MUSE TRADERS HOPE TO REGAIN BANK ACCOUNTS

ELECTED GOVERNMENT MARKS TWO YEARS IN OFFICE

“A priority task for the nation
Rule of law along with reform of the judiciary sector is a priority task for the nation as well as an important task for national stability and development.

Excerpt from a speech made by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the Conference on Justice Sector Coordinating for Rule of Law in Myanmar International Convention Center-II in Nay Pyi Taw on 7 March 2018.

State Counsellor receives Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received a delegation led by Mr. Edmund Ho Hau Wah, Vice-Chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference and former Chief Executive of the Macau Special Administrative Region, at the Presidential Palace Hall for Envoys in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

During the meeting, they discussed matters related to education, rural region development, travel, movies, investment, trade and cooperation.

Also present at the meeting, along with the State Counsellor, were Union Ministers Dr. Than Myint, U Ohn Maung and U Kyaw Tin, Deputy Minister U Sein Aung and other officials, while Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Hong Liang accompanied the Vice-Chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference.—Myanmar News Agency

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi welcomes Mr. Edmund Ho Hau Wah, Vice-Chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Live broadcast today of President U Win Myint taking oath of office, delivering inaugural speech in Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

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‘BEST BANK IN MYANMAR’

Awarded by FinanceAsia 2017
The 21st-day meeting of the seventh regular session of the second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw was held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The MPs discussed the review 5/2018 by the Public Accounts Joint Committee on the report by the office of the Auditor General of the Union on the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's development fund for the 2016-2017 financial year (FY).

Auditor General of the Union U Maw Than replied to the MPs' questions on the policies, managerial process and the auditor general's office work on the report.

Concerning the unused funds, the Auditor General said the Kachin State government had returned Ks 4.9 million on 23 March 2018, which was to be used for constructing a pre-primary school in Sunpwarbun Township in Kachin State, but the project did not go through. In the Yangon Region, a retaining wall was constructed in Twantay Township on 13 March according to the plan, he added.

U Os Htun Maung of Ponnagyun Constituency suggested that township auditors should conduct field checks to determine the status of ongoing projects. The Auditor General replied that field checks cannot be conducted in distant or remote areas and in areas without security, and thus checks are conducted with photographic evidence. Otherwise, township auditors are instructed to conduct field checks.

The Auditor General said the Central Development Committee will continue its work according to the Development Fund Law but will simultaneously review which townships need higher budgets and allot funds accordingly instead of allotting Ks 100 million to each township equally.

The Auditor General said it is important for everyone to follow the permitted businesses in the 2017-2018 FY and budget rules and regulations as well. He said some 18 townships had submitted project completion reports but one of them had submitted alterations to their original project plans. He said these townships need to re-submit the reports detailing the alterations, in accordance with the Development Fund Law.

U Bo Gyi of Chaung Constituency then motioned for the Hluttaw to approve the 5/2018 review by the Public Accounts Joint Committee. The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker then announced the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw had approved the review.

The 22nd-day meeting of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw will continue on 30 March.—Thura Zaw

### Pyithu Hluttaw

**Journalism, cinema, state-owned media discussed at Pyithu Hluttaw**

The Pyithu Hluttaw meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday discussed national budget planning and short-term plans are being drawn up to open a journalism school that will produce international-level journalists. The Myanmar Journalism Institute and Myanmar Media Development Center that are already established in Myanmar are cooperating with the effort, added the Deputy Minister.

Responding to the second question on whether there is a plan for the Myanmar Press Council to issue identity cards to journalists, the Deputy Minister replied that it is not a practical work for Myanmar Press Council to do this. The Myanmar Press Council only endorses the member cards and reporter cards issued by state recognised news media organisations—Myanmar Journalists Association (MJA), Myanmar Journalist Network (MJN), Myanmar Journalist Union (MJU), Myanmar Women's Journalist Society (MWJS), Burma News International (BNI) and Myanmar Foreign Correspondents Club.

### Seventh regular session of second Amyotha Hluttaw concludes

The seventh regular session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw held its 33rd-day meeting at the Amyotha Hluttaw meeting hall yesterday morning.

At the meeting, the Amyotha Hluttaw Public Accounts Committee, Hluttaw Rights Committee, International Relations, Inter-Parliamentary Friendship and Cooperation Committee, Medical, Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Committee, local and international non-governmental organisations and the local and overseas Labour Affairs Committee submitted their committee-wise work reports and obtained the approval of the Hluttaw.

Similarly, the Amyotha Hluttaw Education Promotion Committee, Public Complaints Committee, Health, Sports and Culture Committee, Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery Development Committee, Ethnic Affairs Committee, and Women and Children's Rights Committee also submitted committee-wise work reports and obtained the approval of the Hluttaw.

Next, the government’s Guarantees, Pledges and Undertakings Vetting Committee’s report on questions and motions raised during the second Amyotha Hluttaw’s sixth regular session was discussed by U Hla San of Magway Region constituency (1), Daw Shwe Shwe Sein Latt of Bago Region constituency (3), Dr. Khin Win Thaung of Kachin State constituency (11), U Khin Myo Win of Thaninthisay Region constituency (12), U Aung Thein of Bago Region constituency (12), U Zaw Hein of Thaninthisay Region constituency (7) and U Than Soe, also known as Than Soe (Economic), of Yangon Region constituency (4).

Later, the Amyotha Hluttaw government’s Guarantees, Pledges and Undertakings Vetting Committee Chairman U Thein Swe tabled a motion to the Hluttaw to accept the report and obtained the acceptance of the Hluttaw.

Following this, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Tha delivered a speech to the Hluttaw outlining the works done during the seventh regular session of the Hluttaw.

The Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker said the MPs will now return to their respective constituencies, meet with constituents and implement their wishes and will.

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker concluded by wishing the MPs a safe trip home, urging them to serve their country and constituents sincerely.

After his speech, the Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker announced the successful completion of the seventh regular session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw.—Aung Ye Thwin
Local reporters arrive in Sittway

WITH the aim of gathering news from Maungtaw in Rakhine in a group of 14 reporters arrived in Sittway yesterday evening. The group included reporters from various media houses, including Sky Net, MRTV-4, Myanmar Times, Mizzima, Irrawaddy, Eleven, The Voice, Frontier Myanmar, Hot News, Myanmar Press Photo Agency, MRTV, MITV and MNA. —Kyaw Thu Htet

Third meeting of Rakhine implementation committee held

The 3/2018 meeting of the Implementation Committee on the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State was held at the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement yesterday.

At the meeting, Dr. Win Myat Aye, Chairman of the Implementation Committee and Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, said there were details in the Advisory Commission’s recommendations that can be implemented immediately and others that will take time and planning before implementation. He said the first process was to receive the returnees and help them resettle in their hometowns. He said the committee was also working on the socio-development of the returnees, which will require the cooperation of all the committees involved. He said the reception process will be implemented by the newly formed committee, which will in turn report to the Central Committee for Implementing Peace and Development in Rakhine State. He said the committee will accept help from the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine and facilitate the other committees formed by the Rakhine State government, such as the Committee for Clearing Burned Lands and Resettlement in Maungtaw District.

Next, Co-Chairperson and Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu said the matter of security needs to be considered alongside the implementation process. He said the committee would work swiftly to close the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and allow news gathering teams to visit the area as soon as possible. He said discussions were on to quickly revoke Section 144, which imposes a curfew, from the affected areas, and it had been revoked in Yathedaung already.

