U Win Myint wins
Pyidaungsu Hluttaw elects new President

THE Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw elected U Win Myint as the next President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar yesterday morning in a vote by Members of Parliament in Nay Pyi Taw.

The result was 403 votes for Vice President U Win Myint, 66, who was previously nominated by elected Pyithu Hluttaw MPs, 211 votes for Vice President U Myint Swe, nominated by Tatmadaw MPs, and 18 votes for Vice President U Henry Van Thio, nominated by Amyotha Hluttaw MPs, with four votes rejected.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker then officially announced the election of U Win Myint as President, and U Myint Swe and U Henry Van Thio as Vice Presidents.

Of the 656 Hluttaw MPs, 636 were present, while 20 were absent.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than announced the commencement of the Presidential election at 10am yesterday, explaining that the President would be elected from among the three Vice Presidents in a secret ballot observed by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker and all Pyidaungsu Hluttaw MPs. The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker also explained about the voting process, the ballots and reasons why votes might be rejected.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw MPs then proceeded to vote for the next President by secret ballot.
Chinese President Xi Jinping sends congratulatory message to newly elected President U Win Myint

President Xi Jinping of the People’s Republic of China sent a message of congratulations to U Win Myint, who was elected as the President of Myanmar yesterday.

In his message, President Xi Jinping extended his warm congratulations and best wishes to U Win Myint for being elected as President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. President Xi Jinping said he believed that the Myanmar government and people would make new achievements in maintaining political stability, developing economy, promoting national peace process and expanding international exchanges and cooperation under your Excellency’s leadership.

“China and Myanmar are traditionally good neighbour countries and enjoy a long-standing Pauk-Phaw friendship. In recent years, the high-level contacts between our two countries are frequent, practical cooperation has been expanding, people-to-people exchanges are active and multilateral coordination are close, bringing tangible benefits to the two peoples and making positive contributions to the peace and prosperity of the region”, President Xi Jinping said.

“I attach great importance to the development of China-Myanmar relations and would like to work closely with Your Excellency to consolidate the traditional friendship and deepen the mutually beneficial cooperation, promoting the China-Myanmar Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation Partnership to a new height and bringing more benefits to the two countries as well as two peoples,” said President Xi Jinping.

He also wishes President U Win Myint good health and success, and hopes Myanmar and its people enjoy prosperity and happiness.—Myanmar News Agency

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw elects new President

FROM PAGE 1
After the voting, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker announced the tallying of the votes and the ballots issued, and the election of the President and Vice Presidents, in accordance with the law. The votes received by each candidate were counted in front of a vote monitoring group consisting of one MP from each of the three hluttaws, and one representative MP each from the National League for Democracy, Union Solidarity Development Party, Arakan National Party, Shan Nationalities League for Democracy and the Tatmadaw.

Attending the event were State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Vice President U Henry Van Thio, Union Chief Justice U Htun Htun Oo, Chairman of the Constitutional Tribunal of Myanmar; the Union Election Commission Chairman, Union Ministers, the Union Attorney General, the Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman, the Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman, the Myanmar Human Rights Commission Chairman, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw’s Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission Chairman and members and invited guests.

The event ended after it was announced that the second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw seventh regular session 21st-day meeting was scheduled to be held on the afternoon of 29 March.

—from Myanmar News Agency

Central Committee meeting held to develop and implement national crime prevention strategy

A CENTRAL Committee meeting to develop and implement a national crime prevention strategy was held yesterday afternoon in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Union Minister office assembly hall. The meeting was attended by the chairman of the central Committee to develop and implement a national crime prevention strategy, Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe; Deputy Ministers for the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Border Affairs; permanent secretaries and directors general from the Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Planning and Finance, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, Ministry of Health and Sports, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and Anti-Corruption Commission; officials from Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee, Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation and Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association; Myanmar Police Chief, Deputy Chief and senior police officers. At the meeting, Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe delivered the opening speech, while the central Committee secretary, Myanmar Police Chief, explained the draft strategy drawn up and central Committee members, Deputy Ministers and officials discussed and provided suggestions.

The national-level national crime prevention strategy (draft) includes the main causes of crime, implementing ministries, organisations and entities, and long-term and immediate works. Detailed discussions were held to develop a final draft by May 2018, drawing up detailed work processes by states and regions and implementing them. Later, Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe delivered a concluding speech and the meeting came to a close.—Myanmar News Agency
State Counsellor observes Presidential Election at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi observed the Presidential Election of the 2nd Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw meeting hall, yesterday morning.

First, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khang Than declared the commencement of the Presidential Election and explained about the voting process, ballots and why votes might be rejected. He then announced the election of U Win Myint as President, nominated by the elected Pyithu Hluttaw MPs group, and U Myint Swe nominated by the Tatmadaw MPs group and U Henry Van Thio nominated by the Amyotha Hluttaw MPs group as Vice Presidents.

Together with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Vice President U Henry Van Thio, Union Chief Justice U Htun Htun Oo, Union Election Commission Chairman, Union Ministers, Union Attorney-General, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman, Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman, Myanmar Human Rights Commission Chairman, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw’s Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission Chairman and members and invited guests attended and observed the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw’s Presidential Election event.—Myanmar News Agency

Second coordination meeting of Steering Committee to hold CONASL XVII

A second coordination meeting of the Steering Committee for holding the 17th Congress of Southeast Asian Librarians (CONASL XVII) was held yesterday morning in the Yinkya Yadana (Cultured Gem) Hall, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Nay Pyi Taw.

Vice President U Myint Swe, who is Chairman of the Steering Committee, delivered a speech at the meeting.

The meeting was attended by Union Ministers Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, Thura U Aung Ko and U Thant Sin Maung, Deputy Ministers Maj-Gen Aung Soe and U Set Aung, Steering Committee members, work committee members, sub-committee members and departmental officials.

During the meeting, Vice President U Myint Swe said that Myanmar would be hosting the CONASL XVII meeting for the first time in May 2018. This was the second coordination meeting to successfully host the Congress and associated meetings, such as CONASL’s third Executive Board meeting and the 26th Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia and Oceania (CDNALAO).

The Office of the President had formed the steering committee and work committee for the successful hosting of CONASL XVII with its Notification No. 61/2017 dated 11 July 2017. The steering committee was composed of 13 members, led by Vice President U Myint Swe and the work committee composed of 14 members, which is led by the Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture. Fifteen sub-committees were also formed to carry out the four tasks of the work committee.

The Steering Committee’s first meeting was held on 18 August 2017, in which 18 decisions were made, of which almost all have been implemented. It is believed that after this second meeting, all works will be completed.

As a pre-congress activity, a workshop on school libraries in the ASEAN region will be held in Nay Pyi Taw. The Ministry of Education was working to develop school libraries, so this workshop will be beneficial for the country, noted the Vice President.

The work committee and 13 sub committees were urged to coordinate and work together to fulfill their responsibilities without difficulty throughout the opening, closing and paper reading sessions of the congress. 229 papers were received for the paper reading session, out of which 94 were chosen for presentation. Much thanks was owed to members of the Myanmar Library Association, who gave their time to help choose the papers.

