Rakhine offshore natural gas field fulfilling domestic needs

UNION MINISTER for Electricity and Energy U Win Khine and Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu, together with Deputy Minister Dr. Tun Naing and Rakhine State Minister for Electricity, Industry and Transport, inspected the production and distribution of Shwe Natural Gas Project’s Rakhine Offshore Blocks A-1 and A-3, west of Myanmar, on 5 May.

Firstly, officials from the project reported to the union minister on the exploration, production, distribution and the export of gas and local distribution. They also presented plans to help develop the social economy of the local people. Managing Director of Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise U Myo Myint Oo gave a supplementary report.

Union minister and State Chief Minister looked into the requirements and made arrangements to generate job opportunities for local people, transfer technology, share experiences and ensure a safe and working environment.

The union minister viewed the production and distribution of gas and other functions from the control room.

The Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise of Ministry of Electricity and Energy, Daewoo International Corporation, ONGC Videsh Ltd, GAIL (India) Ltd and Korea Gas Corporation signed an agreement with China National United Oil Corporation to export gas from Shwe natural gas field to China on 24 December 2008. The gas produced from the project is distributed for domestic consumption and 400 million cubic feet per day was exported to China in pipelines having a diameter of 40 feet. — Myanmar News Agency

UNION Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye visited a temporary camp for displaced persons opened at a Baptist church in Lankhwa Village, Namti town, Mogaung Township, Kachin State, yesterday morning.

The union minister promised to provide food, clothing, shelter, health, education and social aid to the people who left their homes. The government, he said, was working towards achieving eternal peace and good results through round-table discussions. It will listen to the voices of the displaced persons and look after their requirements. All the people should join hands with the government.

The union minister presented Ks5.75 million for children below 5, Ks1.3 million for expectant mothers, Ks1.7 million for the disabled, Ks 2 million for women-led families and one-month food supplies at the three camps.

At St Paullu Church, the union minister gave words of encouragement to the displaced. In response to the requirements presented by the displaced, the union minister and a cabinet member of Kachin State promised to provide educational opportunities for children, the systematic regrouping of farm animals and the resumption of farming.

SEE PAGE-3
MPC’s 2nd paper reading session, book sales festival conclude

The last day of the Myanmar Press Council's (MPC) second paper reading session, conducted under the theme “Democratic State of Myanmar and the establishment of a strong fourth pillar,” was held at the Information Ministry’s Printing and Publishing Department (PPD), Central Press Building, Theinbyu Street, Yangon, yesterday morning.

The paper reading session’s Organising Committee Chairman and MPC Vice Chairman (1) U Ohn Kyaw (Hanthawady U Ohn Kyaw) and MPC members Dr. Zaw Than and U Myo Ko Myo acted as chairmen and introduced the paper readers to the audience.

Next, Dr. Maung Maung San presented “World of the Jimmy and our world,” followed by paper readings on “Battles of press freedom” by U Myat Khaing (MJU) and “Review of present news media” by U Kyi Naing (MWU).

In the afternoon, the paper reading session continued, and MPC members Dr. Tin Tun and U Khaing Myat Kyaw, and Associate Secretary-1 of MPC Dr. Thin Thar acted as chairpersons. They then introduced the paper readers to the audience.

U Nyunt Tin (Maung Nye-in Thu–Gyobinkauk) (MWA) read “Journalists and ethics,” followed by paper readings on “Status of media freedom during the NLD government” by U Chit Win Maung (MJU) and “Rakhine State affairs and usage of a peaceful newspaper” by U Zeya (Thargyi Maung Zeya).

It was followed by a question-and-answer section, and chairpersons and paper readers were awarded prizes by MPC Vice Chairman (1) U Ohn Kyaw (Hanthawady U Ohn Kyaw) and MPC Vice Chairman (2) Dr. Myo Thant Tin.

Book lovers thronged the more than 100 bookstalls at yesterday’s ceremony.—Myanmar News Agency

Heat emissions from Htein Bin garbage dump under surveillance

The fire burning in Htein Bin garbage dump in Hlinethaya has been successfully extinguished; however, the site is still under surveillance due to the heat emissions from the bottom of the dump.

Yesterday was the fourth day of surveillance and further containment procedures.

U Myint Oo, Head of Yangon Region’s Northern District Fire service Department, said that they survey the area for heat emissions and then uncover the area with shovels and spray it with water or foam. “It’s a large area but there is no need for alarm,” said U Myint Oo. “There’s no reason for another fire to happen. It’s just because of the heat and gas emissions that we are still surveying the area. I think it will be over in the next few days.”

Dr. Aung Myint Maung, Deputy Head of the Environmental Conservation and Cleaning Department of the YCDC, said that they will tackle one zone per day to end all gas and heat emissions and today they will be starting with zone A of the garbage dump.

The Htein Bin garbage dump fire started burning on of 21 April and ended twelve days later on 2 May. A total force of 900 personnel from the fire department, Tatmadaw Men, police force, the red cross, YCDC, and the irrigation department helped in putting out the fire. The garbage dump was divided into four zones and authorities handed one zone a day starting on 29 April and eventually extinguished the fire.

Now a team of 100 personnel have been left at the garbage dump to monitor the situation and extinguishing remaining heat emissions.—Zaw Gyi

Welcoming of Myanmar from Thailand underway

Myanmar Ambassador to Thailand U Myo Myint Than yesterday visited Kyauk Lone Gyi reception centre in Myawady Township, Kayin State.

The Ambassador was welcomed by Myawady District Deputy Commissioner U Htoo Lwin, Head of District Police force Police Lt-Col Tin Myo Htoo, township administrator U Phyo Zaw Ko Ko and officials at the Myanmar-Thai No (1) Friendship Bridge.

The Ambassador then visited the Kyauk Lone Gyi reception centre and inspected the preparedness of accommodations, foods and health care for the Myanmar citizens who returned from Thailand. He also inspected the program to bring back the returning citizens to their home and instructed the necessities.

The Ambassador also visited Shwe Myin Wun Pagoda and inspected the construction process of Myanmar-Thai No (2) Friendship Bridge.

The Myanmar citizens from Thailand who arrive Myawady today (7 May) will be welcomed by two nations’ officials with a ceremony. Now is the second reception and a total of 65 people, 30 men and 35 women were received in the first time.—Htain Lin Aung (IPRD)
Mon continues national-level political dialogue in Ye

THE second-day session of the National-level Political Dialogue for ethnic Mon people was held in Ye Township, Mon State, yesterday.

Group discussions were held during the dialogue. Proposals on the fundamental principles of the political sector were discussed at the National Stadium of Ye Town; proposals on the fundamental principles of the social sector to build a federal union and proposals on the fundamental principles of the federal economy were discussed at No.(1) Basic Education High School in Ye Town. Proposals on the principles of the farmland and the environmental sector were discussed at the Tapalin Nasu Dhammayone.

The three-day dialogue will be held until 7 May, and the 500 representatives in attendance will discuss the four sectors, as designated by the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee.—State IPRD

Joint efforts made to provide safety, aid to displaced persons in Kachin State

FROM PAGE-1

The union minister then presented Ks2 million to children below five years, Ks200,000 to expectant mothers, Ks200,000 to the disabled, Ks600,000 to women-led families and one-month food supplies at the camp.

In the afternoon, the union minister met the displaced persons at a village church in Myitkyina and presented Ks6.6 million to children below five years, Ks2.1 million to expectant mothers, Ks1.6 million to the disabled, Ks1.05 million to women-led families and one-month food supplies for them.

