State Counsellor leaves for Sydney

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to attend ASEAN-Australia Special Summit

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi left for Sydney, Australia yesterday to attend the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit at the invitation of the Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia.

The State Counsellor was seen off at the Yangon International Airport by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Yangon Mayor U Maung Maung Soe, Charge d’Affaires of the Australian Embassy Mr. Jeremy Peter Kruse and other officials.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is accompanied by Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin and departmental officials.—MNA

136 villages in Rakhine to be supplied with water

AUTHORITIES in Rakhine State have made arrangements to supply water to 136 villages that could face a shortage of water this summer.

“We have earmarked 6 million gallons of water to supply to the villages”, said U Nay Htet Shein, Director of Rakhine State Rural Development Department.

Department officials visited the villagers recently and distributed hotline telephone numbers to the villages so that they can carry out quick responses to solve the water crisis when it occurs.

“Once they contact us, we will supply water to them. So far, no village has contacted us,” he said. The villages suffered a drought last summer.

Lakes on which the villagers relied upon for drinking water dried up last summer.

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State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi arrives at Yangon International Airport on her way to Sydney yesterday to pay an official visit and to attend the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit. PHOTO: MNA
Amyotha Hluttaw discusses electricity supply, road repair work

Myo Thu Hein, Hmwe Kyu Zin  
(MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY)

The 29th-day meeting of the seventh session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw was held yesterday, in which Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy Dr. Tun Naing answered two asterisk-marked questions during the meeting.

Replying to the first question posed by U Maung Maung Latt of the Sagaing Region constituency (9) on the plan to provide electricity to the four wards in Khamapat Town, Tamu District, Sagaing Region, the Deputy Minister said the town was 55 miles from the Kalay-20 KV main substation, and some 35 miles from the Tamu 230-KV main substation, which is being planned. It is more convenient to distribute electricity to Khamapat Town from the Tamu 230/66-KV main substation, and the ministry is planning to build this main substation, said the Deputy Minister.

The funding for the construction of the Kalay-Tamu power line and Tamu main substation have been earmarked in the 2019-2020 fiscal year budget, and the distribution of electricity to Khamapat Town will be carried out only after the construction of this power line and the main substation, said the Deputy Minister.

The second question was raised by Dr. Mya Thaung of the Bago Region constituency (7) on the plan to repair the damaged Nyuangpintha-Seintgyi road in Pyu Township, Bago Region. The Deputy Minister said that Myat Eindre, a private company, had been chosen by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation to conduct agricultural work in some areas of Pyu Township, Bago Region, in 2013.

This company used the Nyuangpintha-Seintgyi road to transport construction materials and heavy machinery, which damaged the road. In a letter dated 11 September 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation was requested to repair the damage.

On inspecting the road repair work, it was found that holes and pits were simply filled-in with earth. The ministry ordered the company to repair the road properly and, currently, the company is conducting the repair work, said the Deputy Minister.

Next, the Amyotha Hluttaw committee member for Local International Non-Government Organisations Committee, U Tin Aung Htun of the Magway Region constituency (15), read and submitted the committee’s work report to the Hluttaw, and the Amyotha Hluttaw speaker requested that those Hluttaw representatives interested in discussing the report should submit their names.

Later, Amyotha Hluttaw Public Complaints Committee Member U Khin Myo Win of the Tanintha Region constituency (12) read and submitted the committee’s work report. From 2 March 2016 to 31 January 2018, the committee received 5,212 letters with complaints.

A total of 91 case files were sent to relevant organisations, of which 44 cases were received back, while 47 cases remain outstanding. Some 195 cases were sent to relevant ministries, of which 84 cases were received back, while 111 cases are outstanding. A total of 357 cases were sent to states and regional governments, of which 87 cases were received back, while 270 cases are outstanding.

During the two-year period of the Hluttaw, the committee, with the permission of the Amyotha Hluttaw speaker, had responded through letters to 247 complaints. Some 653 complaints related to farmlands, while other land confiscations were assessed. According to guidelines, the complaints were transferred to the Central Committee for Scrutinising Confiscated Farmlands and Other Land, chaired by Vice President U Hla Myint. The report recommended all relevant entities, along with the committee, to resolve the complaints, according to the laws, rules and regulations. Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Aung Than then asked the Hluttaw representatives who wished to discuss the report to register themselves.

Amyotha Hluttaw Mineral, Natural Resources Environmental Conservation Committee member Daw Shah Mu of Kayah State constituency (5) read and submitted the committee’s work report. The committee suggested providing equal opportunities, according to the law, to nationals seeking employment. The committee was formed according to the law and had overseen the government and budget assessment works, in accordance with the Hluttaw law and rules, said Daw Shah Mu.
VP U Henry Van Thio in Tachileik

VICE President U Henry Van Thio yesterday inspected an international inland port in Wanpon, the Tachileik trade station and preventive works being done on Mae Hong river bank erosion.

U Henry Van Thio, who is also Chairman of the Central Committee for the Development of the National Tourism Industry (CCDNTI), together with Shan State Chief Minister Dr. Linn Htut, Deputy Ministers Rear Admiral Myint Nwe and Maj-Gen Than Htut, Permanent Secretaries and officials arrived in Shan State for a travel business development meeting held in Shwe Buhli Hotel in Tachileik yesterday morning.

At the meeting, Director U Htin Aung Naing from the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism of Shan State explained about the status of hotels and motels opened, issuing of hotel and tourism licenses, permissions granted for tourist entry, status of local and foreign tourist entering Tachileik, tour areas and tour voyages available for visitors.

Officials from associations of hotel business owners, travel business owners, tour guides, and a committee to control and manage car/bus lines raised questions that were answered by Ministry of Hotels and Tourism Permanent Secretary U Yi Mon and Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population Permanent Secretary U Myint Kyaing.

Commenting on the matters raised, Vice President U Henry Van Thio spoke of the important role played by the hotel and tourism sector on Myanmar:

“There are two parts in the development of the hotel and tourism sector. A part played by state government, hotel business owners and local people, and another part played by the Union government providing support. The key is cooperation between departments, business owners and local people. With the aim toward benefiting the country and the region, the part to be supported by the Union government will be provided in the best possible way”, said the Vice President.

The Vice President and party then went to Tachilek town public service one stop shop and inspected the services provided to the public. The Vice President provided cash support to the staff on duty and then toured the Myanmar-Thailand Friendship Bridge (1).

Afterwards, the Vice President and party visited the women’s household and vocational training school operated by the Ministry of Border Affairs, Education and Training Department, where he met Shan State (east) district head Daw Nan San Phu Hlaung.

After the briefing, the Vice President met cordially with the trainees and inspected the school.

The Vice President and party then went to visit the Myanmar-Thailand Friendship Bridge (2).

Following this, the Vice President and party arrived at the international inland port (Wanpon). The Vice President said Wanpon international port is in a central place between Lao and China, and thus should implement and complete the project quickly. The Vice President also coordinated the land requirement for expanding the project and setting up voyages/trips to accommodate foreign travellers.

The Vice President and party also inspected the bank erosion work conducted between BRP-15 and BRP-16 in Tachileik Township, Golden Triangle region.

While inspecting the work, the Vice President spoke of completing the 1,000 ft. long rock-lined retaining wall during the open season, built up to full quality to have a durable and long lasting embankment and to conduct the necessary calculations to construct an additional 100 ft. above the present one and another one 650 ft. below it.

In the afternoon, the Vice President and party arrived at Tachileik trade station (Mae Yang), where they were met by station official director U Min Aung Aye.

The Vice President remarked on increasing the trade volume in the same way as other border trade stations. The Vice President also commented on finding markets for value-added agricultural products, supporting development of small and medium enterprises and to plant cash crops like coffee in rubber plantations.

From there, the Vice President and party left for Kengtung town by car and cordially greeted the local ethnic nationals upon arrival to Hokyin (Akha village), Kengtung town. The Vice President also observed the traditional handicraft works and provided cash support.

The Vice President and party then reached the border area ethnic national development training school in Kengtung town, where Deputy Minister for Border Affairs Maj-Gen Than Htut and District Head Daw Nan San Phu Hlaung gave a briefing about the status and future works of the school.