The congress is held once every two years in one of the 10 ASEAN countries, so it will be another twenty years before Myanmar’s turn will come again. This has become a great opportunity to provide information about the current situation in Myanmar, as well as its culture and traditions, to visitors attending the CONASL XVII and related meetings.

It was noted that the work committee and sub committees were conducting coordination meetings, detailed discussions and works for the successful holding of CONASL XVII and related meetings. Furthermore, in today’s meeting, while works completed by relevant subcommittees are discussed, difficulties and requirements are to be openly reviewed, said the Vice President.

Also, the Chairman of the work committee to hold the CONASL XVII Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko explained about arrangements made to hold CONASL XVII.

Next, work committee secretary Permanent Secretary U Tun Ohn of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture explained about those works completed and future works to be conducted.

This was followed by each subcommittee discussing and explaining about their completed works and follow-up works. Union Ministers Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe and U Thant Sin Maung, who were members of the Steering Committee, and other meeting attendees, also joined in the discussions.

Matters discussed were coordinated by the Vice President, and the meeting came to a close after the Vice President delivered the concluding remarks.—Myanmar News Agency
A rare species of the Myanmar roofed turtle is being reared for the first time at the Yadanabon Zoological Gardens in the Mandalay Region, according to U Thein Min Aung, a zoo official.

There are some 100 animal species among the 1,100 animals housed in the Yadanabon Zoological Gardens, and arrangements are being made to preserve and increase the number of Myanmar roofed turtles, in accordance with wildlife rules and regulations.

The Yadanabon Zoological Gardens is the only place where such Myanmar roofed turtles can be bred and reared across the country. Currently, some 160 Myanmar roofed turtles are being bred here.

The rare Myanmar roofed turtles can be found along the Ayeyawady and Chindwin rivers. According to the research report, the Myanmar roofed turtles were found in Lin Phar village, some 20 miles away from Khamti Township. They are being reared separately at the Yadanabon Zoological Gardens and Laskananda Garden.

According to Dr. Paul P Call, the research group came to Myanmar to examine the health conditions of the Myanmar roofed turtles and to find a good environment for them to survive.

The Yadanabon Zoological Gardens is considered a suitable place to breed and rear the turtles. Arrangements have been made to ensure the Myanmar roofed turtles are in good health, so they can grow and survive before they are set free into the river.

The Yangon-Dala River crossing bridge will be built with the aim of enabling the local people from Dala, Twantay, Kawhmu and Kungyangon and the Ayeyawady Region to travel smoothly and quickly through their regions.

Upon completion, the bridge will contribute to the socio-economic development of the local people from Dala, Twantay, Kawhmu and Kungyangon and the Ayeyawady Region. —GNLM
Officials from Gov’t and private hold forum to discuss Magway Region agriculture and trade sector

By May Thet Hnin

OFFICIALS from the government and the private sector held a forum on 25 March, as they sought to resolve the difficulties faced by Magway Region agriculture and the trade sector.

The forum was attended by Commerce Deputy Minister U Aung Htoo and the Minister from the Magway Region government, along with officials from the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI), along with Magway Region body of chambers of Commerce and Industry and regional entrepreneurs, traders and farmers. “At the forum, they discussed helping the variety of pulse cultivators who are facing with many difficulties due to the India Pulse Import Policy, to reduce Aflatoxin, high humidity and fungus on beans and edible sesame crops, to manufacture by promoting value and the quality of export products, and to work smoothly and quickly between Sino and Myanmar trade,” said U Aung Kyi Soe, General Secretary of the UMFCCI.

“We mainly discussed the use of good agricultural practices, which can control the standard of agricultural products by reducing chemical residue in Magway Region agricultural products. Then, we discussed setting floor prices for pigeon peas. The Magway Region has also exported sheep and goats. So, we discussed establishing wholesale centres by looking at the demand for sheep and goats,” he added. UMFCCI General Secretary U Aung Kyi Soe also urged Magway Region traders, commodities and traders to use proper agricultural practices to develop a contract farming system to provide information about foreign trade regulations for local farmers.

“Local farmers and traders need to change their minds. If crop farming, which has been growing for an entire year; is not successful it can impact not only local farmers, but also the supply chain. To overcome those difficulties, traders have responsibilities to distribute market information. The local farmers also need to be aware, so they can cultivate the right seeds and use fertilizers and pesticides, he added. Also, Magway Region association of chambers of commerce and industry executive member and Pakokku Trader Association secretary U Sein Lwin noted, “The Pakokku Trader Association has provided training courses to local farmers about crops which are entering into the market and other information concerning crops. Now, we have received the trust of local farmers.” “Magway Region is also facing water shortage problems. Therefore, we have discussed using drip irrigation systems next season as a pilot project,” said U Sein Lwin.

The Magway Region mainly grows sesame, bean, pigeon and gram beans, as well as a variety of pulses. ■

Wholesale center for agricultural crops opens in Bago Region

By May Thet Hnin

A wholesale centre for agricultural crops opened in Bago Region on 25 March.

“The wholesale centre will mainly sell rice and a variety of pulses. The wholesale centre for agricultural crops was formed with 31 members from rice-mill entrepreneurs and rice traders,” noted U Kyi Tun, chairman of the Bago Commodity.

The wholesale centre for agricultural crops was opened between Bago and Thanatpin towns. The centre will operate from 7 am to 12 pm.

“There are many farmers in Bago Region. There are also many farm lands which can grow rice. Therefore, we opened the wholesale centre for agricultural crops, which will benefit local farmers,” said U Kyi Tun.

“Previously, the rice which was grown in Bago Region was exported to foreign markets through the Yangon Region. After opening the wholesale center, we have received orders from foreign countries,” he added.

The Bago Commodity will distribute information about the market to local farmers. Bago Commodity will also organize to prevent fraud, which has occurred in other commodities.

“Myanmar needs a lot of wholesale centres for rice and agricultural commodities, as they can serve as the marketplace for farmers and traders. Through wholesale centres, market information will be known more widely and will reduce the risk of speculation and volatility. The Myanmar Rice Federation is also supporting the set-up of rice wholesale centres in order to improve standards and specification, as well as the adoption of proper contractual engagement between sellers and buyers, said U Ye Min Aung, General Secretary of MRF. ■

The Fifth Meeting of OECD-Southeast Asia Corporate Governance Initiative

THE Fifth Meeting of OECD-Southeast Asia Corporate Governance Initiative was held at Pan Pacific Yangon Hotel yesterday with the collaboration of the Directorate of Investment & Company Administration, Ministry of Planning & Finance, Securities and Exchange Commission of Myanmar (SECM), OECD and the Government of Japan.

The objective of the meeting is to discuss the steps taken by the governments of Myanmar, Vietnam, Lao PDR and Cambodia towards the development and improvement of sound corporate governance framework, to foster improved corporate governance, to spur capital market development and to enhance the countries’ attractiveness to foreign investment.

It was attended by 100 participants including Deputy Minister U Maung Maung Win, Experts from OECD, Finance Watch SokSiphana & Associates Transparency International Cambodia, Japan, Italy, New Zealand, the Netherlands, India, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam, representatives from relevant Ministries, public listed companies, public companies, the companies which have the potential to become public companies, SECM and DICA.

