State Counsellor receives China’s Special Envoy for Asian Affairs

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi (Right) welcomes Vice Chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Mr. Wang Zhengwei (Left) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Independent media group collects news in Maungtaw

By Min Min Zaw (MNA)

An independent media group including foreign journalists arrived at Angu Maw Port in Yathedaung Township, yesterday morning. The media group reached Inn Din village and met the local people to gather news.

Next, the group travelled to Kainggyi (Mro) village in Maungtaw Township, and interviewed Village Administrator U San Htun. They then continued to the Maungtaw District General Administration Department, where Maungtaw District Deputy Commissioner U Ye Htut explained the work for stability, the rule of law and resettlement and development in Rakhine State. He also briefed on terrorists attacks by ARSA in 2016 and 2017, and actions taken against the ARSA terrorists in accordance with the law, measures for food sufficiency, and readiness for repatriation of returnees from Bangladesh. **SEE PAGE-3**

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MPs to debate taking loan from CDB to cover Govt account deficit

Later, the matter of taking a local loan from the Central Bank of Myanmar to cover the government accounts deficit of Ks641.029 billion, sent by the President, was explained by U Maung Maung Win and Central Bank of Myanmar Deputy Governor U Bo Bo Nge. The Central Bank of Myanmar will issue government treasury bonds, which will be auctioned monthly to cover the deficit.

An announcement was then made for the Hluttaw representatives who wanted to discuss the matter to enrol their names. This was followed by Joint Bill Committee member U Thein Lwin reading the committee’s report on its findings and the report on the bill amending the Early Childhood Development Law, over which the two Hluttaw were in disagreement. An announcement was then made for the Hluttaw representatives who wanted to discuss the bill to enrol their names.

Ministers explain utilization of foreign loans

Later, the status of project-wise utilisation of foreign loans, approved by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw up to 31 March 2017, was explained by the deputy ministers.

Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Aung Soe said 246 million yuan from the Exim Bank of China for procurement of vehicles and vessels for the Myanmar Police Force was obtained during the term of the first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw. During the term of the second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, 50 million euros in loan was obtained from Poland to equip the Fire Services Department with firefighting vehicles and equipment. Similarly, Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw explained the ministry’s rural development and poverty reduction micro-financing loans provided to cooperatives through foreign loans. Some 3,899 pieces of farm machinery were sold to cooperative members farmers under an instalment system. Under the poverty reduction regional development project phase 1, some 23 water distribution works were conducted in 23 townships of 10 states and regions.

In the poverty reduction regional development project phase 2, the construction of a roughing transit centre, where they inpected the preparedness of the clinic, obstetrics room and the medical teams. —MNA

Mobile team provides health care to people in Buthidaung, Maungtaw

The Ministry of Health and Sports is providing healthcare services without discrimination to the local populace in Rakhine State, according to the medical code of ethic.

A mobile team from the Ministry of Health and Sports went to Buthidaung and Maungtaw townships in Rakhine State on 20 and 21 May to strengthen the healthcare services being provided there.

The mobile team, led by the Ministry of Health and Sports, Deputy Director-General Dr. Thaung Hlaing from Nay Pyi Taw and head of Rakhine State Public Health Department Dr. Kyi Lwin, visited Buthidaung People’s Hospital on 20 May and Maungtaw People’s Hospital on 21 May to observe the healthcare services provided, the status of constructing a small blood bank and the ward extension works in the hospital. They also met with medical staff and provided the necessary support.

On 21 May, the team visited Taung Pyo (Letwe) Hospital in Maungtaw Township, and viewed the healthcare services provided by the hospital and the construction of additional wards and apartments for the staff. They also checked the preparations made to provide healthcare services to the returnees. Further, they visited the Hla Pho Khaung transit centre, where they inspected the preparedness of the clinic, obstetrics room and the medical teams. —MNA

Weather

Rainfall to increase in southern Myanmar areas

Rainfall is likely to increase in southern Myanmar areas in the next two days, as the weather is slightly cloudy to partly cloudy over the North Bay, and partly cloudy over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal, according to the Myanmar Daily weather report issued by the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology yesterday. The forecast for Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and neighbouring areas for today is isolated rain or thundershowers, and the degree of certainty is 80 per cent, whereas Mandalay and the neighbouring area will see isolated rainfall or thunderstorms, and the degree of certainty is 80 per cent.

Sea waves will be slight to moderate in Myanmar’s waters, and the wave height will be some 3-7 feet off and along Myanmar’s coast.

Low-pressure like to form over Southwest of Bay of Bengal

A low-pressure area is also likely to form over Southwest of Bay of Bengal within next 48 hours, according to observation of the Meteorology and Hydrology Department at 1.30 pm yesterday. —GNLM
Civil aviation department to take action against UAE pilot flying in no-fly zone

THE Department of Civil Aviation has released an official notice to take suitable action against the pilot of a UAE Emirates flight for flying close to a prohibited airspace.

The department will also send an official notice to the civil aviation department on the UAE’s side, so that the relevant airline and department can perform the necessary investigations and contact Myanmar’s side.

Director U Soe Paing of the civil aviation department told reporters that his department had sent a notice to the Dubai-based airline via an operation manager in Yangon yesterday. “They will have their own procedures on how to deal with this. They will reply informing us about the course of action they will take,” said U Soe Paing. He added that his department would soon send an official notice to the UAE side about the action they would take.

The civil aviation department has restricted any aircraft from flying below an altitude of 24,000 feet over the Yangon civil area, including the Shwedagon Pagoda. However, on 20 March at 6.55 p.m., a Boeing 777-31H(ER), en route from Yangon to Phnom Penh, flew at a low altitude over Yangon City.

Upon investigation, the pilot replied that he crossed the restricted airspace due to weather conditions.

“He said that soon after takeoff, the weather was not favourable for flying and to avoid potential danger to the passengers, he meant to turn the plane around and passed through the no-fly zone,” said Director U Soe Paing. “However, international rules indicate that under no circumstances should an aircraft cross the no-fly zone. We will take action according to standard protocol.”—Shin Min

State Counsellor receives China’s Special Envoy for Asian Affairs

DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI, State Counsellor of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, received Mr. Sun Guoxiang, Special Envoy for Asian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at 11.15 a.m. in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. During the meeting, they discussed matters related to bilateral relations and cooperation, the peace process and the situation in Rakhine State.—MNA

Independent media group collects news in Maungtaw

They proceeded to Hla Pho Khaung transit centre, which is a temporary camp for people who are to be accepted systematically by repatriation camps. U Tin Soe, person in charge of the camp, detailed out the readiness for the repatriation process and replied to questions raised by the media personnel.

The media group visited Pan Taw Pyin village, where U Annawar, the Village Administrator of Pan Taw Pyin, spoke about terrorist attacks, the process of repatriation, new village construction, matters of NV Cards, and development of work processes and the socio-economic status of the region. Later, they went to the Kanyintan market and collected news.

The media group included journalists and reporters from Tokyo Shinbun, TV Asahi, Nikkei Shinbun, Yunnan, Xinhua, Guangming Daily, CRI, Myanmar Time, Financial Time, ARD (German TV), RFT (Radio France International), and Belgian Newspaper.

