixty per cent of its highways and most of its rail lines are in a poor condition. Some 20 million people do not have basic road access. Up to US$45 to $60 billion in investments are required by 2030,” he added.

U Kyaw Kaung Cho, Chief Engineer, Department of Bridge, operating under the Ministry of Construction, gave a report on the bridge and road projects and their estimate costs. The projects that will be executed are the Watalone Tunnel in Shan State; Pone Taung-Poneya Tunnel linking Sagaing and Magway regions; Hinthada (Ayeyawady) Bridge; Thayat-Aunglan (Ayeyawady) Bridge; Dala Bridge; an elevated highway (Yangon); and six package projects: Yangon-Mandalay Expressway, Yangon-Pathin-Ngyokekaung Expressway, Thilawya-Thanapink-Kyaikktto Road, Minbu-An-Kyaukpyu Expressway, Mandalay-Myitkyina Expressway and Pathein-Monywa-Shwebo Road.

U Min Min Oo, Assistant Secretary of the Ministry of Electricity and Energy, noted that there are investment opportunities in the field of generation, transmission and distribution of power and upstream, and new energy activities in the petrochemical sector. Korean companies can participate in the international competitive bidding, he said.

“Currently, only 39 per cent of households have access to electricity. There are many opportunities to invest in the renewable energy sector. Hydro energy and clean energy of liquefied natural gas plans are targeted to be implemented by 2030,” said U Min Min Oo.

A one-on-one business matching session is also included in this seminar, which will bring together 17 domestic companies and 12 Korean companies.

The Korean business mission is interested in the infrastructure and manufacturing sectors, and so, they have sought a business network with their Myanmar counterparts.

South Korea was ranked sixth in the investment line-up of 49 countries and brought $3.8 billion into Myanmar. The figure constitutes 5 per cent of Myanmar’s total foreign direct investments.

Nearly 600 Korean companies have registered in Myanmar, of which 400 enterprises have invested in the service sector. The remaining enterprises are engaged in industry, trading, construction, hotel and tourism, and banking sectors.

Yangon government to reduce electricity bills for factories operating at night

THE Yangon Region government will reduce electricity bills for factories and workshops that operate at night, according to a report in Myawady Daily yesterday.

“Electricity consumption is low at night, because only a small number of factories and workshops operate at night.

So, we can reduce the electricity bills if more electricity is used at night,” said an official from the regional government.

Currently, households pay Ks35 per unit for up to 100 units and Ks40 per unit for up to 200 units. Anything above 200 units costs Ks50 per unit.

Industrial users pay Ks75 per unit, Ks100 and Ks150. From April, the Ministry of Electricity and Energy has planned to change the meter system, depending on the usage of electricity.

— GNLM

Chinese merchants buy medicinal vines in bulk from Ngathayauk, Mandalay

CHINESE merchants have been buying medicinal herbs, locally called Sintonemanwe, from Ngathayauk Township, Mandalay Region, accruing good profits for local vine collectors.

The merchants, sent by Chinese businessmen, have been buying as many vines as the local collectors can supply. These vines grow naturally in Ngathayauk Township.

“However, we do not know how they will utilise these vines.

The vines are in demand throughout the year. We are vine brokers for the Chinese merchants.

There are three or four brokers here. We purchase dried Sintonemanwe. A viss (1.6 kg) of Sintonemanwe fetches some Ks400,” said a vine collector.

These vines grow naturally in the forest, attaching themselves to big and small trees. “We can earn extra money for our families,” said the vine collector.—Htet Myat

Photo: Phoe Khiwar
Myanmar National Symphony Orchestra 2018 performs in Yangon

The national band of the Ministry of Information’s Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV) and artists, led by Japan’s Yunosuke Yamamoto, the conductor and composer, jointly conducted Myanmar National Symphony Orchestra 2018 at the National Theatre in Yangon yesterday afternoon.

The performance was attended by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein and wife Daw Khin Mi Mi Kywe, Yangon Region Advocate U Han Htoo, Yangon Region ministers, Ambassador of Japan to Myanmar Tateshi Higuchi, officials, invited guests and the public.

During the performance, musicians from MRTV and the Japanese musicians jointly played Bizet’s Carmen Suite No. 1 Lest Toreadors, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 4, Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto No. 1 (excerpt), Brahms’ Hungarian dance No. 5 and No. 1, Mozart’s Ave Verum Curpus, Myanma sate yin Myanma shukhin (Myanmar’s original thought and Myanmar’s scenery), Maha (majestic), Beauty and the Beast, Despacito and Mahn Taung Yeik Kho (Taking refuge beneath Shwe Mahn Mountain).

Later, U Phyo Min Thein, Tateshi Higuchi, U Han Htoo, Yangon Region Minister for Planning and Finance U Myint Thaung, Yangon Mayor U Maung Maung Soe and Yangon Region Minister for Rakhine Ethnic Affairs U Zaw Aye presented bouquets and flower baskets to Japanese troupe leader Yunosuke Yamamoto, Japanese pianist Kyoko Koyama, the MRTV national band, singers, the Japanese cultural group and the Myanmar cultural group. They also took commemorative group photographs with the artists.—Myanmar News Agency

Information session on Australia Awards Scholarship 2019 Intake

An information session on Australia Awards Scholarship 2019 Intake, a scholarship program directly provided by the Australia government, was held yesterday morning in Lake Garden Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw Hotel Zone.