At the meeting, U Maung Maung Win, Deputy Minister for Planning & Finance delivered opening remarks and the panel discussion was continued with the tile, “the ASEAN Economic Community: corporate governance challenges and opportunities”. In the panel, Ms. Fianna Jurdant, Senior Policy Analyst of OECD served as moderator and Mr. Ismet AI Bakri from Malaysia Securities Commission, Mr. John Lim, Former Chairman of Singapore Institute of Directors, Ms. ADA Ingawanij, Deputy CEOof Thai Institute of Director Association and Mr. Le Duy Binh, MD of Econavica Vietnam served as panelists. Then, U Aung Naing Oo, Director General of DICA, made a presentation on the current corporate governance developments in Myanmar. Moreover, during the meeting, representatives from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam explained about the recent corporate governance developments of their countries respectively. After that, the meeting was concluded in the evening giving closing remarks by Director General U Aung Naing Oo and Senior Policy Analyst Ms. Fianna Jurdant.

On 29th March 2018, the event on launch of the OECD — Myanmar Corporate Governance Reform Programme will be held at the same place. — GNLM ■

Participants pose for the documentary photo at the 5th Meeting of the OECD-Southeast Asia Corporate Governance Initiative in Yangon yesterday. PHOTO: SUPPLIED
**Stakeholders hold workshop on ensuring access to information for hearing-impaired**

STAKEHOLDERS Consultative Workshop was held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday for ensuring rights to Access to Information for deaf and hearing impaired people.

At the event held at Thin-gaha Hotel, Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun said that according to the 2014 census, of the 4 million people with disabilities, there are 670,000 hearing-impaired people, which is more than 1.3 per cent of the total population. The hearing-impaired have fewer job opportunities and face many difficulties with regard to livelihood, and in the social, education and health sectors. Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV) had sent six staff to attend a one-year sign language course conducted by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement in 2013 and 2016 and began using sign languages in the daily 8 p.m. news program from 1 September 2015.

The Deputy Minister said that on 15 March, an awareness-raising discussion was held in Thin-gaha Hotel regarding today’s workshop, where he became aware of the usefulness of sign languages and the difficulties faced with regard to these languages. Sign language is the first language for the hearing-impaired. In Myanmar, there are three types of sign languages—Yangon Sign Language, Mandalay and Standard Sign Languages—which are taught in three sign language schools. It is interesting to note that in the entire country, only some 70 people know sign languages. This figure of 70 out of 670,000 shows that we still have a long way to go.

Sharing some of the suggestions made at the awareness-raising discussion, the Deputy Minister said the sign languages taught in schools were found to be totally inadequate. New sign languages need to be formulated for non-routine circumstances. A person learning sign languages needs to study and learn them continuously. Laws, rules and policies related to the media should include provisions for sign languages, said the Deputy Minister.

Guests in attendance were made aware of the difficulties and requirements and then discussed the way ahead. The Ministry of Information will fully cooperate with all organisations to provide rights to the hearing-impaired, said the Deputy Minister. Next, programme director U Kyaw Kyaw of the Myanmar Deaf Community Development Association explained the aim of the workshop and programme manager U Salai David explained the outcome of the awareness-raising discussion and the suggestions made.

Later, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement school for the hearing impaired (Mandalay) headmistress Daw Thet Thet Mar Soe Shwe explained the works conducted for the hearing-impaired to be able to access information.

Following this, U Kyaw Myo Win of MRTV explained the sign language used for presenting news on television and DVB Multimedia Group Senior Broadcast Journalist U Aye Naing explained how the DVB Multimedia Group presented the news using sign language. In the afternoon, U Kyaw Kyaw discussed future works to be conducted for the hearing impaired to be able to access news and information. U Salai David then conducted a concluding discussion on the suggestions made by the workshop attendees. After U Kyaw Yu delivered a speech of thanks, officials from MRTV and Department of Rehabilitation delivered concluding speeches.

—Myanmar News Agency

**MRTV refutes Academy Award winner’s statements**

MRTV refutes Academy Award winner’s statements made by pianist Tin Win Hlaing at the press conference in Yangon yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

MYANMA Radio and Television held a press conference yesterday in Yangon to refute statements made by pianist Sandayar Tin Win Hlaing on state-run television. At the press conference, Director-General of MRTV U Myint Htwe described the statements made by the prominent pianist at the Myanmar Academy Awards Presentation Ceremony for 2017 in Yangon on 23 March as categorically false. The Information Team of the Ministry of Information released a statement on Tuesday and staff of the MRTV also sent an open letter to U Tin Win Hlaing, Sandayar Tin Win Hlaing, in meeting with reporters after the Myanmar Academy Awards, alleged that his programme “Chay Chay Myit Myit Nht Nht Kar Kar” had not been broadcast in over a year, and that “not a single RCA style is left in hand”, referring to the record players used by Myanmar Radio. RCA record players and cassette players were operated in the presence of journalists yesterday to refute the false statement. In an open letter published in the 27 March edition of the Global New Light of Myanmar, the staff of MRTV said that runs of Sandayar Tin Win Hlaing’s programmes “Chay Chay Myit Myit Nht Nht Kar Kar” are broadcast every Tuesday at 4:30pm.—GNLM
Chick pea sales brisk in Mandalay

THE sales of chick peas in Mandalay markets these days is brisk following the higher volume purchases by bean and pulse vendors in order to stockpile them with the intention to resell them for bigger profits later. They especially purchase chick peas categorized as the V2 and V3 types.

They found 1,260 yaba tablets, weighing 134 grams and worth Ks.6.7 million. During interrogation, Myo Thein admitted his partner, identified as Aung Kyaw, to sell the tablets on 20 March to a man identified as Myo Thein, a wholesaler in Mandalay.

The police arrested two men for carrying and selling yaba tablets on 27 March, according to the Dawei Myoma police station.

A police unit was patrolling Dawei town, when it intercepted a man identified as Myo Thein, alias Ko Aung, riding a motorbike at midnight on the U Kyaw Yin junction. The police conducted a search and seized 80 yaba tablets and a mobile phone from him.

The police then proceeded to search Myo Thein’s house. They found 1,260 yaba tablets, weighing 134 grams and worth Ks.6.7 million. During interrogation, Myo Thein admitted his partner, identified as Aung Kyaw Myint, gave him the tablets on 20 March to sell them.

Temporary border market to be opened in Mese Town

IN an attempt to strengthen friendship between Myanmar and Thailand, a temporary market will be opened in Mese, a border town in Kayah State.

Loikaw, the capital of Kayah State and Mae Hong Son Province of Thailand have already signed a sister city deal to foster cooperation between the two countries. The temporary market will be opened twice a month in Mese, Kayah State and Khun Yuan in Mae Hong Son Province in Thailand on a rotational basis.