The union minister and the delegation met Kachin State Chief Minister Dr Khet Aung in Myitkyina and discussed transport for displaced persons from areas with poor transport to safe areas, and the involvement of the Tatmadaw and the local government in the union government’s arrangements.

Plans were then made to transport 153 displaced persons from Manwei Village to Shwe Myitsu Dhammayon in Indawgyi, before conveying them to their destination and to fulfil other needs.

During the trip, the union minister also distributed snacks to children and presented cash assistance for nonagenarians at specific meetings. The ministry provided nearly Ks71 million worth of aid to the displaced persons during the trip.—Myanmar News Agency

Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye meets with elderly of the displaced persons in Myitkyina. PHOTO: MNA

The displaced persons were gathered at a village church to receive food supplies and financial aid. PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY
THE export value of forest products by the private sector in the current fiscal year (FY) dropped to US$11.3 million compared with the $22.6 million earned in the same period last year, according to the commerce ministry.

Between 1 and 29 April this year, the country exported a wide range of forest products, including bamboos and other non-wood products, earning $12.953 million, of which $1.64 million was from the private sector.

The total export value of forest products from the two sectors in the 2017-2018 FY was $211.071 million, decreasing by $35.9 million compared with the previous FY.

According to the ministry, Myanmar's total bilateral exports with overseas traders reached $588 million, including $36.515 million via the government sector and $552.155 million through the private sector.

Myanmar continues to export locally-produced bamboos and bamboo-based products mainly to Bangladesh, Pakistan, South Korea and Singapore.

The country exported agro products worth nearly $165 million, animal products worth $12 million, marine products worth $37 million, minerals worth $36 million, manufactured goods worth $267 billion and other products worth $64 million.—Khine Khant

Imports from Indonesia top $817 million in 2017-18 FY

KYAW SOE

MYANMAR'S imports from Indonesia totalled US$817.110 million before the end of the 2017-2018 fiscal year (FY), according to the latest report of the commerce ministry.

In February alone, the country imported a wide range of products valued at $71.505 million from the ASEAN member state, recording a decrease of more than $6 million compared with the total imports of more than $77 million in January.

Myanmar’s imports from Indonesia include paper, palm oil, steel, tobacco, rubber, medicine and others, while it exports marine products, agriculture products and miscellaneous items to the Southeast Asian nation. Between last April and this February, the total value of bilateral trade exceeded $926 million, including more than $109 million in exports.

The ministry’s yearly statistical reports showed that bilateral trade with Indonesia has gradually increased since the 2013-2014 FY. The Myanmar-Indonesia trade was $498 million in the 2013-2014 FY. It increased to $636 million in the 2014-2015 FY, $741 million in the 2015-2016 FY and $827 million in the 2016-2017 FY. According to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), Indonesia's investment in Myanmar by the end of the 2017-2018 FY was $9.859 million.—Shwe Khine

KBZ to offer 25-year long-term home loan plan

KANBAWZA Bank Limited will introduce the KBZ home loan long-term financial plan for up to 25 years at a three-day KBZ Property Expo from 11 May, with interest rates of 6.5 to 9.5 per cent, depending on the income, down payment and installment plan.

The expo will feature apartments and condominiums with room capacities of 5,000 from Ahlon, Mayagong, Pazun- tuang, Sanchaung, Kamayut, Hlaing, South Okkalapa, North Okkalapa, Dawbon, Thakayta, Thingangyun, Mingala Taungnyunt, South Dagon, North Dagon and Thanlyin townships.

Interested buyers can own apartments by paying 30 per cent down payment of the property’s total value, at the interest of 13 per cent and principal to be paid in 1 to 25 years.

“We want to provide effective financial assistance. Therefore, interested buyers must consider their choice depending on their income, down payment, interest and instalment plan. The buyers will receive ownership of the property after they complete the payment. To achieve the home loan plan, buyers need to make regular payments. This will help interested buyers own the property,” said U Aung Kyaw Myo, deputy CEO of KBZ.

Other banks are also offering long-term home loan plans. Buyers can apply for home loans by producing documents, including papers to verify the absence of criminal records, census details and salary verification letters.—Nyein Nyein
India’s lifting of ban on pulses importation drives prices up

FOLLOWING the news about India lifting its ban on the import of pulses, mung bean prices increased by Ks72,000 per tonne in the Yangon market.

India has now permitted an import quota of 150,000 tonnes of mung beans and green gram each for the 2018-2019 financial year (FY), according to recent official news.

The price of mung beans RC is up by Ks72,000. The pulses market has recovered from a steep decline. On 5 May, 135 containers were traded, according to records at Bayintnaung commodity depot.

On 5 May, mung beans RC fetched Ks454,000 per tonne, while mung beans SQ were worth some Ks616,000.

Mung bean prices were below Ks400,000 between 2 and 4 May. Last Friday, mung beans RC fetched Ks382,000 per tonne, while mung beans SQ were offered at Ks382,000 per tonne.

In the last FY, Myanmar exported some 600,000 tonnes of mung beans, pigeon peas and green gram, including 300,000 tonnes of mung beans.

Prior to India’s restriction on the import of pulses, mung beans RC fetched Ks757,000, while the special quality was worth Ks887,000 per tonne. — Maung Sae Aung

Mandalay pulses market bustling with traders

India’s relaxation of the ban on bean importation from Myanmar has revived the Mandalay market, triggering a price surge.

“India’s purchase of Myanmar’s mung beans, pigeon peas and green grams came to a halt in May 2017, triggering a price plunge.

The prices went up following the news that India has lifted restrictions on the importation of pulses, except for pigeon peas,” said U Soe Win Myint, a depot owner.

The beans and pulses market has recovered following the move. The market is now bustling with sellers and buyers. The price is now on the high side, he maintained.

Green grams were harvested during the pre-monsoon period of early May. China offers Ks108,000 per three-basket bag of fresh green grams. The price increased to Ks112,000 per bag in May. Similarly, the mung beans price soared to Ks45,000 from Ks36,000 per three-basket bag.

The price of green gram has plummeted to Ks65,000 per three-basket bag last year, compelling growers to turn to other crops for the next season. Therefore, the percentage of green gram cultivation acreage decreased.

The high cost of green gram cultivation and the low price forced growers to focus on other crops. “As a result, the green gram yield is low this year,” said U Soe Win Myint.

Green grams can be cultivated thrice per annum depending on the water supply. Green gram from Mandalay and the Sagaing regions were harvested early this year. — Min Thet Aung (Mandalay Sub printing House)
Traditional fireworks festival held in Namsam, Shan State

A rocket shaped firework launches into the sky in Namsam, southern Shan State.

PHOTO: SAIZAW LATT (LANGKHO)

A traditional fireworks festival of Yinn Gyar ethnic, named Pulu Fei, was held in Namsam, southern Shan State, yesterday. The festival was organized by the Yinn Gyar and Yinn Nat ethnic groups living in Namsam Township, Loleim District, in southern Shan State.

Few members of the ethnic group live in Myanmar, even in Shan State, said U Lone Lwe, a village administrator. The festival is annually held on every full moon day of Kason. The festival starts with the launch of competing fireworks shaped in the form of rockets. Some 50 participants compete in the festival. Referees decide the winners of the festival depending on which rockets reach the target on ground.