Afterwards, the Vice President provided cash support to the students and then inspected the school.—Myanmar News Agency
British tour group visits Myanmar in vehicles

A large number of tourists are visiting Myanmar, after entering the country through international and cross-border gateways, to visit Myanmar’s unique natural locations, along with eco-tourism and archaeological sites. Tourists are arriving by air, sea and road. Moreover, tourists are also coming to Myanmar in vehicles, motorbikes and bicycles to observe its many traditions, customs and lifestyles. Some 39 British citizens visited Myanmar in 18 vehicles, when crossing over the Myanmar border gate. Their travel itinerary was arranged by Essence of Myanmar Travels and Tours Co., Ltd., under the supervision of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism. Their trip started on 20 February and ended 26 February. Their travel route included Myanmar’s capital, Bagan, Nay Pyi Taw, Magway, Bagan, Kalaw, Inle, Nyaung Shwe, Taunggyi, Namsham, Kengtung and Tachilek. The British tourists left the country on 28 February and headed to Thailand, crossing at the Tachileik border gate. A culture-based tourism industry is now active in Myanmar, through which tourists can observe the traditions and culture of the country’s ethnic people. –GNLM

Yangon Region government grants permission for 95 pandals during Yangon water festival

THE Yangon Region government has approved the construction of 95 pandals for the Yangon water festival, said U Hla Min, assistant head of the Public Relations and Information Department, Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC).

The water festival will house 35 entertainment stages and 60 pavilions housing water-throwing and dance performances in the Yangon City. Some 21 pandals will be constructed on Wayzayandar road, six pandals on Paramani road, two pandals on Minda mondoama road, 10 pandals on Kyai Waung pagoda road, 16 pandals on Paya road, four pandals on University Avenue road, two pandals on Htetma-1 road and four pandals on Bogyoke road. Moreover, the regional government has also approved the construction of six pandals on Anawratha road, four pandals on Maha Bandula road, three pandals on Merchant road, six pandals on upper and lower Pazundaung road, one pandal on Thanthumar road and 10 pandals on Kyimyindaing road.

The application forms seeking approvals for the pandals in Yangon must be submitted not later than 25 March to the Engineering Department (Roads/Bridges), along with the recommendation of the township General Administration Department. The application form can be obtained free of charge from the YCDC Engineering Department (Roads/Bridges). –GNLM

Hotel rooms around Ngapali beach fully booked for water festival

Hotels in the vicinity of Ngapali beach are nearly fully booked for the upcoming water festival, said an official from the local training agency. “Travellers are planning to visit Ngapali beach in large numbers during the water festival, but most of the hotels are fully booked. Therefore, they are looking for accommodations in Thandwe Town,” said a traveller.

“Hotels rooms near the Ngwe Saung and Chaung Tha beaches are also fully booked. The room tariffs of hotels close to the sea in Ngapali are high. So people are booking rooms in Thandwe. By the end of this month, all hotels will be fully booked,” said U Tun Kyaw, owner of Ngwe Yeiktha guest-house in Thandwe.

Room prices at hotels near Ngapali beach are now costing between Ks25,000 and Ks50,000 per night. Most of the hotels are fully booked. However, those costing more than Ks100,000 per night are available. Although there were few visitors to Ngapali beach during previous water festivals, more have been flocking to the destination since 2015, according to travel and tour agencies.–GNLM

Sewage treatment equipment to be installed in Yangon Region downtown

SEWAGE treatment equipment will be installed in six downtown townships of the Yangon Region, said Yangon Region Mayor U Maung Maung Soe. While responding to a question posed by the Pobedan Township constituency representative in the Hluttaw, the Yangon Region mayor said the government and Japan’s Sumitomo company have signed a memorandum of understanding on 26 July 2017 to conduct a detailed analysis to install sewage treatment equipment in the back alleys of downtown in the Yangon Region. “We will try to implement the project as soon as possible. Having expanded the project to cover at least half the population by 2040, we have already designed a master plan with the assistance of JICA to establish the sewage treatment plant zones,” he said.

“The construction of the sewage treatment plants is the first priority. We have already discussed the construction of the sewage treatment plants with foreign countries to seek financial and technical assistance,” he added. A network of cast-iron tunnels and pipes have been supporting the city’s downtown area since 1888. Waste-water treatment systems are present in six downtown townships — Kyauktada, Larnmadaw, Latha, Pazundaung, Botataung and Pabedan. However, they are old, with some of them constructed decades ago. There are 175 back alleys, 35 sewage-pumping machines, 2014 sewage ponds and 157,000 feet long pipes, but repairing them will depend on the government’s budget.” –GNLM

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Illegal fish farming lakes to get legal status soon

May Thet Hnin

FARMERS using farmlands for other purposes than agriculture, such as fish farming, will now be granted permits to dig lakes on payment of reasonable fines. Infertile farmlands, only designated to grow crops, cannot be used for other business purposes, according to Section 30 of the 2012 Farmland Law.

“Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr Aung Thu has informed us that the ministry will make such fishing lakes legal soon,” said U Win Kyaing, General Secretary of Myanmar Fishery Federation.

The ministry is yet to decide the amount of the fine. Of the 480,000 acres of fish and prawn farming acres in the country, only 108,000 acres are authorised to practise fish farming, while the remaining farms are considered illegitimate breeding businesses.

“Owing to the farmland law, fish and prawn farmers face several problems. Additionally, they cannot get access to private bank loans by putting up their fishing lakes as collateral, as they are not legitimate under the existing law. Although this problem was pointed out to the previous government, it was rejected. The incumbent government has handled this problem well, satisfying the illegal fish farmers,” said U Win Kyaing.

Section 30 of the 2012 Farmland Law states that if a farmland can be used for other purposes in a certain situation, the land can be used with the approval or recommendation of the state and region land management commissions.

Once the farmlands are granted approvals to be used for other purposes under Section 30, the central land management commission can confiscate these farmlands if owners fail to run the business in the prescribed term or manner within six months from the approved date.

Singapore makes highest investments in hotels, commercial complexes

SINGAPORE brought in foreign investments worth US$1.79 billion into hotels and commercial complexes, followed by Thailand with $446 million, according to statistics provided by the hotels and tourism ministry.

Singapore invested in 29 hotels and apartments, while Thailand invested in 11 hotels and apartments.

Some 56 foreign projects of hotels and commercial complexes with an estimated capital of some $3.88 billion were registered by the hotels and tourism ministry, with some 33 buildings completed, 11 under construction and 12 granted permits by the Myanmar Investment Commission.

Viet Nam, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, Luxembourg and UAE also invested in hotels and commercial complexes in the country.

Singapore has made foreign investments worth $1.8 billion in Myanmar, with 35 projects as of January of the current fiscal year. – Ko Khant

Rice, broken rice exports bring in nearly US$1 billion this fiscal year

THE value of rice and broken rice exports reached nearly US$1 billion this fiscal year, according to a report in the Myanmar Daily yesterday.

Some 2.6 million metric tonnes of rice are exported to 57 foreign countries, while some 568,357 metric tonnes of broken rice are exported to 33 foreign countries, totalling 3.18 million metric tonnes.

Further, about 1.6 million metric tonnes of rice and broken rice, worth more than $550 million, were exported across the nation’s border gates.

Another 1.5 million metric tonnes of rice and broken rice were exported to international markets, with their export value estimated at $440 million.

Myanmar is among the top 10 rice producing countries in the world. However, the country’s rice industry is facing numerous challenges, such as in the areas of pedigree, high input costs, logistics planning, the high cost of transport and transaction, and a lack of advanced growing methods and agro-machinery, in addition to erratic weather problems. – GNLM

Negotiation meeting held on export of Myanmar fishing products to Saudi Arabia

May Thet Hnin

A negotiation meeting is being held with officials from the Saudi Arabian Embassy over SAudi Arabia’s suspension of fish imports from Myanmar, which will take effect from 1 April.

Myanmar’s Deputy Minister for Commerce met with economic councillor Hussam Mustafa Luqman Tambusi of the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Nay Pyi Taw on 8 March.

The negotiation meeting is being conducted after the Myanmar Fishery Federation (MFF) requested the government to resolve Saudi Arabia’s ban on fish imports from Myanmar during the 15th meeting between the Vice President and entrepreneurs held on 7 March at the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Saudi Arabia has temporarily suspended fish and prawn imports from Myanmar, according to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) announcement, following the detection of two prawn diseases. At the beginning of 2017, OIE detected white tail disease (WTD) or macrobrachium rosenbergii in freshwater prawns bred in Myanmar.