At the information session, Anna Greble, Scholarship Consultant and Ma Zar Ni Win, Senior Program Officer of Australia Embassy, Yangon explained about the scholarship award. Selected persons will be permitted to attend the courses in Australia starting from 2018 December, 2019 January and February. Interested person can contact Australia Embassy in Yangon or visit the embassy’s website http://myanmarembassy.gov.au for online application.

Those attending the talk then raised questions. Applications for Australia Awards Scholarships are accepted since 1 February and will be accepted until 30 April. Similar information sessions will be held in Hotel Mandalay on 11 February and Royal Taunggyi Hotel in Taunggyi on 12 February it is learnt.—Myanmar News Agency

Tamu television station tests digital signal

Myanmar Radio and Television is planning to shift from its current analogue system to a digital system, and has completed the installation of a DVB-T2 transmitter and antenna, which took place from 1 to 4 February.

It is now test the transmission of digital television signals that are being received in Tamu Town and the nearby villages of Yan Nyein Aung, Hezin, Chaungnetkyi, Kyuntaung Ywathit, Htantabin, Manmaw and Pantha.—Myanmar News Agency

WORLD WATER DAY 2018

"Nature for Water" \\
“Water for Nation Building”

MCC(III)

Myanmar Government
Pyidaungsu Hluttaw joint bill committee holds meeting

A joint bill committee to discuss the plan for April through September 2018, the national planning bill and the 2018 Union Budget Bill, was held yesterday morning in the second-floor meeting hall of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw building D.

The meeting was attended by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw deputy speaker, Joint Bill Committee and Public Account Joint Committee chairman U Aye Tha Aung, the joint bill committee and public account joint committee deputy chairmen, secretaries, joint secretaries and committee members, legal affairs and special cases assessment commission members, and officials from the ministry of planning and finance, union attorney general’s office and the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw office.—Myanmar News Agency

Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief visits Singapore port

TATMADAW Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, who was in Singapore at the invitation of Chief of the Defence force of the Singaporean Armed Forces, visited Singapore port yesterday morning.

The Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief and party viewed the port from the PSA Building. Next, they went to port control centre and observed the loading and discharging of containers in the port by remote control system and then toured inside the port.

Singapore port was constructed in 1964 and it is the top deep sea port in the world, where containers ships from around the world come to berth and conduct the highest volume of global trade. In 2017 the PSA International company handled containers amounting to 33.25 million TEU. The port had more than 290 cranes of which about 140 cranes were in operation every day. The port handled nearly 6 per cent of the container trade volume in the world.

The Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief also met with families of the Myanmar military attaché (army, navy, air) and officers attending trainings.—Myanmar News Agency

Foreign investment increases two-fold this fiscal year in Mandalay

FOREIGN direct investments (FDIs) in Mandalay has increased some two-fold in the first nine months of this fiscal year (FY), according to the Mandalay Region Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.

Between April and December of this FY, the inflow of FDIs into Mandalay reached more than US$1.1 billion, while investments by citizens were valued at more than Ks1.8 billion, which was a significant increase in the value of investment, compared with last FY.

Daw Nwe Ni Oo, director of Mandalay Region Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, said, “Both local and foreign investments continue to flow into the region, creating more employment opportunities for residents. When compared with last FY, foreign investments in the nine months increased by $370 million from 19 projects, while citizens’ investments went up by Ks860 million from 12 projects.”

Last financial year, the authorities allowed 11 citizens’ investment projects, worth more than Ks940 million, and seven foreign investment projects, valued at $730 million.

Commenting on investments, U Thike Tun, assistant director of the department, said: “The newly founded regional investment committee has the right to grant approvals to both local and foreign investments. The committee has granted approvals to five investment projects, including three foreign projects last month. Efforts are being made to give the green light to the remaining applicants after a review process.”

According to official statistics from the department, foreign investments in Myanmar, as of this December, reached more than $3.2 billion from 56 projects, whereas citizens’ investments reached more than Ks3.750 billion from 141 projects.—Khine Hsat Wai

Chief Scouts Commissioner meets MoP trainees, Chair of Asia-Pacific Scout Region

CHIEF Scouts Commissioner Dr. Tin Nyo met with Mr. Paul Parkinson, the Regional Chair of the Asia-Pacific Regional Scout Committee, at the Diamond Jubilee Hall of the Yangon University yesterday.

At the meeting, Dr. Tin Nyo spoke about how joining the scouts can have a positive impact on a person’s life and that scouts generally help their community and also on topics related to sanitation. He also expressed his gratitude towards the Asia-Pacific Regional Scout Committee for providing training to Myanmar scouts about critical thinking involved in the peace process.

Mr. Parkinson also expressed his delight that Myanmar managed to become a member of the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) in such a short time. He said their Committee will do their best to provide training similar to the recent Peacemaker workshops and for scouts in Myanmar to be able to join in on the World Scout Jamboree.