Yinn Gyar ethnic people set up a traditionally made firework. PHOTO: SAIZAW LATT (LANGKHO)

Waste sorting plant project in Bago nearly 70% complete

NEARLY 70 per cent of a waste sorting plant project implemented by Bago Township Development Committee is now complete, and it is expected to be completed within the set time frame.

The project has been implemented in an area between Nandawya Ward, Hinthagon Ward and Kaedwin Village-tract in Bago Town on a budget of Ks225 million allotted by the region government for the 2017-18 financial year. This will be the first-of-its-kind in the region. On completion, the plant will choose not only solid waste fractions that can be sold as recyclable materials, including fiber, bottles, tins and iron materials, but some other food waste that can be turned into natural fertilizers. The project is part of the government’s waste minimisation plan, which includes reducing the amount of waste produced in the society and helps eliminate the generation of harmful and persistent wastes. The town produces between 60 and 80 tonnes of garbage per day. The waste sorting machines will be put to trial in the first week of next month, said U Zaw Naing, assistant engineer of the development committee.

The partner company has guaranteed that only Ks100 will be collected for individual users.

Fire breaks out at funeral home

A fire broke out at a funeral home in Tatkion Township, Nay Pyi Taw, early Sunday morning, according to the Township Fire Services Department. The flame destroyed the home, but no persons or animals were hurt.

The funeral home was engulfed by fire at some 4 a.m. on 6 May in Padaikon Village in Gyoguam Village-tract. According to the investigation, the blaze was caused by a stove fire. It started in the kitchen and quickly spread to the whole house. With the support of residents, firefighters controlled the flame by 4:45 a.m. on the same day. The cause of the fire is being investigated and action has been taken against the person responsible, according to the law.

Public toilets to be built in markets, highway terminal in downtown Monywa

PLANS are underway to build public toilets in markets and a highway terminal in downtown Monywa, a city in Sagaing Region, within the next five months, said U Kyaw Myo Win, chair of Monywa Township Development Committee.

He added the committee has already signed a contract with a private company earlier this month to build separate toilets for men and women in three markets, including Chindwinyadana Market, Mayathala Market and Thiriya Market, besides a highway terminal in five months.

According to the contract, only Ks100 will be collected from each toilet user.

The five-month project is aimed at providing better toilet facilities to people who crowd the busiest markets and highway terminal. The new modern toilets are expected to promote the health and hygiene of individual users.

The new toilets will include bathrooms and separate toilet facilities for men and women. The partner company has guaranteed that it will use modern facilities for public toilets.
Success can be achieved only through government’s efforts

Q: When will Myanmar launch Dawei SEZ?
A: In 2008, the Myanmar and Thai governments met in Singapore and conceived a plan to implement the Dawei SEZ project. The two then signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). At first, the Myanmar Port Authority signed an agreement with an Italian-Thai company. Because of the delay, the agreement was terminated in 2013. The tenders were invited again.

The same company won the tender. A new agreement was reached in 2015 between the management committee and the Thai-Italian company, and the works were resumed. The project was stopped between 2013 and 2014. The Myanmar and Thai governments then signed an agreement to implement the project themselves. However, the investment from Thailand was small.

As it was impossible for the Italian-Thai company alone to implement the project, a new agreement was signed by Myanmar, Thailand and Japan.

Q: What are the functions of the Management Committee of Dawei SEZ?
A: We started our work in October 2017. We have to look into the details of the agreement reached with the Italian-Thai company and also the three-country agreement. We found 78 points that need bilateral implementation—38 points for Thailand and 20 points for Myanmar. We can resume work only if these points are fulfilled.

The Myanmar government did its best to fulfill the requirements. Currently, only one or two remain. They are important matters such as EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) and SIA (Social Impact Assessment). They are a bit complicated and difficult. However, now the EIA and SIA are nearly completed. A law firm will be hired for land agreements. We asked the Italian-Thai company to implement its part. We will begin the project soon after the two agree to fulfill their agreements. The work will start according to the portion-wise time schedule.

Another part in the portion is called full phase. We have requested the Japanese government to take charge of that phase. A master plan was drawn by Thailand in 2015, but it had no detailed facts and was outdated. So JICA tried to upgrade the master plan.

The Japanese said that a new plan must be drawn and that it must include the technical details. They drew a new master plan in 2017 and completed it in 2018. It has three phases. Phase-1 will be completed between 2018 and 2030, but the area lacks infrastructure. We need at least a two-lane highway. No electricity and jetties exist. Without infrastructure, foreign investment is not possible. So we are giving priority to it.

Some 6,000 acres of land were fixed for phase-1. We will build the infrastructure during the 2018 to 2030 period. Foreign investment may come in only after three years. JICA will finalize its plan in May. Phase-1 will deal with the infrastructure, investment by the Myanmar government, foreign loans and a deep-sea port. Currently, only Dawei and Kyaukphyu have a deep-sea port project.

Q: What are your plans to supply enough power?
A: The Italian-Thai company has an LNG project for power supply. So we will need large LNG tanks. We urged them to build the facilities, but they couldn’t. Plan B was to import LNG. But the rate they proposed was too high. The price in the neighbouring country is usually only 10 cents, but their rate is 27 cents now.

The Ministry of Electricity and Energy has already signed with Total to generate more than 1,300 megawatts of LNG in Kanbauk. Power will be available within three years. The whole Taninthayi Region will be electrified in 2021.

Q: Could you tell us about the plans for the Thiki road that connects Dawei SEZ with Thailand?
A: The Italian-Thai company will construct the 138-kilometre road as a gravel road. The Thiki road is crucial, and the previous government’s administration planned to upgrade it to a tar road, but it was never accomplished due to certain reasons. We don’t have sufficient funding to construct a road, so we will acquire a loan from a Thai group called NEDA. But we need the approval of the Hlutaw first, and if they approve the loan, then we will contact the Thai group and call for a tender for the project, which we estimate will take three years.

Q: How will Dawei develop after the SEZ is established?
A: It is pretty significant. The SEZ is a deep-sea port and is close to Thailand, so potential development opportunities exist.

The Taninthayi Region is abundant in natural resources, fishery businesses, rubber plantations, oil palm and mineral productions. But it does not have the electricity to produce high-end finished products. Yet, once the SEZ is completed, we will be able to produce high-quality products that can rival our neighbours. This will in turn boost the economy and create jobs.

Q: Local residents have voiced fears about the SEZ damaging the natural environment. What measures are being taken to prevent this?
A: In the past, no EIA or SIA were conducted when projects were carried out, and it was obvious the natural environment was being damaged. But now, the democratic government has ensured projects are more transparent, with the vision to reduce as much harm to the environment and to the society as possible.

Now, you cannot start a private company without providing an EIA or SIA. All the projects related to the SEZ have submitted their EIA and SIA to the union government, and we had a meeting with the local people to inform them of these practices and to answer all their questions and concerns.

Q: Are there other plans to ensure the SEZ’s plans and environmental reports are more transparent?
A: We know it is obligatory to put up our environmental reports online but, for some reason, we are still unable to launch our website. I have been told it will be up and running in two weeks. All the EIA and SIA reports will be available online, and people can submit questions on the website. The democratic government will not maintain any secrecy.

Q: What are your projections for investment prospects once the SEZ is completed?
A: It will take three to five years to complete the construction of roads, basic infrastructure and to supply electricity to the area.

Once these are completed, more investments can be expected, but large industrial works will be minimal initially. We will also need to upgrade and develop the rubber factories and fishery-related factories in our region.