“This prawn disease occurred in the beginning of 2017. We have already informed OIE that the disease was not found in freshwater prawns this year. This disease is not infectious. If Saudi Arabia suspects a prawn disease, we will not export prawns. However, we request that Myanmar be allowed to continue with its fish exports,” said U Win Kyaing, General Secretary of MFF.

The economic counsellor said he would raise this issue with the Saudi Arabian government through the Ambassador. Myanmar can also visit Saudi Arabia to discuss the matter with the government ministry concerned, and discussions can also be held between the representatives of the two WTO member countries, added the economic counsellor.

Myanmar exports farmed fish to Saudi Arabia, which accounts for 30 per cent of its farm-raised fish exports and 40 per cent of rohu exports.

“Fish breeders will face difficulties if Saudi Arabia suspends fish and prawn imports from Myanmar. Some fish farmers may even have to close business,” said U Win Kyaing.

A government-to-government meeting was held for the first time. Later on, more negotiations will be held.

There are some 480,000 acres of fish and prawn breeding farms across the country, and Myanmar has earned US$647 million through its fishery products as of March.
Documentary on Rakhine State discussed

A MEETING to shoot a documentary on Rakhine State’s beauty, the richness of natural resources, and the simple, honest and friendly ethnic Rakhine nationals was held in the meeting hall of Myanma Radio and Television on Pyay Road in Yangon.

At the meeting, Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint spoke of the beauty of the Rakhine coastal area.

The Rakhine State is geographically diverse, with both mountain ranges and a sea. Mrauk U, Buthidaung and Maungtaw are open plains where the land is fertile for agriculture. Ethnic Rakhine nationals, like other ethnic nationals of the country, are a lovely people with their own cultures. The documentary movie is to depict these facts, said the Union Minister.

Furthermore, the movie should also show the similarity and sameness of Rakhine ethnic nationals with other ethnic nationals such as Kachin, Kayin and Kayah. This is the main aim and it should also be created artistically, he said.

In addition to being an epic movie, the film should be shot like a documentary, the Union Minister said. In Rakhine State, there are ethnic nationals Mro, Khami, Daingnet and Thet in addition to ethnic Rakhine nationals.

The Union Minister spoke of the desire to shoot a documentary depicting life, culture and tradition of the ethnic people in Rakhine State for posterity.

Permanent Secretary U Myo Myint Maung, Information and Public Relations Department Director-General U Ye Naing, Myanmar Motion Picture Organization patrons Baji Soe Moe and U Aung Lwin, chairman U Zin Wine, Shwe Than Lwin Media Company Limited chairman U Kyaw Win, Forever Group CEO U Win Maw, Mingalar Company Limited manager U Saw Lwin, script writer U Nyein Min, director Zinyaw Maung Maung, actor Nay Htat Lin and participants in attendance discussed their respective sectors.

The movie plans to show the beauty of locations like Mrauk U, Ngapali, Alethankyaw, Sittway and other well-known places, the simplicity and honesty of ethnic Rakhine nationals, how Khami, Daingnet, Mro, Thet nationals live together, their struggle for livelihoods due to lagging behind in development, how the geographical location of Rakhine State could support its development, reconstruction works conducted by ethnic nationals from all over the country after Maungtaw affairs, and conduct of the youth volunteers and works of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine (UEHRD).

—Myanmar News Agency

Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker receives US diplomat

Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U T Khun Myat received the United States Embassy’s Deputy Head Mr. George Sibley yesterday at the Pyithu Hluttaw in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they discussed matters relating to bilateral friendship and cooperation, the Parliamentary Resource Centre that is cooperating with the Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) on Hluttaw Development and Hluttaw legislative matters. — Myanmar News Agency

Certificate Course in Basic Diplomatic Skills (40/2018) Inaugurates

The Inauguration Ceremony of the Certificate Course in Basic Diplomatic Skills (40/2018) conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was held at Wunziyinazar Hall of the Ministry in Yangon at 10:00 a.m. yesterday, with an opening remarks delivered by U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation.

Present on the occasion were retired Myanmar Ambassadors, Directors-General and responsible officials of the departments under the Ministry, senior diplomats, professors and instructors as well as trainees.

The 12-week long course comprises the subjects related to the diplomacy, negotiation skills, international law, international conferencing, international relations and economics. Basic Diplomatic Skills Course runs annually for those who have to engage in international relations from private and public sectors, young graduates and those who want to learn more on those subjects.— Myanmar News Agency

Number of High Level Schools in Myanmar

The 16-member delegation is comprised of journalists from Nikkei, Kyodo, Asahi Shim bun, NHK, Nippon TV, TV Asahi, Zee TV, Agence France-Presse, CNA, Der Spiegel (Germany), Russian TV, MRTV, MITV and MNA. The trip was arranged by the Ministry of Information. —Thura Zaw
**Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe receives Norwegian State Secretary Foreign Minister**

UNION Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U Kyaw Tint Swe received Ms Marianne Hagen, Norwegian State Secretary of Foreign Affairs, yesterday at the meeting hall of the State Counsellor’s Office in Nay Pyi Taw. During the meeting, they exchanged views and discussed Rakhine State affairs, the peace process and humanitarian assistance.—Myanmar News Agency

**136 villages in Rakhine to be supplied with water**

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Every township in Rakhine State has a water purifier, and mobile water purifiers are also ready to supply water to the villagers. “Rural Development Department is working for supplying water to rural areas and the department is also working together with UNICEF and Japanese International Cooperation Agency-JICA,” said U Nay Htet Shein.

Currently, the Rural Development Department and UNICEF are installing water supply pipes with water purifying systems to homes in villages. The department spent more than Ks1 billion from the Union budget on 126 water supply projects in 128 villages in Rakhine State in the 2017-2018 fiscal year. The projects include 52 tube wells, 71 lakes, one water supply facility from a spring and two other projects.

More than Ks205 million was spent on 52 water facilities including sinking tube wells and lake upgrades in the 2017-2018 fiscal year. More than Ks240 million funded by the State were spent on building 44 water facilities in the same fiscal year.—Kyaw Thu Htet

**Matriculation examination in Maungtaw concludes**

THE MATRICULATION examination at three examination centres in Maungtaw area was concluded successfully yesterday.

The examination started on 7 March 2018, with the last paper on history concluding yesterday. The three examination centres were Basic Education High School (B.E.H.S) (1) in eastern Maungtaw, B.E.H.S (1) in western Maungtaw and B.E.H.S (2) in Maungtaw.

“Students took the examination at all the three centres peacefully. The Myanmar Police Force and officials from the related ministries, as well as parents, guarded the students outside the centres. On the compound, teachers and officials from the education department took full responsibility for the security of the students. Nurses and medical officers were also assigned duty near the examination centres to provide immediate healthcare assistance in case of an emergency.”

“No unusual cases were reported during the examinations, and they were held without problems in Maungtaw,” said U Khin Aung, head of the Maungtaw Township Education Department.

Some 189 of the 690 registered students were marked absent on the first day of the examination. On the second day, some 213 were marked absent, while some 66 registered students were allowed to sit for the English paper examination. A total of 231 students from the 648 permitted students were absent for the mathematics examination. Some 600 students sat for the chemistry test paper; while 225 students were absent. Some 227 students were recorded absent for the physics paper examination, while 397 students sat for the test. Some 633 students were confirmed present for the biology and economics test papers, while 246 were absent. Forty students took the geography and history subject tests, but 15 were absent. —Kyaw Thu Win/Aye Min Thu

**Myanmar-Bangladesh commanders meeting**

A Myanmar-Bangladesh battalion commander-level meeting was held in a briefing hall on the Myanmar side near the Myanmar-Bangladesh friendship (Taunggyo Letwe entry/exit) border bridge at border post 31/1 yesterday.

At the meeting, matters relating to movement and activities of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) extremist terrorist group, an ethnic Mro national from Myanmar wounded by a landmine between mile post 55/56 on the Myanmar territorial waters after their boat broke down, arrangements to conduct joint patrols and exchange of news and information in a timely manner were discussed, it is learnt.—Myanmar News Agency

**Students return home after sitting for the matriculation examination in Maungtaw, Rakhine. PHOTO: MNA**
Preparedness can reduce impact of disasters

Myanmar
China launch oceanographic project

SOME 72 per cent of Earth is covered in wa- ter and one-third of the world’s population lives in “water-stressed” countries, defined as a country’s ratio of water consumption to water availability. Moreover, there is much more freshwater stored in ice caps and glaciers on land than there is in the ocean in the form of liquid water. The world’s oceans contain a total of about 1,320 million cubic kilometres of water. It has a total of 234,000 cubic kilometres of land and 2,010 cubic kilometres of water. Myanmar is bordered by India, Bangladesh and the Bay of Bengal to west, China to the northeast, Laos and Thailand to east, and the Andaman Sea to the south. Myanmar contains 4,770,349 square kilometres, which is roughly the same size as Texas or Britain and France combined.

