State Counsellor receives energy officials from PRC, Bangladesh

STATE Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received delegations led by Mr. Li Fanrong, Vice Administrator, National Energy Administration (NEA) of China, and Dr. Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, Energy Adviser to the Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, all of whom had attended the Trilateral Meeting for Electric Power Trading Initiative involving Myanmar, China and Bangladesh yesterday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

U Win Khaing, Union Minister for Electricity and Energy, and U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation, also attended the meeting during which they discussed matters on enhancing cooperation in the areas of electricity and energy among Myanmar, China and Bangladesh.—MNA

Union Minister briefs on Rakhine, peace, democracy at UN side event

A side event entitled “Understanding Myanmar: Efforts for Reconciliation and Peace”, at which the peace process, the transition to democracy and the Rakhine issue were addressed, was held Thursday during the 37th Session of the Human Rights Council being held at the United Nations Office in Geneva.

The Myanmar delegation hosting the briefing was led by U Thaung Tun, Union Minister for the Office of the Union Government.

The Myanmar delegation included Dr. Aung Tun Thet, Chief Coordinator of UEHRD, Daw Pyone Kathy Naing, Member of Pyithu Hluttaw, U Je Yaw Wu, Member of Amyotha Hluttaw, U Nay Oke Tint and Daw Haymar Min Thu. More than 40 Permanent Representatives/Representatives from Permanent Missions and UN agencies in Geneva were present at the event. U Htin Lynn, Permanent Representative of Myanmar, made the introductory remarks.

The Union Minister briefed attendees on the changes, challenges and choices for Myanmar. Salient points of his statement were:

- Myanmar has undergone remarkable change and transformation in recent years.

STATE Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received delegations led by Mr. Li Fanrong, Vice Administrator, National Energy Administration of the People’s Republic of China, second from left, Dr. Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, left, Energy Adviser to Bangladeshi Prime Minister, U Win Khaing, second from right, and U Kyaw Tin. PHOTO: MNA

See Page-3
Dr. Myint Htwe, of Mon State constituency, raised a question on the plan to send outstanding graduate students on scholarship to foreign countries, during the 26th-day meeting of the seventh session of the second Pyithu Hluttaw yesterday.

Union Civil Service Board Chairman U Win Thein replied that the Ministry of Education was selecting and sending qualified students attending post graduate courses to foreign education institutions, whenever it received a scholarship application/proposal from foreign educational institutions. Invitations/proposals for scholarship are forwarded to relevant universities, where written and personal interviews are conducted for students entitled to attend the courses, and those selected are then sent abroad, according to the procedure and regulations.

After the foreign scholarship assessment and selection committee is informed of the wide-ranging courses that can be freely applied to, news about the plan is distributed, and interested students can apply to attend the course. If selected by the respective course, the students are sent abroad, according to the procedure and regulations. Students can also apply for scholarships online with the approval of the Ministry of Education, and those accepted are sent according to the procedure and regulations.

Arrangements have also been made to enable outstanding students to get quality education by upgrading Yangon University, Mandalay University and Yangon Technology University into centres of excellence and providing opportunities to continue further studies abroad through the appointment of an education attaché and selection for state scholarships, explained the Union Civil Service Board Chairman.

A question by Daw Khin Saw Wai of Yathedaung constituency on the deployment of police posts and stations in the five police areas of Yathedaung Township was then answered by Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Aung Soe, who also gave details about future deployment plans.

Next, Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw responded to a question raised by Dr. U Than Aung Soe of Mohnla constituency on how people who wanted to start the livestock business could acquire permission for land. The Deputy Minister said land permission was granted to those who wanted to start the livestock business. For those who want to start a livestock business on farm land, application can be made according to the 2012 Farmland Law, and for those who want to start the livestock business on vacant, fallow and virgin land, they can apply to do so according to the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land Management Law and Rules, replied the Deputy Minister.

—Aye Aye Thant (MNA)

THE 26th-day meeting of the seventh session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw was held at the Amyotha Hluttaw meeting hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

Replying to a question raised by U Mahn Law Moung of Chin State constituency (8) on mentioning the name of the ethnic national races on the National Registration Identity Card (NRIC), Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe said that the name of the ethnic national races will be mentioned on the NRIC according to the law, directives, procedures and guidelines provided, and will be from among the 135 ethnic national races designated under the 1983 census record. Unless the government determines and designates a new ethnic national race, there is no plan to put in other names, except the designated 135 ethnic national races, said the Union Minister.

Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe then replied to a question posed by Dr. Zaw Lin Htut of Mon State constituency (9) on the plans to raise the standard of the national traditional sport of Chinlone. The Union Minister said it is a good thing to train new blood players in the national traditional sport of Chinlone in the basic education schools. Whether the standard of the sports of Chinlone is raised or not is a secondary matter; the main thing is that the entire student population can become healthier. As such, in the coming few months and within a year, this traditional sport will be promoted in schools, in cooperation with the Chinlone sports group. Initially, it will be started in schools in the urban areas, as well as in the six sports and physical science schools under the ministry, said the Union Minister.

On the matter of upgrading the nurse and midwife training school in the Ayeyawady Region, Pathein Town, General Hospital, and to increase the trainee numbers, raised by U Soe Moe of the Ayeyawady Region constituency (1), the Union Minister for Health and Sports said there are 281 trainees attending the Pathein nurse and midwife training school and 243 trainees attending the Hinthada nurse and midwife training school.

As the Myanmara nurse and midwife training school will come into existence in the 2018-2019 fiscal year, it is expected that the requirement of the Ayeyawady Region will be met, replied the Union Minister.

Next, a bill on the amendment for an anti-corruption law (fourth revision) was discussed by Daw Myat Thida Tun of Mon State constituency (5), U Hla Oo of Sagaing Region constituency (4), U Hsan Myint of Ayeyawady Region constituency (3) and U Tin Aung Htun of Magway Region constituency (9).

Later, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Naing Than informed the Hluttaw about receiving the Myanmar Investment Rule, approved and sent with amendment by the Pyithu Hluttaw, and took the approval of the Hluttaw.—Aung Ye Thwin (MNA) □
Trilateral ministerial meeting held for electric power trading initiative between Myanmar-China-Bangladesh

A trilateral ministerial meeting for electric power trading initiative among Myanmar-China-Bangladesh was held at Horizon Lake View Hotel, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar yesterday.

U Win Khaing, Union Minister for Electricity and Energy; Li Fanrong, Vice Administrator of National Energy Administration of the People’s Republic of China; Dr. Twid-e-Ehal Chowdhury BB, Advisor to the Prime Minister, for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Affairs from Bangladesh, and other senior officials from the energy sector of the esteemed countries attended the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting was to enhance the trilateral and Myanmar-China bilateral cooperation on electric power trading by promoting the interconnection of the power grid and infrastructure development among these three countries. The meeting in plenary discussed the kick-starting of the Myanmar-China-Bangladesh cross-border power trading and its implementation mechanism.