The Union Government arranged media trips to Maungtaw, Rakhine State for local and foreign independent media to cover the peace and development in Maungtaw following the armed attacks on 9th October 2016.
Coord meeting held for competitions heralding International Day against Drug Abuse, Illicit Trafficking

A COORDINATION meeting for holding competitions to mark the 21st International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Sittway, Rakhine was held at the Rakhine State cabinet office yesterday.

During the meeting, matters related to painting, cartoon, poster, digital painting and ad-lib competitions were discussed.

In his remark at the meeting, Col. Phone Tint, Rakhine State Minister for Security and Border Affairs and Chairman of Rakhine State Committee for Prevention from the Dangers of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, said that students from basic education and higher education schools could participate in the competition. He also urged the relevant departmental officials to cooperate in organising the competitions.

Rakhine State Minister for Social Affairs Dr. Chan Tha then discussed increasing the prize amount to draw the interest of the students and said students from all districts in the state must take part in the competition.

Officials from universities and the state education office discussed holding the event successfully and the strengths and weaknesses of the competitions held in the past years, to which secretary of Rakhine State Committee for Prevention from the Dangers of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, and the head of state police force provided additional discussions. —Tin Tun (IPRD)

Over 850 criminal cases registered in Yangon Region in one-and-a-half years

By Nyein Nyein

Some 856 criminal cases, including 300 murder cases, were reported in the Yangon Region in one-and-a-half years, said Minister for Security and Border Affairs of the Yangon Region Government Col. Aung Soe Moe.

U Zaw Win Naing, Hluttaw Representative of Latha Township constituency (1), demanded to the court and 26 cases were closed. Five cases of animal theft and possession of ammunition were registered.

Some 806 cases were submitted to the court, while 24 cases were closed for lack of strong evidence. The number of robbery cases was submitted to the police, while 14 cases are being investigated and nine cases were closed. One case of kidnapping has been submitted to the court, said Col. Aung Soe Moe.

Moreover, of the 460 cases of rape that occurred within one-and-a-half years, 456 cases were submitted to the court, while two cases are still being investigated and two cases were closed for lack of strong evidence. The number of burglary cases that occurred, one case was submitted to the court and two cases were closed for lack of strong evidence.

Five cases of animal theft were submitted to the court. Of the two cases of illegal association, one case was submitted to the court and one case was closed for lack of strong evidence. No cases of treason, and possession of arms and ammunition were registered. Of the 856 cases that occurred within one-and-a-half years, some 806 cases were submitted to the court and 26 cases were being investigated, while 22 cases were closed for lack of strong evidence, said Col. Aung Soe Moe.

“The number of criminal cases dropped due to preventive activities. For security purposes and to uphold the rule of law, the police carried out patrols and prevented 85,683 cases,” he added.

The police work together with local communities to investigate the cases, he added.

Welding fire triggers fire in Mandalay Zaycho Market

A fire that started from a welding spark destroyed the fourth floor of Mandalay Zaycho Myan- mar plaza at 84 street between 27 and 28 streets in Chanayeth- asan Township, Mandalay, on 22 May.

The accident occurred in the afternoon, when the workers were at the construction site of a cinema in the market. Some sparks from the welding work spilled on the soundproof cork which was used to decorate the ceiling of a 50x30 room. The fire quickly spread out of control. It took 16 fire engines and several firemen to put out the blaze. The police station has taken action against four workers under section 285 of the Penal Code.—Than Zaw Min (IPRD)
Eel hatching with Viet Nam’s technology reaps results

By May Thet Hnin

THE experimental cultivation of Myanmar-origin eels with the use of Viet Nam technology has shown positive results after seven months.

“Last year, officials from the Myanmar Fishery Federation (MFF) went on a study tour to Viet Nam, where eel cultivation has been successful, and now, we have successfully conducted experimental eel farming,” said Daw Toe Nanda Tin, vice president of MFF.

“MFF is proud to achieve the first ever eel cultivation in Myanmar. This will help enhance rural development,” she said.

Starting from August 2017, eel varieties from across Myanmar were stocked for eel hatching operations that began in October last year.

More than 200 eel larvae were produced in the past two weeks and more eggs were hatched. Currently, the two-week-old larvae are fed stuff produced from the feed processing factory. The larvae will pass the nursery stage after three weeks, explained Daw Toe Nanda Tin.

“After hatching, the larvae will be kept in a five-square feet lake as they grow. Now, they are in the nursery stage. If larvae can be farmed with fish feed powder produced from the feed factory, they can be farmed anywhere in the country,” she added.

The MFF studied the whole hatching process, in cooperation with the Zoology Department of Yangon University, and they will conduct research and share their hatching techniques.

The MFF aims to convert eel cultivation into a commercial business. It is preparing to stock eel species from the eel producing regions to proceed with further production.

Currently, the eel population in Myanmar is dropping owing to illegal fishing methods, such as electrocuting.

Myanmar’s eels are mainly sent to China. An eel can produce 200 to 1,000 eggs. If the experimental eel cultivation process improves further, many more fish farmers will farm eels. Additionally, the MFF will import 1,000 Viet Nam-origin snakehead murrel, climbing perch and river catfish soon to conduct fish hatching.

Sein Ta Lone mangoes’ export takes air, sea routes to S’pore, Russia, China

SOME 10 tonnes of the Sein Ta Lone (Diamond Solitaire) mangoes are being exported via air and sea routes to Singapore, Russia and China every day since 8 May. Myanmar’s Sein Ta Lone mangoes have penetrated foreign markets since 2010, and the demand for this variety has become stronger in the international market since 2013.

“Local cultivators control the quality of mangoes. Therefore, the demand for the Sein Ta Lone mangoes is high. This year, local cultivators have produced more Sein Ta Lone mangoes,” said Daw Lat Lat Oo from Myanmar Shwe Fruit Company.

Earlier, traders only bought mangoes that weighed 250 grams per fruit. However, traders are now buying mangoes that weigh 220, 240, 300, 350 and 400 grams per fruit, according to requests made by local cultivators. Traders usually choose the fruits after measuring the weight and size.

“Local cultivators requested traders to buy even the small-sized mangoes. We select the fruits using a machine to weigh their size. The price of mangoes depends on their size. The mangoes are brought to Yangon in air-con container vehicles and then exported via Singapore airline,” she added.

Traders usually buy the Sein Ta Lone mangoes that are cultivated mainly in Patheingyi, Kyaukse and Singu townships in the Mandalay Region. They are then sent to China in air-con container vehicles via the 165 mile border gate. Traders also distribute the fruits via air. The Mandalay Region does not have a direct airline. Therefore, traders export mangoes to Singapore and Russia from the Yangon airport.

Exporters only buy Sein Ta Lone mangoes that are of good quality, colour and are flawless. From 8 May, Myanmar has been exporting mangoes weighing some 8 to 10 tonnes per day via an airline from the Yangon airport. Myanmar exported the Sein Ta Lone mangoes via sea routes recently.—Khine Set Wai

CBM increases exchange rate to Ks1,351

WITH the US dollar appreciating both in the global and domestic markets, the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) raised its set exchange rate to Ks1,351 per dollar yesterday.