This was followed by Committee Secretary and Deputy Minister of Border Affairs Maj-Gen Than Htut, Joint-Secretary and Deputy Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Soe Aung, and other committee members from the ministries concerned discussing the ongoing processes, and finding solutions to existing problems, to which the Chairman and Co-chairman gave advice as necessary. —Myanmar News Agency

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MR’s locomotive factory expected to be completely operational in late 2018

UNION Minister for Transport and Communications U Thant Sin Maung held a meeting with the Permanent Secretary, Managing Director and officials from Myanmar Railways and CRRC Dalian Company Limited at a locomotive factory in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday evening.

The Union Minister was briefed about the historical background of locomotive plants, in Myanmar and the emergence and completion of the Nay Pyi Taw locomotive factory by Project Engineer U Myint Naing. Construction of the locomotive factory is about 93 per cent complete and a new locomotive began to be assembled on 26 March, which is expected to be complete at the end of June.

Myanmar Railways began construction of a factory in Nay Pyi Taw to build new coaches and to assemble locomotives on 1st June 2015 and the whole project is slated for completion in late December this year.

The factory which consists of 14 buildings was constructed on 18 acres of land. The factory will assemble and manufacture electric diesel coaches with a capacity of 2,000 horsepower which will be equipped with a computer controlled system in cooperation with CRRC Dalian Co., Ltd. from China. Upon completion of the whole project, the factory will be able to produce 20 electric diesel coaches annually.—Myanmar Digital News

Crop insurance to be offered in Magway Region this year

THE Global World Insurance Company, a private insurer, will offer crop insurance services to growers in the Magway Region for the first time this year, according to Myawady Daily’s Thursday edition.

This follows a recent meeting on the implementation of crop insurance in the Magway Region between the regional government and the company.

The company previously arranged to offer this kind of insurance to growers starting this June, however, postponed its plan until the end of this year, targeting agribusiness operators in Pwintbyu, Aunglan and other townships.

Farmers who regularly risk floods and other natural disasters actually need crop insurance, which is of vital importance in agro-centric Myanmar.

Crop insurance is common in countries such as the United States, Russia and Japan, and in regional countries such as India, Thailand, Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia.

Among the various types of insurance, fire insurance is the best seller in the country, representing 40 per cent of the total earnings, followed by comprehensive motor insurance, marine insurance and life insurance, according to Myanmar Insurance, the state-owned insurance enterprise.—GNLM

German wood conservation experts help conserve U Bein Bridge

WOOD conservation experts from Germany examined the strength, resistance, stability, lifespan and durability of U Bein Bridge’s pillars.

The examination has been conducted by Conservation Project Manager Mr. Karl Kleineberg, Wood Specialist Mr. Peter, Wood Conservation student Mrs. Tim from Germany and Dr. Zarchi Min, Professor from Mandalay Technological University on 27 March.

“Experts use techniques for drilling holes in teak pillars in order to test durability, lifespan and damage of the bridge and whether the pillars were naturally grown or not. It will take a week for examination of the bridge,” she added.

The findings and examinations will be submitted to Mandalay’s Regional government. Situated 11 kilometers south of Mandalay, the unique U Bein Bridge is a beautiful 1.2 kilometer-long structure built from over 1,000 teak pillars and is said to be the longest bridge of its type in the world.

U Bein Bridge was built over 160 years ago.—Myanmar Digital News

300-bed specialty hospital to be built in Yangon this year

A PROJECT to build a new 300-bed specialty hospital will be implemented in Yangon this year, and it is expected to be completed in early 2021, according to a report in Myawady Daily on Thursday. The project will be executed with the 8.661 billion Japanese yen aid provided by the Japan government, as well as the Ks42 billion provided by the Myanmar government, according to the Department of Medical Services, operating under the Ministry of Health and Sports.

The new hospital will be constructed near University of Nursing (Yangon) and New Yangon General Hospital in Lanmadaw Township. The project area is located in front of the 500-bed hospital. The new facility will include departments for cardiovascular medicine, cardiovascular surgery, neurology and neurosurgery.

The government is making continuous efforts to offer better medical care to the general public by joining hands with its development partners to enhance the country’s health sector, through the improvement of medical education, healthcare facilities and services.—GNLM
Mineral exports increase by $750 million since last April

THE export value of mineral products before the end of this fiscal year (FY) exceeded US$1.7 billion, recording an increase of $750 million compared with last FY, the Commerce Ministry reported.

The total export value of mineral products from last April through this March included $762 million through public sector exports and $938 million through the private sector. Government exports of the same products increased by $308 million, while private sector exports rose by $442 million this FY. During this period, Myanmar also exported some $12.147 billion worth of agricultural products, animal and marine products, forest products and manufacturing goods, among others.

According to the annual figures issued by the commerce ministry, the value of mineral exports was $897 million in the 2011-12 FY, $939 million in the 2012-13 FY, $1.339 billion in the 2013-14 FY, $1.498 billion in the 2014-15 FY, $968 million in the 2015-16 FY, and $1.010 billion in the 2016-17 FY. —Shwe Khine

Border trade exports via Muse increase by $300 million this FY

THE value of goods exported through Muse, a major trading point between Myanmar and China, in the current fiscal year (FY) increased by US$300 million against last FY, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Since last April, the total value of trade via the Muse border gate reached $5.48 billion, including $1.611 billion in imports and $3.868 billion in exports.

This time last FY, the border trade value at the Muse trade camp amounted to $5.179 billion, including $3.628 billion in exports and $1.551 billion in imports.

Myanmar conducts border trade with China mainly through Muse, Lwejel, Kanpikete, Chinshwehaw and Kengtung.

Of these, the Muse border sees the largest volume and value in terms of border trade.

Myanmar chiefly exports agricultural products, fishery products, mining products, forest products and industrial goods. It imports personal goods, industrial raw materials, construction equipment, automobiles and capital goods from China, Japan, India, Indonesia, Germany, France and Hong Kong.

According to the ministry’s official statistics, the value of trade across all borders in the last 350 days reached $7.942 billion, registering an increase of $515 million compared with last FY. —Khine Khant

Myanmar-France bilateral trade tops $234 million in current FY

THE value of bilateral trade between Myanmar and France topped US$234 million this fiscal year (FY), including $170 million in imports, which was greater than the value of exports, according to the monthly statistics of the Commerce Ministry.

Between last April and this January, Myanmar’s exports to France reached $64.086 million. In January alone, bilateral exports were valued at $5.903 million.

France predominately imports vegetables, certain roots and tubers, clothing accessories, textile products, charcoal, pearls and wood from Myanmar. Its exports include machinery, mechanical appliances, plastic products, pharmaceutical products, glassware, paper and paperboard.

The ministry’s official figures show the trade between the two countries totalled $176 million last FY. The bilateral trade was $110 million in the 2015-2016 FY, $61 million in the 2014-2015 FY, $36 million in the 2013-2014 FY, $48 million in the 2012-2013 FY and $81 million in the 2011-2012 FY.

According to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), France’s investment in Myanmar reached $7.34 billion through 14 projects in the current FY. —Swe Nyein

Rough ruby gemstones. Mineral exports exceeded US$1.7 billion compared with last FY. PHOTO: MNA

PHOTO: MNA
Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar

SENIOR General Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, received Hong Liang, Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar, at the Bayintnaung guest house in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting, they discussed matters related to the process of repatriation of displaced persons from the Buthedaung-Maungtaw region, the role of China in supporting Myanmar at the United Nations, the status of acceptance of international aid for the development of Rakhine State, and security cooperation between Myanmar and Bangladesh police forces. — Myanmar News Agency

Journalism, cinema, state-owned media discussed at Pyithu Hluttaw

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It also endorses the reporter identity cards issued by press media, broadcasting media and online media registered in copyright and registration division of Ministry of Information. The responsibility to issue identity and reporter cards lie in these entities and Myanmar Press Council is responsible to manage these entities so that they conduct matters ethically, said the Deputy Minister.

