Ministries explain spending foreign loans on projects

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw put the discussion on spending foreign loans on projects on record yesterday following the debate by the lawmakers and union-level officials at the Hluttaw yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

**Power supply in Thilawa Industrial Zone, Aunglan Town receives upgrade**

Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy Dr. Tun Naing said the 35-KV power line from the primary power station in Thilawin has been successfully linked to Thilawa Industrial Zone. The substation in Thilawa houses two 25-MW generators, and an additional 9.3 mile-long 230-KV power line from the Thilawin power station has been completed as well.

The 66/6.6KV-5MVA transformer at the Aunglan Town substation has been upgraded to a 66/11KV-10MVA transformer, and an 18.9 mile-long 11-KV power line has been installed. Aunglan Town has also had 959 of the 1,227-old utility poles replaced.

The deputy minister said US$90.738 million of the $310 million loan from the World Bank for the National Electrification Plan has been used to buy transformers, concrete utility poles, steel parts and accessories via an open tender system.

**Education Ministry spends loans on education support programmes**

Union Minister for Education Dr. Myo Thein Gyi said his ministry has received $56.972 million in loans from the World Bank for the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017 fiscal years. He said the specified amount is relevant to the currency exchange rate of the special drawing rate of the FY concerned.

SEE PAGE-3
MINISTRY of Electricity and Energy reported on implementation of the first phase of the National Electrification Plan to Pyithu Hluttaw yesterday.

The ceremony began with opening speech by Deputy Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U Tun Tun Hein.

The NEP is being carried out by the Ministry of Electricity and Energy with a US$ 310 million international development association (IDA) loan from the World Bank.

The Deputy Speaker said the seminar would highlight areas where the attendants and their represented businesses can help with the NEP. He said Myanmar has the least electrical supply in ASEAN, and the MPs are providing support to bring the NEP to fruition swiftly.

Next, Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy Dr. Tun Naing also delivered a speech.

Later, the director-general of the Department of Electric Power Planning explained the completed works of the NEP and the deputy chief engineer of the Electric Power Generation Enterprise then explained the NEP's current progress.

This was followed by a Q&A session between the Hluttaw MPs and officials. —Myanmar News Agency

Ministries explain ... 

FROM PAGE-1 
He said his ministry received $80 million in loans from the World Bank in the 2014-2015 FY to begin education supportive projects in schools, and as of the 2016-2017 FY, the ministry has spent $56.972 million.

Similarly, Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw; Union Minister for Construction U Han Zaw; Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe, and Union Minister for Planning and Finance U Soe Win explained the status and project progress of their respective ministry's Pyidaungsu Hluttaw-approved loans.

Next, Vice President of the National Education Policy Commission U Nyi Hla Nge submitted the six-month progress report (from October 2017 to April 2018) to the Hluttaw. The speaker then requested the interested MPs to register for further discussion.

Joint Coordination Committee on Hluttaw Development

The MPs then discussed the 2016-2017 FY progress report submitted by the Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) on Hluttaw Development.

Tatmadaw MP states Pyidaungsu Hluttaw not notified of Joint Coordination Committee formation

During discussions, Tatmadaw MP Major Zin Lin said the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw was not notified of the formation of the JCC nor was it officially approved by the Hluttaw. He said legislators should follow the law they themselves have passed and called for the JCC to follow Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law Section 79-(F) and the Burma Official Secrets Act.

MPs discussed Pyidaungsu Hluttaw-approved foreign loans up to 31 March 2017, and the assembly listened to reports from union-level organisations during the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session yesterday. A discussion on the formation of the Joint Coordination Committee on the Hluttaw Development was brought up.

U Wai Sein Aung of Rakhine constituency (1) and Daw Wint War Tun of Shadaw constituency discussed the report as well. A further discussion concerning the JCC report will be continued in the next Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session on 12 June. —Myo Myint (Myanmar News Agency)

NREC Union Minister receives US Ambassador

UNION Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win received Mr. Scot Marciel, the US Ambassador to Myanmar, at the meeting hall of the Union Minister's office yesterday morning.