On 21 May, the CBM set the US dollar exchange rate at Ks1,348. The US dollar index reached 94 on 21 May, resulting in a high exchange rate in the local currency market.

Kyat appreciation against the dollar was strong during the pre-Thingyan period. However, the US dollar exchange rate after the Thingyan Festival was on the higher side owing to high imports and remittances of importers, along with a rise in the US dollar value in the global currency market.

The US dollar to Kyat interbank exchange rate in Myanmar’s currency market has risen from Ks1,325 in the post-Thingyan period. The rate showed a steady rise, and it peaked up to Ks1,350 on 21 May.

The dollar selling price was around Ks1,351, while the buying price was Ks1,348, according to money exchange counters yesterday.—Mon Mon
YC CDC continues monitoring Htein Bin garbage dump

THE Yangon City Development Committee (YC CDC) has been continually monitoring the Htein Bin garbage dump and is also working to reduce the methane gas inside, said Deputy In-charge Dr. Aung Myint Maw of the Environmental Conservation and Cleaning Department.

“The fire has been extinguished but the garbage dump still emits methane gas, so we are monitoring it daily. The fire burned 150 acres of the landfill, and the methane is trapped there. So, we are digging pathways through the garbage that will divide the 150 acres into 50-acre cubes and release the methane inside,” said Dr. Aung Myint Maw. He said the YCDC was working on the first 50 acres where the fire occurred.

The task will require 100 YCDC staff and machinery to pave concrete or gravel roads and dirt roads to transport garbage.

The canals surrounding the dump have been built to accumulate rainwater; and the same will be done for other garbage dumps so as to prevent future fires.

The Htein Bin garbage dump is currently being monitored daily by 10 firefighters and 40 YCDC staff with four fire engines.

The Htein Bin fire broke out on 21 April and was successfully extinguished 12 days later on 2 May, with the combined strength of firefighters (including reserves), YCDC staff, staff from the Department of Irrigation and Water Utilisation Management, military officers, police officers, and Myanmar Red Cross members. Authorities divided the burning area into four zones (A, B, C, D) on 29 April and extinguished one zone per day.—Zaw Gyi

Jade scavenger killed in slag heap collapse

A jade scavenger died in a slag-heap collapse at an abandoned jade mine in Phakant Township, Kachin State yesterday morning.

The accident happened when a jade scavenger identified as U Chong Chin, 58 years of age from Seikmu Village was killed after a 50 ft high slag-heap crumbled at a jade mine abandoned by Triple One Jade Mining Company near Baunzachauk Village in Phakant Township. Firefighters and rescue workers from local social organizations went to the scene to carry out search operations. The corpse was transferred to a hospital in Phakant.

—Win Naing (Kachin Land)
Facebook boss to apologise to European Parliament over data scandal

BRUSSEL — Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg will say sorry to the European Parliament on Tuesday, pledging that the social media giant has learned hard lessons from a massive data breach of users’ personal data.

Zuckerberg’s comments, released in advance of the hearing in Brussels, are the latest part of a tour of contrition over the Cambridge Analytica scandal that began in the US Congress in April.

"Whether it’s fake news, foreign interference in elections or developers misusing people’s information, we didn’t take a broad enough view of our responsibilities," Zuckerberg will say, according to prepared remarks e-mailed to AFP.

"That was a mistake, and I’m sorry." The Facebook chief’s grilling by the European Parliament will be live-streamed to the public after he staged a U-turn on Monday and agreed to a webcast, in a further bid to limit the fallout from the data scandal.

Angry EU lawmakers had objected to initial plans for it to be held behind closed doors.

Facebook admitted that up to 87 million users may have had their data hijacked by British consultancy Cambridge Analytica, which worked for US President Donald Trump during his 2016 campaign.

The Silicon Valley giant has told the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, that the personal data of up to 2.7 million Europeans may have been sent inappropriately to Cambridge Analytica, which has since filed for bankruptcy in the US. — AFP

The EU laws will cover large tech companies like Facebook, Google, and Twitter that use personal data
We can promote water transport system through PPPs

However, large investments will be needed to boost the navigability of our rivers, as water transport is the most competitive transport solution.

Closing the transport infrastructure gap is a key focus between Thilawa Port and Shwe Pyit Tha Shwe Me (Black Gold) Yangon Port handled more than 6 million tonnes of goods in the rain season has set in, farmers start looking the fields. Indeed, it is a good opportunity for daily wage earners to get involved in the trade. In the Thilawa port area, two international standard multi-purpose terminals were constructed.

We can promote water transport system through PPPs

2.6 million tonnes in 1992-1993 to 1.38 million tonnes last FY. The commodity trade. In the Thilawa port area, two international standard multi-purpose terminals were constructed. Yangon Port handled more than 6 million tonnes of goods after it was upgraded this year to handle huge vessels. This was a quick achievement after the port and navigation were upgraded.

Moreover, the Ministry of Transport and Communications has planned to deepen the stretch of Ayeyarwady and Irrawaddy rivers from near the sea to Chindwin River to at least 2 metres. This would allow 200-tonne vessels to navigate the rivers all year round.

The Directorate of Water Transport and Improvement of River Systems has completed 13 waterways improvements projects and 21 projects to prevent coastal erosion by constructing retaining walls and dykes measuring some 28,000 feet in the 2017-2018 fiscal year (FY).

A containment beach was constructed with the assistance of Japan International Cooperation Agency last year. The aim is to transport goods along the Ayeyarwady River between Yangon and Mandalay, as well as to transport containers between Thilawa Port and Shwe Pyi Tha Shwe Me (Black Gold) Port. These efforts are aiming at cost-efficient means to economic development, as well as to rural development.

However, large investments will be needed to boost the navigability of our rivers, as water transport is the most competitive transport solution.

According to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the total waterborne traffic in 2017-2018 was 122 million tonnes.

The Committee handles all the complaints and preliminary investigations have been made about them. Investigations are made whether the complaints are in accord with the existing laws or not, the relative of the deceased are genuine or not, the injured person himself/herself is to get compensation or not and the person died in an office or factory or not,” explained an official from the Ministry of Immigration and Manpower Planning. These officers are being carried out for those workers who are not members of the Social Security. Although the Act was promulgated a long time ago, it would be beneficial for injured or disabled workers in some ways.

Types of compensations

Under the specifications of the Compensation Act, there are four types: fatal, loss of limb, permanent or temporary disability if an employee dies in workplace, 26 hours of the deceased’s salary should be given between K. 155,000 and K. 430,000 according to the Act. For those disabled persons 36 times or 14% of their salary will be calculated, permanent or non-disabled person will be awarded with K.20,000 to K.60,000.

A notice to the owners

“In our tea shop, a child accidentally ground his hand in the powerful belt of sugar cane grinder. I sent him to hospital at my own expense and did everything for him for compensation purposes through law courts. As owners, we are totally responsible for occupational accidents or hazards. We should solve the problems publicly but with a clear conscience.” Explained an employer how a child was compensated legally.