Strategically, Myanmar is located near major Indian Ocean shipping lanes and is sandwiched between two of the world’s great superpowers, India and China. It embraces the 3,516,348 square kilometres of land and 26,070 cubic kilometres of water.

Myanmar-China launches joint oceanographic research

The Chinese research vessel Xiang Yang Hong No. 88, carrying a team of scientists, arrived at the Thilawa Sea Port to jointly conduct oceanographic research with Myanmar experts.

This cooperation aims at contributing to better understanding of regional variations in response to climate change and to support marine ecological protection in Myanmar’s waters. During the three-day winter cruise, observations were carried out to study oceanographic, marine chemistry and marine biology using the research vessels.

The research work was conducted with five representative research stations at the sea areas of Defence, Agriculture, Livestock Breeding and Irrigation, Transport, and Communication and Education.

Rise of the sea level

A rise of the sea level can mean that saltwater intrudes into groundwater drinking supplies, contaminates irrigation supplies, or overruns agricultural fields. Low-lying, gently sloping coastal areas are particularly vulnerable to contamination of freshwater supplies.

A sea level rise is usually attributed to global climate change by thermal expansion of the water in the oceans and by melting of ice sheets and glaciers on land. When sea levels rise rap- idly, even a small increase can have devastating effects as coastal areas become submerged. As seawater reaches further inland, it can cause destructive erosion, wetland flooding, aquifer and agricultural soil contamination, and lost habitat for fish, birds, and plants.

The sea level can rise by two different mechanisms with respect to climate change. First, as the oceans warm due to an increasing global temperature, seawater expands — taking up more space in the ocean basin and causing a rise in water level. The second mechanism is the melting of ice on land, which then adds water to the ocean.

Climate Change

Climate change is a change of climate patterns which has lasting effects for an extended period of time and usually results in a change to average weather conditions. Climate change is caused by forces such as land processes, variations in solar radiation, greenhouse gases, plate tectonics, and volcanic eruptions. Certain human ac- tivities have been identified as primary causes of ongoing climate change, often referred to as global warming.

The Myanmar Earthquake committee made studies of the impact of the Kobe Earthquake in concert with international experts.

The most important is that the ministries concerned are to join hands for preparedness to be able to reduce the impacts of the unpredictable disasters.

To monitor earthquakes and tsunamis, the Global Earthquake Observatory Centre was set up in 1985, the Mandalay centre in 1986, the Sittwe centre in 1984 and the Dala centre in 1985.

After a big earthquake, there can be dangerous aftershocks, tsunamis, landslides and tsunamis. As part of the preparedness, it is important to carry out earthquake drills for ensuring an immediate emergency response which includes creating a precise and strong system.

The readiness for effective action, adaptive construction management and prevention of earthquake hazards are an important task and concern in Myanmar.

These processes were related to protecting human life and property, and if the country suffered a disaster, effective communications and organizations would play a vital role.

Effective response is needed for the implementation process. At the same time, we should not forget that the media also plays an important role in raising awareness of preparation for earthquakes.

The most important is that the ministries concerned are to join hands for preparedness to be able to reduce the impacts of the unpredictable disasters.

Dr. Zaw Min Aung
(Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Officials take a documentary photo in front of the Xiang Yang Hong No 88 Ship.

South-East Asian countries commit to end TB

TRACKING progress to eliminate tuberculosis, member coun- tries of the WHO South-East Asia Region yesterday committed to further intensify efforts to come up with concrete and concrete progress to end tuberculosis (TB) by 2030.

In a statement adopted at the Delhi End TB Summit, mem- ber countries unanimously agreed to act quickly and intensify essential actions agreed to in the Delhi Call to Action, which was adopted in March 2018 to accelerate progress towards End TB in the Region, but to one-fourth of the global population but a disproportionate 46 per cent of the global TB burden. The “Progress against TB in this region will have a major impact on the progress globally,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreye- selassie, the General of the World Health Organization. “The most is at stake, we cannot afford to fail. We must remember that the war against TB will be won in communities. It will be won by nurses, doctors, community health workers and others at the frontlines. We must give them the resources they need to find every last person with TB, to diagnose them, to treat them, and to cure them,” he said.

Welcoming the statement, Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director for WHO South-East Asia, said, “it gives shape to our momentum and aspirations, and does so by setting out an ambitious action plan to take forward the strong leadership of TB programmes at the national level,” increasing budgetary and human resource allocations to TB programmes from domestic and global sources; enabling each and every TB patient to access the best possible care available; and supplementing medical care for TB with social and financial protection.

The member countries committed to increasing budgetary and human resource allocations by governments as well as their global, domestic and other partners so as to ensure that national TB Plans are fully funded.

They also committed to universal access to comprehensive, integrated TB care and prevention services, to achieve universal health coverage as committed to in the Sustainable Develop- ment Goals, by enabling the best possible care to every person, including those living with the most high-risk populations, living with any form of TB including drug-resistant TB and TB-HIV co-infection.

Hosted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Gov- ernment of India, the World Health Organization and the Stop TB Partners
chub, the Delhi End TB Summit 2018 was inaugurated yesterday by the Prime Minister of India, Mr Narendra Modi.

In his keynote address, the Prime Minister’s Executive Director, Dr Luca Dotti, and the Global Fund’s Executive Director, Mr Peter Sands, are among the prominent health leaders attending the week- long deliberations of a ministerial conference of member countries, including Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Mozam- bique, Zimbabwe, Kazakhstan and Peru are also participating.

Possible Solutions

There are solutions that can reduce global warming and other related disasters. As all these adverse effects are brought on by human beings, they have a responsibility to control them and restore a nor- mal balance. As for the govern- ment and its citizens, these efforts should be made in a more forward- thinking and comprehensive global warming solutions.

Transluted by Win Ko Ko Aung
Shell, ENI accused of negligence over Nigeria oil spills

LAGOS—Nigeria was on Friday urged to re-open investigations into 90 oil spills in its southern delta region, after claims that Shell and ENI misrepresented the causes.

Rights group Amnesty International said there were “reasonable doubts” about how the spills happened, suggesting corrosion rather than oil theft were behind the pollution.

A total of 46 spills came from pipelines operated by Shell’s local subsidiary, the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria, and 43 from ENI’s Nigerian Agip Oil Company, it added.

The call was made after crowd-sourced analysis of the companies’ publicly available documents on pipeline failures in the Niger Delta in the last seven years to December 2017. Activists who pored over reports found that since Shell began publishing details in January 2011, it had 1,010 spills amounting to 110,535 barrels or 17.5 million litres of crude. ENI had 820 spills -- the equivalent of 26,286 barrels or 4.1 million litres of oil -- since it made its reports public in 2014.

The companies blamed “third party interference” -- either sabotage of pipelines by militants or the theft of crude known locally as “bunkering” -- for most of the spills.

- Insult to injury -

But Amnesty’s business and human rights researcher Mark Dummett said the companies’ claims to be doing all they can to prevent spills were at odds with the analysis.

- (Researchers) found that

In January 2015, Shell agreed to pay $55 million ($77 million, 62 million euros) in compensation to more than 15,000 people affected by oil spills in the Ogoniland area of Rivers state. —AFP

Global biodiversity ‘crisis’ to be assessed at major summit

PARIS—Earth is enduring a mass species extinction, scientists say -- the first since the demise of the dinosaurs and only the sixth in half-a-billion years.

The reason? Humanity’s voracious consumption, and wanton destruction, of the very gifts of nature that keep us alive.

Starting Saturday, a comprehensive, global appraisal of the damage -- what can be done to reverse it, will be conducted in Colombia.

“The science is clear: biodiversity is in crisis globally,” WWF director general Marco Lambertini told AFP ahead of a crucial meeting of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

“We depend on biodiversity for the food we eat, the water we drink, the clean air we breathe, the stability of weather patterns, and yet our actions are pushing nature’s ability to sustain us to the brink.”

Scientists and government envoys will gather as the 128-member IPBES to dot the i’s and cross the t’s on five monumental assessment reports designed to inform global policymaking into the future.