Cinema

In regards to a question by Daw Mar Mar Khine of Thaton constituency on action to be taken against 70 cinemas that were sold to private concerns with an agreement to operate the theatres but to date none of them have converted to a digital system, 36 cinemas were sold to the private sector of which 94 were agreed to be operated as a cinema. Previously, movies where shown in cinemas under a film system, but when films become scarce, movie production declined down to less than 10 movies being produced per year. For the Myanmar motion picture sector to develop, it needs to change over to a digital system, and the Ministry of Information began to drive cinemas to convert to Digital Cinema Package (DCP) starting in 2013.

Of the 94 cinemas that had to be operated as cinemas, only 14 had converted to digital systems as of 13 December 2017 and five more will be converted by mid-2018, resulting in 75 cinemas that still need to be converted. While legal actions are being taken against cinemas who fail to operate as per the agreement, support is being provided to interested private businesses that want to convert to a digital system in cooperation with companies and entities that are working for motion picture sector development.

Access to news

On the question of public's right of access to news raised by Daw Aye Mya Mya Myo of Kyauktan constituency, Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun said a list of spokespersons for each ministry were being published and was posted on the Ministry of Information website www.moi.gov.mm. And for the ease of people who need to contact departments and organisations, information (office works and procedures) are to be displayed prominently in the offices and also posted on internet and social media websites.

The Ministry of Information has also opened a Call Center Hotline (1883) to distribute information obtained, office procedures, work processes of other ministries, weather reports and special occurrences.

Furthermore, in order to inform the public in a democratic society about the works of the three pillars of the government by the news media, talks on increasing cooperation between the four pillars were being arranged to be conducted in Nay Pyi Taw and states and regions in coordination with the Myanmar Press Council. Arrangements are also being made to enact the Right to Information Law, explained the Deputy Minister.

Privately owned newspapers

Answering a question by U Myint Lwin of Twantay constituency, Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun said with the rapid progress in communication technology, online media is rapidly developing, while the print media sector declines. Since about 2018, well known global newspapers as well as many print newspapers were being totally transformed into online newspapers or the online and print newspapers were being published together.

The main reason for print media's continued existence is selling newspapers and declining revenue from advertisement. The work scope limitation of advertisements is one of the reasons.

State-owned newspapers

State-owned newspapers are state-owned enterprises operates state funds and could not be run at a loss. If faced with possibilities of economic losses, methods like joint ventures will have to be adopted. State-owned newspapers could not be operated with the sole aim of making a profit, but also need to provide information and news at a cheap price. It is because of this that the newspapers were being sold at less than the printing cost by offsetting the expense with the income from advertisements. In developing countries, state-owned newspapers have the responsibility to be a bridge between the government and the people and to provide news to the people at a cheap price.

For reporters from private media to obtain departmental media information conveniently and quickly, starting from 2016, discussions between the three pillars and the media news were conducted together with Myanmar Press Council all over the country. This was seen to have supported the ease in understanding one another as well as in contacting to obtain news. Spokespersons from the three pillars were assigned so that news media can contact them. Publishing of advertisement pages in Kyemon and Myanma Alinn newspaper in cooperation with private advertisement companies was stopped starting from 1-June 2016 so that private newspapers and journals could do it. News of union and state-level persons as well as departmental news and photos were also shared in a timely manner on websites so that private newspapers have the same information at the same time as the state-owned newspapers.

Arrangements for travel and accommodation for local private media was also provided in the same way as it was provided to international media. Arrangements are also made so that all have access to news. Even when there is a limitation due to location or time, arrangements are made so that all are given fair chances to attend such occasions alternatively.

The Ministry of Information recognises that the government needs to do much to meet the requirements of private newspapers to publish freely and is doing all it can.
Foreign heads of state send congratulations messages to President U Win Myint

FOREIGN heads of state sent congratulations messages to U Win Myint, who was elected as the President on Wednesday.

Mr Ram Nath Kovind, President of the Republic of India, expressed his warmest greetings and good wishes on the occasion of election of U Win Myint as the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

“India and Myanmar enjoy close friendship that has stood the test of time. Our two countries are working together to expand our mutually beneficial cooperation in a number of areas,” said Mr Ram Nath Kovind.

The president said Myanmar is also an important partner in various development cooperation initiatives that India has undertaken in recent years.

President Mr Ram Nath Kovind also assured assured that India stands ready to work with your Government to assist the newly elected President U Win Myint in realizing Myanmar’s national priorities at a time when Myanmar is engaged in a significant political and economic transition.

He also extended to U Win Myint his congratulations and best wishes.

Mr Tran Dai Quang, President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, and Mr Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, extended their warmest congratulations to U Win Myint in their own names, on behalf of the State, Government and people of Viet Nam.

“Your appointment as President reflects the people of Myanmar’s high regard for your efforts and contributions to the country. We believe that Myanmar will attain greater achievements in socio-economic development, prosperity and national reconciliation,” they said in the message.

We look forward to working closely with You and the Government of Myanmar to strengthen the traditional friendship and the Comprehensive Cooperation Partnership in bilateral, multilateral and ASEAN frameworks.

They wish U Win Myint great health, happiness and success in his high capacity.

Mr Md. Abdul Hamid, President of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, sent the congratulation message to U Win Myint on the occasion of the latter’s being elected as the President of the Republic of Myanmar.

“This reflects your contribution to your country and great confidence that the people of Myanmar have reposed in you,” said Mr Md. Abdul Hamid.

“Both Bangladesh and Myanmar have the potential to contribute significantly to the development of not only our two countries but also to the region,” he said. “I believe our joint efforts will help to make this region a better place and fulfill the aspirations of our two peoples.”

He also expressed his hope that U Win Myint’s election as the President would further consolidate the process of realizing long cherished aspirations of Myanmar for greater peace, stability and development.

He wished President U Win Myint and through him to the people of Myanmar a very peaceful and prosperous future.

Mrs. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, said in her message that it is a pleasure to congratulate U Win Myint on his election as the President of the Republic of Myanmar.

“This must be a recognition to your dedicated service to your party as well as to the nation, especially as the former Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw,” she said in her message.

“We hope that under your leadership, Myanmar will create further momentum in bringing about long-awaited political and economic reforms in an inclusive manner so that all her people enjoy benefits of democracy and development,” said Mrs. Sheikh Hasina.

She continued to say that she firmly believed that as immediate neighbour the two countries’ social and economic complementarities and shared history will continue to inspire the two countries to prosper together despite many challenges.

“I would like to assure you that Bangladesh stands ready to extend due cooperation to realize true potentials of our two countries,” said Mrs. Sheikh Hasina.—Myanmar News Agency

Chairperson of constitutional tribunal receives Executive Director of Open Society Justice Initiative

U MYO NYUNT, Chairperson of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Union received Mr James A. Goldston, Executive Director of Open Society Justice Initiative, at the meeting hall of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Union office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting, they exchanged views and discussed matters related to the constitutional tribunal’s affairs, the empowerment of legal quality, human rights issues, prevalence of rules of law and enhancement in the quality of research officers of the constitutional tribunal office. Also present at the meeting were members of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Union Daw Hla Myo Nwe and U Kyaw San and the director-general.—Myanmar News Agency

Senior General sends congratulatory message to newly elected President

Ta’indaaw Command er-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing sent a message of congratulations to Myanmar’s new President U Win Myint, who was elected on Wednesday at the Presidential Election of the 2nd Pyidaungsu Hluttaw 7th regular session.