Earlier in the day, Dr. Tin Nyo met with the participating scouts and their instructors at the training for coordinators of Messengers of Peace and gave words of encouragement.

Later in the afternoon, members of the Asia-Pacific Scout Committee and members of the Myanmar Scout Association discussed the strengths and weaknesses of Myanmar’s scouts and possible expansion of the Scout Association’s processes. This was followed by Mr. Parkinson explaining the mission of WOSM and how the Asia-Pacific Committee can provide support to Myanmar’s scouts.—Myanmar News Agency
Solve the armed conflicts through negotiations

EMBERS of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and Kachin State government signed two bridges in Samprubum Township in Kachin State on 28th January, and the destruction has stopped the flow of life-saving commodities to the towns and villages of Putao State.

On the same day, the armed conflict in Kawapan Village, Myitkyina-Putao Samprubum Road near Kawapan Village. Despite armed conflicts in Kachin State, the Putao District is usually a place of peace and stability. Ethnic people including Japhun, Laiw and Rawun live in peace. The local people welcomed with delight the recent inauguration of road infrastructures by the government, as it shortened the travel time between Putao and Myitkyina.

We should understand that armed conflicts cause loss of lives on both sides, and civilians are victims of the conflicts.

By An Editor

According to the bilateral agreement made by Myanmar government and the Kachin State government, the Myanmar government declared that the negotiation and repatriation programmes will be resumed. But, after signing an agreement with the UNCHR on 22, Kachin State postponed the repatriation plan. It is evident that the Myanmar government is ready for repatriation to accept the displaced people who find places to offer to others following the torrential attacks in Rakhine State.

The Myanmar government has taken measures to ensure safe and sustainable returns of the displaced people who will return by turns or on their own will. But the Bangladesh government held up the repatriation process because the conditions of the displaced people had not been insisted on ground that the list of people to be sent back is yet to be prepared, their verification and sorting process is still in progress.

We would like to urge the KIA to realise the demand and pressure of the displaced people from Rakhine State.

A few weeks ago, The New York Times journalist Hannah Beech wrote an article which published in the 21st Century Panglong Magazine. In this, the journalist mentioned that the armed groups have come out on the road to dwell.

According to her articles, “She was reporting on children who had arrived in the camp without their families. An international charity had given financial support to their uncle, however, he meekly refused to meet the girl. Within an hour, she had a notebook filled with the kind of quotes that put at heartbreakings. Little of it was true.

For four days, I interviewed a nine-year-old boy named Nurshad, and his story had it all. In my notebook, he drew pictures of his house – and the tree from which two boys were hanged by Myanmar soldiers. Then he drew the party can be so change as he crossed the river into Bangla-

desh. He found his flip-flops in his waist, said, with a bit of bide.

The sandal was from the dead of his Oma. His glance at them and sobbed.

Inconsistent accounts. But there were inconsistencies. Beech said he liked cricket, a sport popular in Bangla.

Hence, only cessation of armed conflicts and peace can bring delight not only to all armed groups but also to the people of Mon State, it will bring safe and security to the livelihood of the people. Peace and development. The best way to solve the armed conflicts is to hold negotiations. The talks have skyrocketed, resulting in a shortage of household commodities.

The International community tries to mount pressure on Myanmar to agree what they are demanding, because all displaced people are civilians.

In fact, in the history of the region, the people in the hilly areas in Kachin State joined in the fight against the colonialists and to regain independence. After independence, they undertook armed struggle against the then government and to defend the country's border against the invasion from the соседaries. Many a time he tried to escape from his prison, but failed. Finally, he took his life. In the other story, the farmer asked his quarrelsome sons to come one by one and make an agreement. He asked his quarrelsome sons to come one by one and make an agreement. Unfortunately, many ethnic conflicts are still going on in the areas connected with the country after independence as a result of internal and external dangers.

In doing so, the people should hold more value than that of an international agreement. The huge and unseen part of the conflicts is that armed groups should be officially invited to come back to Rakhine State.

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The huge and unseen part of the conflicts is that armed groups should be officially invited to come back to Rakhine State.
France urges halt to air strikes, aid corridors in Syria

PARIS — French Defence Minister Florence Parly on Friday called for an end to air strikes in Syria and the opening of humanitarian corridors, saying it was unacceptable that civilians were being targeted.

Parly highlighted the fighting in rebel-held areas of Idlib province and eastern Damascus, where waves of Syrian government and Russian strikes have killed dozens of civilians in recent days. “We are very worried. The air strikes need to end,” Parly said.

On France Inter radio, “Civilians are the targets, in Idlib and in the east of Damascus. This fighting is absolutely unacceptable,” she added. The Syrian civil war, now entering its eighth year, has killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced more than 11 million from their homes, while drawing in regional countries and global powers supporting client factions on the ground.

Parly did not specify who was carrying out the strikes. Her comments came after the United Nations on Tuesday called for an immediate ceasefire in Syria of at least a month. UN war crimes experts have also said they are investigating several reports of bombs allegedly containing chlorine gas being used against civilians.

Standing beside Russian President Vladimir Putin last summer, French leader Emmanuel Macron said any failure to open humanitarian corridors in Syria would be a “red line”, as did the use of chemical weapons.