Compiled over the last three years, the reports will provide the most up-to-date picture of the health of the world’s plants, animals and soil.

The diagnosis will be unveiled in two parts at the summit in Colombia’s second-largest city, Medellin.

First, on 23 March, the IPBES will simultaneously release separate assessments for the four regions into which it has divided the world -- the Americas, Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Europe and Central Asia.

A fifth report, due 26 March, will focus on the global state of soil, which is fast being degraded through pollution, forest-destruction, mining, and unsustainable farming methods that deplete its nutrients.

- 600 volunteers, 10,000 reports -

Altogether, the evaluations took 600 volunteer scientists three years to complete, synthesising data extracted from about 10,000 scientific publications.

The end product covers the entire Earth apart from Antarctica and the open oceans -- those waters beyond national jurisdiction.

Meeting host Colombia claims to boast the world’s largest variety of birds and orchids and is second only to Brazil in terms of overall species diversity.

Paradoxically, decades of conflict have preserved fragile habitats in no-go zones in the country, whose mountainous topography supports 311 different ecosystems.

But 1,200 Colombian species are listed as threatened, due partly to pollution and forest-destruction caused by illicit drug production.

More than just a portrayal of doom and gloom, the latest assessments will include projections for future recovery or decline, and “suggestions for action,” IPBES executive secretary Anne Larigauderie told AFP.

The expert panel, she explained, had compiled five assessment reports, each about 600-900 pages long.

Each of these was then condensed into a 20-30 page “summary for policymakers”.

These summaries must be officially adopted in Medellin before being sent to IPBES member states to guide policymaking in areas that affect biodiversity -- everything from transport and infrastructure to farming, water management and education.

The reports are not prescriptive, but “we hope that this will help inform policy decisions to stem the loss of biodiversity and the fundamental services it provides us with,” chief scientist Tom Brooks of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature told AFP.

- Word by word -

After opening formalities on Saturday evening, delegates will hunker down for days of intense, “word-by-word” negotiations on the five summary documents.

The drafts in their current form will be put to a joint IPBES meeting on Sunday, after which delegates will meet in five groups -- one for each report.

Governments will have a final chance to request changes to the wording of the summaries. If the scientific authors disagree, a compromise must be found through negotiation.

“It is likely that there would be quite a few discussions,” said Larigauderie.

“It may be that there are some countries that might not be satisfied by what the report says about the state of their biodiversity.”

Any changes to the summaries adopted in Medellin will be incorporated into the full reports, which will be published only after the conference in the six official UN languages.

The whole process has cost about $5 million (four million euros). —AFP
Study challenges ‘healthy but obese’ theory

PARIS — Being overweight or obese does pose a risk of heart disease, despite claims to the contrary, a study of nearly 300,000 British adults suggested Friday.

While it is generally accepted that being overweight increases a person’s disease risk, some researchers have recently suggested that carrying extra weight does not actually boost death rates for some, particularly the elderly.

A number of experts have even suggested that being overweight may protect against disease, a claim dubbed the “obesity paradox.”

But the latest study, published in the European Heart Journal, said there is no paradox. It looked at 296,535 people aged 40-69 who enrolled in an ongoing health study in the United Kingdom between 2006 and 2010.

For the latest analysis, data on the participants – all of “white European descent” – was available until 2015.

All were healthy when they first enrolled.

The researchers noted that the participants’ Body Mass Index (BMI) — a ratio of weight-to-height squared used to determine whether a person falls in a healthy weight range.

They then tracked who went on to develop CVD — which includes heart attack, stroke or high blood pressure.

The World Health Organization considers someone with a BMI of 25 kg/m² as overweight, and 30 kg/m² or higher as obese.

The research team found that CVD risk increased beyond a BMI of 22-23 kg/m².

“Furthermore, the risk also increases steadily the more fat a person carries around their waist,” said a press statement summarising the findings.—AFP ■

Chinese women’s status boosted by improved laws, policies, envoy tells UN

UNITED NATIONS — Improved laws and policies have enhanced women’s status and welfare in China, especially in the rural areas, a Chinese envoy told a United Nations (UN) meeting on women Thursday.

“Our mechanism for gender-related assessment of laws, regulations and policies has further improved, and the system of conducting interviews to ensure equal employment for women has been incorporated in local legislation,” Wu Haitao, China’s deputy permanent representative to the UN, said at the general debate of the 62nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Of the representatives elected at the beginning of this year to the 13th National People’s Congress, China’s national legislature, women constitute 24.9 per cent.

Female members make up 22.39 per cent of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, the top political advisory panel, an increase of 2.55 per cent over the last session.

“The number of rural women living in poverty has decreased drastically and more rural women now enjoy social security benefits such as basic pension scheme and new rural cooperative medical scheme,” Wu said.—Xinhua ■

Trump to oust national security advisor HR McMaster

WASHINGTON—US President Donald Trump has decided to sack National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster, in what would be the latest in a string of high-profile White House departures, The Washington Post reported Thursday.

The newspaper said that Trump is discussing potential replacements for McMaster, but is willing to take his time because he wants to avoid humiliating him as well as to have a successor ready.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said that there were no changes at the National Security Council, a response that avoided the issue of whether any were being planned.

“Just spoke to POTUS and Gen. H.R. McMaster - contrary to reports they have a good working relationship and there are no changes at the NSC,” Sanders wrote on Twitter.

The Post said that some in the White House were hesitant to remove McMaster until he had “a promotion to four-star rank or other comfortable landing spot.”

While Trump reportedly wants to avoid humiliating McMaster, that did not appear to have been a particularly high priority when he removed Secretary of State Rex Tillerson two days ago, a move he announced on Twitter.

A top aide said Tillerson did not speak to the president before his firing was announced and was not given a reason for his dismissal.

Tillerson’s sacking came less than two weeks after Trump’s top economic advisor Gary Cohn quit in protest against the president’s decision to levy tariffs on imported steel and aluminum.—AFP ■

European Heart Journal study says being overweight or obese poses a risk of heart disease. PHOTO: AFP

‘Superman’ retires: Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka-shing to step down

HONG KONG — Hong Kong’s richest man, Li Ka-shing, has finally stepped down from his business empire at the age of 89, as one of the world’s most storied tycoons brings his career to a close almost 70 years after founding his first company.

Li spent decades making his name in Hong Kong and around the world at the helm of a prosperous conglomerate that covered sectors from container ports to telecommunications, with his business moves setting market trends.

Nicknamed “Superman” for his business acumen, Li’s companies are part of the fabric of Hong Kong life, providing everything from internet services to supermarket chains.

His decisions have the potential to affect property and utility prices for the city’s seven million residents as investors hang on his every word.

Li was born in 1928 in the mainland Chinese city of Chaozhou.

He and his family fled to neighbouring Hong Kong during the Sino-Japanese War — Li recalled bombs being dropped on his hometown when he was in primary school in an interview with Forbes Magazine in 2012.

He first started his own business in 1950 manufacturing plastic flowers, calling the company Cheung Kong after China’s Yangtze River.

But after diversifying into property he saw large profits in the 1960s and in the following decades his businesses reached into many sectors of Hong Kong.

His firm has a longstanding interest in overseas markets, making investments in the Canadian property and energy sectors in the 1980s. He has been offloading major property investments in China after investing heavily there in the 1990s, in a move seen as part of a quest for stability for his vast empire and a sign of diminishing confidence as China’s formerly stratospheric growth rates cool.

‘Everyone has a goal’ — He has also sought to trim his Hong Kong assets and his CK Asset Holdings sold its stake in the Center skyscraper — one of the jewels in the crown of his property portfolio in the city — in November for a record HK$40.2 billion ($5.2 billion).

Analysts said the deal showed CK Asset’s move to diversify out of real estate as it expands into infrastructure and energy.—AFP ■
Footbridge collapses in Miami, killing four

MIAMI — A newly installed pedestrian bridge over a major road in Miami collapsed on Thursday, killing four people and trapping multiple cars below.

The walkway, which connected Florida International University to a student housing area, went up less than a week ago but was not yet operational.

“We have located up to four victims. Four deceased,” Miami-Dade Fire Chief Dave Downey told a news conference.

Crews worked into the night at the scene of the disaster. Miami-Dade Fire Rescue from the area’s deputy mayor, said the search for survivors had not been abandoned.