By initiating and collaborating in electric power trading with the three neighbouring countries, reciprocal benefits can be enjoyed not only in the improvement of energy security, sharing of electricity resources, infra-structure development, capacity development of officials and job opportunity, but also strengthening of long-term friendships and fulfilling the basic requirements of electricity supply to support the economic development of each country.—MNA

Union Minister briefs on Rakhine, peace, democracy at UN side event

FROM PAGE-1

The country has abandoned five decades of military rule and is striving to ensure that democracy takes firm root. We are now on a path of transition away from centuries-long legacies of colonial occupation, ethnic rivalries and military rule.

• Immediately after taking office, the government began reviving the peace process. In spite of the complexities involved, there has been significant progress. The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was signed by eight ethnic armed groups in 2015. A new milestone in the direction of peace was made last month when two more ethnic armed groups came on board.

• With regard to rule of law, it is worth mentioning here that State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, in addressing the conference on justice and rule of law on Wednesday, underscored the need for judicial and legal reforms.

• The complexity is compounded by the high expectations that the international community and the Myanmar people have for the Government.

• With regard to Rakhine, it is only natural that there will be criticism and doubting Thomases. Scepticism may well be warrant- ed. However, what we need is constructive criticism and not recriminations and the passing of judgment. We need to find a constructive way forward.

• Nothing must be done to derail the transition to democracy.

• In Rakhine, our efforts to bring peace and development were on track until August 2017, when violence was triggered by the attacks on security forces by terrorists. Regrettably, the attacks and the subsequent mass displacement of people changed the situation and negatively affected the perception and attitude of the international community on the situation in Myanmar.

• The Government, recognizing the urgent need to find a lasting solution to the problem of Rakhine, has been working to promote peace, harmony, and development for all communities.

• The Government has initiated a number of programmes to find a sustainable solution to the issue of Rakhine. We are currently implementing the recommendations of the Annan Commission. A Ministerial-level implementation committee and an Advisory Board, made up of eminent personalities from home and abroad, have been set up to help us find lasting solutions.

• The State Counsellor herself is leading a public-private enterprise, the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine (UEHRD), to provide humanitarian assistance, carry out resettlement and rehabilitation and to develop Rakhine State.

• Allegations of widespread “atrocity”, “ethnic cleansing” and “genocide” have been made repeatedly. The Government and the leadership have been accused of standing by in silence.

• The leaders of Myanmar, who have been struggling so long for freedom and human rights, will never condone any action that can be construed as ethnic cleansing or genocide. The Government will do everything to prevent it.

• We take the allegations of human rights violations seriously and will take action against offenders whenever there is clear evidence.

• Far from being indifferent to the situation, we care deeply for all people affected, including those who have fled to Bangladesh, due to recent incidents in Rakhine.

• Following the agreement reached between Myanmar and Bangladesh, we have made preparations for the repatriation of the displaced persons.

• Concerns have been expressed by the international community for the safety and security of the returnees. We have strengthened our border guard police capacity to ensure the safety of the returnees as well as all communities – Rakhine, Muslim, Daingnet, Mro, The, Maramagyi and Hindu. They are all victims of violence and terrorism. Security needs to be ensured for all.

• Today we are faced with terrorism, funded and inspired from abroad. This is a dangerous trend for all of us. We need to join hands to counter the growing threat posed to our region by terrorism.

• The complexities and challenges in Rakhine cannot be seen in isolation and through a narrow lens of human rights of one particular community alone.

• On our part, Myanmar is ready to continue to work with the international community.

• At the same time, we earnestly hope that the international community will pursue a more objective and balanced approach to help overcome the challenges in Rakhine.

• Without mutual understanding, mutual suspicion and hostility will prevail. The lives of those most affected will not improve. And the door will be open to even greater tragedy.

• I believe that the better choice before us is to recognize the reality of the situation on the ground and accommodate each other’s concerns. We must work together to build trust and confidence in order to achieve lasting peace, security and development in Rakhine.

Then, Dr. Aung Tun Thet, Chief Coordinator of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine State (UEHRD), appraised Myanmar’s development strategies and agenda, which are in line with Sustainable Development Goals. He also briefed about the work of UEHRD (a public-private enterprise), in term of humanitarian assistance, resettlement and development in Rakhine State through ten task forces.

Daw Pyone Kathy Naing, a member of the Pyithu Hluttaw, gave an explanation of her perspectives on Rakhine, providing humanitarian assistance in Rakhine, the promotion and protection of human rights, and concerns on the terrorist acts of ARSA based on her 30 years of experience in human rights. She stressed that no one is above the law and they will continue to fight for it. She urged the international community to extend understanding and cooperation to Myanmar. She warned that sanctions against Myanmar will affect mostly the ordinary people of Myanmar.

During the question-and-answer session, Permanent Representatives/Representatives of Japan, Thailand, the Philippines, the European Union and Australia raised questions related to the state of cooperation between Myanmar and the UNDP and UNHCR on humanitarian and development assistance in Rakhine State, the work and funding of UEHRD, cooperation with the World Bank, more access for humanitarian organizations, the repatriation process, the possibility of setting up a national independent investigation commission, actions against security personnel who committed human rights violations, freedom of movement and prevention of statelessness.

The Union Minister and the Chief Coordinator responded to all the questions.

After the side event, the Union Minister briefed the press on the situation in Rakhine State at the United Nations Office and conducted a telephone interview with BBC (Myanmar).

The 37th Session of the Human Rights Council at the United Nations Office in Geneva began on 26 February and will continue until 23 March.—Myanmar News Agency
THE Inle floating market is expected to open in November this year, according to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

“WE are discussing a plan to develop the Inle floating market. We will choose the best place for the floating market,” said U Ohn Maung, Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism.

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is cooperating with the forestry department to procure the woods required for the construction of boats for the market.

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is also working on creating new tourist destinations and market promotions, in cooperation with the related ministers, and private and international organizations to attract more foreign tourists.

The floating market is being developed in the Inle region to promote its tourism market, as well as create job opportunities for the local people. There are some 105 hotels with 3,410 rooms in the Nyaung Shwe-Inle region. The ministry has issued licences to 70 tour companies, 257 vehicles, 1,204 tour guides and 934 local tour guides. —GNLM

Inle floating market to open in November

Five pilgrims died as minivan topples into gorge in Kachin State

FIVE people were killed and nine others injured after a minivan fell into a canyon in the northern Myanmar state of Kachin on Wednesday.

The accident happened near mile post 38 on Momauk-Lwejel road between two villages in Momauk Township in Sagaing Region after visiting a famous pagoda in the area, the van was driven by Phyo Maung Maung, 28 years of age. The injured have been transferred to a nearby government hospital. Action has been taken against the driver by local police.

Kachin is thought to be a country with one of the highest numbers of road fatalities in the world.

Raw jade stones seized during a car search in Northern Myanmar

LOCAL security force discovered 34 different sizes of raw jade stones weighing about 90 kilograms during a car search.