Ministries hold press conference on second one-year performance

Receiving compensation for occupational hazards

By Khin Yadanar

If a worker gets injured or disabled, they are given a reward with 27 beneficiaries, settling with a total of 19 cases of accidents were awarded with financial rewards with 27 beneficiaries, settling with a total of K.44519480. The compensation sums are relatively lower than the current prevailing prices of commodities. But these have eased up or more new,” said U Kyaw Myint who takes care of rights for the workers. “If you are not satisfied with the amount of compensation payments, or decisions handed down by the authorities concerned, you have a right to lodge a complaint to the Township Labour Office,” continued U Kyaw Myint.

The Labour Directorate managed to give financial benefits to the eight cases of occupational fatalities during the past financial year. In addition, 15 cases of accidents were awarded with financial rewards with 27 beneficiaries, settling with a total of K.44519480. The compensation sums are relatively lower than the current prevailing prices of commodities. But these have eased up or more new,” said U Kyaw Myint who takes care of rights for the workers. “If you are not satisfied with the amount of compensation payments, or decisions handed down by the authorities concerned, you have a right to lodge a complaint to the Township Labour Office,” continued U Kyaw Myint.

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Kremlin spokesman dismisses US media allegations on Russian arms, says ‘trust Putin’

MOSCOW — Journalists should rather trust Russian President Vladimir Putin instead of listening to reports of their American colleagues regarding allegedly unsuccessful tests of Russia’s cutting-edge weaponry, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday.

“Listen to Russian President Vladimir Putin and trust him,” Peskov told journalists, commenting on the US television channel CNBC’s recent report about failed tests of Russia’s most advanced weapons.

In his State of the Nation Address to both houses of Russia’s parliament on 1 March, Putin announced about the development and trials of the most advanced strategic weapons Russia was creating in response to Washington’s unilateral withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and the deployment of the missile shield both on the territory of the United States and outside its national borders. CNBC reported on Tuesday, citing its unnamed sources that new generation missiles mentioned in Putin’s address two months ago allegedly failed the trials.

The breakthrough weapons include the Sarmat new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), the Kinzhal hypersonic missile, the nuclear-powered cruise missile and the drone submarine that can be armed with both conventional and nuclear charges.

The Russian leader stressed that Russia’s growing military might was a reliable guarantee of peace on the planet while all the work to strengthen the country’s defence capability had been carried out within the framework of existing arms control international treaties.

—Tass

EU fears offer to US not enough to end trade row

BRUSSELS — The EU’s own top trade official warned on Tuesday that the bloc’s last-ditch bid to persuade US President Donald Trump to back off stiff tariffs on metals imports from Europe fell short of expectations in Washington.

Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom spoke ahead of talks of the EU’s 28 trade ministers to discuss an attempt to woo the US away from punishing steel and aluminium tariffs and win Europe a similar break as handed China.

Europe was hit by the shock tariffs in March, part of the protectionist president’s threat of an “America First” trade war with Washington’s closest partners, including Canada, Mexico and Japan.

“If we are exempted, then we are willing to engage in talks and see how we can facilitate trade relations,” said Malmstrom.

She has spearheaded a series of talks with US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, a stalwart of Trump’s hardball tactics who also plays a role in the parallel negotiations with China.

But asked if she thought the EU’s gesture to the US was acceptable to Washington, Malmstrom answered: “I think they don’t think it’s enough.”

The ministers will take encouragement from the US-China development on Sunday with Washington and Beijing backing off from tit-for-tat tariffs after reaching an as-yet unspecified accord on slashing the massive American trade deficit with China.

The European Union has said it refuses all trade talks with the United States unless Washington grants a permanent exemption from the painful steel and aluminium tariffs that are set to kick in on 1 June.

“We are allies but we are not vassals. Today is a moment of truth for the EU,” said French trade minister Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne as he arrived for the talks.

EU trade ministers will discuss a plan laid out by EU leaders at a summit last week for a limited EU-US trade deal as well as opening up the European market to US natural gas — if the exemption is granted. Europe’s incentives come with a threat to retaliate against the US with European tariffs on American imports, including iconic items such as Harley-Davidson motorbikes and bourbon whiskey.

These counter-measures will officially become enforceable on 20 June, but Europeans have committed to not use them as long as talks with the US are ongoing.—AFP

An egg a day may keep heart disease away

BRUSSELS — Eating an egg each day appears to be linked to a lower risk of heart disease among middle-aged Chinese, according to a study published online in the British Journal of Heart.

The study, authored by a group of Chinese scientists, analyzed data from over half a million Chinese aged 30 to 79 from 10 diverse survey sites in China during the period from 2004 to 2006, and have since been followed up to determine their morbidity and mortality rates.

“Our findings contribute scientific evidence to the dietary guidelines with regard to egg consumption for the healthy Chinese adult,” said the scientists.

The study linked eating an egg a day with lowering the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) by 11 per cent, ischemic heart disease by 12 per cent, major coronary events by 14 percent, hemorrhagic stroke by 26 per cent as well as ischemic stroke by 18 percent.

Daily consumers of eggs also have an 18 per cent lower risk of CVD death and a 28 percent lower risk of hemorrhagic stroke death compared to non-consumers, it showed.

Eggs are a prominent source of dietary cholesterol, causing concern that eating too many may be unhealthy. But they also contain high-quality protein, many vitamins and bioactive components.

In recent years, more scientific evidence has emerged for the positive impact eggs have on human health. Previous studies focusing on a link between eating eggs and heart disease mostly had smaller sample sizes, fewer CVD events and were unable to obtain accurate estimates on stroke subtypes, said the Chinese scientists.—Xinhua

Arrests as protest greets fourth year of Thai junta rule

BANGKOK — Thai police detained leaders of an anti-junta protest on Tuesday who had tried to mark the fourth anniversary of a coup by marching to Government House, one of the largest acts of dissent since the army grabbed power.

Protest leaders flashed a three-finger salute as they were led into a police van — a resistance symbol borrowed by Thailand’s anti-coup movement from the Hollywood movie “The Hunger Games”.

Disquiet with the junta is simmering in Thailand, despite a ban on political gatherings since a coup toppled the elected government of Yingluck Shinawatra on 22 May, 2014. Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha, who as army chief bootlegged Yingluck’s administration from power, has suggested elections will be held in February next year. But the timetable for a return to democracy has repeatedly slipped and patience with his junta is wearing thin among many sections of Thai society.—AFP
Israel says first to use F-35 stealth fighter jets in combat

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military has used its newly acquired F-35 stealth fighter jets in combat, making it the world’s first to do so, the air force commander said on Tuesday.

“The Adir aircraft are already operational and flying combat missions,” Major General Amikam Norkin said at a conference in central Israel, using the plane’s Hebrew name.

“In fact, we have performed the first operational F-35 strike in the world.”

“We attacked twice in the Middle East using the F-35 — we are the first in the world to do so,” he said in remarks quoted by the air force’s website, without providing further details.

Israel has carried out a number of strikes in Syria against what it describes as Iranian targets as well as on what it says are advanced arms deliveries to Hezbollah.

The country has agreed to buy 50 of the American high-tech stealth bombers, which will help it maintain military superiority in the turbulent Middle East, particularly regarding anti-aircraft missile systems in Syria.