“Miami-Dade county and our partner agencies... have been working feverishly in the search and rescue mode to ascertain how many victims there are and rescue as many as we can,” Kemp told journalists.

Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Division Chief Paul Estopinan said at least eight cars were trapped when the 950-ton (tonne) concrete bridge suddenly gave way.

Police block a road near a newly installed pedestrian bridge that collapsed in Miami. PHOTO: AFP

Police detective Juan Carlos Llera said, “it sounded like an explosion. A huge bang.”

“It looks like a disaster area. It looks literally like a bomb went off,” Llera told AFP.

The bridge was suspended from cables that were determined to have loosened. While they were being tightened, the span collapsed, Florida Senator Marco Rubio wrote on Twitter.

The bridge had only been installed on Saturday ahead if its planned opening in 2019.—AFP

Death toll in India forest fire rises to 14

NEW DELHI—The death toll in a forest fire in southern state of Tamil Nadu has risen to 14, with some of the critically injured trekkers succumbing to their burn injuries at the hospital in the past 24 hours, police said Friday.

The massive fire broke out late Sunday evening when a group of nearly 40 people, mostly college students, went trekking in Kurangini hills in Tamil Nadu’s Thenni district, some 540 km from the capital of Chennai.

While 10 people—seven women and three men—initially died in the fire, 30 others were rescued by Indian Air Force. “Of those rescued, some sustained severe burns. Four of them have so far died during treatment at a government hospital,” a senior police official said.

Police have already arrested a 30-year-old tour guide in connection with the fire. “The tour guide led the trekking group to the forest. He is being interrogated. Preliminary probe suggests that the trekking group did not obtain required permissions from the authorities,” he said.

A probe is underway to ascertain the cause of the fire.

“We will try to fix responsibility as soon as the investigation is over. Anyone guilty will not be spared,” the official added.—Xinhua

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V KUOHSUNG VOY.NO. ( 1082 S/N )

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V KUOHSUNG VOY.NO. ( 1082 S/N ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 17-3-2018 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. Cargo will be discharged from the premises of the Port of Yangon.

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 LINE.
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V HUNSA BHUM VOY.NO. ( - )

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V HUNSA BHUM VOY.NO. ( - ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 17-3-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T A.I.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 REGIONAL CONTAINER LINES
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V NACC POROS VOY.NO. ( 42 )

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V NACC POROS VOY.NO. ( 42 ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 17-3-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P 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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SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MERIDIAN SHIPPING AGENCIES PTE LTD.
Phone No: 2301928

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V XETHA BHUM VOY.NO. ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V XETHA BHUM VOY.NO. ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 18-3-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S REGIONAL CONTAINER LINES
Phone No: 2301185

The Republic of Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population
Social Security Board

Open Tenders Invitation for developing and implementation of Social Security Information System

1. Social Security Board (SSB) wants to acquire a comprehensive Social Security Information System in Myanmar. Any interested domestic, international or joint-venture companies are eligible to submit tender proposals.

2. The project is to deliver an integrated solution comprises of the followings:
   - Data center implementation
   - Development and implementation of SSB core business processes such as employer/employee registration process, contribution collection process, benefits provision process, claims management process, medical services provision process and e-Money services, etc.
   - Setting up and operate the SSB smart card printing processes
   - Implementation of software packages such as accounting, human resource management, hospital management, and building and inventory maintenance, among others.

3. The tender forms including Terms of Reference and Tender Discipline can be purchased at the Administrative Department, Social Security Board (Head Office), No (OU-77), corner of Thiriydanar and Naykyar (6) Street, Ottararhiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar during office hours starting from 19-3-2018 to 28-3-2018.

4. The closing time to submit tender proposal is 16:30 pm on May 11, 2018 at the above mentioned address. Any tender submitted after the closing time will not be considered.

5. For further information, please visit the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population website http://www.mol.gov.mm and inquiry the following address or phone.
   - Information and Communication Department, Social Security Board, Nay Pyi Taw
   - Phone - 067-3417925, 3417951, 3417952
   - Fax - 067-3417926

Tender Invitation and Appraisal Committee
Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population

Footbridge collapses in Miami, killing four

MIAMI — A newly installed pedestrian bridge over a major road in Miami collapsed on Thursday, killing four people and trapping multiple cars below.

The walkway, which connected Florida International University to a student housing area, went up less than a week ago but was not yet operational.

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Crews worked into the night at the scene of the disaster. Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Division Chief Paul Estopinan said at least eight cars were trapped when the 950-ton (tonne) concrete bridge suddenly gave way.

Police block a road near a newly installed pedestrian bridge that collapsed in Miami. PHOTO: AFP

Police detective Juan Carlos Llera said, “it sounded like an explosion. A huge bang.”

“It looks like a disaster area. It looks literally like a bomb went off,” Llera told AFP.

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Death toll in India forest fire rises to 14

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While 10 people—seven women and three men—initially died in the fire, 30 others were rescued by Indian Air Force. “Of those rescued, some sustained severe burns. Four of them have so far died during treatment at a government hospital,” a senior police official said.

Police have already arrested a 30-year-old tour guide in connection with the fire. “The tour guide led the trekking group to the forest. He is being interrogated. Preliminary probe suggests that the trekking group did not obtain required permissions from the authorities,” he said.

A probe is underway to ascertain the cause of the fire.

“We will try to fix responsibility as soon as the investigation is over. Anyone guilty will not be spared,” the official added.—Xinhua
Thousands flee Syria rebel enclave after month-long bombardment

GHOUTA — Thousands of civilians poured out of Eastern Ghouta on Thursday after a month-long bombardment brought the Syrian regime closer to recapturing the devastated rebel enclave outside Damascus.

Defying expectations and calls to step down, Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad was strengthening his grip on power as the conflict entered its eighth year.

His troops advanced in a ferocious assault on Ghouta, once the opposition’s main bastion on the outskirts of the capital. A war monitor said regime forces now control 70 per cent of the area, splitting the remaining rebel territory into three shrinking pockets.

After a fierce air and ground assault, regime forces on Thursday captured Hammuriyeh town, in an isolated southern part of Ghouta.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitor, said rebels later launched a counter-attack and regained parts of the town, killing 14 regime fighters.

Elsewhere, however, it said the regime overran Al-Rihan town in an assault led by Russian officers and advisers. The regime’s advance into Hammuriyeh had punched a corridor through the town into government-controlled territory.

Streams of women and children escaped through that corridor on Thursday, carrying plastic bags stuffed with clothes and pushing strollers piled high with suitcases and rugs. They reached a regime checkpoint in Adra district, where ambulances and large green buses waited to take them to temporary shelters.

“Largest displacement”

The Observatory said nearly 20,000 people fled the enclave in 24 hours before the flow stopped on Thursday evening.

It called the exodus “the largest displacement since the beginning of the assault on Ghouta.”

The United Nations said it was trying to determine how many people have left the enclave.

“The UN has not observed the evacuations, but is visiting collective shelters where some of the evacuees are arriving,” a UN spokesman said.

Eastern Ghouta had been the main rebel bastion on the outskirts of Damascus since 2012 and came under a devastating regime siege the following year.

That left the area’s roughly 400,000 residents struggling to secure food and hospitals crippled by shortages of medicine and equipment.

On Thursday, a joint convoy of food supplies for some 26,000 people entered Douma, the largest town in Ghouta and part of a separate rebel-controlled pocket.

‘This is just a little of what these families need,” said the International Committee of the Red Cross, which delivered the aid alongside the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the UN.—AFP □

Philippine troops kill 2 Abu Sayyaf terrorists

MANILA— At least two terrorists have been killed as troops fought an underdetermined number of Abu Sayyaf Group fighters (ASG) in southern Philippine jungles of Sulu, an army general said on Friday.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the military’s Joint Task Force Sulu, said in a statement that fighting broke out around noon on Thursday in a village in Patikul town, a known lair of Abu Sayyaf Group.

He said Thursday’s firefight last almost an hour with two Abu Sayyaf Group terrorists killed.