The vehicle was on the way to Myitkyina from Phakant and was driven by Thein Tan, 34 years of age from Myitkyina. The force seized the raw jade stones at a checkpoint near a village in Kamai Town, Kachin State this evening.

The driver has been charged with transporting the raw jade stones illegally by local police force, according to a source from the Information and Public Relations Department. —MDN

MYANMAR likely to reach target FDI for 2017-2018 FY

MYANMAR is set to achieve its US$ 6 billion Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) target, according to the Ministry of Commerce (MIC). Myanmar has received over US$ 5 billion in FDI while it is just one month away from the end of 2017-2018 fiscal year, said U Tun Aung Kyaw, Deputy Director General of Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

We inquired businesses about their difficulties and make responses, he added.

For 2017-2018 FY, MIC has approved 206 FDI businesses worth US$ 4,508.453 million until February, 2018, and total investment including introduction into existing project amount US$ 5,307.207 million.

Besides, MIC approved US$ 366.530 million in Thilawa Special Economic zone under special economic zone law, therefore total investment reached US$ 5,673.737 million. —GNLM
Yangon gov't submits proposal to establish fish farming zone

By May Thet Hnin

THE Yangon Region government has submitted a proposal to the union government on developing a fish farming zone in Kawhmu and Kungyangon townships in the Yangon Region, said U Phyo Min Thein, Yangon Region Chief Minister.

The proposal was made during the 15th meeting between the Vice President and entrepreneurs, which was held on 7 March at the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The fish farming zone will be established on a 10,000-acre plot.

“We are discussing a project with the Myanmar Fisheries Federation, the Myanmar Fisheries Federation of Myanmar, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Industry, the Department of Fisheries and the Yangon Region government,” he added.

The union government has not responded to the proposal yet. “If the union government grants the permission, we have to discuss the details with the land owners, whether we will pay compensation for the land or allow them to participate as land owners,” he stated. According to the Land Law, land cannot be used for other purposes.

Cuttlefish price increases due to low supply

THE price of cuttlefish has increased since February because of the low supply to Yangon fish market, according to the Thiri Minkalar fish wholesale market.

The price of cuttlefish was Ks9,000 per viss in the third week of January 2018. Now, the price of cuttlefish has increased to Ks10,000 per viss.

“Last year, few supplies of cuttlefish entered the market. Even suppliers could not supply the fish to our market to meet the market demand this year. This is because fish suppliers are directly contacting restaurants,” said a fish retail seller. Moreover, fishermen are facing difficulties in catching cuttlefish, because they do not have fishing licences, which is another reason for the lower supply.

“Although the cuttlefish fishermen have a boat and machine grants, according to the rules and regulation of the fisheries department, they do not have fishing licences. Therefore, some fishermen may have to suspend their businesses,” said the Joint-Secretary of Myeik District Cuttlefish Entrepreneurs Association.

There are more than 800 cuttlefish fishing boats in Myeik district, but only some 200 are officially sanctioned by the fishery department. — GNLM

Internal Revenue Department issues notification on affixing commercial tax stamps

By May Thet Hnin

THE Internal Revenue Department sent a notification letter to the Myanmar Gold Entrepreneurs Association on 6 March about affixing commercial tax stamps on gold purchases.

The Internal Revenue Department released the notification letter because they found a few gold shops had failed to affix the commercial tax stamps on their gold vouchers, while others were selling gold with two vouchers — one with payment for commercial tax and another without payment for commercial tax.

The Internal Revenue Department has reduced the commercial tax on gold jewellery from 5 per cent to 1 per cent, and while refined gold is now exempted from the commercial tax, earlier it was taxed 5 per cent.

The ministry has thus requested Myanmar gold entrepreneurs to ensure they collect the commercial tax from buyers. The ministry has not made a public announcement, as it does not want to reveal the names of the gold shops yet.

In this regard, Myanmar Gold Entrepreneurs Association’s General Secretary U Oth Myaing said, “Now, buyers pay only one per cent commercial tax on gold jewellery purchases, because our association requested for that. The commercial tax rate imposed by the government is reasonable. Every country pays taxes. Therefore, we have delivered the notification letter to the state and region gold entrepreneurs associations through the Central Executive Committee and regional Executive Committee, as soon as we received it from the ministry. In addition to this, it has been announced on social media (Facebook). We will also discuss the matter in the forthcoming monthly meeting.”

The commercial tax of 1 per cent on gold jewellery is collected through gold purchases. However, some gold shops reduce the commercial tax for their regular customers, because they do not want to lose business. — GNLM
Discussion on draft law to amend Television and Video Law (8/1996)

A discussion on the draft law to amend the Television and Video Law (8/1996) was held at the Ministry of Information’s office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

At the event, Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint explained about the ministry performing its information, education and entertainment duties, in cooperation with other organisations, entities and individuals.

The Union Minister said that everything needs to be conducted according to the enacted laws, but when a law is not in accordance with other enacted laws, it is not useful or is an obstacle or a hindrance, and attempts must be made to amend it.

Next, U Saw Hla Tun, member of Pyithu Hluttaw’s Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission, said the law was being amended to prevent and reduce piracy of videos and to develop the motion picture sector.

Later, Dr. Wei Phyo Aung, member of the Pyithu Hluttaw Health and Sports Development Committee, said the stage to submit the bill committee’s report had been reached, and the related sectors were holding discussions and coordination meetings. The Hluttaw will discuss establishing a law that is appropriate to the Myanmar movie sector.

Following this, Pyithu Hluttaw Health and Sports Development Committee member Dr. Sein Mya Aye said the day’s discussion would be held with the aim of enabling discussion in the Hluttaw for the establishment of a law that is appropriate for the motion picture sector. Only then can discussion be held in the Hluttaw for the enactment of the law, added the committee member. The laws enacted must be amended if there are difficulties in following it, he said urging the attendees to discuss it openly.

Information and Public Relations Department Director General U Ye Naing then explained that the draft law was prepared because the Television and Video Law (8/1996) was not in accordance with the Constitution and the international motion picture laws. Before a new motion picture law can be enacted, the clauses and fines prescribed in the law are being amended to be in line with the time, explained the Director General.

Myanmar Motion Pictures Organisation Chairman U Zin Wine, Myanmar Music Association Copyright and International Relation Chairman U Myo Swe, Myanmar Thabin Association Vice Chairman U Ne Win, Video (central) Group Chairman U Win Naung, Anti-corruption Commission Member U Han Nyunt, representatives of states/regions governments, and representatives of states/regions video related groups and committees provided discussions and suggestions.

The Union Minister also discussed the amendment proposed on the work licence, video rental, show and distribution, and offences and fines included in the television and video law. — Myanmar News Agency

Expenditure on Health of Myanmar

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Source: Budget Department Information Unit / Central Statistical Organisation.

Rain, thundershowers likely in Bago, Yangon, Taninthayi regions

RAIN or thundershowers are expected in the Bago, Yangon and Taninthayi regions, and Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Kayin and Mon states within two days, as the weather is partly cloudy to cloudy over South Bay and a few clouds hover over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal, according to the Myanmar Daily weather report issued by the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology yesterday evening.