France and the United Nations have repeatedly called in past months for the opening of aid corridors to alleviate the humanitarian crisis. The Paris government has also urged Moscow in private to consider ways to alleviate the crisis, but those efforts have not materialized into results on the ground.

France’s foreign minister is due in Russia before the end of February.—Reuters

Oil slides towards steep weekly loss as supply fears mount

LONDON — Oil prices fell for a sixth day on Friday, and were on track for their biggest weekly losses in 10 months, as record-high US crude output added to concerns about a sharp rise in global supplies.

The drop came amid a rout in global equity markets sparked by inflation fears.

Brent futures LCOc1 were down 30 cents at $64.51 a barrel by 0925 GMT. On Thursday, Brent fell 1.1 per cent to its lowest close since 20 December.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude CLc1 was down 42 cents at $60.73 a barrel, having settled down 1 per cent in the previous session, its lowest close since 2 January.

Both contracts have fallen more than 9 per cent from this year’s high point in late January. Brent was heading for a weekly loss of nearly 6 per cent, its biggest since April, while WTI’s weekly decline of more than 7 per cent is the steepest since March.

“It has now become painfully clear for beleaguered oil bulls that the early-year rally was not justified,” PVM Oil Associates’ Stephen Brennock said in a note. “In its place is a deepening price rout that has quashed any lingering pockets of optimism.”

US domestic crude production hit a record of 10.25 million barrels per day (bpd) for the most recent week, according to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), while an outage on a key oil pipeline in the North Sea proved short-lived.

OPEC member Iran also announced plans on Thursday to increase production within the next four years by at least 700,000 barrels a day, which Brennock said marked “a hat-trick of heartaches” for oil bulls.

“This will be a tail order as the spectre of fresh US sanctions looms but nevertheless exacerbated the sell-off,” Brennock said.—Reuters
WASHINGTON — The number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits unexpectedly fell last week, dropping to its lowest level in nearly 45 years as the labor market tightened further, bolstering expectations of faster wage growth this year.

The second straight weekly decline in claims reported by the Labor Department on Thursday also pointed to stronger job growth momentum, which could further drive the unemployment rate lower. “The extremely low level of claims is a sign of tightness in the labor market and suggests that February is shaping up to be another solid month for job creation,” said John Ryding, chief economist at RDQ Economics in New York. Initial claims for state unemployment benefits decreased 9,000 to a seasonally adjusted 221,000 for the week ended 3 February, the Labor Department said. Claims fell to 216,000 in mid-January, which was the lowest level since January 1973. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast claims rising to 232,000 in the latest week. Last week marked the 133rd straight week that claims remained below the 300,000 threshold, which is associated with a strong labor market. That is the longest such stretch since 1970, when the labor market was much smaller.

The labor market is near full employment, with the jobless rate at a 17-year low of 4.1 per cent. The tighter labor market is starting to exert upward pressure on wage growth. The Labor Department reported last week that average hourly earnings jumped 2.9 per cent year-on-year in January, the largest gain since June 2009, after advancing 2.7 per cent in December. Strong wage growth supports optimism among Federal Reserve officials that inflation will increase toward the US central bank’s 2 per cent target this year. US financial markets expect the Fed will raise interest rates in March. The Fed has forecast three rate increases for this year after lifting borrowing costs three times in 2017.

ECONOMY LIKELY OVERHEATING

Prices for US Treasuries fell, with the yield on the benchmark 10-year note rising to a near four-year high also as the Bank of England said interest rates probably need to rise sooner. The dollar was little changed against a basket of currencies. The dollar was little changed against a basket of currencies. The dollar was little changed against a basket of currencies.

The claims report also showed the number of people receiving benefits after an initial week of aid fell 33,000 to 1.92 million in the week ended Jan. 27. The four-week moving average of the so-called continuing claims rose 12,500 to 1.95 million.

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North Korean leader’s sister arrives in South Korea

SEOUL — North Korea’s high-level delegation to the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics including leader Kim Jong Un’s younger sister, Kim Yo Jong, arrived in South Korea by plane on Friday afternoon.

Considered one of the closest aides to her brother, Kim Yo Jong has become the first immediate family member of North Korea’s founder Kim Il Sung to ever set foot in South Korea.

At a reception dinner prior to the Olympics’ opening ceremony in the evening, North Korea’s ceremonial leader Kim Yong Nam, who leads the delegation, shook hands with South Korean President Moon Jae In, local TV footage showed. They exchanged a few words. The delegation and Moon are scheduled to hold a meeting on Saturday, the South, while testing the unity of the North’s intentions.

The report said one potential date for such a visit is 15 August, the anniversary of Japan’s surrender in World War II and liberation of the Korean Peninsula from decades of Japanese colonial rule. South Korean media have meanwhile floated the possibility that the delegation may deliver to Moon a personal letter or message from Kim Jong Un.

Observers say that by sending Kim’s younger sister, the North is trying to underscore the recent rapprochement with the South, while testing the unity among South Korea, the United States and Japan over sanctions imposed on the North over its nuclear and missile programs.