In December, the air force announced that the nine F-35 jets in its possession at the time were operational.

Norkin was speaking at an event marking the air force’s 70th anniversary in Herzliya, north of Tel Aviv, attended by senior air force officials from over 20 countries, the military said.

Israel has pledged to prevent its main enemy Iran from entrenching itself militarily in neighbouring Syria, where Tehran is backing President Bashar al-Assad’s regime.

Earlier this month, Israel launched a large-scale attack on what it said were Iranian targets in Syria, raising fears of a major confrontation.

Those strikes followed a barrage of rockets that Israel said was fired toward its forces in the occupied Golan Heights by Iran from Syria.

In his comments on Tuesday, Norkin also made reference to an Israeli strike on missiles Iran had allegedly transported to Syria, without providing a timeframe.

“The past few weeks, we understood that Iran was transporting long-range missiles and rockets to Syria, among which are ‘Uragan’ missile launchers which we attacked, just north of Damascus,” Norkin said.

He then went on to describe the series of events on May 9 and 10.

“The Iranians fired 32 rockets. We intercepted 4 of them and the rest fell outside Israeli territory,” Norkin said.

“Afterwards, we attacked dozens of Iranian targets in Syria.”

He noted that over 100 ground-to-air missiles were fired at Israeli planes during the attack.

The strikes left at least 27 pro-regime fighters dead, including 11 Iranians, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Israel has been blamed for a series of other recent strikes inside Syria that have killed Iranians, though it has not acknowledged them.

As a result, Israel had been preparing itself for weeks for possible Iranian retaliation.— AFP ■

Five killed, 33 wounded by blast in southern Afghan city

KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN — At least five people were killed and 33 wounded on Tuesday when a minivan stuffed with explosives detonated as security forces were trying to defuse it in southern Afghanistan, officials said.

Security forces in Kandahar had already cleared the area around a bus station where the van was found, provincial governor spokesman Dadullah Ahmad said.

“As the security forces were trying to defuse the van, it detonated,” said police spokesman Mohammad Qasim Arzad.

The dead included one civilian, as well as two police and two intelligence officials, authorities at Kandahar’s Mirwais Hospital said.

The blast was so powerful that the majority of the wounded were civilian passers-by outside the cleared area.

Ahmadi said security forces also found a large container of explosives, rocket-propelled grenades, suicide vests, and ammunition near the site.

“The terrorists planned to conduct a big attack at end of Ramadan in the city among crowds of people as they went out shopping for Eid... security forces prevented a disaster from happening,” one security official told AFP.

No group immediately claimed responsibility.

The blast comes as the Taliban step up their spring offensive across the war-torn country.

Last week the insurgent group attacked western Farah city, but were repelled by commandos backed by Afghan and US Air Forces.

On Monday, the Taliban warned Kabul residents to avoid “military centres” in the heavily fortified city, saying they are planning more attacks in the Afghan capital.

A US government watchdog also warned Monday that upbeat assessments of improving security in the country did not match facts on the ground.

The Pentagon’s Office of the Inspector General said there were “few signs of progress” against the Taliban.— AFP ■

Dozens feared killed in Karachi heatwave: charity

KARACHI, PAKISTAN — Dozens of people are feared to have died in a heatwave gripping Pakistan’s largest city Karachi this week, a charity in the sprawling metropolis said on Tuesday, as temperatures hit 42 degrees Celsius (108 degrees Fahrenheit).

The non-profit Edhi Foundation said scores may have been killed by the sweltering weather, with double the usual number of bodies sent to the city’s morgues in recent days.

“We have received 180 dead bodies in the last four days which is more than double of what we receive normally,” said Faisal Edhi, head of the welfare organization which oversees a variety of public health projects — including morgues and ambulance services.

“The majority of these were sudden deaths because of the heatwave as claimed by their relatives, which we cannot independently verify.”

The provincial government in Sindh province disputed the estimate.

“One only casualty has been reported due to heat stroke so far,” said Muhammad Ali Shahid, Director of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority in Sindh told AFP.

The heatwave coincides with the beginning of Ramadan, when millions of devout Pakistanis abstain from food and drink from sunrise to sunset.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department warned “hot to very hot weather is likely to prevail in Karachi during next 2-3 days”, forecasting highs of 44 degrees Celsius during the period.

Amir Habib, from Karachi’s Korangi, said his brother was among the dead and had been rushed to the hospital after collapsing at work on Monday.

“The doctors said he died because of heat stroke,” Habib told AFP.

The mega port city, capital of southern Sindh province, is hit by frequent power cuts and has few green spaces.—AFP ■
French public sector workers strike against Macron’s reforms

PARIS — French public sector employees joined rail workers in striking on Tuesday to protest overhauls proposed by President Emmanuel Macron, calling them an “attack” by the centrist leader against civil services as well as their economic security.

It is the third day of major stoppages and demonstrations by public-sector employees since voters last year elected Macron, who has pledged to reduce public spending, trim jobs and reform large parts of the vast French state.

All unions representing civil servants have backed on Tuesday’s strike, a show of unity which was last seen around 10 years ago. Their walkout affected high-speed trains.—AFP

Nipah virus death toll in India jumps to 10

NEW DELHI — The death toll from an outbreak of the rare Nipah virus in southern India jumped to 10 on Tuesday with more than 90 people quarantined to try to stem the spread of the disease, officials said.

With tests from other suspect deaths awaiting, authorities in Kerala state have ordered emergency measures to control the virus, which is spread by fruit bats.

Three of the fatalities are members of the same family — dead bats were found in a well at their home. A nurse who treated one of the family has also died, leaving a heart-wrenching note for her family.

“We sent 18 samples for testing. Out of these 12 tested positive. Ten of those who tested positive have died and the remaining two are undergoing treatment,” a health official in Kerala’s Kozhikode district, the centre of the outbreak, told AFP.

Ninety-four people who have come into contact with those who died have been isolated in their homes.

“They have been quarantined as a precaution,” Kerala state health surveillance officer KJ Reena told AFP.

Nipah has killed more than 260 people in Malaysia, Bangladesh and India since 1998 and has a mortality rate of nearly 70 per cent, according to the World Health Organisation.

There is no vaccination for the virus which induces flu-like symptoms that lead to anagonising encephalitis and coma.

The WHO has named Nipah as one of the eight priority diseases that could cause a global epidemic, alongside the likes of Ebola and Zika.

Nurse hailed

Among the dead in the Kerala outbreak was a nursing assistant and mother-of-two Lini Puthussery, who had helped to treat one of the original family suffering from Nipah.

Puthussery died on Monday and was cremated before her family members could bid her a final goodbye because of fears the virus could spread.

In a final note she scribbled in a hospital isolation unit, she urged her husband to take care of the children.

“I don’t want to be able to see you again. Sorry. Please take care of our children,” she said.

Kerala state Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said Puthussery’s “selfless service will be remembered”.

He also said many professionals had expressed their willingness to work in Nipah affected areas. “The government of Kerala welcomes their service,” he said on Twitter.—AFP

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY
MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE
( INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER )
( 10/2018 )

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

2. The Open Tender forms including Description of Materials / Qtty with details specifications and Tender Terms & Conditions can be available free download at the Ministry of Electricity and Energy Website Portal (www. moee.gov.mm) as from 23 May 2018. Tender forms will not be sold.