The forecast for Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay and neighbouring areas for today is generally fair with slight rain or thundershowers, and the degree of certainty being 60 per cent.

The outlook for the weekend weather is slight rain or thundershowers in the Yangon Region, and the weather will be generally fair in Nay Pyi Taw and Mandalay Region.

Seas will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. The wave height will be some 3-5 feet off and along Myanmar coasts. —GNLM

Fish resource declines in Ye due to poison fishing

LOCAL fishermen in Ye, Taninthay Region, are facing scarcity of fish in the rivers, and have blamed illegal fishing activities for the decline.

Traditional fishermen have complained about illegal fishing with the use of poison to the local authorities, urging them to take action against those involved in such activities.

“To fight illegal fishing, we need the cooperation of the local people, because it is difficult to get evidence,” said U Zaw Min Oo, Head of Ye Township Fishery Department. A case was brought to the court this year, thanks to the cooperation of the local people, he added.

The department is conducting a campaign to educate the local people and raise awareness against illegal fishing with the use of poison.

According to the local people, some people engage in illegal fishing early morning to avoid being caught. Local fishermen noticed the decreasing fish resources three years ago. —Htut Htut (Ye)
**Heads of service organizations appointed**

The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has confirmed the following persons as Heads of Service Organizations shown against each of their names on expiry of the one-year probation period.

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<th>Name</th>
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<td>(1) U Thant Sin</td>
<td>Director-General Protocol Department Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
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<td>(2) U Zaw Htay</td>
<td>Director-General Union Peace Implementation Department Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor</td>
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**Senior General Min Aung Hlaing back from Singapore**

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and his delegation, who attended the 15th ASEAN Chiefs of Defence Forces Informal Meeting in Singapore, left the Singapore Armed Forces Paya Lebar Airbase for Myanmar.

He was seen off by Myanmar Ambassador to Singapore U Htay Aung, Military Attache (Army, Navy, Air) Col. San Nyunt Oo and senior officers from the Singapore armed forces. The commander-in-chief of defence services and his delegation were greeted at Yangon International Airport by Commander-in-Chief (Army) Admiral Tin Aung San, Lt-Gen Myo Zaw Thein and Lt-Gen Tin Maung Win of Commander-in-Chief (Army) office, the Yangon Command commander; senior Tatmadaw officers, Singapore Ambassador to Myanmar Mrs Venessa Chan and other officials. —Myanmar News Agency

**U Aye Tha Aung returns from Viet Nam**

A delegation, led by Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye Tha Aung, visited Viet Nam on the invitation of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and returned to Yangon yesterday evening. The delegation was welcomed by Yangon Region Hluttaw Speaker U Tin Maung Tun, Deputy Speaker U Lin Naing Myint, Viet Nam’s Ambassador to Myanmar Dr. Luan Thuy Duong and officials from the Amyotha Hluttaw office at Yangon International Airport. —Myanmar News Agency

**Number of students sitting for matric exam declines**

The total number of students who registered to take this year’s matriculation examination was 844,358, of which 789,883 turned up on the first day of the three day assessment, when Myanmar subjects are tested.

Since then, the number of students who have shown up on subsequent days has declined, officials said.

On the second day, when English is the main subject tested, 789,070 students showed up. On the third day, when the test subject is mathematics, only 788,504 students turned up. The total three days reduction in numbers sitting for the examination was 55,854 on the third day. In Nay Pyi Taw, a total of 22,389 sat for the Myanmar subject. This number was reduced to 22,357 on the English subject day and further reduced to 22,336 on the mathematics subject day.

Similarly in Yangon and Mandalay, the numbers declined from 111,851 and 111,397 on day one to 111,672 and 111,260 on day two and 111,523 and 111,188 on day three, respectively.— Myanmmar News Agency

**Union Attorney-General receives executive director of ILF**

Union Attorney-General U Tun Oo received Jennifer Smith, executive director of International Legal Foundation (ILF), at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. During the meeting, they discussed matters related to legal aid for criminal cases in Yangon and Mandalay, the processes of free lawyer renting by the Union Attorney-General’s Office for the poor who are facing the death penalty, cooperation work and training in the rule of law, as well as legal aid and cooperative works between legislators and legal-aid lawyers for the legal rights of the clients.

Also present at the meeting were Deputy Attorney-General U Win Myint, Permanent Secretary Daw Nu Nu Yin and Deputy-General Dr Thida Oo.— Myanmar News Agency
We earnestly hope that the international community will pursue a common objective and balanced approach to overcome the challenges in Rakhine.

The Myanmarese government is giving priority to repatriation of the displaced people. Humanitarian aid has been provided to all affected communities.

Nothing must be done to derail the transition to democracy.

MANMAR is going through a critical period of transition. The government is dealing with social, economic, cultural and judicial challenges.

Bellyahching and reforming the rule of law and justice sector is a top priority for the government. It is essential for our efforts towards sustaining Peace and Development.

In Rakhine, the government’s efforts to bring peace and development was on track until the attacks of August, 2017. Following these attacks, the administration, the economy, transportation, and regional development affairs stopped from the right path, displacing people to other regions. Currently, the government has made efforts to restore the governmental machinery back to normal.

We earnestly hope that the international community will pursue a common objective and balanced approach to overcome the challenges in Rakhine.

Despite many lauding the Rohingya being Myammar, the international community has focused more on the situation in Rakhine State, as the media has incessantly portrayed it as a religious issue. For us, in fact, the Rakhine State is not a religious issue but a political and economic challenge involving migration, conflict, and...
Bali — Millions of tourists are drawn to Bali’s palm-fringed scenery and rich marine life, but there is a danger lurking beneath its famously crystal-clear waters: a wasteland of plastic rubbish.

An underwater video shot by British diver Rich Horner this week showing a sea overflowing with plastic and other garbage at Manta Point, a well-known diving site near Bali’s main island, has highlighted trouble in paradise.

The holiday island has become an embarrassing poster child for Indonesia’s trash crisis.

The problem has grown so bad that officials in Bali last year declared a “garbage emergency” across a six-kilometre stretch of coast that included popular beaches Jimbaran, Kuta and Seminyak.

“The ocean currents brought us in a lovely gift of a slick of jellyfish, plankton, leaves, branches, fronds, sticks, etc... Oh, and some plastic,” the diver wrote on his Facebook account.

His video, which has been viewed more than a million times, shows a diver swimming through a torrent of rubbish — including bottles, cups and straws — at Manta Point about 40 kilometres (25 miles) from Bali’s main island.

“Plastic bags, more plastic bags, plastic, plastic, so much plastic!” Horner said.

Indonesia, an archipelago of more than 17,000 islands, is the world’s second biggest contributor to marine debris after China, and a colossal 1.29 million metric tons is estimated to be produced annually by the Southeast Asian nation.