In his message, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing extended warm congratulations and best wishes.—Myanmar News Agency

Chairperson U Myo Nyunt poses documentary photo together with Open Society Justice Initiative executive director and other officials in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

MYANMAR GAZETTE
Appointment of Permanent Secretary

THE Union Government has appointed Director-General U Lwin Oo, Office of the Amyotha Hluttaw, as Permanent Secretary of the same office.—Myanmar News Agency

PRESS RELEASE
Appointment of Ambassador agreed on

THE Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the appointment of Mr. Nikoloz Apkhazava as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Georgia to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, with residence in Kuala Lumpur.

Mr. Nikoloz Apkhazava was born on 6 July 1971 in Zugdidi, Georgia. In 1993, he obtained a diploma in International Law from Faculty of International Law and International Relations, Tbilisi Ivane Javakhishvili State University in Georgia. From 1998 to 2003, he studied at Graduate School of International and Business Law and Social Sciences of Yokohama National University in Japan and earned Master of International and Business Law and Doctor of Laws (L.L.D). From July to October 1993, Mr. Nikoloz Apkhazava served as a Leading Specialist at State Constitutional Commission, Parliament of Georgia in Tbilisi. He also served as Legal Advisor to business firms and organizations. From October 2008 to December 2011, he served as Minister Counselor at the Embassy of Georgia in Japan. From January 2012 to February 2017, he served as the Ambassador of Georgia to the Republic of Korea. Since April 2017, he has been serving as Ambassador of Georgia to Malaysia.

He is married.—Myanmar News Agency

Chairperson U Myo Nyunt

Isolated rain or thundershowers likely in Upper Sagaing, Taninthayi regions

ISOLATED rain or thundershowers may occur in the Upper Sagaing and Taninthayi regions, and Kachin, Shan, Chin and Kayah states. The degree of certainty is 80 per cent, while the weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining regions and states, as it will be partly cloudy over the Andaman Sea and Southeast Bay, and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal, according to the Myanmar daily weather report issued by the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology yesterday evening. The forecast for Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay, Yangon and neighbouring areas for today is partly cloudy. Seas will be slight in Myanmar’s waters. The wave height will be some 2-4 feet off and along the Myanmar coast.—GNLM
Focus on organic farming to produce safer food

To aid our agricultural sector, the most important thing we should do is doing research on climate change and we must change our country’s bases in preparing research for the new systems of agriculture. It is very important to do research on a new system of agriculture which is based on climate change. For our agricultural produce, we will have to set the target of meeting the international standard of food quality, in the future whether we want to do it or not. The time has come for us to improve our food standards so as to meet the international standards and therefore help improve the foreign markets.

Today, experts from agricultural departments are disseminating knowledge about organic farming to local farmers as part of efforts for promoting sustainable agricultural methods in the country.

Growers need to practice organic methods based on climate change following the instructions of agricultural experts to produce safe, quality food and fruits to penetrate more markets.

**Maung Thein (Archaeology)**

The history of Mount Popa

Mount Popa is situated in Kyaukphyauk Township and lies at the northeastern edge of the Bago Range, 31 miles away to Bagan and 27 miles away from the Ayeyawady River. According to map descriptions, the location of Mount Popa lies at 50.37’N and 99.34’E. The history of Mount Popa is greatly associated with worshiping. It is also known as an enjoyable place for Mahagi’s brother and sister who are easily seen in every Myanmar household. After all, Mount Popa is a lust spot in Myanmar dry season which has produced a lot of achievements. According to Myanmar legends, Myanmar people have worshiped the statues of Mahagi’s sister since AD 994.

Since the king of Pyu Min Hl Min, Bagan kings have initiated a climbing festival annually and Mount Popa has been regarded as a sacred site. Nat worshiping, in Myanmar has started in Bagan and Mahagi’s worshiping is the earliest in the history of Nat-worshiping. Nat wor- shipping was believed to have continued up until Yadanabon Period. It continued to exist even when King Anawrahta newly built Bagan. Almost in every Myan- mar household, there are the statues of Min Mahagi. Mount Popa is famous for personalities such as Bow Baw Aung and Bo Min Gaung who practice many ways of escaping from sufferings.

**Popa Geo Park**

There are two parts in popa mountains: Mount Popa and Taung Kalat which slopes towards the west. The Taung Kalat is believed to be a part results from volcanic eruptions. Mount Popa is 4811 feet above the sea level. Taung Kalat is 4981 feet high and made its shape like a small circular crater with trees.

The Taung Kalat has a lot of pagodas, religious edifices and nat-figures and shrines for nats. The pilgrims climb along the stairways joyfully from the base to the top. The rungs of 777 along the stairways were built by Great Hermit U Khanti, stone-age inhabitants.

**Omar Sein (Archaeology)**

archaeologist Dr. Movius predicted Popa region used to be described by stone-age inhabitants. They used rocks as weapons. At the same time fossils are found in Fonggnias and Sin-un regions.

Stone-age dwellers were afraid of the sun, volcanoes and mountains and so Mount Popa was regarded as a sacred place. When languages came into exis- tence, Mahagi/Bigmat mountain In Palii emerged as a solitary peak, thereby leading to a story of Min Mahagi. According to a palace history, a loud explosion occurred in the middle of the Ay- eyawady, creating a big lake in the region of Popa-Muang; two rivers of Sumun and Sumun flowed, Mount Popa emerged out of the ground and the wa- ter near Sekutta went dry. Palii city lies near Sekutta, Bohtikha and Hanlinn flourished very far from Mount Popa and their records were hidden in Mount Popa. Cities collapsed leading to the emergence of Bagan Era, with Popa playing an impor- tant role in history books. This sence of connection of do- sccriptions between Mount Popa and Bagan Era.

**End of neglected tropical diseases**

Dr. Poonam Khetrapal Singh, WHO Regional Director Achieving the sustainable development agenda means ending all neglected tropical diseases.

The WHO South-East Asia Region is healthier than ever. Polio has been vanquished. Maternal and neonatal tetanus has been eliminated. And after decades of struggle, the HIV, TB and malaria epidemics have been brought under control in the region in coming years.

A series of achievements, region-wide progress against neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) stand out. As the name suggests, NTDs - including leprosy, trachoma, (lymphatic filariasis and kala-azar) - are diseases that affect the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people.

High level political buy-in has changed that dynamic, and with it the NTD burden. India is now yaws-free. Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand have eliminated lymphatic filariasis as a public health problem.

Progress must continue. Though the region has eliminated polio as an acute public health problem, the disease continues to circulate among vulnerable communities, accounting for more than 60 per cent of leprosy-caused grade 2 disabilities worldwide. Though several member countries have eliminated lymphatic filariasis, it continues to burden human communities in remote and hard-to-reach areas, leading to high levels of morbidity and impeding a mass drug administration to stay free of the disfiguring disease.

Though each NTD has its own clinic, environmental and local component – outline in WHO’s Roadmap to overcome the impact of NTDs – are critical to success, and should be marshalled to decisive effect.

First, national ownership and buy-in must continue, and where necessary be fortified. The ongoing strength of national NTD pro- grams creates a critical momentum and overcoming persistent difficulties, whether related to the depth and quality of surveillance or the stability of stigma and discrimination. Stable domestic funding for national programmes is critical to this outcome, as a high-level focus on key targets and accelerated progress, coupled with continued assistance from external sources.