Sobejana said the militants were part of the ASG group that clashed with troops on Tuesday in another village in Patikul town. At least five ASG militants were killed and six soldiers wounded in Tuesday’s clash, according to the military. The military said the ASG is still holding more than a dozen hostages.—Xinhua □

### CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

**M.V MCC SEOUL VOY.NO. ( )**

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MCC SEOUL VOY.NO. ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 18-3-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T / M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT (STP) LTD**

Phone No: 2301185

### CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

**M.V SIMA PERFECT VOY.NO. ( )**

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SIMA PERFECT VOY.NO. ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 18-3-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of HPT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT MYANNA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GLODEN SEA SHIPPING LINE**

Phone No: 2301185

### INVITATION FOR PRICE QUOTATIONS

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has received financing from the International Development Association (IDA) towards the cost of the National Community Driven Development Project (NCDDP). The IDA No. 8814MM. The Department of Rural Development (DRD) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, in its role as implementing agency of the NCDDP, intends to apply a portion of the proceeds of this financing towards eligible payments under the Purchase Order/Contract for the following packages.DRD now invites eligible suppliers to express their interest in supplying the following items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference No.</th>
<th>Lot No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Quantity (Number)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G 112</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tile Stones and Plaques with completed Sub-Project Information</td>
<td>11,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 113</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>T-shirts with the logo and text of the NCDD Project</td>
<td>145,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 114</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Caps with the logo and text of the NCDD Project</td>
<td>57,918</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expressions of Interest on Quotation must be submitted in a written form to the email address below and clearly indicate the reference number above. The invitation to quote will be distribute on the needs of DRD. Eligible suppliers having expressed interest will receive an INVITATION TO QUOTE (ITQ). Sealed Quotations will be submitted to the address by corresponding date and time as stated in each package, after which no Quotations will be accepted.

The goods will be contracted in lot-by-lot basis. Suppliers will be selected following the Shopping Methodas per the “Guidelines for Procurement of Goods, Works and non-Consulting Services under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants by World Bank Borrowers” dated January 2011.

Please submit your Expression of Interest for receiving the Invitation to Quote (ITQ) to U KyawSoe, Deputy Director General, Department of Rural Development, Office No.(14), Nay Pyi Taw.For detailed information please contact U KyawSwaAung, Director, Procurement and Logistic Section, Mobile phone 0943434333 or office phone 067490971/ Email: unionncddprocurement@gmail.com. Please indicate your e-mail address as only electronic copies of the ITQ will be send as well as introduce your company name and contact number to communicate with you. For more information on the NCDD Project please also visit Website: www.cdd.drdmyanmar.org.
Australian paraplegic aims to be first to reach Everest under own power

KATHMANDU — A wheelchair-bound Australian is aiming to become the first paraplegic to reach Everest base camp unaided, a breathtaking trek he reckons he will make mostly on his hands.

Scott Doolan, 28, sets out Friday for Mount Everest’s base camp, which lies 5,384 metres (17,598 feet) above sea level and is traditionally only accessible on foot or by helicopter. He is out to prove that it is also accessible to wheelchair users.

Doolan will be using a specially designed wheelchair with mountain bike wheels when the trails allow, but thinks he will mostly be on his hands with a friend holding his legs in a move he’s dubbed “wheelbarrowning”.

“I jump out of my chair and my mate Matt, he’ll grab me and hold my ankles and I basically walk on my hands,” he said, explaining a technique that’s similar to the wheelbarrow race of school sports days. Doolan has spent the last eight months training for the trek, doing daily cardiovascular and strength training.

He also spent time in Australia’s Blue Mountains to get some experience on trails, wearing a mask that limits oxygen flow in a bid to replicate the high altitude conditions that await him in the Himalayas.

Along the route there are steps and narrow paths hewn into the valley wall, forcing hikers to clamber over rocks and occasionally trek in snow or mud, all at an altitude where limited oxygen can cause headaches and nausea, and if left untreated a potentially fatal build-up of fluid in the lungs.

“I have no idea what it’s going to be like. Obviously there are going to be parts when I can’t physically go in a wheelchair so I’m going to get out and use my hands. That will probably be the most challenging of it all,” Doolan said.

“Hopefully I don’t get altitude sickness.”

Every year, Everest’s base camp is transformed into a nylon tent city of around 1,500 people for two months starting in April, when climbers descend on the mountain with the sole aim of reaching its summit.

Meanwhile, around 5,000 trekkers a year take the eight to 10 days to trek to the base of the world’s highest peak, according to figures from Nepal’s tourism department. Doolan expects to take about twice as long and will then have to retrace his route back to Lukla. Doolan has been confined to a wheelchair since he was 17 when he broke his spine in a motorcycle accident.

An athletic teenager, it took him a few years to get back to the gym after the accident, but once he did, it helped him come to terms with his disability, he said.

And then he met Matt Laycock, founder of the Apexgen clothing brand, which has a philanthropic mission that aims to build awareness of mental health and disability under the tagline “Rise above it”.

It was Laycock who came up with the idea that Doolan should try to become the first paraplegic to get to Everest’s base camp mostly under his own power. The company is backing the trip, which costs Aus$70,000 (US$54,400) including Aus$15,000 for Doolan’s custom wheelchair.

Laycock pitched the idea to him over coffee — and Doolan initially said no. But a few weeks later he came round to the idea.

“Anything you set your mind to you can achieve. That’s what I’ve learned so far. Your mind is your only limitation,” said Doolan of the precipitous challenge awaiting him. —AFP

Celebrated Portuguese luthiers face end of the line

PORTO — Surrounded by planers and other woodworking tools, Joaquim Capela carefully sculpts a new bridge for a violin at a tiny workshop in northern Portugal as it drizzles outside.

Joaquim Capela, 85, quietly goes about changing the strings and turning the pegs of a cello at the workshop in Anta, a picturesque town that is home to around 10,000 people near Porto, Portugal’s second-largest city.

“Aside from the two or three days of the year when I have my usual cold, I never stop working, even on weekends,” he says in a soft voice.

- ‘Many orders’ -

It takes on average about two and a half months for the Capelas to make a new string instrument, which sells for around 3,000 euros ($3,700).

“We have so many orders that it takes us generally two years to honour them,” says Joaquim, who started learning the craft as a child.

Their story as luthiers began in 1924, when Joaquim’s carpenter grandfather, Domingos Capela, agreed to repair the violin of an Italian-Brazilian musician, who belonged to the orchestra of the neighbouring town of Espinho.

The musician was thrilled with the results and recommended Domingos to other members of the orchestra.

As time went by the Capelas started to count top musicians as their clients, among them Rostropovich, considered to be among the world’s greatest cellists.

Photos of the Russian musician, who died in 2007, are proudly displayed on a wall of the Capelas’ workshop, alongside violins, violas and cellos.

The Capelas in 1972 won the top four prizes in the prestigious Henryk Wieniawski international violin making competition, which is held every five years in Poland, as well as the top prize in a highly respected Japanese competition in 1989.

- Balkan maple, Italian spruce -

“Make a quality violin, you have to choose the wood well,” says Antonio, who studied his craft in Paris and the northern Italian city of Cremona, considered to be the cradle of violin making.

The Capelas use only Balkan maple for the back of their violins and Italian spruce for the sounding board.

“They have great acoustic qualities,” says Antonio, taking the first violin made by his father out of its storage case to show AFP.

The other secret of their success is the varnish they use to coat their instruments whose smell fills the workshop in Anta.

The Capelas credit the varnish with giving their violins a distinctive timbre.

“In Cremona in Italy, the village of the violin, the other luthiers often ask me for the formula of the varnish,” he simply answers that it is the same as theirs, “says Antonio, before breaking out into a mischievous smile.

- ‘Name will last’ -

Ana Mula, a Spanish professional cellist, drove 550 kilometres (340 miles) from Madrid with her father to get her two cellos repaired by the Capelas.— AFP
Impressionism’s US icon Mary Cassatt finally gets her due

PARIS — There is no known record of the American artist Mary Cassatt giving Edgar Degas a good slap.

But in the half century the two were friends, there must have been times when she was tempted to take a swing at the French painter.

“I don’t believe that a woman can draw that well,” Degas told her in 1892, taken aback by her painting “Young Women Gathering Fruit”.

On another occasion standing before one of her Japanese-style prints, he asked in disbelief, “Did you really do this?”

To top it all, Degas painted a “repulsive” portrait of his young friend – a picture that left her so furious she painted a riposte.

The sparky relationship between the pair is at the centre of the first major retrospective of Cassatt’s work in Paris.

Although Cassatt is something of a national hero and the misogynist who somehow became friends for life. “Degas could be awful, I mean really awful,” she told AFP. “He had no filter.

“Everybody had a falling out with him eventually. He said terrible things. He was a misanthrope, and could be really cruel.”