The waves of plastic flooding into rivers and oceans have been causing problems for years, clogging waterways in cities, increasing the risk of floods, and injuring or killing marine animals who ingest or become trapped by plastic packaging.

“Microplastics can contaminate fish which, if eaten by humans, could cause health problems, including cancer,” Gede Hendrawan, an environmental oceanography researcher at Bali’s Udayana University, previously told AFP.

Bali’s rubbish problem is at its worst during the annual monsoon season, when strong winds push marine flotsam on to the beach. PHOTO: AFP

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Japanese PM lauds Putin’s strong spirit, love of Russia

MOSCOW — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe considers Russian President Vladimir Putin to be a strong leader with whom it is possible to resolve various issues, as he himself said in Russian TV and radio journalist Vladimir Solovyov’s documentary dubbed World Order 2018, which was released on social media.

“Putin is very much fond of his country and has a strong spirit,” Abe said. The Japanese prime minister added that “talks often turn out to be very difficult.” “But I am sure that together we can resolve the most complicated issues,” he stressed. According to Abe, the world has been facing a lot of complex problems, including the situation in Syria, the fight against terrorism and the North Korea issue.

“It is impossible to resolve these problems, particularly the Ukrainian conflict, unless Russia takes part in dialogue,” he said.

Abe also shared his impressions from a joint visit to Tokyo’s Kodokan Judo Institute that he had made together with Putin in December 2016. “When people enter Kodokan, it is easy to tell if they are judokas or not,” the Japanese prime minister said, explaining that before stepping on the tatami, each judoka must take a deep bow.

“Despite being a president, Putin took a bow upon entering Kodokan. President Putin is undoubtedly a true judoka,” Abe concluded. — Tass

According to Shinzo Abe, “Putin is very much fond of his country”. PHOTO: TASS

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Africa new frontline in anti-tobacco fight: activists

CAPE TOWN — Africa and other developing regions are becoming increasingly significant battlegrounds in the effort to combat the spread of smoking, an anti-smoking campaign group warned on Thursday.

But most countries in sub-Saharan Africa have inadequate monitoring of tobacco use, according to the authors of the newly reissued “Tobacco Atlas” of global tobacco control efforts and challenges.

Globally, the battle to end the scourge of tobacco is still long.

Smoking claims nearly seven million lives yearly around the world from cancer and other lung diseases, and accounts for about one-in-10 deaths worldwide, according to the World Health Organization. “More than 1.1 billion people are current smokers, while 360 million people use smokeless tobacco,” the authors said in a statement. The sixth edition of the atlas, co-authored by the American Cancer Society and Vital Strategies, was published to coincide with the opening this week of the World Conference on Tobacco or Health in Cape Town.

“Low and middle income countries represent over 80 per cent of tobacco users and tobacco-related deaths, placing an increased share of tobacco-related costs on those who can least afford it,” said the authors.

“A growing proportion of that burden will fall on countries across Africa in the future, if governments do not implement tobacco control policies now to prevent it.” Research on the tobacco industry, published in peer-reviewed journals, has portrayed a decades-long strategy by the industry to defend itself against health campaigners.

Investigators say tactics have included casting doubt on the scientific evidence of the perils of smoking, promoting brands through product placement in movies and aggressively marketing tobacco in low and middle-income countries where smoking laws are weak. Even as the percentage of adults who smoke has dropped in rich nations and plateaued in some emerging ones, the total number of smokers keeps climbing, driven by an expanding global population and more people in poor countries lighting up. —AFP
Three killed, dozen injured in blast, fire in chemical factory in India

NEW DELHI — At least three people were killed and around a dozen others injured in a massive blast that triggered fire inside a chemical factory in India’s western state of Maharashtra, police said Friday.

The blast took place Thursday night inside a boiler of the factory at Boisar-Tarapur industrial estate in Palghar district, about 150 km north of Mumbai, the capital city of Maharashtra.

“Last night at around 11:40 (local time) a massive explosion took place inside a boiler filled with industrial solvent at a private factory, triggering fire,” a senior police official said. “Three unidentified bodies were found at the site and 13 people were injured in the incident.”

The blast shattered window panels of buildings in the vicinity and locals said the impact of the blast was heard within a radius of 8 km.

Authorities rushed 11 fire tenders to the spot to contain the fire that spread to the nearby factories.

“Firefighting measures are underway and a lot of smoke has engulfed the area,” the official said.

Accidental explosions are common at Indian factories as owners usually ignore safety standards. —Xinhua
Trump and Kim to hold historic meeting

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has agreed to a historic first meeting with Kim Jong Un in a stunning development in America’s high-stakes nuclear standoff with North Korea.

Standing in front of the White House, South Korean National Security Advisor Chung Eui-yong announced the first ever meeting between a US president and North Korean leader, which he said would take place by the end of May.

Chung had recently returned from Pyongyang, where he met Kim, who, he said “expressed his eagerness to meet President Trump as soon as possible.”

Trump hailed “great progress” in the push to persuade Pyongyang to end its nuclear weapons program.

“Meeting being planned” he tweeted. “Kim Jong Un talked about denuclearization with the South Korean Representatives, not just a freeze. Also, no missile testing by North Korea during this period of time.”

“Great progress being made but sanctions will remain until an agreement is reached.”

News of the summit, which South Korean President Moon Jae-in said was “like a miracle”, is the latest step in a quickening diplomatic detente.

North and South Korea exchanged envoys as Pyongyang sent a delegation to the Winter Olympics in the South, which Seoul had dubbed the “Peace Games” and which saw the two countries marching under a unified flag.

The thaw came after a period of extreme tension between Washington and Pyongyang that sounded like the growing drumbeat of war.

Just months ago, Trump mocked Kim by calling him “little rocket man”. Kim returned the favor by describing Trump as “mentally deranged” and a “dotard.” The United States and North Korea were foes throughout the Cold War and fought on opposite sides of a bloody war in the 1950s. In the last two decades, they have been engaged in what is perhaps the world’s most dangerous nuclear standoff, with 30,000 US military personnel stationed just over the border in the South.—AFP

Krill could prove secret weapon in ocean plastics battle

SYDNEY — They might be at the bottom of the food chain, but krill could prove to be a secret weapon in the fight against the growing threat of plastic pollution in the world’s oceans.

New research Friday showed the tiny zooplankton are capable of digesting microplastics — under five millimetres (0.2 inches) — before excreting them back into the environment in an even smaller form.

Study author Amanda Dawson stumbled on the finding while working on a project involving microbeads — polyethylene plastic often used in cosmetics such as face scrubs — at the Australian Antarctic Division’s krill aquarium to check the toxic effects of pollution. “We realised that krill actually break up plastic, it was amazing,” the researcher from Australia’s Griffith University told AFP. “It’s difficult to know exactly what the implications of this could be, but the theory is that because plastics in the ocean are already degraded and more fragile, they would be even easier for krill to break up.”

The problem of plastic pollution is widespread, and rapidly getting worse.