Second, as progress continues, member countries must ensure that programmatic work is both dynamic and flexible. That means pursuing the full range of NTDs - are critical to success, and should be marshalled to decisive effect.

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**Mo Pyae photon CTSA (MEIRUTLA)**

Popa Geo Park

Besides holding mountain, Mount Popa could become an attraction for researchers on archae- ology, geology, history, belane and flora. Geological survey on rock formations, biodiversity

**PHOTO: CHAN THA (MEIRUTLA)**

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**PHOTO: CHAN THA**

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Muse traders hope to regain bank accounts

By May Thet Hnin

On 23 March, China closed 217 bank accounts of sugar traders, currency exchangers, businessmen, and merchants selling beans, maize, and sesame in Muse in northern Shan State. This has resulted in a significant decrease in trade at the Muse border gate, and traders are urging for their accounts to be reopened as soon as possible. U Min Thein, a sugar and rice trader who had his account frozen, told reporters that the Chinese authorities said the accounts were closed as they are suspected to have links to drugs and narcotics trading.

“Those of us who’ve had their accounts frozen are borrowing other people’s accounts to do business transactions. Naturally, they refuse to lend you their accounts after one too many times, so we need our accounts back to do any steady business,” he said.

The Chinese authorities have not disclosed how long they will keep the bank accounts frozen. All the traders can do for now is submit notices to the District General Administrator Department, the Department for Border Trade Administration, the Department for Promoting Trade, and the China-Myanmar Relations Office.

“The Muse trade zone mainly deals in rice and maize, followed by sugar and beans, and since the accounts have been frozen, trade has dropped by a third of its original run, said U Min Thein. “The sellers are a bit calm and surveying the situation, so there hasn’t been an adverse impact yet,” he said.

U Chan Thar Oo, Vice President of the Muse Rice Wholesale Centre, said this situation has had the least impact on rice trade. “It’s the new season for rice, so we have an excessive supply that exceeds demand and thus the market is slow. It’s not necessarily because the accounts were frozen,” he said.

The Chinese government levies a high tax on foreign imports and has strict regulations on quality control. Muse traders have urged the Myanmar government to negotiate with the Chinese to lessen these rules. Investigations of frozen bank accounts can take from one month to six months.

Muse traders hope to regain bank accounts

Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo received Mr. James A. Goldston, Executive Director of the Open Society Justice Initiative, in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Union Attorney-General receives Executive Director of Open Society Justice Initiative

Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo received Mr. James A. Goldston, Executive Director of the Open Society Justice Initiative, at the Union Attorney-General’s office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. During the meeting, they discussed matters related to the rule of law and the judiciary sector, upgrading the capacity of law offices, setting up of law officers, the code of conduct and judiciary standards, human resource development and cooperation between international organisations. — Myanmar News Agency

Mogok celebrates 800th anniversary

By Khaing Sat Wai

A commemoration of the 800th anniversary of Mogok kicked off yesterday with ceremonial celebrations, many of them centred on rubies, for which the region is famous.

The celebration is aimed to promote the gems and tourism industry of Mogok, which is also known as Ruby Land, to advertise the culture of ethnic people living in harmony in the same area, to pass the good heritage of the Ruby Land to the next generation of the city and to create jobs in the tourism sector.

Mandalay Region Chief Minister Dr. Zaw Myint Maung and regional cabinet members attended the opening ceremony. In his opening address, the Chief Minister expressed thanks to local ethnic peoples and the people from Mogok who are settling in other areas for their united efforts for holding the celebration.

Organisers of the event hope that foreign tourists will visit the anniversary celebration and share their experiences with friends and families in their own countries.

At the commemoration, sports competitions, music entertainment and festivities will be included. Burmese, Lisu, Shan and Palaung ethnic people reside in Mogok, which produces world-famous rubies and other precious gemstones. In addition, Mogok is surrounded by a large number of mountains and it has a temperate climate. The city has many historical temples and pagodas.
Facing outcry over data breach, Facebook again overhauls privacy settings

WASHINGTON — Facebook on Wednesday launched a fresh effort to quell the firestorm over the hijacking of personal data, once again unveiling new privacy tools and settings to give users more control over how their information is shared.

The new features follow fierce criticism of the social network giant after it was revealed that the personal data of tens of millions of users was harvested by a British firm linked to Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign.

The company acknowledged that it needed to “do more to keep people informed,” but said the changes have been “in the works for some time.”

“We’ve heard loud and clear that privacy settings and other important tools are too hard to find,” chief privacy officer Erin Egan and deputy general counsel Ashlie Beringer said in a blog post.

“We’re taking additional steps in the coming weeks to put people more in control of their privacy.”

The updates include easier access to Facebook’s user settings and tools to easily search for, download and delete personal data stored on the site used by two billion people.

Facebook said a new privacy shortcuts menu will allow users to quickly increase account security, manage who can see their information and activity on the site, and control advertisements they see.

Facebook’s terms of service and data policy are being updated to improve transparency about how the site collects and uses information, according to Beringer and Egan.

The social network said it is also shutting down ‘Partner Categories,’ a feature which enables more precise targeting of ads by combining information from Facebook with data aggregated by outside companies such as Experian and Acxiom.

“This product enables third-party data providers to offer their targeting directly on Facebook,” product marketing director Graham Mudd said in a statement posted online.

“While this is common industry practice, we believe this step, winding down over the next six months, will help improve people’s privacy on Facebook.”

Earlier this month, whistleblower Christopher Wylie revealed political consulting company Cambridge Analytica had obtained profiles on 50 million Facebook users via an academic researcher’s personality prediction app.

The app was downloaded by 270,000 people, but also scooped up their friends’ data without consent — as was possible under Facebook’s rules at the time.

Lukewarm praise
Yet some analysts said Facebook and its chief Mark Zuckerberg have made similar promises in the past.

“Zuck promised easier, better privacy controls ‘in the coming weeks’ eight years ago,” Zeynep Tufekci, a University of North Carolina professor who studies social media, said on Twitter.

“The solution isn’t shifting the burden to the user because the problem is the negative externalities of the business model.”—AFP

A bridge so far: China’s controversial megaproject

HONG KONG — Touted as an engineering wonder, the world’s longest sea bridge, which connects Hong Kong, Macau and mainland China, includes a snaking road crossing and an underwater tunnel and reportedly uses enough steel to build 60 Eiffel Towers.

Nine years after construction began on the 55-kilometre (34-mile) crossing, a preview organised by the Chinese government this week offered a first peek into the megaproject.

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The bridge will link Hong Kong to the southern Chinese city of Zhuhai and the gambling enclave of Macau, cutting across the waters of the Pearl River Estuary. Although the opening date has not been confirmed, officials expect the bridge to be in use for 120 years and say it will boost business by cutting travel time by 60 per cent.

The 420,000 tonnes of steel used for the project represent 60 times the amount used in the Eiffel Tower, China’s official Xinhua news agency said.

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Gao Xinglin, the bridge’s project planning manager, said the construction of the 6.7-kilometre underwater tunnel gave him sleepless nights.

“There were many nights where I couldn’t fall asleep, because there were too many difficulties during the construction,” Gao told reporters Wednesday.

“Linking the 80,000-tonne pipes under the sea with water-tight technology was the most challenging,” he added.

The total price tag for the project, which includes artificial islands, linked roads and new border-crossing facilities, is unclear but some estimates run to over 100 billion yuan ($15.1 billion), leading critics to slam it as an costly white elephant.