Construction of stalls, toilets, bathrooms and availability of electricity and water will be systematically carried out by Kayah State Government and foodstuff will be sold at the temporary market by local merchants from both countries, he added. Deputy Commissioner of Mae Hong Son Mr. Suebsak Eaimvijarn and party looked into preparations being made to open the temporary border market in Mese yesterday evening.—MDN

MR to resume Ye-Yangon-Dawei direct route during Thingyan

THE Myanma Railways (MR) is planning to operate the Ye-Yangon-Dawei direct route during the water festival on a regular basis, said U Maung Maung Myint, a station master from Ye railway station.

Recently, many people flocked to a popular beach resort in Ye Township and the arrival of both domestic and foreign travellers has increased significantly compared to previous periods. Last year, around 600 people used Ye-Yangon-Dawei route daily. Now the number of railway passengers increased to nearly 750 on a daily basis, he added.

“Travelling by train is very convenient when compared to the past. Seats and public toilets are much more clean and hygienic now. Travelling by train is comfortable and more suitable for passengers, especially for the elderly,” said Ma Kathy Win, one of the railway commuters from Theinzayet Town. Train ticket prices are similar to previous ticket fares, according to the Myanma Railways.—MDN
Highway linking Myanmar, Thailand will speed up Dawei SEZ

With the Pyithu Hluttaw’s legislative per-

The project is expected to benefit from
to the Ministry of Construction, re-

The highway linking Myanmar and
the Myanmar-Thai border. The project was
to be held in January 2018.

The Dawei SEZ project is expected to

The ASEAN Committee for Culture and Information (ASEAN COCI), Myanmar

The ASEAN Committee for Culture and Information (ASEAN COCI), Myanmar is an intergovernmental organization that promotes cultural and information cooperation among ASEAN member states. It was established in 1978 by the ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information (ASEAN COCI) of Myanmar, and it is responsible for assisting the Ministry of Information in fostering cultural and information cooperation among ASEAN member states.

The Committee implements projects and activities that focus on promoting cultural and information cooperation among ASEAN member states, including the promotion of cultural exchange programs, the establishment of cultural centers, and the enhancement of information cooperation.

The ASEAN Committee for Culture and Information (ASEAN COCI) aims to contribute to the development of ASEAN through the promotion of cultural and information exchange, and to enhance the understanding and appreciation of ASEAN's diverse cultural heritage.

The ASEAN Committee for Culture and Information (ASEAN COCI) is headquartered in Yangon, Myanmar, and it has a Secretariat located in Bangkok, Thailand.
Trump says ‘good chance’ Kim will give up nukes

WASHINGTON, (United States) — US President Donald Trump, who has agreed to meet with Kim Jong Un, said on Wednesday there is a now a good chance the North Korean leader will give up his country’s nuclear weapons.

“For years and through many administrations, everyone said that peace and the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula was not even a small possibility,” Trump wrote in an early morning tweet.

Now there is a good chance that Kim Jong Un will do what is right for his people and for humanity. Look forward to our meeting!” Trump added.

His comments came as Kim completed a secretive and unprecedented visit to Beijing on Wednesday as the two countries seek to repair frayed ties between Pyongyang’s landmark summits with Washington and earlier with South Korea.

On his first trip abroad since taking power, Kim and his wife were greeted by an honor guard and a banquet hosted by President Xi Jinping, according to state media, which confirmed the three-day visit on Wednesday only after Kim had returned by train to North Korea.

The two men held talks at the Great Hall of the People and Kim pledged he was “committed to denuclearization” on the Korean peninsula, according to China’s Xinhua news agency.

Kim also expressed willingness to hold the summits with Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in, it said. Analysts said Xi likely wanted to see Kim in order to ensure North Korea does not cut a deal with Trump that hurts Chinese interests during their summit, expected to be held in May.

—AFP

Poland buys US Patriot anti-missile system for $4.8 bn

WARSAW — Poland signed on Wednesday a $4.75 billion (3.8-billion-euro) contract to purchase a US-made Patriot anti-missile system, a move that is likely to irk Russia as East-West tensions rise.

“We are signing today a contract to deliver a modern system that has proven itself in numerous countries and thanks to which we are joining an elite group of states which have an efficient weapon that guarantees security,” said Polish Defence Minister Mariusz Blaszczak.

The first deliveries are expected in 2022. The Patriot is a mobile air-defence system made by US defence firm Raytheon and designed to intercept tactical ballistic missiles, low-flying cruise missiles and aircraft.

Moscow was reported to have deployed nuclear-capable Iskander missiles for exercises in its Kaliningrad exclave in 2016, rather nearby NATO members. Tensions with Moscow have been high since the Ukraine crisis and Kremlin’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the current diplomatic spat over the nerve agent attack on a former Russian spy in Britain has done nothing to calm matters.

Russia has complained about the prospect of the deployment of Patriot anti-missile systems in Poland and Romania, which it says violates a 1987 arms treaty.

—AFP

German politicians reject calls for World Cup boycott over ex-spy poisoning

BERLIN — Leading German politicians rejected international calls on Wednesday to boycott the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia in reaction to the poisoning of ex-spy Sergei Skripal in Britain.

“I am against a political boycott of the football world cup in Russia,” Norbert Roettgen, president of the parliamentary foreign policy committee, told German magazine Der Spiegel.

Roettgen said that there had already been a “strong international reaction” to the alleged poisoning of Skripal and that Western governments should now refrain from further “escalation.”

He said sports should always be a final resort in the “catalogue of consequences” because of its importance for intercultural dialogue.

Juergen Hardt, a senior lawmaker in Chancellor Angela Merkel’s Christian Democrat party, told Der Spiegel on Wednesday that boycotts of international sports events were not a “smart instrument of diplomacy.”

Free Democratic Party foreign policy spokesperson Björn Dijan Dijar-Sarai similarly warned against the risk of a “spiral of escalations.”

Earlier, Berlin had joined 23 other Western countries, including the United States and 16 European Union (EU) member states, in ordering a total of 137 Russian diplomats to return to their home country. The government was subsequently criticized by politicians from across the political spectrum for having made the unprecedented decision prior to the conclusion of an independent investigation into the Skripal case.

German Social Democrat politician and former EU Commissioner Guenther Verheugen said in the newspaper “Augsburger Allgemeine” that Berlin’s decision had been made on the basis of assumptions rather than facts.

“The argumentation in the Skripal case reminds me of a court verdict in which the defendant is found guilty not because his guilt could be proven, but merely because the crime which he is accused of is believed to fit his character,” Verheugen said.

—Xinhua

Germania airline plane collides with Israel’s El Al plane in on-ground accident

JERUSALEM — A Germania airline plane collided Wednesday with an El Al plane in an on-ground accident in Ben Gurion Airport outside Tel Aviv.

A spokesman for the Israel Airports Authority said no injuries were reported. The passengers were evacuated through the regular stairs back to the terminal, he said.

The Berlin-bound Germania Boeing 737 was pushed back from its position near the terminal ahead of launch when it collided with the tail of Rome-bound El Al 767.

Damage was caused to the planes and they were both grounded. Both flights took off after hours’ delay, the airport said.

An investigation was opened into the circumstances of the accident, the spokesman said, adding that according to initial estimates the clash was caused by the driver who pulled the German plane.

—Xinhua

Israel’s Netanyahu discharged from hospital after tests

JERUSALEM — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was discharged from hospital in Jerusalem on Tuesday after being admitted with a case of “high fever”, his office said.