Japanese companies, such as those with a firm foothold in Thailand, are interested in the steel industry and the automotive industry. Being a least developed country (LDC), Myanmar has numerous trading opportunities. For example, Thailand does not receive a GSP (Generalised Scheme of Preferences) and needs to pay tax to export to the EU and the United States, but Myanmar has a GSP and enjoys free trade. We have received these opportunities but have yet to make use of them.

Q: What is the most difficult challenge the project is facing currently?
A: The most pressing concern right now is that of the project developer. Currently, the Italian-Thai company is leading the project, but it has financial difficulties, and so cannot achieve optimal performance. But we must employ a financially stable and internationally experienced developer during the full phase of the project. After we complete the master plan in May, we will employ developers for each project.

Q: Do you have any closing remarks?
A: Leading a project requires political stability, national integrity, active participation and support from one’s government for the project to take off and succeed. These are national-level projects and thus require in-depth participation from the union government.
Adopting an anti-corruption culture

T HE duality of human nature results in either acquiring virtue or merit. If a person lives in line with righteous ethics and good moral conduct, he will acquire virtue and merit. This is of course true for both men and women alike. Conversely, if they live committing misconduct or immoral behavior, then their demerits will increase. As a result of this duality human society has both prosperity and criminal activities to its limits.

Our minds easily fall into temptation and it takes considerable fortitude to act with a righteous mind. For prosperity to increase from the community level up to the national level, its people must carry out their duties and responsibilities. Everyone has their own agenda and self-interest while carrying out their jobs and some might find fun and satisfaction within the legal boundaries of the society, others choose to break these rules and bring damage to themselves and their fellow men. If a person or organization in power abuses their position then they become a burden to the people. It is generally accepted that one who is above the law, but certain individuals may exploit the law or twist it to fit their needs and this weakens the rule of law in society. Thus, these kinds of activities are a significant obstacle to the government and the people working towards the rule of law.

The type of people who choose to cultivate virtue is one that is honest, hardworking, speaks the truth, and practices compassion to other living beings. Nurturing this mindset serves the purpose of helping the negative do nothing, thinking and actions out of their own. Only you can cleanse yourself. Agreement on something else can do for you. It is believed that these negative actions are harmful not only to the people but also to other living beings. If people dislike with prejudice, then it is a kind of corruption. So too is the type of mindset people normally think.

The program is also being modernized to include multiple benefits, such as reducing poverty and improving livelihoods; (6) strengthen governance; (7) foster regional cooperation. With the theme of “Linking People and Economies for Inclusive Growth,” this year’s Annual Meeting was attended by over 4,000 delegates from member countries, academia, business and civil society representatives.

In his remarks, Mr. Nakao said Strategy 2030 will address existing and emerging challenges. “There is still persistent poverty,” said Mr. Nakao. “We must bolster equality, growing environmental pressures, and rapid urbanization. Aging in some countries and an increasing youth population in others present opportunities as well as challenges.” Strategy 2030 will be aligned with the international agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement.

Strategy 2030 will stress 10 priorities: (1) tackle remaining poverty and increasing inequalities in Asia and the Pacific; (2) strengthen governance; (3) reduce gender disparities; (4) foster regional cooperation and integration; (5) mobilize private sector resources to meet the region’s vast development financing needs; (6) further strengthen ADB’s role as a provider and facilitator of knowledge and skills; (7) help the region’s education system adapt to the changing needs of the workforce; (8) work with countries to develop a more efficient and effective financial sector; (9) support a circular economy, including circular and low-carbon technologies; and (10) strengthen ADB’s core financial resources efficiently and creatively,” Mr. Nakao said. “We will invest in our workforce, promote diversity including gender balance, and ensure a responsive workplace. We will continue to invest in our technology; we will dramatically improve the transparency and efficiency of our operations.” He added. ADB, based in Manila, is dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration. Established in 1966, it is owned by 67 members—49 from the Asia and the Pacific region. ADB operations totaled $32.2 billion, including $11.9 billion in cofinancing. —ADB

OPINION

Everyone has their own agenda and self-interest while carrying out their jobs and while some might find fun and satisfaction within the legal boundaries of the society, others choose to break these rules and bring damage to themselves and their fellow men.

By: CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security

Everyone sees the need to improve food and nutrition security through climate-smart agriculture and nutrition-smart villages. Of these, the key to a food-secure Myanmar is the Climate-Smart and Nutrition-Smart Villages approach. The program is also being modernized to include multiple benefits, such as reducing poverty and improving livelihoods; (6) strengthen governance; (7) foster regional cooperation. With the theme of “Linking People and Economies for Inclusive Growth,” this year’s Annual Meeting was attended by over 4,000 delegates from member countries, academia, business and civil society representatives.

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**Canada oil sector faces ‘significant challenges’ to reduce emissions**

OTTAWA — Canada’s oil industry faces “significant challenges” in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which account for 26 per cent of local emissions, but cuts are “essential” for meeting climate agreement targets, the Senate said Friday.

The conclusion of the Senate report echoed others published by it and the auditor general, which have been critical of Canada’s efforts to meet its Paris climate agreement target of slashing carbon dioxide emissions by 39 per cent compared with 2005 levels by 2030.

“The biggest challenges facing the industry will be to remain competitive and to encourage investment while facing increasingly tough emissions-reduction requirements,” said the report.

The oil and gas sector employed 700,000 people directly and indirectly, and accounted for 7.7 per cent of Canada’s gross domestic product in 2015, equivalent to Can$142 billion in economic activity.

The Senate committee studying Canada’s transition to a low-carbon economy noted that the oil and gas sector released 189 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents in 2013.

Under current projections, Canada is on track to emit 722 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year by 2030 — far more than its target of 523 megatonnes.

The Senate cited a September 2017 auditor general’s report that slammed years of inertia for leaving the nation vulnerable to climate change, saying: “Canada has failed to achieve every emission target it has set since 1992.”

These included reducing emissions to 1990 levels by 2000 (Rio Earth summit), six per cent below 1990 levels by 2012 (Kyoto Protocol), and 17 per cent below 2005 levels by 2020 (Copenhagen Accord). At the same time, temperatures in Canada have risen at approximately double the global rate, resulting in the loss of Arctic sea ice and permafrost, affecting wildlife and ecosystems.

Ottawa unveiled a plan last year to backstop regional measures to cut greenhouse gas emissions with a national carbon tax.

It set a minimum carbon price starting this year at Can$10 per tonne and rising each year to a maximum of Can$50 in 2022.

Currently four provinces — Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec — representing 40 per cent of the population, have carbon pricing or cap-and-trade schemes. Almost all of the others have carbon pricing schemes in the works.

Ottawa would only step in to top up provincial efforts that do not meet the federal standard.

— AFP

**Chinese scientists develop new material for water purification**

HANGZHOU — Chinese scientists have come up with a new membrane material which can efficiently separate salt from water and has other water purification functions.

A research program led by professor Zhang Lin with the Zhejiang University developed the membrane formed by nanoscale bubbles and tubes. The material allows water to permeate three to four times faster than traditional membrane for water purification.

— Xinhua

**Five militants, five civilians killed in gunfight, clashes in Indian-controlled Kashmir**

SRINAGAR — Five militants and five civilians were killed in a fierce gunfight and subsequent clashes in restive Indian-controlled Kashmir, police said.

The gunfight broke out in village Badigam of Shopian, 62 km south of Srinagar city, the summer capital of Indian-controlled Kashmir.