A jetliner carrying the high-level delegation flew into Incheon International Airport, near Seoul, shortly before 2 p.m. South Korean TV later showed footage of the delegation catching a high-speed train to Pyeongchang, the main Olympic venue in eastern South Korea. North Korea’s airline Air Koryo is subject to sanctions imposed by the United States and South Korea. But an official of the South’s Unification Ministry indicated that the plane used by the delegation would not be subject to the sanctions.

—Kyodo News

Lanzhou police seize 15 kg heroin in drug case

LANZHOU — Police of Lanzhou City, northwest China’s Gansu Province, have caught a man suspected of transporting drugs and seized 15 kg of heroin.

Last month, Lanzhou police were informed that a man surnamed Ma frequently contacted people at the border area and its $20 trillion national debt. Their sweeping tax overhaul bill approved in December will add an estimated $1.5 trillion to the national debt over 10 years.

Nearly $300 billion in new spending included in the bill approved on Friday will ensure the annual budget deficit will exceed $1 trillion in 2019, said the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, a private fiscal policy watchdog group in Washington.

Friday’s budget deal allows for $165 billion in additional defense spending over two years that will help Trump deliver on his promise to rebuild the military. That won over many Republicans but some were still furious over the $131 billion extra made available for non-military spending, including health and infrastructure.

None of the added spending will be offset by budget savings elsewhere or revenue increases, relying instead on government borrowing. There also is no offset reduction for nearly $90 billion in new disaster aid for US states and territories ravaged by hurricanes or wildfires. —Reuters

China catching up in neuroscience research: scientist

BEIJING — China is intensifying research on neuroscience and the China Brain Project (CBP) will be one of the world’s biggest, according to a neuroscientist.

Muming Poo, Director of the Institute of Neuroscience and Center for Excellence in Brain Science and Intelligence Technology (CEBSIST) of Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), has played a key role in planning the CBP.

The goals of CBP were to advance basic understanding of the brain, to address some urgent health needs through neuroscience to develop new technology, Poo said in a recent interview published in the National Science Review, a CAS journal. CBP will build on the work of the EU human brain project, the US BRAIN initiative and Japan’s brain/MIND project, with some distinctive features of its own.

“CBP puts research on brain disorders and brain-inspired artificial intelligence (AI) as a high priority, rather than a remote goal. Indeed, neuroscience already provides useful input into these areas,” he said.

“China has the largest patient populations in the world for all brain disorders, making research on prevention, early diagnosis and early intervention particularly urgent and offering the largest data base for researchers to work with,” Poo added. The current international neuroscience community mostly uses rodents (mice and rats) as animal models for studying the neural mechanisms.

Poo believes that non-human primates are more appropriate experimental animal models as their brains are more similar to those of humans.

“China has large macaque monkey resources, and research on developing human disease models using macaques is advancing at a rapid rate. This is an opportunity for China to lead the study of higher cognitive functions, such as empathy, consciousness and language, as well as pathogenic mechanisms and intervention approaches for brain disorders,” Poo said.—Xinhua

Trump signs deal to end brief government shutdown, increase US spending

WASHINGTON — The US Congress ended a brief government shutdown on Friday by reaching a wide-ranging deal that is expected to push budget deficits into the $1 trillion-a-year zone.

The bill passed by a wide margin in the Senate and survived a rebellion of 67 conservative Republicans in the House of Representatives thanks to the support of some Democrats. Those conservatives were mainly angry about non-military spending increases.

President Donald Trump signed the measure into law on Friday afternoon.

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**Quake-hit Taiwan city winds down rescue efforts, five still missing**

HUALIEN, (Taiwan) — Rescue operations in Taiwan started to wind down on Friday after a devastating 6.4-magnitude earthquake rocked the tourist area of Hualien this week, taking a toll of 12 dead and five missing.

More than 270 people were injured when Tuesday’s quake hit the eastern coastal city just before midnight, toppling four buildings, ripping large fissures in roads and unleashing panic among the roughly 100,000 residents.

More than 200 aftershocks followed, hampering a round-the-clock rescue effort in which emergency personnel battled rain and cold to comb rubble in a search for survivors.

Efforts on Friday narrowed to finding five Chinese nationals still missing after rescuers pulled two bodies, identified as Canadian citizens from Hong Kong, out of a 12-storey residential building that had been left tilting at a 45-degree angle. Authorities said they would focus their search on the single building where the five missing were believed to be.

“The military will continue to prioritise today rescuing the missing people in the Yun Men Tsui Ti residential building,” it said in a statement.

The building’s extreme displacement made the search tough, the government said in a statement, adding, “The space for our operations is small, so the progress of search and rescue can be slow.”

Power was restored to all affected areas in Hualien, although 8,500 homes are still without water.

The military will work with local government officials to develop a plan to demolish a hotel, a residential building and other dangerous buildings, it said in its statement. —Reuters

**Philippines eyes 2 mln Chinese tourists this year**

MANILA — The Philippines is aiming to attract 2 million Chinese tourists to visit this archipelagic Southeast Asian country this year, an official of the Department of Tourism (DOT) said on Friday.

Niel Ballesteros, chief of DOT Market Development Group, told Xinhua that the Philippine government is expecting an estimated 2 million Chinese tourists to visit the Philippines this year, almost twice the number of Chinese tourists who visited the country in 2017.