The 68-year-old premier, who underwent tests in the Hadassah hospital, was also suffering from a “cough”, the office said in a statement.

He was able to return to his residence in Jerusalem after the examinations “which revealed a benign viral disease of the airways”.

“The doctors recommended him to rest and undergo medical treatment,” his office said in a statement, without giving details.

An earlier statement said Netanyahu’s personal physician, Zvi Herman Berkowitz, believed he had not rested enough following an illness contracted two weeks ago, causing his symptoms to worsen.

—AFP
Solar seeks its place under Spanish sun

PARIS — French President Emmanuel Macron will lead a national ceremony on Wednesday honouring a heroic policeman who died offering himself as a hostage in a jihadist attack.

Lieutenant-Colonel Arnaud Beltrame, 44, was the fourth and final victim in the shooting spree last Friday in the southwestern towns of Carcassonne and nearby Trebes.

“In giving his life to bring to an end the deadly actions of a jihadist terrorist, he died a hero,” Macron said ahead of the ceremony.

The senior police officer, who was killed while out jogging, had been on a list of suspects extremists were out of the way.

Across the country, police stations will pause for a minute’s silence at 0800 GMT. The coffin of Beltrame, who was married, was flown in from Carcassonne on Tuesday, draped in the national flag.

Beltrame had been hailed as a national hero, with family members saying it was typical of him to put others first. “You behaved in your last moments just as you behaved throughout your whole life: as a patriot, as a good man, as a man with a big heart,” his brother Damien wrote on Facebook.

“The coffin of the woman Lakdim was using as a human shield, hoping to negotiate with the terrified shoppers. The DRRD invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the following separated contracts:

### Contract

**Lot 1** (ShaeGji Bridge)

- Standard Concrete Bridge; single carriageway of 6 Meter width.
- Total length is 130 Meter.

**Lot 2** (Nat ta khar Bridge)

- Standard Concrete Bridge; single carriageway of 6 Meter width.
- Total length is 130 Meter.

### Location

- Kalay township of Sagaing Region.
- Kalay township of Sagaing Region.

### Ministry of Construction

**Department of Rural Road Development**

**Invitation for Open Tender**

The DRRD invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the following separated Bridge work contracts;

### Contract

**Lot 1**

- Standard Concrete Bridge; single carriageway of 6 Meter width.
- Total length is 130 Meter.

**Lot 2**

- Standard Concrete Bridge; single carriageway of 6 Meter width.
- Total length is 130 Meter.

### Location

- Kalay township of Sagaing Region.
- Kalay township of Sagaing Region.

### Procurement

The DRBD will conduct the tendering procedures through International Competitive Bidding and under the laws and regulations governing public procurement within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and following the KfW Guidelines for Procurement of Goods, Works and Associated Services in Financial Cooperation with Partner Countries (KfW procurement guidelines-August 2016).

### Bids

Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before 2pm, May 15, 2018.

### Invitation

This invitation is open to all bidders and bidders have the option to Bid for any one or both lots.

Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information complete bidding documentation from:

**Rural Road Rehabilitation Programme (RRRP), Department of Rural Road Development, Ministry of Construction, Northern of (200)Bedded Hospital, Yan Aung (2) Quarter, Pyinmana, Myanmar.**

Phone: +95 67 24821, Email: ruralroad.drrd@gmail.com, rbbnd@gmail.com

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Solar was one of the pioneers of solar power-generation but the financial crisis broke its momentum.

**PRESS PHOTO:**

Spain and another 165 megawatts in neighbouring Portugal, in a 400-million-euro ($490 million) investment.

Companies have sought authorisation for solar power projects across Spain with a total capacity of 24,000 megawatts, according to the director general of Spanish solar power lobby UNEF, Jose Donoso.

**Subsidies stumble**

That is the equivalent of 14 of the latest generation nuclear power plants that France hopes to launch later this year, after a decade of costly construction. Spain was one of the pioneers of solar power-generation. Subsidies in the form of a high purchase price for solar power lured investors and homeowners to install solar panels, triggering an installation boom in 2008 that saw Spain’s installed capacity jump five times to 3,355 megawatts.

But the global financial crisis, which ravaged Spain via a collapse of the property market, led to a bust in new projects and the cash-strapped government was quickly forced to abandon the subsidies. Just 49 megawatts was added in 2015, and 55 megawatts in 2016, before picking up to 135 megawatts in 2017, according to UNEF figures. However in Germany, which kept up its subsidies, solar power swelled by six times although the country does not receive as much sun as Spain, meaning each panel produces less electricity.

The country now has more than 40,000 megawatts of solar power, compared with 3,400 in Spain at the end of 2016. But the sector has undergone “a complete reversal in less than six months”, according to Donoso.—AFP

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**France bids farewell to hero policeman killed by jihadist**

PARIS — Sun-drenched Spain should be a natural source for solar energy, and it is here that the technology is making an effort to stand on its feet financially without subsidies.

Investors are now betting again on solar power generation in Spain, which for a decade was in the shadows as the country cut subsidies for the clean but expensive source of energy.

A plunge in the price of solar panels and lower construction costs has changed the maths, and new projects are moving forward again.

Iberdrola, Spain’s largest power company, this month launched a solar project with a capacity of 425 megawatts.

And last week Spanish renewable energy firm Cox Energy signed a deal for the construction of 495 megawatts of capacity in Spain, and another 165 megawatts in Portugal, in a 400-million-euro ($490 million) investment.

**Pressure on government**

Beltrame has been hailed as a national hero, with family members saying it was typical of him to put others first.

“You behaved in your last moments just as you behaved throughout your whole life: as a patriot, as a good man, as a man with a big heart,” his brother Damien wrote on Facebook.

Macron’s government has meanwhile come under criticism from right-wing opponents who allege that the attack could have been prevented.

Lakdim, who had previous convictions for drug use and handling a banned weapon, had been on a list of suspected extremists since 2014 and was being monitored.

A police source told AFP that Lakdim had been summoned by anti-terror officers for questioning earlier this month.

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen accused the government of exploiting the grief over Beltrame to “escape from its own incompetence and cowardice” in failing to tackle Islamic extremism.—AFP

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Spain was one of the pioneers of solar power-generation but the financial crisis broke its momentum.
Diplomat: No reply from UK, US to Russia’s request for information over ‘Skrimal handout’

Moscow — Moscow has received no reply from London and Washington to its request to provide printed materials on the incident with the alleged poisoning of former Russian military intelligence officer Sergei Skripal in Salisbury; the UK, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Tuesday.

US Ambassador to Russia Jon Huntsman said on Monday that the British side had circulated a certain document, a certain material, a certain list of topics or maybe rather London’s explanations of what happened in Salisbury have never reached the media. Journalists tried to obtain this document. We also tried and sent a corresponding inquiry to our British and American colleagues, and did it publicly to receive zero information in reply,” Zakharova said in an interview with the NTV television channel.