“Today in a gunfight with militants in Badigam, five militants and five civilians have been killed,” a senior police official posted in the area told Xinhua. — Xinhua

**Death toll from contaminated water in Cambodia rises to 10, 121 hospitalized**

PHNOM Penh — The death toll from drinking contaminated water in eastern Cambodia’s Kratie province has risen to 10, as 121 others were hospitalized, Om Phy, deputy police chief of Kratie province, said Sunday.

“Four more victims were confirmed dead at the Kratie Provincial Hospital and the Phnom Penh’s Calmette Hospital today, bringing the number of the dead to 10, as the number of villagers hospitalized has reached 121,” he told Xinhua, adding that the dead were four men and six women.

— Xinhua

**50 live crocodiles from Malaysia seized at London**

LONDON — British officials have seized an illegal shipment of 50 live crocodiles at London Heathrow Airport, the UK Border Force said Friday.

The year-old juvenile saltwater crocodiles were found crammed into five boxes coming from Malaysia. They were bound for a farm in Cambridgeshire, eastern England, where they were to be bred for their meat.

The animals had not been packed in accordance with international regulations, making the importation illegal. Each box only had room for four crocodiles but 10 had been packed into each one.

“It is just not acceptable for reptiles to be transported in this way,” said Grant Miller, head of the national Border Force Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) at Heathrow.

“The crocodiles had started to fight each other during the flight as space was limited, so little attention had been paid to their welfare. “We will seize anything that contravenes CITES regulations, so this should serve as a warning to those thinking about transporting wildlife in such conditions.”

The crocodiles were found on 27 April. One box has since died and the others are being cared for before being rehomed. — AFP

**A research program led by professor Zhang Lin with the Zhejiang University developed the membrane formed by nanoscale bubbles and tubes. The material allows water to permeate three to four times faster than traditional membrane for water purification.**

PHOTO: AFP
Russian business eyes reform in Putin’s fourth term

MOSCOW — Russian businesses are expecting wide-ranging reforms and are full of suggestions for a new government as Vladimir Putin begins a fourth Kremlin term with promises to revitalise the country’s economy.

While Moscow’s relations with the West remain tense with US sanctions hurting the Russian economy like never before, the new government will be tasked to fulfil the ambitious goals Putin presented to parliament in March.

In his last major speech before winning the presidential election by a landslide, Putin set a goal of halving Russia’s “unacceptable” poverty rate in six years by investing in infrastructure, housing and health services. He also promised a growth rate of four per cent against forecasts of one to two per cent, as the Russian economy continues to stabilise following a recession that ran until 2016.

But the 65 year-old Russian leader did not explain how he aimed to achieve these goals and solve the predominantly structural problems holding back the country’s growth.

Oleg Kouzmin, an analyst at the Renaissance Capital investment bank, said business circles hope that “concrete reforms and development plans with real steps” would be outlined after Putin’s inauguration on Monday.

“Small steps” -

In recent years, the government mainly focused its efforts on fiscal and monetary discipline to avoid dramatic changes to the deficit or debt in a country still traumatised by the 1998 financial crisis. But favourable conditions for reforms are finally coming together for Putin, who has led Russia for 18 years, in his fourth term.

Kouzmin said it was hoped the new government will adopt measures to “address the weakness of the labour market and adverse demographic discipline” as well as weaknesses in education and health provision.

Investor support and financial development of the Russian regions would also be welcome, he added.

Thanks to control of inflation, a long term bete-noire of the Russian economy, these objectives could be “more achievable than in the past,” according to Renaissance Capital.

Chris Weafer, founder of the consulting firm Macro Advisory, said that a public debate on infrastructure financing, taxes and public spending in the education and health sectors could take place at the start of Putin’s new term.

But Weafer said it “is not realistic” to hope for in-depth reforms.

“Vladimir Putin received a mandate from a people who were more or less satisfied with the way the country is run,” he said.

“The reforms in Russia are moving forward and will continue in small steps so as not to risk unexpected consequences or instability,” he added.

Kudrin, the reformer

Alexei Kudrin — a liberal former finance minister who is respected by the business community in Russia and foreign investors — is expected to return to the Kremlin in a reshuffle.

The 57 year-old has said he is ready to help “provided that we do not stop at half-measures.”

Weafer said Kudrin could call for “an ambitious program of reforms, the only option he sees to avoid a long period of stagnation.”

Close to Putin during the election campaign earlier this year, Kudrin has pushed for a raft of unpopular measures.

He advocates cutting the number of Russian bureaucrats by 30 per cent in six years and increasing the male retirement age to 63.

A legacy of the USSR, Russia’s retirement age — currently set at 55 for women and 60 for men — is among the lowest in the world. Given the demographic decline, the pension system represents a growing weight for the federal budget despite the fact that pensions are small.

Kudrin has also called for the introduction of technology classes for children from a young age to create “two million additional developers to digitalise the economy,” echoing the hopes of the business community.

“Change the secondary and higher education system. We do not need this many lawyers, we need technology experts,” said Oleg Tinkov, the founder and chairman of the Tinkoff Bank board of directors.

But even if he gains support from the government, Kudrin will struggle to implement his reforms amidst the traditional reluctance of the Russian state towards any major reform.

“President Putin is clearly in favour of a more cautious approach,” said Weafer.

“Even in years of growth, he was opposed to a high level of debt because of the consequences in terms of national security.”

—AFP

Crackdown shakes Chinese city’s ‘Little Africa’

GUANGZHOU — The Ghanaian university student was roughed up after midnight by police shouting and pounding on his door in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou, where a crackdown on illegal immigration has left many residents of its “Little Africa” neighbourhood feeling scared and angry.

After demanding to see his visa, the agents carefully checked his papers before leaving to knock on other doors. The commercial hub has long been a magnet for fortune-seeking Africans, but traders and students say they face unfavourable visa rules and increasingly heavy policing.

“They do this because Africans live here,” the Ghanaian student told AFP as he stood on a pedestrian bridge in the bustling city, still upset over last summer’s after-dark visit. “I was sick of being treated like a criminal. I had to move to another neighbourhood,” he said, gesturing at a nearby police station and lamenting that the omnipresent security had made life more complicated.

Migration from Africa has risen in recent years as China has stepped up its diplomatic links and investments with the continent.

Guangzhou draws merchants who come to buy goods such as jewellery and electronics in bulk, which they ship back to their homelands.

But in January, the official Xinhua news agency reported that the African population in Guangzhou had decreased as “police have tightened enforcement on illegal immigration”.

There are now 15,000 Africans living in the city compared to 20,000 in 2009, but “the real number, including illegal immigrants and overstayers, is believed to have been much higher,” the report said. Estimates from Chinese researchers have put the actual number of residents at over 150,000, making Guangzhou home to the largest African community in Asia.

‘Harsh treatment’

Police vans with flashing lights and officers astride motorbikes congregated after nightfall recently at a small public square in Xiaobei, a “Little Africa” neighbourhood with halal restaurants on narrow winding streets.

A Nigerian merchant was returning home from a meeting with wholesalers earlier this year when officers handcuffed him and hauled him to a police station because he was not carrying identification. It was only after his Chinese landlord vouched for him over the phone that police allowed him to retrieve his passport in his apartment — under close watch.

The treatment seemed “wrong” for a routine document check, the merchant told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Residents who faced police checks asked not to be identified over fears of being deported.

Guangzhou’s police and exit-entry bureau did not return requests for comment.