3. The interested Bidders should submit the Technical Specifications with Original Bid Bond and Commercial Quotation in each separate sealed envelopes on which to be addressed to the Managing Director, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise and should reach in Tender Box of the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise not later than 16:30 pm on 21 June 2018.

4. Tender Closing Date & Time- 21-6-2018, 16:30 pm

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

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<td>Steel Ball Valves and Pipe Fittings (2) Groups</td>
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Phone No: 2301185

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

Students take part in a demonstration on 22 May, 2018, in Montpellier, southern France, as part of a day of striking by French public sector workers to protest a series of reforms proposed by the French president, which they consider an attack on key civic services as well as their own economic security. PHOTO: AFP
Malaysia ex-PM Najib quizzed by graft agency

PUTRAJAYA, Malaysia — Scandal-tainted former Malaysian leader Najib Razak arrived on Tuesday at the anti-corruption agency for questioning over a massive financial scandal that helped to bring down his long-ruling regime.

Najib’s coalition suffered a shock defeat at the 9 May poll, beaten by a reformist alliance led by Mahathir Mohamad, which broke their six-decade stranglehold on power.

Mahathir, who first served as premier from 1981-2003 and came out of retirement aged 92 to take on Najib, and his allies focused on claims that the former leader and his cronies looted sovereign wealth fund 1MDB.

Billions of dollars were allegedly stolen from the fund in a sophisticated fraud, and used to buy everything from artworks to high-end real estate.

Najib and his reviled, luxury-loving wife Rosmah Mansor have had a swift fall from grace. They have been barred from going abroad pending corruption charges.

SRC was placed under the finance ministry in 2012 — Najib was finance minister as well as premier at the time. According to an investigation by the Wall Street Journal, 42 million ringgit ($10.6 million) originating from SRC was transferred to Najib’s personal bank accounts.

Hundreds of millions of dollars from 1MDB allegedly ended up there. Najib and 1MDB have denied any wrongdoing. A domestic investigation launched during his premiership concluded that the money in his accounts was a donation from the Saudi royal family.

Najib, a former senior officer with the anti-graft agency who last week lodged reports against Najib, praised the body for quickly hauling him in.

“If we delay, a lot of evidence can be lost or tampered with,” he told AFP.

As reports proliferated in recent years that billions were looted from 1MDB, Najib’s government shut down domestic inquiries into the scandal, arrested critics calling for a full investigations and muzzled news organizations reporting on the affair.

Mahathir has vowed to fully investigate the financial scandal. On Monday the new government set up a task force headed by high-ranking current and senior officials to probe the controversy.— AFP

Foreign reporters head to North Korea to cover shutdown of nuke test site

BEIJING — Around 20 foreign journalists on Tuesday left Beijing for North Korea by a charter plane to observe the dismantlement of the Punggye-ri nuclear test site, three weeks ahead of leader Kim Jong Un’s potential summit with US President Donald Trump.

North Korea allowing foreign media to conduct on-the-spot coverage of the facility’s shutdown is seen as a sign of goodwill from Kim, who has recently committed to denuclearization — but skepticism lingers that it may be only a “political show.”

Pyongyang has said it will hold a ceremony to mark the closure between Wednesday and Friday, depending on weather conditions, and that journalists from China, Russia, the United States, Britain and South Korea will be allowed to visit the site.

Punggye-ri is where North Korea has conducted all of its six nuclear weapon tests to date, beginning in 2006, including the most powerful one last September.

US and Russian reporters said they received visas at North Korea’s Embassy in Beijing on Monday. Foreign journalists are scheduled to go to a press center set up in Wonsan, a city on the country’s east coast.

“We hope that North Korea is going to be transparent like they said,” Will Ripley, a CNN correspondent based in Hong Kong who is on his 18th trip to North Korea, told reporters before departing from Beijing International Airport. At his summit with South Korean President Moon Jae In on 27 April, Kim pledged to shut down the key test site in May and disclose its closure to foreign experts and media to ensure transparency, according to Moon’s office.

But North Korea did not invite experts, such as those from the International Atomic Energy Agency, to observe the dismantlement, raising concern that the actual condition of the nuclear test site will not be revealed.

All the tunnels at the test site will be destroyed by explosions and the surrounding area will be completely closed, North Korea’s Foreign Ministry was quoted by the country’s official media as saying earlier this month.

Kyodo News

The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation

Central Committee for Holding Myanma Gems Emporium

The Information on Fifty-Fifth Myanma Gems Emporium 2018

1. The significant Fifty-Fifth Myanma Gems Emporium will be held on June 20 to 29, 2018 at Maniradana Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw.
2. Rough jade, rough gems, cut and polished gemstones, jewelry, jade carving, gold and silver wares and gemstone pictures will be sold in Euro currency at the Emporium.
3. Gem lots and jade lots will be put up for sale through open tender system and specifying reserve prices as follows;
4. Foreign visitors eligible for the following qualifications will be granted admission to the Fifty-Fifth Emporium 2018, excluding those blacklisted for their default on payment in the previous emporiums;
(a) The person who was invited by the Emporium Central Committee with invitation card.
(b) The person who requested the invitation card via the Foreign Jade Associates.
(c) The person who requested to receive the invitation card through the respective Embassies and Consulate.
(d) Foreign visitors are permissible to make bids for the lots up to the value of the 10-fold of the minimum deposit paid by the types of gemstones. The minimum amount of deposit to be paid and the amount permitted to bid are as follows;

<table>
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<th>Sr. Kind of Gem</th>
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<td>(1) Gems</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Jade</td>
<td>€ 20,000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5. Starting from 6th June 2018, admission card will be issued at the Maniradana Jade Hall, Registration Office to the foreign merchants who have already paid the deposit advance.
6. Application Forms for admission to the Emporium can be downloaded from provided websites (www.mining.gov.mm or www.mge.gov.mm) starting from 26th May 2018. Application can also be submitted via On Line Pre-Registration System from www.mge.gov.mm. The requirements to make the admission card are as follows;
(a) Name, Passport and National Scutinity Card No. (Passport Issuing Country)
(b) Clear Photocopy of Passport.
(c) Two passport photos taken within one month.
(d) Complete contact information, (to state Phone No., Fax No. and E-mail if applicable)
(e) Admission fee – Myanmar currency (Kyat) which is equivalent to US$ 100.
7. Buyers shall settle payment for the purchases within deadline as prescribed by the Sales Agreement. The necessary arrangements will be made if the buyer desires to bring his/her fully paid purchase along with them.
8. Shipment of fully paid purchase to the buyer is made under the EXW/EXW (Ex Works) System. Purchase will be timely despatched once the buyer has made full payment for the purchase. Emporium Central Committee will be responsible for loading the merchandise onto the Transportation Vehicles from the Emporium Hall while the buyer himself or his authorized representative company will be held liable for the remaining processes.