On 4 March, former Russian military intelligence officer Sergei Skripal, 66, who had been convicted in Russia of spying for Great Britain and exchanged for Russian intelligence officers, and his 33-year-old daughter Yulia were found unconscious on a bench near the Maltings shopping center in Salisbury. Police said they had allegedly been exposed to a nerve agent. Both are in the hospital in a critical condition.

London immediately accused Russia of being involved, but failed to produce any evidence. UK Prime Minister Theresa May blamed Russia for “unlawful use of force” against her country. She identified the alleged substance used in the attack as the Novichok nerve agent, developed in the former Soviet Union. The UK expelled 23 Russian diplomats and announced other restrictive measures against Moscow.

Russia has flatly rejected these allegations pointing out that neither the Soviet Union nor Russia had any programs to develop that substance. In response, Moscow expelled the same number of British diplomats from Russia and ordering to close the British Consulate-General in St. Petersburg and shut down the British Council’s offices in Russia.

In a show of solidarity with the UK, many of European countries, including France, Germany, Poland, the Baltic states, and Ukraine, as well as the United States and Canada announced on Monday their decision to expel about 100 Russian diplomats.

The Russian foreign ministry said in turn this unfriendly step would not go unanswered. —Tass

Invitation for Bids (IFB)


2. The Project Executing Agency now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for Design, Supply and Installation for 500kV Taungoo-Kamanat Transmission Line on turnkey basis. The eligible bidders shall be Korea Company by the EDCF Guide Lines.

3. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information from the tender Office or the Website (http://www.moee.gov.mm) in the head office of below and inspect the bidding documents during office hour exclusive of public holidays.

4. A complete set of bidding documents may be purchased by any interested Bidder on the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of non - refundable fee of US$ 1,000.

5. Bids must be delivered to the address below between 13:00 to 14:00 (Local Time) on 18th May, 2018. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security of not less than one million one hundred thousand US Dollars (USD 1,100,000). Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidder’s representatives, who choose to attend at the address below after 14:00 (Local Time) on 18th May, 2018. Address: Meeting Room, Material Planning Department, Department of Power Transmission and System Control, Building No.27, MOEE, Nay Pyi Taw.

Tender Committee
Department of Power Transmission and System Control
Ministry of Electricity and Energy, office No.27, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar
Telephone: 067- 3410202, 3410209

Greek media squeezed as banks pull plug on loans

Athens — On the side of a buzzing Athens highway, a group of middle-aged men huddle in the dark beside a tarapulin-covered van, outside the offices of one of Greece’s wealthiest families. Smoking cigarettes and drinking cheap wine, these TV veterans with a combined century of work experience are among the remnants of Mega Channel, once Greece’s most influential station. Like hundreds of journalists, technicians and administrative staff hit by a new purge of Greece’s long-suffering media sector, they have not been paid for more than a year. The latest jobs cut has come during a handover of power in three of the country’s top media groups after a decision by under-pressure banks to pull the plug on a long history of bad loans. “We are unpaid by a business that is still operating — and earning income that more than covers the payroll. This makes us mad,” says 56-year-old head cinematographer Grigoris Farmakas, who has worked at Mega for nearly three decades. —AFP

Claim’s Day Notice

M/V KOTA HADIAH VOY. NO. (KHAD 0093NS) Consignees of cargo carried on M/V KOTA HADIAH VOY. NO. (KHAD 0093NS) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 29-3-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT 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
Myanmar Port Authority
Agent for: M/S Advance Container Lines

Trade Mark: 09-251022355

Phone No: 2301185

WORLD

29 MARCH 2018
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Trade Mark: 09-251022355

Phone No: 2301185
South Korea repatriates remains of 20 Chinese soldiers

SEOUL — Seoul repatriated the remains of 20 Chinese soldiers killed during the Korean War on Wednesday, its defence ministry said, reflecting warming ties between the former Cold War foes.

South Korean soldiers handed over lacquered wooden caskets covered with red Chinese flags to Chinese honour guards at Incheon airport, west of Seoul, where they were loaded onto a Chinese air force cargo plane.

The transfer brought the total number of Chinese remains repatriated since a 2013 agreement to 589. The repatriations took place ahead of China’s annual Qingming — tomb-sweeping — festival, when many people visit and clean the graves of their ancestors.

An estimated three million Communist Chinese troops played a crucial role in support of the North during the 1950-53 conflict, known in China as the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea. They saved the North from defeat as US-led United Nations forces drove Kim Il Sung’s army back towards the Chinese frontier in late 1950, before the two sides ended up in a stalemate along what is now the Demilitarized Zone dividing the peninsula. Casualty figures remain disputed but Western estimates commonly cite a figure of 400,000 Chinese deaths, while Chinese sources give a death toll of about 180,000.

South Korea Oil and Gas Enterprise

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY
MYANMA Oil AND GAS ENTERPRISE
(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER )
(6/2018)

1. Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in Myanmar Kyats and United States Dollars.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Tender No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Remark</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>DMP/L-001(18-19)</td>
<td>Spares for Garbarino Pump</td>
<td>6 Items</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>DMP/L-002(18-19)</td>
<td>Rig A Lite Lighting Fixture Complete Set</td>
<td>50 Sets</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Spares for 30 Ton Kato Rough Terrain Crane</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>DMP/L-004(18-19)</td>
<td>Spares for SK 50P-6 Kobelco Excavator</td>
<td>69 Items</td>
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<td>DMP/L-005(18-19)</td>
<td>Spares for MI-2 Tracked Dozer</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>DMP/L-006(18-19)</td>
<td>Spares for Volvo Tractor</td>
<td>45 Items</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>DMP/L-007(18-19)</td>
<td>Spares for MWM D226-4 Engine</td>
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<td>2 7/8” &amp; 2 3/8” EUE Tubing</td>
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<td>DMP/L-009(18-19)</td>
<td>Water Transfer Pump with Engine</td>
<td>48 HP (10) Sets</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>DMP/L-010(18-19)</td>
<td>Water Transfer Pump with Motor</td>
<td>11 KW (4) Sets</td>
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<td>DMP/L-011(18-19)</td>
<td>Crude Transfer Pump with Motor</td>
<td>100 GPM x 150 FT HD (1) Set</td>
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<td>DMP/L-012(18-19)</td>
<td>Portable Fire Pump with Engine and Accessories</td>
<td>(10) Sets</td>
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<td>DMP/L-013(18-19)</td>
<td>Electrical Materials &amp; Accessories</td>
<td>(3) Groups</td>
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<td>DMP/L-014(18-19)</td>
<td>Storage Server</td>
<td>(1) Lot</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>DMP/L-015(18-19)</td>
<td>HP A0 Scanner, Printer, Copy &amp; Copier (A3)</td>
<td>(2) Items</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>DMP/L-016(18-19)</td>
<td>Interpretation Workstation &amp; Data Processing Center</td>
<td>(1) Lot</td>
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</tbody>
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2. The Open Tender forms including Description of Materials / Qty with details specifications and Tender Terms & Conditions can be available free download at the Ministry of Electricity and Energy Website Portal (www.moee.gov.mm) as from 28 March 2018. Tender forms will not be sold.