“Sure, there are some illegal activities like the drug trade and police should target this minority of people,” said Ohene Opoku Agyemang, a doctoral student in international relations at Jiaxing University. “But the harsh treatment of law-abiding people negatively affects Africans’ view of China and hurts efforts to build friendly relations with African countries,” he said. —AFP
Thousands flee after Hawaii quake triggers new volcano eruptions

LOS ANGELES — Thousands of people have been forced to flee after a magnitude 6.9 earthquake shook Hawaii’s Big Island, triggering the collapse of a coastal cliff and prompting fresh eruptions of a volcano that has been spewing lava near residential areas.

No injuries have been reported but several homes were destroyed or badly damaged by the quake Friday, the biggest to hit the island since 1975, authorities said. It caused small sea-level changes but no tsunamis.

The US Geological Survey said the quake struck at 12:32 pm (2232 GMT) and was centered on the south flank of the Kilauea volcano, which first erupted on Thursday after a series of tremors.

A 5.7-magnitude tremor hit the island earlier on Friday. The quakes prompted the Kilauea volcano, one of five active on the island, to erupt.

The quakes temporarily cut power to thousands of households.

The Federal Aviation Administration imposed flight restrictions over the area through Monday for all but relief operations.

The quakes triggered rock slides on trails in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, and caused a coastal cliff to collapse into the ocean. Officials ordered a rare closure of the park, which covers more than one-tenth the island’s total area. About 2,500 visitors were evacuated.

“It is currently not safe to be here,” Park Superintendent Cindy Orlando said in a statement.

Video footage showed orange magma gushing up from cracks in the ground and snaking through a wooded area.

Molten lava could also be seen bubbling up through cracks on streets in the Leilani Estates and Lanipuna Gardens neighborhoods, where residents were ordered to evacuate on Thursday.

The area is home to about 1,700 people and 770 structures, and some 10,000 people live in the broader district potentially impacted.

Governor David Ige mobilized the Hawaii National Guard, which deployed about 70 soldiers and airmen to help with evacuation, neighborhood security and other emergency work.

- Dangerous gas warning - Officials warned of extremely high levels of toxic gas emitted from the volcano.
- Hawaii Fire Department reports extremely dangerous air quality conditions due to high levels of sulfur dioxide gas, the Hawaii County Civil Defense Agency said.
- Elderly, young and people with respiratory issues need to comply with the mandatory evacuation order, said a statement from the mayor’s office.

Ige said residents were being housed in community centers until the danger has passed.

The governor visited two evacuation shelters and said he had met “many people who are frightened and deeply concerned about losing everything,” but added that Hawaiians would come together to help. “This is a resilient community,” he said.

One local resident, Neil Valentine, told CNN he and his wife had been forced to evacuate “our dream home that we’ve been looking for all this time,” calling the situation “just basically heartbreak.”

The lava outbreak came after hundreds of small earthquakes in recent days that followed the collapse of a crater floor on the Puu Oo volcanic cone.

A 5.0-magnitude earthquake early Thursday south of the cone triggered rockfalls and sent a massive pink plume of ash wafting briefly into the air.

Big Island resident Janice Wei, who moved to Hawaii from California — known for its own high earthquake risk — said the eruption was almost a “relief.”

“We’ve been waiting for big movement from the crater; after so many small earthquakes,” she told AFP.

“Hawaiians and local people have lived here forever,” she said.

“You know what’s going on; we have warning systems. Everybody should be prepared.”

“Fire curtain”

Using his drone, area resident Jeremiah Osuna captured video footage of the lava flow, which he described as a “fire curtain” that left him feeling “shock and awe.”

“It was like if you put a bunch of rocks into a dryer and turned it on — a lot of earth and pressure and fire just moving around,” Osuna told AFP.

Governor Ige signed an emergency proclamation releasing disaster funds to the Big Island.

He noted the current flow was similar to a 1960 eruption in the Kapoho area that “caused significant damage.”

Geologist Janet Babb of the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory told AFP that scientists had been following an “intrusion of magma” down the rift zone since Monday afternoon in anticipation of a possible eruption.

Though the cracks from which lava was emitting had gone dormant, she emphasized that “the overall concern and the overall event has not ended.”

US Senator Brian Schatz of Hawaii said the Federal Emergency Management Agency was mobilizing resources, as well as monitoring for forest fires, power outages and water supply issues.

Hawaii Island, or the Big Island, is the largest of the eight main islands that comprise the Pacific US state, an archipelago that includes hundreds of smaller volcanic islands. —AFP

One scientist’s 30-year quest to get under Mars’ skin

PARIS — Philippe Lognonne has waited three decades to hear the heartbeat of Mars.

With a little luck and some help from NASA, the instrument he designed to take the Red Planet’s pulse will land before the year’s end and press a high-tech ear to its dusty surface.

As principal investigator for the Seismic Experiment for Interior Structure (SEIS), a multi-sensor seismometer, Lognonne will have a front-row seat for the scheduled launch on Saturday from Vandenberg Air Force Base in central California of NASA’s InSight mission.

But he’s keeping the champagne corked: three times in the past, Mars space missions featuring his ultra-sensitive seismometers have faltered, failed or been scrapped.

Lognonne’s herculean features are framed by a mop of shoulder-length auburn hair, a grizzled beard and white sideburns.

He has just turned 55, and has a weakness for Hawaiian shirts.

A researcher at the Institute of Earth Physics in Paris, Lognonne has explored the dynamics of tsunamis and deciphered non-tidal ocean changes but no tsunamis.

But from the start, his true passion and unwavering mission was to build the tools that could detect what’s going on under Mars’ red surface.

“This planet was habitable four billion years ago, and I want to understand why, bit by bit, it stopped being so,” Lognonne said in an interview at the Paris university where he teaches.

Soon after completing his PhD in 1989, the young scientist focused on designing a suite of seismometers — used on Earth to detect and measure earthquakes — that could probe deep beneath the Martian surface in search of answers. —AFP
Sierra Leone holds first national cleanup day

FREETOWN (SIERRA LEONE) — Sierra Leone on Saturday held its first “national cleaning day” under new President Julius Maada Bio as part of a campaign to improve hygiene and the work rate of civil servants.

In the capital Freetown’s largest slum Kroo Bay hundreds of men and women sifted through tons of household rubbish and plastic waste that had been clogging the drainage system.

Trader Adama Kamara who lives in the slum said he was pleased that President Bio was trying to improve the environment “because our country is too dirty.”

So much household waste is dumped in gutters that they constantly become blocked causing flooding during the rains, he said.

“Aft of the cleaning, the water can now easily flow through the drainage and empty into the sea, so I appreciate that and I’m happy for that,” he added.

Michael Aboidu Frazzer, a fisherman in his fifties, said the cleanup would have a big effect on the slum dwellers.

The area is “among the disaster prone communities in Freetown with a (a) perennial flood problem which often cause deaths and damage to properties during the rainy season,” he said.

The cleanup was announced by the President Bio’s office last month, two days after a rally in which Bio, a former general who was briefly in power in the 1990s, said he would be a stickler for “discipline.”

“I love the enthusiasm of the people... they clearly want to get their environment very clean,” he told AFP during a spot inspection in central Freetown.

“The process is going to continue (and it) will not stop at just once per month,” he said.

A monthly National Cleaning Day — in which public areas are cleaned of rubbish, trees planted and walls repainted — was brought in during the 1992-1996 junta led by Captain Valentine Strasser, who was overthrown by Bio, then his deputy.

The monthly cleanup was restored from time to time by following regimes.