Opponents in Hong Kong say the project is part of Beijing’s drive to tighten its grip on the semi-autonomous city.

Dogged by delays, budget overruns, accusations of corruption and the deaths of construction workers, the bridge failed to open by the end of 2017 as hoped.

There have also been safety concerns after 11 lab workers were charged over faking concrete test reports, with one man jailed last December.—AFP

PHOTO: AFP

PHOTO: AFP
Egypt’s Sisi wins second term with 92% of vote: state media

CAIRO — Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has been reelected for a second term with 92 per cent of the vote, preliminary results showed on Thursday, but turnout of just 40 per cent dented his push for popular legitimacy.

Some 23 million of the 60 million registered voters turned out during the three days of polling that ended Wednesday, state-owned newspapers Al-Ahram and Akhbar el-Youm, and the official MENA news agency reported.

According to Al-Ahram, in addition to the 23 million who cast valid votes, two million spoiled their ballot papers, inserting the names of candidates who were not among the only two approved.

Sisi’s sole challeng- er was the little-known Moussa Mostafa Moussa, himself a supporter of the president, who registered immediately before the close date for applications, saying he wanted to keep the election from being a one-horse race.

Other, more heavy- weight would-be challeng- ers were all sidelined, de- tained or pulled out.

Sisi, who as army chief ousted Egypt’s first freely elected president — Isla- michrist Mohamed Morsi — after mass street protests in 2013, won his first term in 2014 with 96.9 per cent of the vote.

Turnout down on Thursday, but turnout of just 40 per cent dented his push for popular legitimacy.

Turnout of 47 per cent in that year’s election was sharply higher than this year’s 40 per cent despite appeals from Prime Minis- ter Sherif Ismail for voters to fulfi- lli their patriotic duty.

Boycotters who cannot show good reason for not going to the polls could face a fine of up to 500 Egyptian pounds (22 euros), the elec- tion commission has warned.

At a news conference, election commission of- fi- cial, Mahmud al-Sherif, said there had been no vi- olations of Egypt’s election law. Opposition groups had called for a boycott of this week’s vote which they la- belled a facade.

There were no pres- idential debates and Sisi himself did not appear at any of the campaign events, despite claims that he spoke at a number of ceremoni- es.

In an interview days ahead of the vote, Sisi said he had wished there were more candidates, denying any role in sidelining them.

At a speech before the vote he also called for a high turnout.

“I need you because the journey is not over,” Sisi told a mostly female audience. “I need every lady and mother and sis- ter, please, I need the en- tire world to see us in the street” voting.

Morsi’s removal had ushered in a crackdown down that killed and jailed hundreds of Islamists. The initial crackdown on Mor- si’s supporters expanded to include liberal and leftist secular activists A jihadist insurgency since has killed hundreds of policemen and civilians. Sisi gave the armed forces and police a three-month deadline in November to wipe out the Islamic State group in its Sinai Peninsula stronghold.

The deadline has since been extended, and on February 9 the armed forces launched their most comprehensive campaign yet to end the five-year-old jihadist insurgency.

But attacks by the jihadists have continued.

On Saturday, two police- men were killed in a car bomb targeting the pro- vincial head of security for the Mediterranean city of Alexandria. The security chief was unharmed.

Egyptian cities, es- pecially Cairo, have been flooded with banners show- ing Sisi and messages of support from business owners. Posters vowing support for Moussa, 63, are rarely seen.

While still popular, Sisi has embarked on tough economic reforms that have been welcomed by foreign investors but dented his popularity at home.—AFP

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**Invitation for Bids (IFB)**

**Loan/Credit No. :** EDCF-MYA-7


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 address 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

Phone : 067-3410282, 3410209

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**CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE**

**M.V ARCA VOY. NO. (1813)**

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V ARCA VOY. NO. (1813) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30-3-2018 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 to Claim’s Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

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**CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE**

**M.V PATHEIN STAR VOY. NO. (016NS)**

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V PATHEIN STAR VOY. NO. (016NS) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30-3-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P/TMT 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 CONTINENTAL SHIPPING LINE PTE LTD**

Phone No: 2301185

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**CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE**

**M.V EVER ALLY VOY. NO. (0234-561W/E )**

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V EVER ALLY VOY. NO. (0234-561W/E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30-3-2018 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 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 EVERGREEN SHIPPING LINE**

Phone No: 2301185

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**CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE**

**M.V Sinar Bali VOY. NO. (051NS )**

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SINAR BALI VOY. NO. (051NS ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30-3-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P/TMT 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 SILKAGO LOGISTICS PTE LTD**

Phone No: 2301185
Two Koreas agree to hold summit on 27 April

SEOUL—The two Koreas on Thursday set a date for a rare inter-Korean summit, following a high-level meeting that was held days after the nuclear-armed North’s leader Kim Jong Un made his international debut with a surprise trip to China.

“According to the will of both leaders, the South and North agreed to hold the 2018 South-North summit on 27 April at the South’s Peace House in Panmunjom,” said a joint press statement, read out in turn by both delegations’ leaders.

The meeting between Kim Jong Un, leader of nuclear-armed North Korea, and the South’s President Moon Jae-in will be only the third of its kind, and will be followed by landmark talks with US President Donald Trump which could come as early as May.

The venue will make Kim the first North Korean leader to set foot in the South since the end of the Korean War — although according to Pyongyang’s official accounts, during the conflict his grandfather and predecessor Kim Il Sung went several times to Seoul, which twice fell to his forces.

The two sides did not settle on the summit agenda at Thursday’s meeting in the Unification Pavilion on Panmunjom’s northern side, but the South’s delegation leader Cho Myoung-gyon told reporters they agreed Kim and Moon should be able to hold “frank discussions on all matters”.

That would include the demarcation issue of the Korean peninsula, Cho said.

The leader of Pyongyang’s delegation Ri Son Gwon added: “What the people want is our agenda.” Another round of working-level talks next Wednesday will discuss issues including protocol and security.

Next month’s meeting comes after previous inter-Korean summits in Pyongyang in 2000 and 2007, when since the North has made extensive progress in its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes.

It has been subject to multiple rounds of sanctions by the UN Security Council, US, South and others as a result, and tensions in the region have soared, with Kim and Trumpengaging in a fiery war of words last year.

But a rapid rapprochement on the peninsula was kicked off by the Winter Olympics in South and events have moved quickly since then, with a flurry of official visits between the two Koreas.

An advance team of Southern performers headed north on Thursday ahead of K-pop concerts in Pyongyang.

Kim-Xi meeting

Beijing welcomed Thursday’s developments, with foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang saying improved relations between the Koreas “will help promote regional peace and stability”.

“We believe it serves their mutual interests as well as the regional situation,” he added. China’s top diplomat, State Councilor Yang Jiechi, arrived in Seoul Thursday to brief Moon and other officials on Kim’s secretive visit to Beijing this week to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping for the first time.

It was the North Korean leader’s first overseas trip since inheriting power following the death of his father, Kim Jong Il, in 2011.

China has long been the North’s key diplomatic defender and provider of trade and aid, but relations have been strained by Pyongyang’s weapons programmes, with Beijing showing a new willingness to implement UN sanctions against it.

Even so the two leaders hailed their nations’ historic ties, with Xi accepting Kim’s invitation to visit Pyongyang, according to the North’s official Korean Central News Agency.

“There is no question that my foreign visit would be to the Chinese capital,” it quoted Kim as saying, calling it a “noble obligation”.