3. The interested Bidders should submit the Technical Specifications with Original Bid Bond and Commercial Quotation in each separate sealed envelopes on which to be addressed to the Managing Director, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise and should reach in Tender Box of the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise not later than 16:30 pm on 23 April 2018.

4. Tender Closing Date & Time- 23-4-2018, 16:30 pm

Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise
Ph. +95 67 - 411206
+95 67 411212

Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise

PHOTO: AFP

Chinese ambassador to South Korea, Qiu Guohong, places a flag on a casket containing the remains of Chinese soldiers from the Korean War at Incheon airport.
Spy drama ‘The Americans’ takes final bow, timed to USSR’s demise

NEW YORK — As hit TV drama “The Americans” prepares for its final jaw-dropping season, set against the backdrop of the fall of the Soviet Union, the Cold War-era spy thriller has never felt more topical.

The show’s creator, former CIA officer Joe Weisberg, recalls with amusement the question he was asked when he first presented his idea back in 2012: “Who really cares about US-Russia relations?”

Since then, Russia went to war with Ukraine, annexed Crimea, backed America’s foe Bashar al-Assad in Syria and, according to US intelligence agencies, interfered in the 2016 presidential election with the aim of helping Donald Trump win.

The sixth and final season, set to air from Wednesday on FX, finds Soviet sleeper agents Elizabeth and Philip Jennings still posing as an average American couple in the suburbs, with two kids and jobs at a travel agency.

Philip — whose commitment to the KGB has wavered over the years — has left the game of spycraft, but Elizabeth — the idealistic Russian patriot — is all in, and their daughter Paige is along for the ride.

Elizabeth is desperate to gather intelligence on the INF treaty that saw the United States and Soviet Union eliminate part of their nuclear arsenals in 1987.

And their marriage is as chilly as the Cold War standoff between Washington and Moscow. “Being a girl and getting to play this character is pretty cool. She’s so fierce and single-minded,” Russell told Variety magazine’s “Remote Controlled” podcast, calling her work on the show “by far my most fun role.”

“Everything at home that Elizabeth is fighting for is falling apart, is in complete anxiety and turmoil.” —AFP

Upbeat reviews as Trump-voting ‘Roseanne’ returns to TV

NEW YORK — Hit working-class sitcom “Roseanne” returned to US television screens on Tuesday after a two-decade hiatus, winning generally positive reviews in a sharply polarized America with a title character who is now a pill-popping, Trump-voting grandma. ABC aired the first two episodes of the award-winning show’s 10th season — back for the first time in 21 years with actress Roseanne Barr in fine fettle as the eponymous blue-collar matriarch of the Conner clan.

Roseanne and husband Dan, played by John Goodman, are getting on in years, and are on a long roster of medication, which they share to save on cost.

“If you’re not happy, I have no chance of being happy,” quips Dan, handing the anti-establishment Roseanne Barr — star and creator of “Roseanne” — at the premiere of her revived hit sitcom on 23 March at Walt Disney Studios in Burbank, California; so far, it’s earning generally positive reviews. PHOTO: AFP

Roseanne Barr — star and creator of “Roseanne” — attends the premiere of her revived hit sitcom on 23 March at Walt Disney Studios in Burbank, California; so far, it’s earning generally positive reviews. PHOTO: AFP

Roseanne’s sister Jackie (multiple Emmy winner Laurie Metcalf) sports a “Nasty Woman” T-shirt and pink pussy hat of the type worn at women’s marches against the Republican president’s administration.

“What’s up, deplorable?” she greets a feuding Roseanne, adopting Hillary Clinton’s now infamous epithet for Trump voters.

“The sisters’ bickering covers the economy, the 2016 election and health care, but Roseanne is portrayed as neither a racist or a bigot — stereotypes of Trump voters often seen in the media.

She treasures her black grandchild and defends gender-fluid Mark on his first day at his new school, telling his classmate her grandson’s on his way to becoming a famous fashion designer: “This just feels like me. I like colors that pop,” Mark tells her of his penchant for girls’ clothes, before she grasps him in a bear hug. —AFP

Court upholds Jean-Marie Le Pen fine for Holocaust comment

PARIS — France’s top appeals court upheld a 30,000-euro fine on Tuesday against former far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen for dismissing the Nazi gas chambers as a “detail” of history.

Le Pen, 89, had been found guilty twice by lower courts of denying crimes against humanity over the 2015 remark and had taken his case to the final court of appeal.

“It doesn’t surprise me, coming from these crooks,” Le Pen told AFP in response to the verdict, blasting what he said was “collusion” against him in the court system.

The court upheld a fine of 30,003 euros ($37,200) to be paid to three anti-racism groups, and another 4,000 euros in legal costs.

His daughter, current National Front (FN) leader Marine Le Pen, hinted at the party he co-founded over the comment, but told the court of appeal it was “a detail of the history of the war.”

Le Pen already had a string of hate speech convictions, including against Muslims and Roma people.

But he remained in his role as the FN’s honourary president until this month, when she was finally able to change the party statutes to kick him out once and for all. —AFP
Australian indigenous languages have common source: study

SYDNEY — All indigenous languages in Australia descend from a single common tongue, a study revealed on Wednesday in findings that shed new light on the country’s cultural history.

More than 250 languages were spoken at the time of British settlement in 1788 and after three years investigating their origins, researchers said they had finally proven a long-held theory that they all derive from so-called Proto-Australian.

The existence of a common parent language gives further weight to the idea that all Aboriginal Australians descend from a single group that landed on the continent at least 65,000 years ago, and spread out over the following millennia, becoming ethnically and linguistically distinct.

The project used a standard method in historical linguistics to establish whether similarity between languages was due to inheritance from a common ancestor, as opposed to transfer from one language to another through human contact. Western Sydney University chief investigator Robert Mailhammer said the findings repeatedly revealed similarities between languages that were not in contact. “We discovered that the sounds of words we compared showed recurrent systematic differences and similarities across a set of languages that are spread out in a geographically discontinuous way,” he said.

“This makes it very unlikely that they are the result of chance or language contact.”

He added that the findings pointed to Proto-Australian being spoken about 12,000 years ago. “This raises more questions around how the languages spread and how the linguistic findings connect to the genetic findings,” he said. University of Newcastle historical linguist Mark Harvey said he hoped the research, published in the linguistics journal Diachronica, would enhance the understanding of Australian and human history. “Until now, it was speculated that Australia was significantly more linguistically diverse than somewhere like Europe, because it had not been proven that all Australian languages actually stemmed from the same lineage,” he said. “This is the first demonstration that all Australian languages are part of the same language family.”

He said this language likely spread across Australia from a small area in the country’s north that was first populated thousands of years ago.

“This spread is likely to have been carried out by at least some population movement whose material and genetic traces have remained somewhat elusive,” he added. “However, with further interdisciplinary research, this new linguistic evidence is likely to give us a more precise reconstruction of Australian prehistory from what is currently known.”

Only around 120 of the original 250 tongues are still spoken today, with many at risk of being lost as elders die off without passing on the language to younger generations. —AFP

Camel power turns sesame into precious oil in Afghanistan

KABUL — Old Afghan men looking to soothe their aching joints or enrich their rice dishes stand around a tiny shop where they are hulled by a camel’s steady steps as sesame oil flows into a plastic bucket.