Bio took office in early April after a tumultuous election campaign ending a decade-long rule by the All People’s Congress (APC).

One of the poorest countries on the planet, Sierra Leone wrestles with major problems of infrastructure, such as sewerage, roads and power.

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Death toll of Pakistan’s coal mine collapses rises to 23

ISLAMABAD — The death toll of Pakistan’s two separate coal mine collapses, which took place on Saturday, in northwest Balochistan province, rose to 23, officials said on Sunday.

Chief Inspector of Mines Iftikhar Ahmad said the death toll rose after five more bodies were recovered from a mine in Margi area near Quetta, the provincial capital of Balochistan.

According to the official, overall, seven people were killed and two others sustained serious injuries in the incident in Margi area. However, he said the reason behind the mine collapse has not been known yet.

Earlier on Saturday, local media reported that an explosion triggered by gas caused the incident. — AFP

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

MV TOVE MAERSK VOY. NO. ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V TOVE MAERSK VOY. NO. ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 7-5-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.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.

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Freak out: Telling a fashion life, Gaultier taps Nile Rodgers

WESTPORT (UNITED STATES) — Deciding how to tell his story as one of fashion’s edgiest designers, Jean Paul Gaultier knew there had to be music. And he knew it had to come from Nile Rodgers.

The designer who has brought playful and provocative clothes to the world’s runways for four decades is turning the focus to himself with an autobiographical show to open on 2 October in Paris.

More than a catwalk and not quite a musical, the genre-blurring “Fashion Freak Show” will bring out Gaultier’s iconic designs as well as new outfits and tell his life through actors, models and a live singer.

Spearheading the music will be the creator of “Le Freak” himself — Nile Rodgers, the force behind disco titans Chic and the behind-the-scenes producer for a who’s who of stars from Madonna to Daft Punk.

“Truly, honestly, if there was one person I would think about for the music, it was him,” Gaultier told AFP at Rodgers’ seafront home in Connecticut, the walls covered with guitars and framed records of the producer’s hits by artists including David Bowie and The B-52s.

“He is part of my life,” Gaultier said. “Everybody loves his songs, has danced to them, has been in love with someone because of his music.”

Rodgers — who affectionately calls the 66-year-old Gaultier, five months his senior, “J.P.” — said that the show would feature both new music and classic songs.

But Rodgers said he plans to rework some of the better-known tracks to serve as underscores during the show, which will take place at the celebrated Folies Bergere cabaret hall.

“When you’re dealing with a theatrical piece, you are absolutely dealing with an emotional arc,” Rodgers said. “And that emotional arc may not be served properly with the original music. It has to change a bit.”

Fashion to advance music

Gaultier has been deeply involved in the music world. In 1989, he recorded a now-obscur dance track, “How to Do That,” his vocals delivered in his rapid-fire, irresistibly enthusiastic yet heavily accented English.

But his biggest influence in music came through his work with Madonna.

He designed some of the more headline-grabbing items from her “Blond Ambition” tour in 1990 including her bullet-like cone bra and the golden corset she sported when she sang “Like a Virgin,” a track produced by Rodgers.

Gaultier, who has also designed clothes for Beyonce, Kylie Minogue, Lady Gaga and Rihanna as well as plenty of Hollywood royalty, rocked the fashion world by mixing up traditional gender roles and has been wildly experimental when imagining costumes for films such as Luc Besson’s science-fiction “The Fifth Element.”

But the French designer, who was inspired as a child by playing in his grandmother’s closet, said he sees more creativity in music. PHOTO: AFP

Creating an ‘emotion’

Rodgers, sporting a white sports coat made of a collage of newspaper prints, said he did consider fashion to be art — but saw the overwhelming power of music.

“It’s the only art that changes you down the street,” Rodgers said.

The “Fashion Freak Show” is scheduled to run through April. Rodgers said he imagined shaking it up frequently, including making adjustments during intermission, and could envision creating a television version.

“What we’re trying to create is not only an experience that happens with you, but I think an emotion that you internalize and that you take back home with you,” Rodgers said. —AFP

Gaultier, who was inspired as a child by playing in his grandmother’s closet, says he sees more creativity in music. PHOTO: AFP

Films in the running for the top prize at Cannes

PARIS — From an African-American detective infiltrating the Ku Klux Klan to Kurdish female fighters battling jihadists, here are the movies that will battle it out for the top Palme d’Or prize at the Cannes film festival this week:

Everybody Knows

Iranian master Asghar Farhadi kicks off the festival with a psychological thriller about a family reunion going awry, featuring Spanish stars Penelope Cruz and Javier Bardem. While Farhadi, 45, won an Oscar and the Golden Bear at Berlin for his 2011 breakthrough film, “A Separation”, he is yet to take home the coveted Cannes prize.

BlacKkKlansman

US director and activist Spike Lee’s drama is based on the real-life story of an African-American police officer who infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan in 1978. John David Washington plays him with Adam Driver as his Jewish police partner. The film will open in the US on the first anniversary of a white supremacist march in Charlottesville where an anti-racism activist was killed.

Under the Silver Lake

Four years after giving Cannes audiences nightmares with his thriller “It Follows”, David Robert Mitchell returns with another spine-chiller, this time about the mysterious murder of a billionaire.

Dogman

Italian director Matteo “Gomorra” Garrone’s new work is not for the faint-hearted. Dubbed an “urban Western”, the film is inspired by the gruesome murder by dog groomer and cocaine addict Pietro De Negri in the late 1980s.

Three Faces

Little is known about this portrait of three women by the Iranian dissident Jafar Panahi, who is banned from travel to Tehran. The festival and US director Oliver Stone have pleaded with the authorities to let the director, who has faced years of harassment and arrest, to fly to Cannes to show his film.

Leto

Russia’s Kirill Serebrennikov is another director who may not be able to present his work at Cannes. Under house arrest over highly disputed allegations of embezzlement, his film focuses on Soviet rock star Viktor Tsoi and the birth of Russian underground music in the 1980s. —AFP

Spike Lee’s drama is based on the real-life story of an African-American police officer who infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan. PHOTO: AFP
After death, Hawking cuts ‘multiverse’ theory down to size

PARIS — With a science paper published after his death, Stephen Hawking has revived debate on a deeply divisive question for cosmologists: Is our Universe just one of many in an infinite, ever-expanding “multiverse”?

According to one school of thought, the cosmos started expanding exponentially after the Big Bang.

In most parts, this expansion or “inflation” continues eternally, except for a few pockets where it stops.

These pockets are where universes like ours are formed — multitudes of them that are often likened to “bubbles” in an ever-expanding ocean dubbed the multiverse.

Many scientists don’t like the idea, including Hawking, who said in an interview last year: “I have never been a fan of the multiverse.” If we do live in an ever-inflating multiverse, it would mean the laws of physics and chemistry can differ from one universe to another, a concept that scientists struggle to accept.

In his last contribution to cosmology, Hawking — with co-author Thomas Hertog from the KU Leuven university in Belgium — does not dismiss the multiverse concept, but proposes dramatically scaling it down.

“We are not down to a single, unique universe,” the University of Cambridge quoted Hawking as saying of the paper submitted before his death on 14 March and published this week in the Journal of High Energy Physics.

However, “our findings imply a significant reduction of the multiverse, to a much smaller range of possible universes.”

The new hypothesis relies on a branch of theoretical physics known as string theory, and concludes that the cosmos is “clearly finite”, Hertog told AFP, though still composed of numerous universes.