Kim pledged that he was “committed to denuclearisation” on the Korean peninsula, according to China’s Xinhua news agency — but added this would depend on South Korea and the US taking what he called “progressive and synchronous measures for the realisation of peace”.

Analysts say both sides had reason to hold the meeting — Pyongyang to secure Beijing’s backing and support, and China to protect its interests in what it considers its backyard.

Robert Kelly, a professor at Pusan National University in South Korea, said: “Xi would not grant this meeting unless the Chinese were genuinely concerned about the summit’s outcome and wanted something of kind of role to play.”

The South’s Joong Ang Daily newspaper said in an editorial Thursday that the meeting “makes the situation more complicated as Beijing stepped into the negotiation all of a sudden”.

“China will have no choice but to look on,” it added.—AFP

Chinese tourists to Viet Nam surge 42.9 pctl in Q1

HANOI —Viet Nam received nearly 1.4 million Chinese tourists in the first quarter of this year, or roughly 32.3 per cent of the total international arrivals, seeing a year-on-year rise of 42.9 per cent, the country’s General Statistics Office said on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Viet Nam welcomed a total of more than 4.2 million international arrivals, up 30.9 per cent on year, with the highest growth of 69 per cent in the number of visitors from South Korea, followed by China, up 42.9 per cent, and Finland, up 36.9 per cent.

Of the international arrivals between January and March, roughly 3.4 million came to Viet Nam by air; up 27.9 per cent; 719,900 by road, up 53.6 per cent; and 119,800 by sea, up 6.9 per cent.

Meanwhile, nearly 3.2 million visitors were from Asia, up 37.6 per cent; 645,800 from Europe, up 15.4 per cent; 278,200 from the Americas, mainly from the United States, up 11.5 per cent; 119,100 from Oceania, up 14.1 per cent, and 11,100 from Africa, up 25.7 per cent.

Viet Nam plans to receive 16-17 million foreign visitors and 76 million domestic ones, and gain tourism revenues of 27.5 billion US dollars in 2018, according to the Viet Nam National Administration of Tourism.—Xinhua
K-pop or Kim-pop

Red Velvet: Upbeat electro, disco, R&B and syrup ballads. Hits include “Ice Cream Cake” and “Peek-A-Boo”. Lyrics mostly deal with romance and heartbreak, although “Red Flavour” is a paean to the delights of strawberries and summer.

Sample lyric: “Follow me like you’re under a spell/ Everyone’s cheering, soon you’ll be Ooh ooh”.

Moranbong: Fast-paced patriotic pop, mostly lauding Kim Jong Un or socialist ideals. Synthesizers, electric guitars and violins combine for hits including “Mother’s Birthday” about the ruling party — and “We Call Him Our Father”, but they occasionally bust out a Korean language version of “My Way”.

Sample lyric: “Drawn by affection, we call him father without constraint/We live only with our faith in him; Oh Comrade Kim Jong Un.”

Suit up and dance

Red Velvet: High-voltage, fast-paced dances performed in perfect sync with seamless formation changes. The five sport a giddy mix of colourful, girlish clothing and sexy, revealing outfits tailored-made by an army of stylists or from high-end luxury brands.

Style: Sultry sex kitten mixed with girl-next-door.

Moranbong: Moderate shoulder-shifting, arm swinging and rhythmic foot movements evocative of 1960s Western girl groups. Unlikely to set pulses racing in the South, but still radical by North Korean standards. Signature outfits include white military uniforms matched with miniskirts.

Style: Strict disciplinarian with a hint of naughty

Thin, red line (up)

Red Velvet: Like almost all K-pop bands, the five members are survivors of a years-long selection process that begins with young teenagers chosen for their looks — slim with flawless complexes — and star potential. Hopefuls are coached in singing, dancing and foreign language, with regular cuts for those who do not make the grade.

Moranbong: The 10 members were reputedly hand-picked by Swiss-educated leader Kim Jong Un with a strong emphasis on girl-next-door. In line with K-pop orthodoxy, members must steer clear of romanticism. Moranbong: News about the band is tightly controlled by the secretive regime and in the absence of a tabloid news culture little is known about the private lives of the 20-somethings.

South Korean media previously reported that founding member Hyun Song Wol — rumoured to be a one-time girlfriend of leader Kim — had been executed by firing squad after appearing in a pornographic film.

However, she was later found to be very much alive and well, and popped up in the South on a Winter Olympics-related trip earlier this year — AFP

This boy is on fire: Viet Nam drag queens electrify Hanoi

HANOI — Makeup artist by day, cross-dressed by night, Betty is among a vanguard of Vietnamese drag queens shaking up Hanoi’s nightlife — and social norms — in a city where such performances remain little known.

In a lime green bare-shoulder mesh dress and towering silver heels, the 22-year-old hopes to bring drag into the mainstream with regular performances in Hanoi, a conservative capital better known for its colonial charm than men in sequined minis.

“If we dare to be pioneers, soon this art will be accepted in Viet Nam,” Betty told AFP after a show Saturday that stirred up crowds with renditions of hits by Whitney Houston and Alicia Keys. The drag night started as a weekly viewing party for the TV series “RuPaul’s Drag Race” and quickly transformed into a show of its own — drawing a handful of men in drag to the stage for punchy lip-sync performances.

Organiser Tamah Lake said it’s the only event of its kind in Hanoi.

“It’s brought it more into the open... I think it’s becoming accepted more mainstream and slightly more well-known,” said Lake, not herself a drag queen, who works as a teacher during the week.

The drag queens who turn out for her Saturday night parties say they have few places to perform in a city where cross-dressing is almost unheard of, unlike in the West where starlets like RuPaul — the drag queen mother — have helped to popularise it.

“In Viet Nam there are drag queens that have been active for a long time but have not been acknowledged. This show helps more people know about our art,” said Betty, who started the five-member drag group “Vietteam” in Haiphong, east of Hanoi.

Communist Viet Nam is seen as relatively progressive on LGBT issues — the one-party state decriminalised gay marriage celebrations in 2015, although it stopped short of full legal recognition for same-sex unions — and the government is currently drafting a transgender law to allow legal gender changes.— AFP

Passed away peacefully to ALMIGHTY ALLAH

Al-Haj Molvi Sayed Moeinuddin Hasan (a) U Aung Naing Oo BE (Mechanical YIT) Master of Aerospace Technology (U.K) (45 years)

Al-Haj Molvi Sayed Moeinuddin Hasan (a) U Aung Naing Oo, only beloved son of late Al-Haj Mifti Hafiz Sayed Nourul Azim (a) Sayyagi U Than Shwe and Hajinia Haseena Begam (a) Daw Hla Hla Aye of No137 Bogalayar Lan Botathuang Township Yagon; Son-in-Law of Al-Haj Ebrahim Esosof Ka Ka (a) U Ba Yee and Hajinia Hajar Kotwal of Fynnama; beloved husband of Hajinia Rabiya (a) Daw Khin Mar Yee; Elder brother of Hajinia Mehtaba Saeida (a) Daw Ohn Mar Than and Al-Haj GoGo (a) U Zaw Naing Mjint (Shah Brothers Group of Companies) Nephew of late Dr.Azim; beloved father of Sana, Ahmed Shah, Mozammil and Monarwar; peacefully returned to ALMIGHTY-ALLAH at London on Tuesday 27th of March 2018- 8th of Rajab 1439.

Beneath Family.
Movie theaters cash in as Hollywood turns to God

HOLLYWOOD — Marilyn Monroe famously invoked a Hollywood “where they’ll pay you $1,000 for a kiss and 50 cents for your soul” — but these days it’s as likely to be the other way around.