At the meeting, matters related to possible cooperation between Myanmar and the US in business, investment in the environment sector and extractive industries (forest, gems and mineral), according to international standards, US businesses investing in various sectors, the status of conducting an environmental impact assessment and holding regular meetings between the ministry and the American Chamber of Commerce in Myanmar were discussed. —MNA

Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win holds talks with US Ambassador Mr. Scot Marciel yesterday. —PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY
U Myo Aye presents credentials to President of Bulgaria

U Myo Aye, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Republic of Bulgaria, presented his Credentials to His Excellency Mr. Rumen Radev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria on 29 May 2018 in Sofia.—Myanmar News Agency

Union Minister for Health and Sports separately receives WHO, WFP delegations

UNION Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe received Dr. Gvenael Rodier, director, Health Emergencies Programme, Country Health Emergency Preparedness and International Health Regulations of the World Health Organisation, and Mr. David Kaatrud, Asia-Pacific regional director of the World Food Programme-WFP, separately, at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the meeting with the delegation, led by Dr. Gvenael Rodier; they discussed the implementation of health safety and security in national-level projects, quick response to and prevention measures against new diseases and infectious diseases in a timely manner, promoting quality and performance to fight infectious diseases, establishing a central bureau for controlling infectious diseases in Myanmar, publishing and using health manual books and disseminating knowledge about health over mobile phones.

At the meeting with the WFP delegation, led by Mr. David Kaatrud, they discussed the tasks to be carried out under the WFP strategic plan 2018-2022, WFP’s survey of food sufficiency and nutrition on the outskirts of Yangon, releasing the data of WFP’s survey on micro-nutrition and food intake, jointly carried out with the Ministry of Health and Sports, and cooperation in food sufficiency and nutrition.—Myanmar News Agency

Fifth public talks to be conducted in Htantabin

THE fifth public talks will be held at the monastery of MawleU Village, MawleU Village-tract, on 10 June morning under the sponsorship of Htantabin Township Information and Public Relations Department of Yangon North District. Participants in the talks are MP U Aung Phone Kyaw, Administrator of the Township GAD U Than Zaw Linn, Township Education Officer U Ba Thein, Staff Officer of the Township Rural Development Department U Myint Htwe Win, Staff Officer of Fishery Department U Aye Min, Staff Officer of the Township Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department Dr Kay Thi Maung and Deputy Head of the Township Agriculture Department U Htwe Aung.

The talks will be held under the title of “Rural Development”—Zin Min Htet-IPRD/MDN

Union Minister for Information separately receives Myanmar Press Council, International Media Support

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint separately received Myanmar Press Council Vice Chairman Hanthawady U Ohn Kyaw and Dr. Myo Thant Tin, joint secretary U Kyaw Swar Min and party at 10 a.m. and Mr. Lars Bestle, head of department for Asia of the International Media Support at 11 a.m. at the ministry in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the meeting with the Myanmar Press Council, matters relating to electing the Myanmar Press Council members, news media law and news media rules were discussed.

During the meeting with the delegation led by Mr. Lars Bestle of International Media Support, matters relating to future works for news media development in Myanmar, conducting workshops and courses to raise the quality of news reports, amending the television and video law and cooperation between the ministry and International Media Support were discussed. Present at the meetings were Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun and other officials.—Myanmar News Agency

Mrauk U inscription enters in MOWCAP register

FROM PAGE 1
A DOCUMENTARY heritage is a single document of any kind, or a number of documents that form logical coherent groups (such as a collection, a holding or archival funds). The MoW programme was started by UNESCO in 1992, and every two years, the proposed documentary heritages from across the world are reviewed, and of now, 348 have been designated as MoW. In 1998, the MOWCAP was established. This committee includes 43 countries in the region as members, of which 18 have opened national MoW committees.

Myanmar started proposing heritages for MoW status since 2012 and in 2013, the stone inscriptions of the Tipitaka in Mahalawka Marazein Kuthodaw Pagoda, known as the world’s largest book, was listed as UNESCO MoW. In 2015, Myazedi Quadrilingual Stone Inscription and the Golden Letter of King Ahungphaya to King George II of Great Britain, sent in the year 1756, were listed as UNESCO MoW. In 2017, King Bayintnaung Bell Inscription on the bell in Shwezigon Pagoda, Bagan, in 1557 AD was listed as UNESCO MoW. Prior to this listing, the bell inscription entered the register of MOWCAP in 2010.

The Anandachandra Stone Inscription was moved from Wethali (Vesali) to Shitthaung (Shite-thaung) Pagoda, Mrauk U, in AD 1536 by King Min Bar Gyi (AD 1531-1550). The four-face stone inscription was written in three ancient letters, including ancient north Indian letters spanning the period from AD 600 to AD 1000. The inscriptions were made under the order of King Anandachandra. The stone inscription will be proposed for UNESCO MoW too.