The traditional industry in northern Afghanistan is the domain of ethnic Turkmen, though its origins seem unclear. The sesame are pressed not by hand but by camel power to extract their precious oil.

Two of the animals take turns every couple of hours walking around in circles in the cramped space, a pack on their shoulders supporting a mast that drives the wooden press, a patch covering one eye to narrow their gaze.

Char Amini has taken over the business started by his father and his 12-year-old son is already helping him as he prepares to become the next generation of sesame oil producers.

Amini buys sesame at the local market, which are grown between rows of wheat, hashish and poppies in the fertile soil of Balkh province, which borders Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

If the seeds are of good quality, one kilogramme can produce half a litre of oil. “We are about 35 producers in Mazar-i-Sharif, all Turkmen, and we all know each other,” says Amini, his bald head covered with a turban, referring to the capital of Balkh.

“We are honest — it’s the key to business,” he explains. “We never stopped during the wars.”

Amini also presses sesame for farmers who bring their harvest to him, charging 100 Afghanis ($1.50) per seer, a traditional unit of weight that is equal to seven kilogrammes.

Dark chunks of residue are collected and used as fuel in homes.

This modest trade brings Amini 20,000 Afghanis per month — not as lucrative as opium poppy used to produce heroin, but better than the income of a soldier. And it is enough to support his five children.

His shop is one of several facing a wide road in Mazar-i-Sharif, the front entirely open to customers.

Every two hours, his employee Alokozai pours 11 kilograms (24 pounds) of seeds into the press and takes the reins of the camel to guide him around the circle. Alokozai never considered doing anything else with his life, he says, surprised by the question.

A traditional sesame oil press powered by camel in Mazar-i-Sharif. PHOTO: AFP

Amini also resells them “for a profit” once they are muscular.

“Y ou can use it and feel better and sweeter’

Each camel works for 10 hours a day. Amini keeps the animals for 18 months and then resells them “for a profit” once they are muscular.

Roughly 300,000 litres of sesame oil are produced using the traditional method each year in Balkh, according to Zabihullah Zubin, a director at the provincial Department of Agriculture. That provides a livelihood for about 50 producers.

About 300 farmers produce sesame but they prefer to sell on the regional market for a higher price — 120 Afghanis per kilo against 90 Afghanis in the Mazar-i-Sharif bazaar, explains Zubin.

This method of producing sesame oil is competing with more efficient industrial presses, of which Mazar-i-Sharif has three.

“They have the food technology, they know how to process, to clean the seeds, do the packaging... the small manual production would need investment and technical support” to access the overseas market, said Zubin.

Joseph Nezam, an Afghan-French businessman, is trying to develop local sesame oil production with the support of the American development agency USAID so they can sell directly into markets abroad.

“Afghanistan has a very good quality sesame but people prefer to sell to neighbouring countries that serve as an intermediary to the international market, and help them to produce at European standards,” Nezam says.

Old customers of Amini swear that the camel-pressed sesame oil they use to flavour their traditional Afghan rice dish kabuli palau is “totally organic, healthier, and sweeter” than industrial presses that “burn” seeds by crushing them.

“It’s better than any tablet or medicine,” says Haji Abdul Ghani Rahmani, a traditional doctor who stops by Amini’s shop to stock up on sesame oil to use at his clinic.

“You can use it and feel better very soon,” he adds, as he massages the knee and leg of an elderly man sitting inside the shop. —AFP
Elimination matches conclude in MFF Futsal tourney

THE knock-out matches of the MFF Futsal Open Cup 2018 were completed yesterday at Thuwunna National Indoor Stadium in Yangon, resulting in the advancement of four teams to the quarterfinal stage.

A total of four matches including GV Athletic Vs Shwe Kayan, RDZ Vs Winner, Shwe Myawady Vs Zombie and VUC Vs UPT played for fighting the Quarter-final stage.

In yesterday’s matches, GV Athletic trounced Shwe Kayan by a score of 10-1, while RDZ beat Winner 6-5, Shwe Myawady eliminated Zombie by a score of 7-4 and VUC beat UPT by a score of 3-1.

Officials recognised the standout play of individual players from each game.

The players of the match performance awards were garnered by Kaung Chit Thu from GV Athletic, Aung Myo Htun from RDZ, Thura Aung from Shwe Myawady and Nyein Min Soe from VUC.

The winning teams advance to the quarter-finals that will be played on 31 March at the same stadium.—Kyaw Zin Lin

Sport & Education football team trounces YREO in women’s league

THE Sport & Education team notched a big win over YREO by a score of 6-1 yesterday at Aung San Stadium in Yangon in one of the KBZ Bank Women’s League football matches.

Sport and Education’s big win was due in large part to the four goals scored by its star Yee Yee Oo.

Sport & Education, considered one of the best in the women’s league, lived up to its reputation, as all the players executed great tactics, tackling, and stable football handling as they dominated the first half with frequent scores in the early minutes.

At the six-minute mark, Yee Yee Oo scored Sport & Education’s first goal. Their second goal was scored by Khin Malar Tun at the eight-minute mark.

As a point when the defence line of YREO was found to be scattered, Yee Yee Oo scored Sport & Education’s third goal at the 15-minute mark.

To their credit, YREO did not give up, and scored a goal at 30 minutes by May Thawe Ko.

The match heated up in the second half due to smarter play by YREO, which changed tactics and playing style.

But at the 52-minute mark, capitalising on a YREO defender’s error, Kay Zin Myint scored the fourth goal for Sport & Edu.

There were no easy scores for Sport and Education for the rest of the match, as five or six defenders along with massive midfielders carefully blocked the ball.

Despite the defence, Yee Yee Oo scored the fifth and sixth goal at the 71 and 84-minute marks for her team.—Kyaw Zin Lin

Isco nets hat-trick as Spain hit Argentina for six

MADRID — Spain blew Argentina away on Tuesday but coach Julen Lopetegui insists they can take nothing for granted at this summer’s World Cup.

A 6-1 demolition, which included an Isco hat-trick at the Wanda Metropolitano, underlined Spain’s credentials as one of the tournament favourites in Russia, while exposing Argentina, who were without the injured Lionel Messi. Diego Costa was back in Spain’s starting line-up for the first time in eight international matches and he marked his return with the opening goal.

Isco then scored twice either side of what proved to be no more than a consolation from Argentina’s Nicolas Otamendi, before Thaigo Alcantara, substitute Iago Aspas and Isco’s third completed the rout. “I am very satisfied with a win against the finalists of the previous World Cup,” Lopetegui said. “It is an opponent that has a fantastic history, but nothing else, it does not change anything, we have to start the World Cup with zero points (in the group stage).”

As irresistible as Spain were going forward, Argentina were lamentable at the back and coach Jorge Sampaoli will have questions to answer with the World Cup less than three months away.

“I have to take responsibility,” Sampaoli said.

He might cling to the hope of Messi, whose hamstring strain meant he was not even in the squad, instead left to watch on from the stands.

“Leo trained with us, he had a very good week of workouts but still had some discomfort in his leg,” Sampaoli said.—AFP