Ballesteros said the Philippines is on target to reach the 2 million target given the booming economic and diplomatic relations between Manila and Beijing.

“To meet the target, the Philippine government will increase the connectivity between two countries. Now, we are lureing more direct flights between China and the Philippines,” Ballesteros said.

Most of the Chinese tourists who visited the Philippines last year spent their holidays in the world-renowned beach island resorts of Boracay and Bohol, DOT records showed. This year, Ballesteros said DOT is endorsing other destinations in the Philippines, like tourist spots in Dumaguete on Negros island in the central Philippines.

A total of 968,447 Chinese tourists visited the Philippines from January to December 2017, an increase of 43.32 per cent from 2016, making China the second-largest source of tourists last year. The Philippine government announced in January that it is increasing the number of flights between the Philippines and China to lure more Chinese tourists. —Xinhua

**CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE**

**M.V GSS YANGON VOY. NO. (1080)**

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V GSS YANGON VOY. NO. (1080) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 10-2-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T 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**

**SHIPPING LINES**

Phone No: 2301185

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**CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE**

**M.V CAPE FLORES VOY. NO. ( )**

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V CAPE FLORES VOY. NO. ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 10-2-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T 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.

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**THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE (INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)**

(3/2018)

Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in Myanmar Kyats.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr No</th>
<th>Tender No</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>DMP/L-094(17-18)</td>
<td>Chrome Lignite (200) MT</td>
<td>Ks</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>DMP/L-095(17-18)</td>
<td>Spaces for K 700 A Big Pump Ex</td>
<td>National 55 Series Drilling Rigs (15) Items</td>
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<td>(3)</td>
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<td>M.S Plate and Angle Iron (2) Groups</td>
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<td>(4)</td>
<td>DMP/L-097(17-18)</td>
<td>Assorted Sizes of Tyres (1) Lot</td>
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<td>(5)</td>
<td>DMP/L-098(17-18)</td>
<td>Assorted Sizes of Batteries (1) Lot</td>
<td>Ks</td>
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<td>(6)</td>
<td>DMP/L-099(17-18)</td>
<td>3” ERW Steel line Pipe API SL Grade A</td>
<td>(PSL-1) (10000) Meter</td>
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Tender Closing Date & Time— 8-3-2018, 16:30 pm

Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 8 February 2018 at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No (44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

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**INVITATION TO OPEN TENDER**

Sealed tenders are invited by Department of Medical Services, Ministry of Health and Sports for the supply of 29 seater Bus and Forensic DNA Laboratory Equipment.

Tender documents are available during office hours at the Procurement and Supply Division, Department of Medical Services, office No (4), Ministry of Health and Sports (13.2.2018).

Sealed bids are to be submitted to the office, not later than (28.2.2018)15:00 hour, after which no bid will be accepted. No telegraph/telex proposal will be accepted.

For detail information please contact the Phone No.067-3411510, 067-3411544, Procurement and Supply Division Office, Department of Medical Services, Ministry of Health and Sports.

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**BANGKOK — A woman was killed while trying to take a selfie with a friend on a train track at a station in Bangkok, local police said. The 28-year-old had been drinking with a group of friends near the Samsen train station in Bangkok’s Phaya Thai district. At around 4 am local time on Thursday, they came to the station and tried to take a selfie with a train in it.**

The tragedy happened when she and a male friend attempted to take a photo with an oncoming train in the background, failing to see an oncoming train. Taking selfies, especially in dangerous locations, is a new popular culture in Thailand and India. In January, a man died in a similar accident in India.—Xinhua
Real life heroes star in Clint Eastwood French attack movie

LOS ANGELES — In 2015 they were hailed as heroes by US President Barack Obama and given France’s highest honors.

This week, the three American childhood friends who overpowered a man wielding an assault rifle and a box cutter on a passenger train to Paris are starring in a Clint Eastwood movie about the attack, and it’s feeling a little surreal.

Spencer Stone, Anthony Sadler and Alek Skarlatos from Sacramento, California, play themselves in the movie “The 15:17 to Paris,” opening in US movie theaters on Friday.

After meeting the three men in their 20s at an awards show, Eastwood decided to make a film, but rather than casting actors, the Oscar-winning director called on the friends themselves.

“Three weeks before shooting, he’s like ‘Do you guys want to do it yourselves?’ and we were like ‘What? The movie starts in three weeks and we never took acting classes,’” Sadler said.

“(Eastwood) was like ‘Don’t worry about it. We’re just going to go and do it.’ So he just kept it simple and said ‘Be yourself and we’re just going to capture it,’” he added.

They helped overpower the man, and Stone plugged the wounds of another passenger with his fingers after being struck himself by the attacker.

Two other passengers were wounded and the attacker was arrested when the train stopped.

Stone is glad the film also honors the other people who sprang into action. In the film, many of the passengers are the same people who were on the train in 2015.

A lot of the times the story is depicted that we were the only ones who did anything,” he said. “For them to be honored for what they did in such a big way is awesome because it’s something we’ve always wanted but we just didn’t know how we could do that.

“We just wanted to get it right and I think we did,” Stone added. Skarlatos said shooting the movie “helped us close a chapter in our lives and move on.”