Emporium Central Committee
Barack and Michelle Obama sign Netflix production deal

NEW YORK — Barack and Michelle Obama have entered into a multi-year agreement to produce films and series with Netflix, the world’s leading internet entertainment service announced on Monday.

The former first couple have launched Higher Ground Productions to produce a variety of content for the video streamer, possibly including scripted series, documentaries and features. “One of the simple joys of our time in public service was getting to meet so many fascinating people from all walks of life, and to help them share their experiences with a wider audience,” Obama, who served two terms in the White House from 2009, said in a statement.

“That’s why Michelle and I are so excited to partner with Netflix. We hope to cultivate and curate the talented, inspiring, creative voices who are able to promote greater empathy and understanding between peoples, and help them share their stories with the entire world.”

The Obamas already have a large social media presence — a combined 150 million followers on Twitter and Instagram — but the deal will see their influence boosted significantly by Netflix’s 125 million subscribers in 190 countries. “Barack and Michelle Obama are among the world’s most respected and highly-recognized public figures and are uniquely positioned to discover and highlight stories of people who make a difference in their communities and strive to change the world for the better,” said Netflix chief content officer Ted Sarandos.

The statement didn’t discuss money but their time in the White House has already begun to reap lucrative dividends for the Obamas, who negotiated book deals last year reportedly worth more than $60 million.

A much-awaited memoir by Michelle Obama is due to be released on 13 November, publisher Penguin Random House said in February, describing her as “one of the most iconic and compelling women of our era.”

The Obamas met while he was an intern and she his adviser at a Chicago law firm, and they were soon married. She became his closest confidante during his political rise. Michelle used her influence as one of the world’s most high-profile public figures to advocate for the rights of women and girls and campaigned for Americans to live healthier lives.

The Obamas are not planning to use Netflix to counter President Donald Trump or other conservatives, but will focus instead on “storytelling to inspire us, to make us think differently about the world around us, and to help us open our minds and hearts to others,” the former first lady said. — AFP

Tom Holland is the Spider-Man I envisioned, says Stan Lee

LOS ANGELES — Comic book legend Stan Lee says Tom Holland is the perfect choice to play Spider-Man as the actor is exactly how he imagined the webbed superhero.

The 95-year-old popular comic book writer, who co-created the character with writer-artist Steve Ditko in 1962, took to Twitter to praise Holland. “I think @TomHolland96 is a great Spider-Man. He is the exact height and age I envisioned when I first wrote Spider-Man. Spidey was never supposed to be too large. How is my friend Tom doing?” Lee wrote. In another tweet, the veteran writer said his publisher had initially trashed the idea of creating Spider-Man. “Never give up on your dreams! When I first wrote Spider-Man, my publisher said I was crazy because people hate spiders and insects and he was not going to publish it. But I never gave up, until it was published,” he added. Holland replied to Lee’s tweets, saying: “Thanks very much Stan. It all started with you sir. Looking forward to catching up soon bud”. The 21-year-old first appeared as the webslinger in “Spider-Man: Homecoming” and was last seen in the recently-released “Avengers: Infinity War”. He will reprise his role in the upcoming sequel to his standalone. Besides Holland, Tobey Maguire and Andrew Garfield have played the superhero in the past. —PTI

Thailand Cultural Music Festival to be held in Pattaya next week

BANGKOK — The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) said during a press conference on Wednesday that the Thailand Cultural Music Festival is to be held from 25 to 26 May, at Bali Hai Bay in Pattaya targeting international travelers.

Sujitra Jongchansitto, TAT Deputy Governor for Tourism Products and Business, said during the press conference, “The Thailand Cultural Music Festival will help build awareness and promote tourism through Thailand’s dynamic music industry that really is growing into one of the country’s greatest assets.”

“Events like this help build brand recognition for Thailand as a tourist destination as it is also one of Asia’s best musical and cultural event destinations.” She added.

The Thailand Cultural Music Festival’s line up include local folk music performances, contemporary musical acts and a live stage with music by popular bands and singers, with action taking place across four stages over two days. — Xinhua

Taylor Swift changed my life: Selena Gomez

LONDON — Singer Selena Gomez has thanked her best friend, pop diva Taylor Swift, for changing her life and for being a support system throughout her career.

The “Same Old Love” hitmaker praised Swift as she joined her on-stage at her Reputation Tour at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, reported Contactmusic. “I want to say thank you to my best friend of about 12 years, almost 13.”

And the reason why she has been one of my best friends is because this person has never, ever judged a single decision I’ve made. “She’s always met me where I’ve been. She’s encouraged me when I’ve had nothing to be encouraged about. And I don’t know if I would be as strong as I am if I didn’t have you and your family because you changed my life,” Gomez said. —PTI
Monet sister paintings reunited in US for first time

WASHINGTON — For the first time since they were painted more than a century ago, two oil paintings of Claude Monet’s garden in Vetheuil have been reunited, in Washington.

Monet moved to this village in the Paris suburbs in 1878 with his sickened wife Camille and their two young children as they faced financial difficulties, along with the family of one-time patron Ernest Hoschede.

The period that ensued was one of the most prolific for the French Impressionist, who produced in just three years nearly 300 paintings, including “The Artist’s Garden at Vetheuil” (1881).

Until 8 August, the National Gallery of Art is presenting two of four known works of this lush summer scene with huge sunflowers, including its own, larger piece and another temporarily on loan from California’s Norton Simon Museum.

“It’s a turning point in terms of his career, his struggles, he’s turning more toward landscape, he’s becoming more interested in atmospheric effects,” National Gallery curator of 19th century French paintings Kimberly Jones said in an interview.

The Norton Simon’s version, believed to have served as a model for its companion, is more heavily worked in most areas.

New findings

“Before these two pictures were together, we always described the handling of this one as quite loose because we didn’t have another example, and we had always believed ours was a study for the larger picture,” said Norton Simon assistant curator Emily Talbot.

“All of the things that have been published about these two pictures we’re starting to question just by having them in the same space."

Where Monet layered meridian green thickly on top of cobalt blue to give more interest to the sky in the Norton Simon’s picture, in the companion piece it’s defined instead by contrasts of thick and thin, and patches of exposed canvas ground.

The National Gallery’s senior conservator of paintings Ann Hoenigswald spent months removing a discolored natural resin varnish from the museum’s masterpiece that had flattened the work visually.

“The minute I got the varnish off, it just soared,” she said.

“What I find really exciting is the energy of the brushwork. You see the richness of the impasto and the speed at which he moves his brush across, and all the bruises of the brush, or a little lip of paint that just comes straggling there.”

It was not until almost 10 years later, in 1890, that Monet began painting formal series each comprised of dozens of works depicting a single subject — the Rouen Cathedral, London’s Houses of Parliament or water lilies — at different seasons or times of the day usually from the same vantage point.

The garden proto-series “could be the germ of an idea that’s just starting to develop in his mind,” said Jones.—AFP

Japan social benefit costs to rise 50% by FY 2040 amid aging society

TOKYO — Social benefit costs in Japan will grow more than 50 per cent over the next two decades as the country’s population rapidly ages, the government said on Monday.

The costs, which include pensions and health-care coverage and will be primarily funded by the government and insurance fees, are expected to balloon from an annual 121.3 trillion yen ($1.11 trillion) in fiscal 2018 to around 190 trillion yen in fiscal 2040.