Every year, more than eight million tons ends up in the ocean, costing billions of dollars in damage to marine ecosystems and killing an estimated one million sea birds, 100,000 sea mammals and untold numbers of fish, studies have shown. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres last year cited one study that showed plastic could outweigh fish in 2050 if nothing was done. Australian Antarctic Division krill biologist and study co-author So Kawaguichi said this was the first time scientists had examined microplastics digested by the crustaceans.

Published in Nature Communications, it found the fragments excreted were, on average, 78 per cent smaller than the original beads with some reduced by 94 per cent. “It’s a new pathway for microplastics to interact with the ecosystem”, Kawaguichi said.

He added that the research suggested other zooplankton with similar digestive systems may also be able to break down microplastics.

But Dawson cautioned the finding could also be a double-edged sword, citing the potential for toxins to be passed down the food chain as the smaller excreted particles became available to organisms that would not be able to ingest larger ones.

“We’ve barely scratched the surface and more work is needed,” she said.—AFP

Sri Lanka tourist arrivals record growth in February on strong rise from China

COLOMBO — Tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka exceeded 200,000 in February, a 19.3 per cent growth compared to the same period last year, mainly due to a strong rise from China, statistics from the Sri Lanka Tourism Ministry showed here Friday.

China emerged as the leading market followed by India and the United Kingdom. A total of 35,929 tourists arrived from China in February, a 42.3 per cent increase from the same period of last year.

Indonesia recorded over 32,000 tourists while over 22,000 arrived from the United Kingdom.

So far this year, 474,542 tourists have visited Sri Lanka, a 13.8 per cent growth compared to last year. Region wise, Europe continued to be the largest source of tourist traffic to Sri Lanka with a 52 per cent growth followed by Asia and Pacific with a 41 growth. America recorded a 5 per cent growth and Middle East recorded a 2 per cent growth.—Xinhua

Georgian PM calls for restoration of diplomatic ties with Russia

TBILISI — Moscow and Tbilisi should take joint steps to break the deadlock in relations between the two countries, Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili said in a statement addressed to Russian authorities.

“Urge the leadership of the Russian Federation to take joint steps and resolve this complicated situation, while fully embracing our responsibility to the present and future generations,” PM said in a statement released by the government’s press service on Friday. According to Kvirikashvili, the Georgian side has stated before, and reiterates its interest in reaching tangible progress in the Geneva International Discussions. “I have reaffirmed my commitment to personal involvement to this end,” he added.

“Unfortunately, we are facing a difficult reality today. Although we have restored bilateral trade and economic relations, a chain of tragic events continues. This undermines the prospects of regulating Georgia-Russia relations,” Prime Minister noted.—Tass
UN chief: now is time for gender equality

UNITED NATIONS — UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Thursday called for action to empower women and girls on the occasion of International Women’s Day.

“Everywhere, women are saying ‘The Time is Now.’ Time for equality and opportunity, respect and equal representation. Time for an end to violence. Around the world, women and girls are calling out the abusive behavior and discriminatory attitudes they face everywhere and all the time. They are insisting on lasting change,” Guterres told an event at UN headquarters in New York on 8 March 2018. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Thursday called for action to empower women and girls on the occasion of International Women’s Day.

“Power is at the heart of the matter. As we still live in a male-dominated world with male-dominated culture and until power is fairly shared, the world will remain out of balance.”

There is overwhelming evidence that investing in women is the most effective way to lift communities, companies and countries.

Women’s participation makes peace agreements stronger, societies more resilient and economies more vigorous, he said.

“Gender equality is the unfinished business of our time. And so the time is now to change it,” said Guterres.

Significant advances have taken place since the first International Women’s Day in 1976, he said. But structural barriers remain: unpaid care work, unequal pay, harmful stereotypes, discrimination and violence.

He pledged his determination to achieve gender parity throughout the United Nations.

For the first time ever, gender parity has become reality in the senior UN management team — the top level of this organization, he said, adding that the world body is very close to reach gender equality among leaders of UN country teams around the world.

He reiterated his commitment to zero tolerance of sexual harassment.

“I am improving reporting and accountability and trying to establish confidence, empower people who experience or witness harassment to come forward and seek justice.”

Blast kills three, wounds 13 in Kabul

KABUL — At least three people have been confirmed dead and 13 others wounded in a blast that rocked western edge of Kabul city, close to a political gathering on Friday, Afghan Public Health Ministry confirmed. According to sources with the ministry, three dead bodies and 13 injured persons have been taken to hospitals in Kabul. The blast occurred near to a political gathering on Darul Aman road at around 11:45 a.m. local time. Police have cordoned off the area and are not allowing journalists to get access to the site of the incident. Meantime, an eyewitness on the condition of anonymity said he believed that the number of casualties was higher than reported.

Philippine military clashes with rebels, 12 dead

MANILA — Heavy fighting between government troops and some 50 militants in the southern Philippines has resulted in the deaths of 12 militants, a military spokesman said on Friday. Army Capt. Arvin Encinas said the clash broke out around 6 a.m. on Thursday in Lower Salbo, a village in Datu Ampatuan town in Maguindanao province.

He said 23 other BIFF bandits under Commander Peni of Kariaian faction,” Encinas said in a statement.

“Our soldiers have been vigilant guarding the entire Central Mindanao in order to control the fighting in specific engagement areas and continue to pursue the remnants of the terror group,” Encinas said.

The military said the BIFF has about 200 to 300 members, mostly disgruntled former members of the larger insurgent group Moro Islamic Liberation Front, who signed a peace agreement with the government in 2014.

The BIFF is among the several groups in Mindanao that pledged allegiance with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria a few years ago.
LOS ANGELES — To amass a fortune in real estate, despite New York’s crazy housing prices: that is the challenge thrown down by singer Jennifer Lopez and her boyfriend Alex Rodriguez to kids from the Bronx, the city’s poorest borough.

Around 50 young students from the Bronx, most of them black or Latino, have been selected for “Project Destined,” designed by J.Lo and A-Rod — as the retired baseball superstar Rodriguez is known — to teach them the ins and outs of financing and real estate.

The youths underwent intense instruction from lawyers, bankers, mortgage companies and realtors, but the course will not be just theoretical.

The student team that comes up with the best business plan will have the chance to buy a building worth $1.5 million in the Bronx and develop it.

In this real estate mecca, its skyline in constant flux and whose most famous alumnus Donald Trump is now in the White House, good contacts can open unimaginable doors.

That was the philosophy of the project’s two founders, Fred Greene and Cedric Bobo, both of them successful black businessmen who wanted to pass on their knowledge and experience to kids from humble backgrounds.

“What we are doing here is giving kids a chance to work with us almost like apprentices,” said Bobo. “Kids come in, analyze properties, we then buy them and we share a portion of the profits.”

“We want to put owners and stakeholders in the communities where they live, work and play. If we do that, we do a lot,” said Bobo, an experienced investment banker for the Carlyle Group, one of the powerhouses of Wall Street. Before moving to the Bronx, where more than 35 per cent of the population live in poverty, the program ran in Detroit, Memphis and Miami, helping young people from poorer backgrounds learn the ropes of business.