Religion is reclaiming cinema for sacred purposes at a rate never seen in history, with faith-based movies exploding from an obscure cottage industry last century into a multi-billion-dollar business.

“You can add faith-based movies to the list of genres that you can count on as box office, as much as you can count on any genre. But these movies have to come from an authentic place,” comScore senior media analyst Paul Dergarabedian told AFP.

“You can’t just suddenly have executives in board rooms saying, ‘Faith-based movies are big right now so let’s do one.’ You have to come from an authentic place. Those in the faith-based community will know if it’s not the real deal.”

For most of the US film industry’s short history it has turned out a few religious films a year, but the end of the 1990s saw a sudden boom, and by 2006 theaters were showing four or five new releases a month.

The relatively recent upsurge is down to smaller distributors who have “really cracked the code” on what religious audiences want, says Dergarabedian, often eschewing the epic Biblical dramas for modern, contemporary stories.

A staple of the weekly menu of releases now, faith-based filmmaking accounts for two of the weekend’s top ten movies at the domestic box office.

“I Can Only Imagine,” starring Dennis Quaid, amassed $17.1 million in its opening weekend — by far the biggest debut for a film from Roadside Attractions — and has earned an impressive $38.1 million from its first two weeks in theaters.

‘Whisper-acting’

Dergarabedian describes its surprise performance as one of the box office stories of the year, alongside the five-week chart-topping run of Marvel’s “Black Panther.”

“Therein lies the rub with faith-based movies. They are marginalized because they aren’t on the radar or they are somehow dismissed as being not part of mainstream Hollywood fare,” he told AFP.


The actor is in talks to revive his role in a sequel of “Passion,” the most lucrative faith-based movie of all time, with a global box office exceeding $600 million against a $30 million budget.

“I wasn’t politicking for the role because nobody knew it was happening,” Caviezel said of the 2004 original at a recent conference of the The Fellowship of Catholic University Students.

“Mel Gibson wants me to play Jesus Christ, he wants the guy with the initials of JC who just happened to be 33 years of age to play Jesus Christ. Is that a coincidence? I don’t think so.”—AFP

Vietnam Airlines - Summer Schedule from 25 March to 27 October 2018

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What, no sledging? Disgraced Australia to copy Black Caps

JOHANNESBURG — For years Australia’s cricketers have mocked New Zealand’s no-sledging policy, now they plan to adopt it in a belated bid to repair their own battered reputation.

Australian coach Darren “Boof” Lehmann cited the Black Caps’ approach when asked how his team needed to change its approach in the wake of the ball-tampering scandal in South Africa which led to year-long bans for Steve Smith and David Warner, while Cameron Bancroft got nine months.

“The thing for me would be if we take a leaf out of someone like say New Zealand’s book, the way they play and respect the opposition,” he told reporters in Johannesburg.

It is a major turnaround for the Australians and Lehmann in particular, who has previously described his priorities as “win, win, win.” With his long-term future in doubt as Cricket Australia examines the team culture he encouraged, a chastened Lehmann said: “We’ve got to make sure we’re respecting the game and its traditions.”

‘Overpaid prima donnas’

New Zealand decided to scrap sledging in 2013 after their own crisis of confidence, when Smith said Zin Ko Ko Thet, a fan from Yangon, “The quarter-final matches will be played on 31 March at the same stadium in Yangon.

The tourney began with 50 teams from across Myanmar, and loyal fans have expressed their support and appreciation for the efforts of the teams.

“My favourite team is the UM futsal team because of their stable playing style and fast moves. But I will support all the teams, as all are good enough to reach the semi-final stage”, said Zin Ko Ko Thet, a fan from Toung.—Kyaw Zin Lin ■

Draw is enough in match against Magwe

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Fair play! Steve Smith shakes hands with New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum as David Warner looks on after a one-day international in Hamilton in 2016. PHOTO: AFP

Newly-appointed captain Brendon McCullum promised change and was as good as his word, acknowledging his players were seen as “overpaid, under-delivering prima donnas.”

With his tattoos and swagger, McCullum appeared to be the New Zealand player most likely to adopt a hard-nosed Australian approach of baiting and belittling opponents.

Instead, he surprised many by setting out to revive the Black Caps’ sense of sportsmanship and nurture his players’ love of the game.

“One of the things that we decided we had to change was the public perception of us as people, not just on the cricket field but off it as well,” he later said. “The changes... endeared us to our public and let’s hope that continues for a long time.”

It was a move that left the Lehmann-coached Australians distinctly unimpressed, best illustrated by their behaviour during the 2015 World Cup final.

New Zealand had beaten Australia in the group stages but did not rub their opponents’ faces in it, leaving wicketkeeper Brad Haddin non-plussed.

“They were that nice to us in New Zealand and we were that uncomfortable,” he said after Australia’s seven-wicket victory.

“I said: ‘I’m not playing cricket like this. If we get another crack at these guys in the final I’m letting everything (out).’”

‘They deserved it’

Haddin adopted the role of lead attack dog in the final as Australia gave New Zealand’s batsmen a series of ugly send-offs, including a snoring farewell for Daniel Vettori in his final international appearance.

“You know what? They deserved it,” he said. It was not just Haddin who took exception to Lehmann’s approach. Steve Smith and David Warner also made it known they had no time for such niceties.

McCullum received a curt “mind your own business” when he pointed out some of Smith’s behaviour appeared petulant during the recent acrimonious Ashes series.

“I’m not saying Australia don’t bring that to the table when you play against them, but it is a different atmosphere in my experience.” Mickey Arthur, who was sacked as coach to make way for Lehmann, said Thursday he was “bitterly disappointed watching the Australian cricket team over the last few years.

“The behaviour has been boorish and arrogant,” he wrote on www.playersvoice.com.au.

Whether his successor Lehmann is the right person to oversee a change in Australia’s toxic team culture remains to be seen.—AFP ■

Eight teams fight for semi-final spots in MFF Futsal tourney

AFTER having survived the knockout matches played recently at Thuwunna Indoor Stadium in Yangon, the remaining eight teams will now have to struggle for spots in the semi-final stage of the MFF Futsal Open Cup 2018.

In the quarter-final matches, Myanmar Imperial College (MIC) Futsal team will play against GV Athletic, while Titans XII will meet Shwe Myawady, UM will face the VUC futsal team and RDZ will play Best Friends.

The quarter-final matches will be played on 31 March at the same stadium in Yangon.

The tourney began with 50 teams from across Myanmar, and loyal fans have expressed their support and appreciation for the efforts of the teams.

“My favourite team is the UM futsal team because of their stable playing style and fast moves. But I will support all the teams, as all are good enough to reach the semi-final stage”, said Zin Ko Ko Thet, a fan from Toung.—Kyaw Zin Lin ■

Draw is enough in match against Magwe

“It is right that our team gains very good results at meeting with Magwe in the last year’s MNL. But this year’s Magwe is not last year’s one. The team is much stronger. They have even beat the two best teams, Yangon United and Yadanabon FC, this season.

The players’ spirit are utmost and we have to play against Magwe respectfully. Even a draw is enough for us”, said U Tha Kyaw, head coach of the GFA FC.

In this year’s MNL season, GFA has performed poorly, earning four points after one win, one draw and five losses, putting them in 11th place, while Magwe FC is in second place by virtue of earning 17 points after five wins, 2 draws and one loss.

The match between Magwe and GFA will be broadcast live on MRTV Sport.—Kyaw Zin Lin ■

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