It would be equivalent to an increase from 21.5 per cent of Japan’s gross domestic product to 24.0 per cent, according to the government’s “baseline” scenario for economic growth.

The outlook, released following a meeting by an economic policy panel consisting of members of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s Cabinet, Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda, and academics and private-sector business leaders, will become the basis for the government to draw up long-term plans to deal with the demographic shift.

Of the total costs, pensions are projected to increase from the current 56.7 trillion yen to 73.2 trillion yen, while medical benefits could rise from 39.2 trillion yen to as high as 68.5 trillion yen.

Nursing care benefits are expected to more than double from 10.7 trillion yen to 25.8 trillion yen, and benefits for child-rearing will grow from 7.9 trillion yen to 13.1 trillion yen.

Regarding how the costs will be funded, the government said the 46.9 trillion yen currently shrouded by taxpayers is forecast to climb as high as 80.4 trillion yen, while insurance premiums will rise from 70.2 trillion yen to as much as 107.3 trillion yen.

An extremely low birthrate and a wave of postwar baby boomers entering advanced age means Japan’s population will continue graying. People over age 65 made up 26.6 per cent of the population in 2015, but that is expected to grow to 38.4 per cent by 2065, according to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

In addition to the rising costs of social benefits, the surge in the elderly population will require more workers in the medical and nursing care industries.

The ministry said Monday the number of such workers is expected to increase to 10.65 million by fiscal 2040, or 18.8 per cent of the country’s entire workforce, compared with current 12.5 per cent.

The government’s “baseline” scenario for economic growth, which formed the basis for the latest social benefit outlook, assumes Japan’s nominal GDP will grow from a projected 564.3 trillion yen in fiscal 2018 to 790.6 trillion yen in fiscal 2040.

—Kyodo News
West Ham announce Manuel Pellegrini as new manager

LONDON — West Ham announced former Real Madrid and Manchester City boss Manuel Pellegrini as their new manager on Tuesday, replacing David Moyes at the helm of the Premier League club.

The 64-year-old Chilean left his role with Hebei China Fortune over the weekend and flew to London for talks.

The Hammers opted not to keep Moyes on after the Scot’s short-term contract ended following the final game of the Premier League season — a 3-1 win over his former side Everton that saw them finish 13th.

Joint chairman David Sullivan hailed Pellegrini’s track record of winning the Premier League title with City as crucial to his chances of ushering in a new era of success at the London Stadium.

“I am delighted to welcome Manuel Pellegrini to West Ham United,” Sullivan said on the club’s website.

“He is one of the world’s most respected football coaches and we look forward to working with him.

“It was important that we appointed someone with knowledge and experience of the Premier League, who already has an understanding — not only of the teams and players we face — but of West Ham United and our ambitions.

“Manuel brings a reputation for attacking football and getting the best out of his players. We believe he will attract new talent to the London Stadium as well as improving the current squad.”

Pellegrini coached at Villarreal, Real Madrid and Malaga in Spain before taking charge of Manchester City in 2013, going on to win the 2013/14 Premier League title as well as the League Cup twice before his departure.

He left the Etihad Stadium in June 2016, to be succeeded by Pep Guardiola, but was soon back in work at Hebei.

Despite being under contract through to the end of 2018 and with a reported release clause of $7 million, Hebei confirmed on Saturday that Pellegrini had left his role.—AFP

Back among the best: Klopp instils new belief in Liverpool

LONDON — The last time Liverpool faced the might of Real Madrid, then manager Brendan Rodgers named a second-string side so impossible it did seem that England’s most successful club on the European stage could compete with the self-proclaimed “kings of Europe”.

Madrid won 1-0 at the Santiago Bernabeu that November night in 2014, two weeks after they had inflicted Liverpool’s heaviest ever European home defeat by cruising to a 3-0 victory at Anfield.

Such was the gulf between the sides that even a former Manchester United hero Cristiano Ronaldo was apoloulfl off on what used to be enemy territory. Madrid were a class apart rather than a competitor. Fast-forward three-and-a-half years and Jurgen Klopp has transformed the five-time European champions back into believing they are worthy of their place in a Champions League final when they face Real once more in Kiev on Saturday.

“A lot of things happened since I came in, but the biggest change was how the people changed in the case of how much they like their actual team,” said Klopp on Monday. “That is really nice and helped a lot. The boys deserved this. They had an exceptional season, always could be better, but it was really good and a big step in comparison to last year.”

Klopp’s tenure has been far from all plain sailing. He acknowledged even after exiting Premier League champions Manchester City 5-1 on aggregate in the quarter-finals that the clock was ticking on his promise to deliver a trophy in his first four years.

By contrast, since the sides last met, Madrid have won another two Champions Leagues, a La Liga title, two Club World Cups and two European Super Cups.

Best yet to come

However, the feeling around Anfield is that Liverpool can now compete with Europe’s elite, and — with Klopp having renewed his contract till 2022 — the best is still to come.

“This could be the start of something special under Klopp, he’s world class,” the last Liverpool captain to lift the Champions League, Steven Gerrard, told BT Sport after a rollercoaster 7-6 aggregate semi-final win over Roma. Klopp’s role as a rabble-rousing, bear-hugging cheerleader on the sidelines makes the 50-year-old a colourful and lovable character for fans, players and media alike.

However, the headlines he creates often hide a keen eye for the tactical details that count.

None more so than how Klopp didn’t let the loss of arguably his best player in Philippe Coutinho for a Premier League record sale of £142 million ($194 million, 160 million euros) in the middle of the season derail Liverpool’s road to Kiev.

Coutinho’s departure robbed Klopp of competition for places and ammunition for his front three. Yet, Mohamed Salah, Sadio Mane and Roberto Firmino continued to thrive, combining for 90 goals this season. Behind them Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain came to the fore, scoring a stunning goal against City in a 3-1 victory in the last eight.

When the England international’s season was ended by a cruciate knee ligament injury against Roma in the semi-finals, Georginio Wijnaldum stepped in to score what proved to be the winning goal in the tie in Rome.

—AFP

Buffon to make a decision on PSG within week

MILAN — Juventus legend Gianluigi Buffon said on Monday that he will make a decision this week on whether he will be joining Paris Saint-Germain.

Buffon, 40, played his final game for the Italian giants in a 2-1 win over Verona on Saturday, capping a 17-year career in Turin that harvested seven consecutive Serie A titles.

“PSG? I need a week to be calm and analyse everything. These aren’t simple choices. At 40, you can’t make decisions in the heat of the moment,” Buffon told Sky Sports Italia after playing in former Italy team-mate Andrea Pirlo’s testimonial at the San Siro on Monday.

“He speaks French? No,” he added.

Paris Saint-Germain president Nasser Al-Khelaifi earlier in the day poured cold water on suggestions Buffon could step in to replace the French club’s number one goalkeeper, Alphonse Areola. Al-Khelaifi told L’Equipe sports daily: “He (Buffon) is a fantastic goalkeeper, he’s very charismatic and is a true gentleman. I’m sure all the clubs want him.”—AFP