‘Fringe idea’

“It is a debate that touches on the very foundations of cosmology,” Hertog said.

“The underlying question is whether we can achieve a deeper understanding of where the laws of nature come from, and whether they are unique.”

Not everyone likes the new theory. “The idea that we live in a ‘multiverse’ is a fringe idea in a small part of a subfield of the physics community,” said theoretical physicist Sabine Hossenfelder of the Frankfurt Institute for Advanced Studies.

“Nobody who does serious science works with the multiverse because it’s utterly useless,” she told AFP. The main problem, Hossenfelder explains, is that any multiverse theory is “underdetermined” and “doesn’t contain enough information to make calculations”.

For detractors, a multiverse theory complicates our understanding of our own Universe. But it has its defenders too.

For astrophysicist Aurelien Barrau of Laboratory of Subatomic Physics and Cosmology in Paris, “the concept makes sense.”

“It is remarkable that today numerous types of universe can be envisaged. Several theories, reliable for some and speculative for others, lead to the prediction of a multiverse,” he said.

For Hertog, the new theory is a step in the right direction.

“It makes the cosmology more predictive, a lot... stronger as a scientific theory and therefore ultimately, we hope, testable”, he explains on the UK Leuven website.

‘Assumptions’

Hossenfelder disagrees.

She described the new theory as just another “variant” of eternal inflation, “with some additional assumptions on top of it.”

Thomas Hertog, who co-authored work on the multiverse concept with Hawking, says the measurement of gravitational waves can help determine whether the theory is scientifically sound.

Hertog hopes to use gravitational waves, ripples in the fabric of spacetime caused by black hole collisions, supernova explosions, or the formation of the early Universe, to test the new hypothesis he created with Hawking.—AFP

Japanese manga strip fetches record price at Paris auction

PARIS — A rare series of sketch-es of Japanese manga artist Osamu Tezuka’s robot character Astro Boy sold for a record 269,400 euros in an auction in Paris Saturday.

“It’s a world record for this artist whose works are few in the market,” said Eric Leroy, an expert on comic strips in the auction house Artcurial.

The winning bid was five times the pre-sale estimate and Leroy put this down to “the rarity and exceptional character” of the China ink and water colour strip measuring 35 centimetres by 25 centimetres. It drawn at the end of the 1950s and comprises six panels showing Astro Boy fighting an enemy. The buyer was a “European collector who had been dreaming for a long time” of buying the sketch, he said.

“Astro Boy is an emblematic work which has nursed a whole generation of collectors,” he said.

Astro Boy was serialised in Japan from 1952 to 1968 centred around an android with human emotions who is sold to a robot circus but saved from servitude by a professor who creates a robotic family for him.—AFP

Sagai silver artisans worth the visit

SILVER has a special place in many of Myanmar’s revered celebrations. For example, on special occasions silver bowls are used for pouring water, arranging flowers, sprinkling scented water, and silver kettles are used to pour water droplets during donations.

With such a prestigious place in Myanmar’s culture, you can be sure to find the Myanmar’s finest and most defining art and motifs on these silver paraphernalia. Indeed, detailed depictions of flowers and folklore can be seen engraved on pieces of silver and for the finishing touch. This is the initial stage of the process and the silverware then goes through a detailing artisan process where the famous motifs are engraved onto it.

Most artisans give the silverware its coloring by washing in a concoction made from soapberries and then brushed and polished. The entire process takes time and requires patience. Another common usage of silver is in producing shields and trophies for competitions.

—Nwe Nadi, Myit Nge

Traditional silverware on display at a stall. PHOTO: MNA

The red carpet of the premiere of ‘Astro Boy’ at the Chinese Theater in Los Angeles. PHOTO: AFP
Myanmar wins two gold medals at 2018 Asian Dragon Boat Championship in Taipei

MYANMAR claimed two gold medals at the 2018 Asian Dragon Boat Championship held in Chinese Taipei after completing the matches on 6 May.

Myanmar displayed a great performance at the Day 1 matches of the championship on 5 May and earned a gold medal in the 200-metre boat racing competition for men and women athletes, followed by China teams in the second and third places.

Similarly, Myanmar won another gold medal on 6 May in the 500-metre boat racing competition, followed by China teams in the second and third places.

Some 28 athletes competed in the championship. The Myanmar team will compete in another category on 7 May (today).— Phoe Thaw Zin

Myanmar Dragon Boat team seen with their gold medals at the 2018 Asian Dragon Boat Championship in Chinese Taipei yesterday. PHOTO: MRCF

Myanmar women football team to play friendlies in Thailand

AS part of the preparation for AFF Women’s Championship 2018, Myanmar National Women football team will play three friendly matches in Thailand in June according to an official from Myanmar Football Federation.

Myanmar’s women team is headed by its brilliant head coach U Win Thu Moe. Myanmar’s women team will depart for Thailand at the beginning of June and will play friendly matches against Thailand’s national women team on 12 June, Thailand women’s club on 14 June and Thailand’s national women team on 16 June respectively.

The 2018 AFF Women’s Championship is the 9th edition of the AFF Women’s Championship, organised by the ASEAN Football Federation (AFF).

The tournament will be hosted by Indonesia from 30 June to 13 July 2018 and both Thailand and Myanmar will participate in the tournament.

Thailand and Myanmar will participate in the tournament. Myanmar falls into Group B together with Viet Nam, the Philippines, Indonesia and Singapore while Thailand is in Group A along with Australia, Malaysia, Timor Leste and the Philippines.

LONDON — Messages of support continued to pour in as legendary football manager Sir Alex Ferguson fought for his life following emergency surgery for a brain haemorrhage.

Considered the most successful manager in the history of British football, Ferguson won 38 major trophies in just over 26 years in charge of Manchester United, including 13 Premier League titles and the UEFA Champions League twice.

It is a measure of the Scot’s success on the pitch, and his stature off it that tributes poured in from around the world of sport, and beyond, to wish the 76-year-old a speedy recovery after he underwent surgery on Saturday.

“Everyone at AC Milan wishes Sir Alex Ferguson a full and speedy recovery,” said a statement by the seven-time European champions on their official Twitter page early Sunday morning.

Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri, who is on the verge of leading the Turin giants to a seventh successive Serie A crown, said: “Stay strong Alex Ferguson.”

News of Ferguson’s condition also had an impact beyond the world of football.

Top American baseball side the Chicago White Sox posted a heartfelt message on their Twitter page a week after one of their players, Danny Farquhar, recently suffered a brain haemorrhage while sitting in the team dugout.

“The stand with the community in sending our positive thoughts to Sir Alex Ferguson,” said the message on @whitesox.

“Having been recently impacted by a brain haemorrhage in our own family we know the dramatic impact it causes, and the strength that can be drawn from those who care.”

Ferguson, who retired from management five years ago, appeared in good health when presenting a commemorative vase to old rival Arsene Wenger, who is stepping down as Arsenal manager, at United’s Old Trafford ground last week.

But on Saturday an ambulance was called to the Scot’s home in Cheddle, near Manchester, at 9:00 am (0800 GMT).

Concerns for Ferguson’s health mounted when it was announced his son, Darren, the manager of English third-tier club Doncaster, would miss his side’s match against Wigan because of “family reasons”.

News of Ferguson’s operation was made public by United in a statement that appeared to be cautiously optimistic about his prospects for recovery. “Sir Alex Ferguson has undergone emergency surgery today for a brain haemorrhage,” the statement said on Saturday.—AFP