- Wanting to be Michelangelo -

Yet when the young Mary Cassatt defied her rich Pennsylvanian parents to decamp to France to become a painter, Degas invited her to join him, Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir and the other Impressionists.

Cassatt was fiercely ambitious, Mowll Mathews said. “She wanted to be the female Michelangelo... for her paintings to hang in museums with the great artists of the past.”

Such was her confidence that she deliberately chose homely models to grandstand her talent, she added.

While her women were not pretty, they were “tall and very strong and confident – this was the image that she wanted to project of women,” the curator said.

And when men patronised her, Cassatt loved proving them wrong – producing some of the best prints of the period when others claimed that Japanese woodblock prints could not be matched in the West.

When Degas painted a portrait of her that she found “repugnant and repulsive”, she took up her brush.

She rebuked him with a self-portrait that Mowll Mathews said “swiftly corrected him. In his is she stooped over, in hers she is upright and feminine and most important of all, she is painting...”

- Sexual tension with Degas -

Curator Nancy Mowll Mathews said Cassatt and Degas were the oddest of couples – a feminist and the misogynist – a feminist and the misogynist

The first major retrospective of Mary Cassatt’s work in Paris is at the Musee Jacquemart-Andre. PHOTO: AFP

King of spectacle Balich puts Sistine Chapel on stage

ROME — The producer of the Rio Olympics opening ceremony, Marco Balich, is used to making flashy spectacles, but entering into the artistic world of Michelangelo and his frescoes of creation on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel may be his most ambitious project yet.

Described as “artainment”, Balich’s show, which premiered on Thursday, aims to take a new audience inside the Vatican’s Sistine Chapel, one of Rome’s most famous sites that is so swamped by camera-clicking tourists it can hardly be fully appreciated.

Balich has taken over Rome’s former symphony hall in the hope of giving the art masterpiece back to the people of the eternal city.

“Rome is the only major European capital that doesn’t have a permanent show about its own history,” Balich told AFP.

Using the techniques learned during his Olympic experiences he makes audiences feel as if they are sitting in the middle of the iconic chapel.

- Beauty is everything -

High definition photographs provided by the Vatican Museums are projected onto the stage, walls and ceiling of the hall, which have never been covered with canvases.

Adam and Eve frolic in front of a close-up of a fresco of the Garden of Eden with plants climbing the walls toward the ceiling, while Noah’s Ark heaves in a stormy deluge that soaks actors on stage.

“We’ve tried to apply the language and technology of the Olympics to a pillar of humanity,” says Balich.

The show starts with blocks of rough marble sliding mysteriously around the stage, before Michelangelo appears revolving the universe rocks, evoking “beauty” until a sculpture emerges from the grey mass.

“Everything is in there,” Balich says. “I seek beauty, the beauty is everything. It is my obsession.”

Next comes Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484), who had called upon the great artists of his time like Perugino, Botticelli or Ghirlandaio, to paint and restore an old medieval chapel that would eventually be named after him.

Then in 1506 Michelangelo is summoned from his hometown of Florence to paint the ceiling of what we now call the Sistine Chapel, at the request of Pope Julius II (1503-1513).

Just 30 years old and up to that point a sculptor, he recoils at the madness of having to paint one thousand square-metres — 500 hundred days work despite having no knowledge of fresco painting techniques. —AFP
Myanmar attendees recognised in FIFA’s Hanoi conference

Kyaw Zin Lin

MYANMAR representatives who attended the TMS Conference Hanoi 2018 were recognised for their excellence, according to a statement on Myanmar Football Federation website.

The conference was attended by football officials and executives from 15 countries including the Philippines, Bhutan, Singapore, Viet Nam, Thailand, Macau, Indonesia, Mongolia and Hong Kong, Myanmar attendees were recognised as the best by FIFA because of their insightful questioning and well-organised answers during the conference.

“We have many benefits to come here. The FIFA Transfer Matching System (TMS) is awesome for football. The system really works in each and every league of football”, said U Ko Ko Thein, an MFF official. The FIFA Transfer Matching System is an online platform for FIFA’s Member Associations to record player transfers between clubs. The introduction of the system was approved by the FIFA Congress in 2009, and was made mandatory from 1 October 2010. ■

Silver Stars beat Mountain Lion in MNL II tourney

Kyaw Zin Lin

SILVER Stars FC trounced Mountain Lion FC by a score of 5-2 with the help of a hat trick by the Silver Stars’ Nyi Nyi Aung in a Week-6 match of the MPT Myanmar National League II 2018 played at Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon yesterday.

Even though both teams languish at the bottom of the MNL II rankings, tremendous efforts were put forth by Silver Stars and Mountain Lion last night.

At the 3-minute mark, Silver Stars striker Nyi Nyi Aung scored the first goal for his team past a surprised keeper after some quick passing over the Mountain Lion defenders.

The Silver Stars did not let up and scored their second goal at the 21-minute mark by Paing Moe Wai. Mountain Lion did not give up and responded with a goal by Aung Myat Thu at the 32-minute mark.

Mountain Lion made too many mistakes in their defence and that created great chances for the opponents.

Silver Star youth player Naung Naung Kyaw took advantage of one of the mistakes and made the third goal for his team.

Nyi Nyi Aung scored the fourth goal for his team at the 41-minute mark.

Mountain Lion played better in the second half with a good interception. They scored their second goal at the 76-minute mark by youngster Aung Myat Thu. But with a shining attack, Nyi Nyi Aung completed his hat trick with the fifth goal for his Silver Star team at 89 minutes. ■

England’s fallen Champions League trio eye FA Cup redemption

LONDON — All three crashed out at the last 16 stage of the Champions League, but it is United’s exit to Sevilla that has attracted the most stinging criticism due to manager Jose Mourinho’s overly cautious approach.

Chants of “attack, attack, attack” rained down from frustrated United fans at Old Trafford on Tuesday as doubts over Mourinho’s suitability to lead a club made famous for attacking sides under European Cup winning managers Matt Busby and Alex Ferguson grow.

Despite sitting second in the Premier League, United trail local rivals Manchester City by 16 points and could even suffer the indignity of seeing City crowned champions when the sides meet next month.

In that context, victory over Brighton is a must to maintain the impression that progress is being made under Mourinho, who was handed a contract extension to 2020 as recently as January.

“We have one trophy to chase and that is the FA Cup,” said United striker Romelu Lukaku, who was one of few players to emerge with any credit from the Sevilla defeat after netting his 24th goal of the season.

“We wanted to go far in the Champions League, that is what a club like Manchester United needs to do and we didn’t do it so we are disappointed.”

Mourinho’s decisions on whether to start under-performing star duo Paul Pogba and Alexis Sanchez will be heavily scrutinised.

Sanchez has been a ever-present since signing from Arsenal last month despite a string a poor performances and a meagre return of one goal in 10 appearances.

Pogba was only introduced for the final half hour on Tuesday, but did little to justify a return to the starting line-up.

Son to shine for Kane-less Spurs?

Tottenham will have to get used to life without talismanic striker Harry Kane with an ankle ligament injury ruling him out until next month.

However, the form of Son Heung-min means the England international might not be as badly missed as feared.

Kane hobbled off with Mauricio Pochettino’s men trailing 1-0 at Bournemouth last weekend, but Son inspired an emphatic response by scoring twice in a 4-1 victory to take his tally to seven goals in his last four games.

Chelsea also have little time to recover from a European hangover after being swept aside by two goals and an assist from Lionel Messi to lose 3-0 to Barcelona on Wednesday.

Unlike United, the English champions could at least say they went down with a fight as they hit the woodwork twice and looked a more potent attacking threat with Olivier Giroud acting as a focal point rather than Eden Hazard playing as an auxiliary centre-forward.

The Frenchman is expected to keep his place on Sunday against a dangerous Leicester side who have the luxury of prioritising the Cup as they lie eighth in the Premier League, outside the race for Europe or against relegation.

In the other quarter-final Mark Hughes takes charge of Southampton for the first time hoping to avoid becoming the third-tier Wigan Athletic’s fourth Premier League scalp of an amazing Cup run.

Manchester United have little time to lick their wounds from an embarrassing Champions League exit as Bright-on’s visit to Old Trafford in Saturday’s FA Cup quarter-final represents their last realistic hope of winning a trophy this season.

However, United aren’t alone in seeing the Cup as a last chance for silverware as Tottenham Hotspur and Chelsea travel to Swansea and Leicester also needing to win a Wembley final on 19 May to salvage their season. —AFP■