- Escaping the ghetto -
At Yankee stadium in the Bronx, the students — split up into six teams — lay out their business strategies to a panel of experts that includes Jonathan Gray, head of the Blackstone Group, and Lopez, the mega-star singer who herself grew up in the Bronx but who is selling her Manhattan penthouse apartment for $27 million. The winning team will be the one with the most persuasive strategy that secures the greatest profit. The winners will then become minority shareholders in the development and receive some of the earnings from the property, helping pay their university tuition as long as they stay enrolled in the project and take part in more courses online.

In a pre-training session, Rodriguez chats with participants on an impressive balcony overlooking Times Square.

“Real estate is a way out of the ‘hood,” he says. “For real estate is the one game where you can get rich ... it doesn’t matter if you don’t have any money and it doesn’t matter what market, you can go buy real estate all over the world with no money.”

The ex-ball star says he is living proof of that: he bought a duplex in southern Florida in 2003 and now owns more than 10,000 apartments through his company Monument Capital Management.

“I’m really excited to learn how the real estate market works,” said Jovani Amaxtal, an 18-year-old philosophy student whose Mexican mother works slicing loaves for street vendors. “That’s where the money is!”

- Don’t settle for less -
“I come from very humble beginnings. My mother worked two jobs. But I believed I was going to be the leader of my family and I was going to make a difference,” said Rodriguez, who grew up in Washington Heights, a Dominican neighborhood in New York.

Mark Hamill bags Hollywood star, with no wars required

HOLLYWOOD — “Star Wars” legend Mark Hamill was immortalized on Hollywood’s iconic Walk of Fame Thursday in front of scores of fans, some of whom had waited hours to glimpse the actor. The 66-year-old Californian has appeared in some 70 movies which were nothing to do with Lucasfilm’s space opera, not to mention almost 200 TV shows, but will always be thought of as the iconic farm boy turned pan-galactic lightsaber-wielding hero Luke Skywalker. “You are with me through thick and thin and the highs and the lows and everywhere in between,” Hamill told the cheering crowd as he collected his star.

“If it weren’t for the public, I’d be nowhere. From ‘Jedi’ to ‘Joker’ and back again, it’s been a fantastic ride. Thank you so much, and may the force be with each and every one of you.”

Hamill, who lends his voice to the villainous Joker in animated “Batman” and “Justice League” shows, punctuated his comments with a cackling Joker laugh.

He paid tribute to his fans after the ceremony, telling AFP he would never get used to the acclaim, nor take it for granted.

“They are the most passionate, loyal people. They are with you in career highs and career lows,” he said.

- Don’t get cocky -
Harrison Ford, who portrayed fugitive smuggler and all-round charmer Han Solo in four “Star Wars” films, was among those on hand to pay tribute to Hamill, along with “Star Wars” creator George Lucas. “Mark is a friend that I don’t see very often. Our lives have diverged to a certain extent but I am very pleased for him. He has been the master of his own experience, his own life,” Ford said. “And he is as he always was — a quiet, sincere, honest person. He’s not a grandstander and I think he has found comfort and utility and control of his destiny, and I’m happy for you pal.” As he accepted his star, Hamill told the crowd he was struggling to convey the depth of his gratitude. “I haven’t been this speechless since ‘Force Awakens,” he joked in a nod to the first episode of the sequel trilogy in which he briefly appeared but said nothing. Hamill also hailed the genius of George Lucas, I wouldn’t be standing here today.”

He said he knew while working with Ford that he was in the “presence of greatness” and that Ford was “one of the best actors in film history.” “He also gave me the great advice: ‘Hey kid, don’t get cocky,’” he added.

- Prolific -
“Star Wars” (1977) was Hamill’s first feature film. He was discovered in a workshop musical comedy called “Anthems in E-Flat Calliope” the summer before starting college in Los Angeles.

Now a prolific voice artist in animated series and video games, Hamill started out on TV in a 1970 episode of the short-lived CBS comedy-drama “Headmaster.” —AFP
Women subvert domesticity in US art show

WASHINGTON — Is home a burden, tied to endless chores and confinement, or a liberating shelter? Turns out it can be both for women artists exploring and deconstructing notions of domestic space and gender in a show opening Friday at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington.

Running across several generations and featuring 36 international artists working in various media, the result is full of humor — both the dark and the laugh-out-loud kind.

In “Housewives—Kitchen Apron” (1975), Austrian photographer Birgit Jurgenussen carries a literal “bun in the oven.” A loaf sticks out of an open door to an oven she carries with a strap around her neck. It’s a heavy, awkward apron.

The show could not be more topical in a #MeToo era punctuated by revelations of widespread sexual misconduct and abuse of women across multiple industries, and coincides with International Women’s Day.

Traditional gender roles become a chess game in British artist Rachel Whiteread’s 2005 sculpture “Modern Chess Set,” where the husband’s seating areas and television face off against the wife’s trash cans and dusters.

The husband’s “kings” is the fridge. The woman’s? The stove.

“The artists we chose, they are indeed interested in gender. But sometimes it’s poetic... everything is not brutally feminist,” said Camille Morineau, who curated the show with Lucia Pesapane, both from the Monnaie de Paris, the French national mint.

Breaking out, post-MeToo

In one especially jolting installation, London-based Palestinian Mona Hatoum transforms ordinary kitchen utensils into a menacing situation.

A live current hums loudly and runs through the instruments laid out on a table behind horizontal metal wire, lighting up colanders and graters.

“Since I was a kid, I always had fantasies of anthropomorphizing objects around me,” said Laurie Simmons, whose “Walking House” (1989) shows a heavy tiling home carried by a stelvete pair of legs.

“That kind of collides with my idea that women have a way of morphing into where they live and what they have, and they identify themselves oftentimes through objects and a sense of place and a sense of home,” she told AFP. “Women House,” as the exhibition is titled, was inspired by a groundbreaking 1972 Los Angeles show organized by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro that explored similar themes.

Some of the works here poignantly reflect on the sometimes oppressive nature of women’s condition, and their struggle to make a break.

In her 1998 video “Hammering Out (an old argument),” Italy’s Monica Bonvicini shows a woman’s arm using a hammer to repeatedly pound on a wall in a desperate effort to break it. The woman only manages to expose the underlying brick.

The work is juxtaposed with one by Dutch artist Lydia Schouten, shown in a tight-fitting white dance outfit rubbing against the bars of a color-coated iron cage.

There’s also some of Louise Bourgeois’s “Femme Maison,” where women literally become a house, or a house becomes a woman, as well as sketches for Niki de Saint Phalle’s various “Nana Maison” (Chick House).

Morineau said it’s high time for women to get the place they deserve in the canon of art history. “We should be allowing new names, theories, movements and vocabulary to enter this space,” she said in an interview.