The Mya Ganaing (Emerald Jungle) movie was produced in 1934 by director A-1 U Tin Maung. It is a well-known movie involving jungle scenes with actor Chit Swe and actress Myint Myint portraying the lead roles.—Myanmar News Agency

Anandachandra Stone Inscription. PHOTO: MNA
Japan’s cold chain logistics empowers Myanmar strawberry farmers

JAPANESE cold chain logistics expertise is buoying the spirits of strawberry farmers in Myanmar, radically reducing damage from poor transportation methods and heat before their produce is delivered to consumers in commercial capital Yangon.

Reefer trucks supplied by Premium Sojitz Logistics Co. a Japan-Myanmar joint venture, transport strawberries daily from Pyin Oo Lwin in central Myanmar at temperatures that never exceed 8°C.

The city near Mandalay is known for the country’s largest strawberry fields, but the fruit has long been stored along with luggage on long-haul buses before being delivered to a wholesale market in Yangon.

Japanese trading house Sojitz Corp. group established the joint venture in 2015 with Premium Distribution Co., a subsidiary of retail and logistics firm City Mart Holding Co., to help the Myanmar partner modernize its wholesale operations.

Ichiro Uesawa, managing director of the joint venture, has arranged for Myanmar strawberry farmers to visit Japan to show them the integrated food cold chain from fruit producers through retail outlets.

Nay Lin Tun, a 33-year-old farmer, expressed a keen interest in Japan’s modern logistics know-how. The adoption of refrigerated transportation is “rewarding as we suffer less product losses than before,” he said.

His strawberries are now sold at high-end supermarkets in Yangon, gaining a favorable reputation among consumers. He plans to switch the current strawberry varieties to sweeter Taiwanese ones next season.

Nay Tun’s strawberries fetch 1,000 to 2,500 yuan per tonne in China. Last year, he obtained 70 percent of his total exports from China.

“The decrease in price recovered yet, following India’s restriction on their importation. In the export sector, the agriculture industry performed the best along with the natural gas export sector. The chief export goods in the agricultural sector are rice and broken rice, pulses, corn and rubber. Fruits and vegetables, sesamum, dried tea leaves, sugar and other agro products are also sent to foreign countries. The commerce ministry is endeavouring to help deal with the challenges faced by farmers, such as high input costs, procurement of pedigree seeds, high cultivation costs and erratic weather conditions.”—Mon Mon

Watermelon supply at Muse gate down by 75 per cent compared to pre-Thingyan period

By May Thet Hnin

Myanmar gold entrepreneurs are preparing to hold an International Gold and Jewellery Exhibition showcasing internationally and locally produced items. The exhibition will take place at the Yangon Region Gold and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association office on 6 June.

“Gold entrepreneurs discussed matters concerning the holding of a jewellery expo at the Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association office on 6 June. ‘We will initially conduct market surveys to understand how the public responds to this. Depending on the market surveys, we will arrange the expo. The survey will be conducted soon,’ said U Myo Myint.

At this expo, we will invite international exhibitors to showcase pieces of gold and jewellery from other countries, including Thailand, China and Singapore, gold refining machines, jewellery and diamond-cutting machines, besides Myanmar’s gold and jewellery.

The expo will help attract international buyers for Myanmar’s gold and jewellery and facilitate technical sharing, U Myo Myint maintained.

The international gems and jewellery expo is planned to be held in early 2019.

SMID bank to provide three loans, including education loan

By Nyein Nyein

The Small and Medium Industrial Development (SMID) Bank will provide three loans, which are education loan, trade finance loan and cash flow-based loan (CFB), said Dr Zayyar Nyount, a member of the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Committee and chief executive officer of SMID, at SMID’s product launch event held at Sule Shangrila Hotel on 7 June.

The SMID bank has already engaged with five international universities to provide the education loan. The bank will provide the education loan for students enrolling in the diploma and master’s courses.

“We want to participate in providing education. Therefore, we are providing the education loan for those attending the diploma and master’s courses,” he added.

Moreover, the International Banking Division of SMID will also provide a trade finance loan to the enterprise without receiving a mortgage. The bank will provide the loan without receiving the mortgage but by building a trustworthy relationship with the loan borrowers.

The SMID will also provide CFB loan in three main sectors, such as the agriculture sector (paddy and corn), livestock breeding sector (fish, shrimp, crab, chicken, cow) and the manufacturing sector (food, goods, garment), said Dr Zayyar Nyount.

The SMID will spend a capital of Ks100 billion on the three loans, he added.

The SMID started its operations on 15 February 1996 and has 19 branches. The bank has provided Ks630 million worth of loans to 30 businessmen without receiving mortgage and Ks90 billion loans with mortgage documents.

THANKS to the high yield of Djenkol fruits in the Papun Township of Kayin State, the Djenkol is reaping profits in the local market.