But the trio is also hoping it opens other doors. “Hopefully this launches movie careers for all three of us,” said Sadler.

“We’re all trying to pursue acting. We’ve kind of caught the acting bug and he (Eastwood) gave us the confidence to do it.” — Reuters

Movie Review: Padman

The best thing about “Padman” is the person the film is based on.

Arunachalam Muruganantham, a school drop-out from a small village in Tamil Nadu, invented a machine to manufacture sanitary pads at a fraction of the cost of branded ones. This allowed thousands of women in rural India, where menstrual hygiene is abysmally low, access to a safe and healthy option.

Muruganantham opened four pad-making units in North India, and now has four branches across the country. His story is told in “Padman,” a film based on the real-life entrepreneur.

Shah Rukh Khan says taking up a project is an organic process for him and he does not go looking for a film.

The 52-year-old actor said every artiste has their own method of selecting a film but believes it is the movies that choose him, not the other way around. When asked whether he would also like to work in a film promoting campaigns like Akshay Kumar in the case of “Toilet: Ek Prem Katha”, Shah Rukh said, “Everybody has their own system of doing a film, why they do, they do. I feel a film.

“I don’t go searching for a film. I have been a producer for 15 years, I have never produced a film that I think I should do. I think films choose me.”

The actor was speaking at a select media roundtable at the ongoing Auto Expo 2018 here yesterday.

Shah Rukh believes even if the content was message driven, the film has to be entertaining to strike a chord with the audience.

“Sometimes they (films) go wonderfully right, sometimes they go fantastically bad and I am ok with it. If I don’t keep that part of my life fluid, whatever level of artistic, I can’t wake up every morning and keep on acting. “I can’t do it (acting) as a job, I am not saying others are doing it. Different strokes for different folks,” he added.

The actor recalled the time when people were apprehensive about “Chak De! India”.

“Shah Rukh said he trusted his gut and the rest, as they say, is history. “My father used to play hockey. No one knew I played hockey. Someone offered me a film on hockey, everyone said it was the worst film being made. There is no heroine, the girls are unknown, the songs are bad and I look awful with a beard. —PTI

I don’t go searching for a film: Shah Rukh Khan

NEW DELHI — Supertar Shah Rukh Khan says taking up a project is an organic process for him and he does not go looking for a film.

The 52-year-old actor said every artiste has their own method of selecting a film but believes it is the movies that choose him, not the other way around. When asked whether he would also like to work in a film promoting campaigns like Akshay Kumar in the case of “Toilet: Ek Prem Katha”, Shah Rukh said, “Everybody has their own system of doing a film, why they do, they do. I feel a film.

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Movie Review: Padman

The best thing about “Padman” is the person the film is based on.

Arunachalam Muruganantham, a school drop-out from a small village in Tamil Nadu, invented a machine to manufacture sanitary pads at a fraction of the cost of branded ones. This allowed thousands of women in rural India, where menstrual hygiene is abysmally low, access to a safe and healthy option.

Muruganantham opened four pad-making units in North India, and now has four branches across the country. His story is told in “Padman,” a film based on the real-life entrepreneur.

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Indian cyclist spreads Gandhi’s message of peace on world tour

TOKYO — When Dnyaneshwar Yeotkar was meandering down the streets of a village in Hakone, south of Tokyo, he was simply hoping to find somewhere to escape the cold and lay his head down for the night.

The 27-year-old Indian man, who is on a solo journey to cycle the world spreading Mahatma Gandhi’s message of peace and friendship, depends on the good graces of locals for shelter — hence his relief when an elderly Japanese man made him welcome.

“All the doors were closed. I was thinking where to stay because it was so cold that my tent would not be enough. I knocked on the door of the only house that had its lights on. A grandfatherly figure opened it. Using Google Translate, I told him that I want to stay for a night. ‘Come, come,’ he said in Japanese.”

Not only did the older man assist Yeotkar with unloading his luggage but made food for him as well. When Yeotkar departed the next day, the older man was in tears, he said as he recalled his stay in the mountain resort in early January. “I was so moved.”

Japan is one of 75 countries he plans to cycle through by Oct. 2, 2019, the 150th birth anniversary of Gandhi.

Yeotkar, who started the “Vishwa Maitra Yatra” (“World Peace and Friendship Tour”) in November 2016, has been met with acts of kindness such as he encountered in Hakone, but has also faced trouble along the way. He will often go hungry or be without shelter for two to three days. In Thailand, Yeotkar was bitten by dogs. He had a bag stolen in Indonesia and experienced his first typhoon in Taiwan, where he tied himself and his bike to a tree and spent two full days being buffeted by strong winds. In Laos, he awoke to snakes wrapping themselves around his feet.

Yeotkar started his journey from India, traveling to Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Taiwan, China, and Japan. He departed for Mexico, his next destination, in early February.

“I am enjoying it. The biggest thing is that these are experiences I believe that experiences are not bad or wrong, they are teachings to nurture one’s life,” he said. Yeotkar cycles around 70 kilometers a day and carries 75 kilograms of luggage, including a camping gas burner, cooking pots and spices. Since he is a vegetarian, he is happy to survive on white rice when no other supplies are available, while getting his hands on lentils is a treat.