The show runs through 28 May. — AFP

Row erupts over new Frida Kahlo Barbie

NEW YORK — A dispute has erupted over toy company Mattel’s new Frida Kahlo Barbie doll, with the late Mexican artist’s family and a Miami-based corporation arguing over who holds the rights to her image.

Mattel raised eyebrows, and indeed uproars, on Wednesday when it announced that Kahlo — a brilliant painter famous for defying gender norms — would be included in its newest collection of Barbie dolls.

Released just ahead of International Women’s Day, the “Inspiring Women” collection includes dolls based on Kahlo, pioneer aviatrix Amelia Earhart and other historic figures.

But Kahlo’s family soon issued a statement objecting to the doll.

“Mrs Marfa Romeo, great-niece of Frida Kahlo, is the sole owner of the rights of the image of the illustrious Mexican painter Frida Kahlo,” it said.

“The company Mattel does not have the proper authorization to use the image of Frida Kahlo.” It said, threatening to take “necessary measures” against the California-based toymaker.

Romeo said the problem went deeper than just a dispute over image rights.

“I would have liked the doll to have traits more like Frida’s, not this doll with light-colored eyes... It should be a doll that represents everything my aunt represented, her strength,” she told AFP. — AFP

Pacific island bones likely those of Amelia Earhart

WASHINGTON — Bones found on a remote South Pacific island that were originally believed to be those of a man may in fact be those of famed aviatrix Amelia Earhart, who disappeared in the area in 1937, according to a new study.

Richard Jantz, professor emeritus of anthropology at the University of Tennessee, used modern bone measurement analysis to determine the bones were likely those of Earhart, who went missing while on a pioneering round-the-world flight with navigator Fred Noonan. Earhart’s disappearance is one of the most tantalizing mysteries in aviation lore, fascinating historians for decades and spawning books, movies and theories galore.

The prevailing belief is that Earhart, 39, and Noonan, 44, ran out of fuel and ditched their twin-engine Lockheed Electra in the Pacific Ocean near remote Howland Island while on the third-to-last leg of their epic journey.

One of the most popular theories is that Earhart and Noonan crash-landed on uninhabited Gardner Island, now known as Nikumaroro, part of the Republic of Kiribati, where she survived briefly as a castaway.

A 1940 British Colonial Service expedition to the island found a human skull, bones, part of the sole of a woman’s shoe, a box for a sextant and a bottle of Benedictine.

The bones were shipped to Fiji and examined in 1941 by Dr. David W. Hoodless, a professor of anatomy, who determined they were those of a stocky man.

The bones have more similarity to Earhart than to 99 percent of individuals in a large reference sample, according to the study.

“This strongly supports the conclusion that the Nikumaroro bones belonged to Amelia Earhart,” Jantz said. “The bones are consistent with Earhart in all respects we know or can reasonably infer.” — AFP
Mourinho must stop Salah to keep Liverpool at bay

LIVERPOOL — Manchester United boss Jose Mourinho has the tough task of keeping Liverpool’s Mohamed Salah quiet as Jurgen Klopp’s entertainers roll into town at the weekend — with second place in the Premier League the prize on offer. With Pep Guardiola’s Manchester City virtually assured of the title, northwest rivals United and Liverpool — the two most successful clubs in the English game — are left fighting for the scraps. United’s impressive lightback from 2-0 down on Monday to beat Crystal Palace 3-2 maintained their slender two-point lead over Liverpool in the battle for the runners-up spot behind runaway leaders City. Nemanja Matic bailed out Mourinho’s men with a stunning stoppage-time strike in London but another three points papered over the cracks in the latest in a series of unconvincing performances from United. “We have to be honest, we have to play better,” Matic admitted once the euphoria of his first United goal died down. “We have to do more if we want to win as Liverpool is a team with great quality.” The onus will be on Mourinho to take the game to the visitors and revitalise a United side already in a winning groove in the Premier League games before a much-changed side drew 0-0 with Porto in midweek in the Champions League quarter-finals for the first time in nine years. With January signing Virgil van Dijk settling in well at the back and Loris Karius impressing in goal, the pieces are falling into place for Klopp’s team, who have lost just once in 20 Premier League games. But it is their forwards, led by the irrepressible Salah alongside Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane, who have scored a combined 68 goals this season, that will give Mourinho sleepless nights. There was a palpable sensation around Anfield on Tuesday that Liverpool minds were already focused on United, with the free-scoring front three all rested at different spells of the game. —AFP

U-21 national football team formed for Brunei Challenge Cup

The Myanmar U-21 national football team has been selected to compete for the Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy in the annual tourney in Brunei for ASEAN youth, according to the Myanmar Football Federation.

The team will be led by head coach U Kyi Lwin, the former Myanmar football star.

The newly formed Myanmar U-21 team consists of Bhone Thitsar Min, Tun Nanda Oo, Naing Lin Tun in the keeper position.

In the defence line will be Thurein Soe, Thet Paing Htwe, Y Yin Aung, Aung Wunna Soe, Than Htike Soe, Soe Moe Kyaw, Zaw Win Maung, Win Moe Kyaw, Heing Htet Sithu and Kyaw Thu Htun.

In the middle position are Ye Naing Oo, Soe Lwin Lwin, Myat Tun Thi, Zoyya Naing, Zwe Thet Paing, Lwin Moe Aung, Pyae Sone Naing, Myat Kaung Khan and Hein Htet Aung.

The newly formed Myanmar U-21 team consists of Bhone Thitsar Min, Tun Nanda Oo, Naing Lin Tun in the keeper position.

The well-known young football stars Win Naing Tun, Myat Kaung Mhan and Zin Min Tun are in the striking positions.

The Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy for ASEAN Youth Football Championship is a football tournament for youth players from ASEAN member nations under the age of 21 years.

The Myanmar Football Federation. The tournament is organised by the Football Association of Brunei Darussalam in collaboration with the ASEAN Football Federation. The tournament was first launched in 2002.

The Myanmar Football Federation (MFF) launched the MFF Futsal Open Cup 2018 this week with the hope of finding new players for the national futsal team.

Fifty teams from various States and Regions across Myanmar participated in the tournament, where they are divided into 10 groups of five teams each.

They will play in a round-robin competition with the best two best teams from each group getting into the knockout stage.

The competition will be held till 31 March. —Kyaw Zin Lin

Gandamar, GV and Yeik Thar score big in MFF Futsal Open Cup

Gandamar, GV and Yeik Thar notched double-digit, lopsided wins in Group A, B and J matches of the MFF Futsal Open Cup 2018 yesterday at National Indoor Stadium (1) Thuwunna in Yangon.

In Group A, GV Athletic beat MGG by a score of 10-2, while Yeik Thar beat Monster Hero 14-2.

In Group B matches, Zombie beat Best Friends 3-2, while MSJ beat United 4-1.

In Group J Matches, Shwe Gandamar, GV and Yeik Thar notched double-digit, lopsided wins in Group A, B and J matches of the MFF Futsal Open Cup 2018 yesterday at National Indoor Stadium (1) Thuwunna in Yangon.

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