‘Last year, the Djenkol fruit had a lower yield. But this year, the yield was high in our region because we are taking time before cultivating for the next season. For example, if the fruit has a lower yield this year, we will get a high yield next year,” said a Djenkol fruit farmer.

This year, we made good profits because of the high yield. The fruit is selling well in the local market,” said a Djenkol fruit local cultivator.

The Djenkol fruit from the Papun Township is sold in the Hpa-an, Mawlamyine and Yangon. Some of the cultivators sell their fruits in the market, while some sell them to Djenkol fruit traders. Some Djenkol fruit traders buy the fruit from the farmland itself.

Last year, the price of Djenkol fruit was Ks18,000 per basket. However, this year, the local cultivators are selling the Djenkol fruit at Ks22,000 per basket.

Djenkol fruits are cultivated mainly in Pae Wah, Dwele, Mawthitdaw, Pantun, Parlar, Paykay, Daypunu, Kawpok and Meenanwwe villages in the Papun Township of Kayin State.—Papun District IPRD

Individual trade worth Ks55bn as of 18 May

The border trade with individual trading cards (ITCs) was valued at Ks55 billion between 1 April and 18 May of the six-month interim period for the next 2018-2019 fiscal year, according to the statistics of the commerce ministry.

Exports conducted with the use of ITCs were worth Ks120 million, while imports were valued at Ks43.8 billion in the past two months. The trade values of individual card holders were registered as some Ks684 million at Tamu, Ks6.2 million at Muse, Ks3.7 billion at Myawady; Ks11.7 million at Tachileik, Ks757 million at Kanpilotee, Ks130 million at Kawthoung, Ks127 million at Reedd, Ks705 million at Mawtaung and Ks7.2 million at Kongtung.

The trade department has issued 1,442 cards so far. The trade values with ITCs were more than Ks7.73 million from 21 November 2012 to 31 March 2013, more than Ks6.6 billion in the 2013-2014 FY, more than Ks9.3 billion in the 2014-2015 FY, more than Ks6.4 billion in the 2015-2016 FY, more than Ks18.9 billion in the 2016-2017 FY and Ks45.9 billion in the 2017-2018 FY.

The trade department has issued trade cards to boost border trade. A businessman can trade Ks3 million worth of goods per day using the ITC, with the trade department granting trade values of up to Ks15 million per day, equal to a five-day trade value.—Ko Htet

Djenkol fruit. PHOTO: DISTRICT IPRD

Djenkol cultivators make good profits due to high yield
National Literature Award Selection Committee holds press conference

The National Literature Award Selection Committee held a press conference on the 2017 national literature award selection policy at the Printing and Publishing Department Central Press Building of the Ministry of Information on Theinnyu Road, Yangon, yesterday.

At the press conference chaired by the National Literature Award Selection Committee member Dr. Kyaw Win, committee secretary U Than Ohn (Maung Zeya), and committee members U Htay Win (Maung Lin Yeik), U Kyaw Naing (Htet Myat) and U Khin Maung Soe (Maung Thama) took the lead in explaining the policy. The press conference was attended by literature experts, news media and invited guests.

Dr. Kyaw Win
First, chairperson of the press conference and National Literature Award Selection Committee member Dr. Kyaw Win explained the history of the committee, committee members, the duties and responsibilities of the committee, the policies set for selection, selection according to majority consensus and the announcement made about the selected literature awards after holding meetings repeatedly.

U Than Ohn
Next, committee secretary U Than Ohn explained the National Literature Award was not a literature competition but the selection of the best book from among the books and papers published within a year, and said the secretariat had been giving a special assignment to collect all the books and papers.

The committee led by Sayagi U Thaw Kaung in 2016 had 77 committee members, where Sayagi U Thaw Kaung was the chairman. The vice chairmen were Saya U Khin Aye and Saya Maung Paw Hsan, as some members resigned for health reasons, the National Literature Award selection work was conducted by 65 members last year. He said the members had done a good job. During the time of the democratic government, the committee set up new policies.

The first policy was the non-involvement of the Ministry of Information and the minister in the selection of the National Literature Award. The committee led by Sayagi U Thaw Kaung strove to make the commission independent, without being influenced by outside entities or persons.

In setting this policy, the first step was to collect all the books that were published and to select the best book without bias and impartially. The second step was the decision to include all the books published in 2016. All members anonymously supported and accepted this, and the results can be found in last year’s award-winning books. The third move was to put in an additional best modern poem category, in addition to the best traditional poem category.

All poems are considered equal, and the poem award was included to be made to only one type of poem. That year, there were quite a number of poetry enthusiasts in the committee, and there were many objections in the selection due to diverse opinions.