— Kyodo News

‘Rarest white diamond ever’ to be sold in London

LONDON — A flawless diamond, the size of a large strawberry, is expected to fetch a world record price when it comes to market at Sotheby’s in London this month.

Weighing just over 102 carats, the round, brilliant white stone is smaller than a 118-carat oval diamond sold in Hong Kong in 2013, which currently holds the record price per carat.

But Sotheby’s, which also handled that Hong Kong sale, expects the smaller stone’s rarity and high quality will see it attract an even higher price. “That (stone sold in Hong Kong) fetched $259,000 a carat, currently the world record for any colourless diamond. This one being a round brilliant cut - the asking price will be north of that,” Patrick Wong, chairman of Sotheby’s Diamonds told Reuters. The diamond is the only stone over 100 carats to have been given the highest grades in every criteria by the Gemological Institute of America, which judges a precious stone’s quality, Sotheby’s said. It has not disclosed the asking price for the stone, which will be sold in a private sale.—Reuters

New York’s Met can keep Picasso sold during Nazi flight: judge

NEW YORK — A US judge on Wednesday dismissed a lawsuit seeking the return by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan of a Pablo Picasso masterpiece that a German Jewish businessman was allegedly forced to sell at a low price, to fund an escape from the Nazis and fascism.

US District Judge Loretta Preska in Manhattan said the great-grandniece of Paul Leffmann, who once owned Picasso’s “The Actor,” could not show under New York law that he sold the painting under “duress,” justifying its return to her family.

“The great-grandniece, Laurel Zuckerman, who oversees the estate of Leffmann’s wife Alice, had alternatively seen the estate of Leffmann’s wife Alice, had alternatively sought more than $100 million of damages over “The Actor,” from Picasso’s Rose Period in 1904 and 1905.

“Our client is very disappointed with the decision and intends to appeal,” Zuckerman’s lawyer, Lawrence Kaye, said in an email. In a statement, the museum said the decision confirmed it is the Picasso’s “rightful owner.” It also said it “considers all Nazi-era claims thoroughly and responsibly,” and has returned objects that appeared to have been misappropriated.

Many lawsuits seek to reclaim art taken or sold after Adolf Hitler took power in Germany in 1933.

Zuckerman said the Leffmanns fled Germany for Italy in 1937, and Paul Leffmann sold “The Actor” the next year to two art dealers for $12,000 to fund an escape to Switzerland from the Fascist regime of Benito Mussolini, a Hitler ally.

The Met acquired “The Actor” in a 1952 donation, but did not acknowledge Leffmann’s ownership until 2011, after decades of incorrect cataloguing, the lawsuit said.

Zuckerman said the circumstances of the 1938 sale meant her family never lost title. The Met disagreed, while expressing sympathy for the Leffmanns’ plight.—Reuters
Yangon stay perfect in MPT MNL 2018 match

Yangon United defeated Rakhine United by a score of 3-1 yesterday on Yangon’s home field.

Yangon United dominated the match, with the opening goal being scored by Sekou Sylla at 9 minutes. Yangon gained their second goal just before the end of the first half when Sylla touched the ball into the net after Min Kyaw Khant made a crossing pass in front of the goal.

Both teams changed game tactics in the second half.

Exploiting some mistakes by Rakhine United’s defence line, Maung Maung Lwin scored Yangon’s third goal with an assist by Yamazaki Kosuke at the 64-minute mark. Rakhine averted a shutout when they were awarded a foul ball and Matthew Sunday Idoko made a goal for Rakhine.

Yangon United has garnered 13 points in 5 games so far this season. With four wins and one draw, they stand in second place, with Yadanabon in first place.—KyawZin Lin

Olympics: Bitter cold greets athletes as Pyeongchang Games open

PYEONGCHANG, (South Korea) — A ray of light shone and a bell rang out to pronounce the start of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics opening ceremony on Friday.

All eyes settled on the rival Koreas, who marched together under a “Korean Unification” flag a day after the North staged a military parade to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the founding of the Korean People’s Army.

It was the first time the Koreas as marched together at an Olympic opening ceremony since the 2006 Turin Games. North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un’s younger sister, Kim Yo Jong, was among the high-level delegation attending the opening ceremony, along with the North’s ceremonial leader Kim Yong Nam, both putting a face to the heavy political tensions looming over the winter sports festival. Others dignitaries in attendance included Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and US Vice President Mike Pence. The march under the unified Korean flag was the outcome of a meeting between South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un near the border town of Panmunjom.

Approximately 2,500 athletes from over 90 countries and territories are taking part in the open-air Pyeongchang Olympic Stadium had to brace for the elements and were provided with windbreakers, lap blankets and even heated seat cushions for the sub-zero temperatures in the mountain town of Hoenggye.

The protagonists for the opening extravaganza were five child actors from Gangwon Province, representing the five Olympic rings and the five elements — fire, water, wood, metal and earth — on a journey that connects past, present and future.

Netherlands-based sports statistics firm Gracenote projects a record 15 medals for Japan, nearly double the outcome from Sochi, where the athletes brought home one gold, four silver and three bronze medals. —Kyodo News