Although the meeting was attended by the union minister, the union minister did not get involved and simply confirmed the discussion made by the committee. Subject-wise, we had a lot of arguments. When no consensus was reached, members voted on it. All who attended participated in the voting. Of the 250 poem books, one was selected and given the award. The award went to the modern type of poem.

Saya Maung Sein Win (Padi-gone), who was assigned the duty of head of poetry, left because he was not satisfied with the award. National Literature Award winner poet Myainnu Maung Naing Moe also left because he was not happy that there was only one award instead of two. Due to their exits, a search for a balanced and unbiased leader in poetry had to be made.

When the 2017 meeting was held, the Union Minister himself attended and there was a problem. Saya Hein Latt requested that a decision be made on whether there’ll be one or two poem awards. The Union Minister himself asked the committee to discuss it and said that the committee’s decision will be confirmed and approved if there are to be two awards.

As no consensus was reached, the matter was put to a vote. The votes were to be made in a sealed envelope and to remove any doubt of bias, the secretariat group handed over the duty (of counting the vote) to the Sarpay Beikman support group. There was no objection and no one came up with a better idea or alternative. When the votes of all 65 members were counted, 40 went to the one poem award and 23 went to two poem awards, while two votes were discarded.

When the result was announced with the permission of chairman Sayagi U Khin Aye, writer Ma Sandar immediately objected to it. The committee is striving toward becoming an independent entity and everything is being done toward this aim. But after the voting was conducted, first Ma Sandar left. The following day, Saya Thuya Zaw left.

The committee needs to have a culture of honouring and following the majority decision. That is why we are explaining the situation. Because there had been many accusations that only a modern poem award will be given.

But when the news about the matter reached the media, many cast doubts on the committee as promoting modern poems and neglecting traditional poems. We were worried that words of anger and hate were spreading among the literature circle. That is why this news conference had been held. We are truly sorry to hold this conference but we don’t want to see the spread of hate (and anger) in the media and on Facebook.

U Htay Win (Maung Lin Yeik)
Next, National Literature Award Selection Committee member U Htay Win (Maung Lin Yeik) explained that when the Poem Selection Committee was formed, it considered all forms and genres of poetry, but there are basically two types of poetry: classical and modern; and thus the selection process focused on including both genres.

He explained that the Poem Selection Committee was formed with experienced poets, most of who have served in executive or leading roles in poetry-centric organisations. He added that the poem selection process follows the policy set in the 2016 report by the National Literature Award Selection Committee and sub-committees.

U Kyaw Naing (Htet Myat)
Committee member U Kyaw Naing (Htet Myat) said the Union Minister for Information and the National Literature Award Selection Committee rejected the inputs of former committee members concerning the Literary Conference’s decisions. He added that the current issue did not concern modern poems.

He said the phrase “prefer not to be a culprit in recorded history” is insulting and not befitting of professional conduct. He added that the people involved all know the truth about who is the culprit and thus the issue did not need extra attention.

U Kyaw Naing then talked about the history of the Literary Conference’s formation. He said author Myay Mhone Lwin suggested the idea for the literary conference, which started with representatives from 11 literary organisations, invited by Union Minister Dr. Pye Myint, holding a press conference here. U Kyaw Naing said he had held a similar literary conference in 1962 and said the government should take a leading role in the conference. However, he said Union Minister Dr. Pye Myint refused to be involved in the conference either as a representative of the government or in his individual capacity. He said the union minister wished for only the free voice of the literary organisations involved in the conference.
Disaster drill held in Dala

A DISASTER preparedness drill was held on a vessel at a jetty in Dala Township, Yangon Region, yesterday morning.

“We (Inland Water Transport) have been working and focusing on the safety measures for vessels and passengers. Storms may occur during pre-monsoon season in Myanmar. The aim of the drill is to be ready and to make preparations when storms hit the country. By doing so, we can provide effective protection for people if natural disasters occur,” said U Aung Than Myaing, the Director General of the IWT at the opening of the drill.

Over 100 staff under the department took part in the drill. Officials gave lectures on obligations and emergency tasks to be carried out by individuals as natural disaster preventive measures. Similar exercises were conducted in Mandalay, Sagaing, Mawlamyine and Rakhae State simultaneously.

The Department of Meteorology and Hydrology (DMH) use the colour-coded storm warning system and classifies storms into five colours—orange, yellow, red, brown and green.

The yellow colour shows the outbreak of a storm and the orange colour represents the necessary preparations that should be made for possible strong winds. The DMH issues weather forecasts every two or three hours.

Two ferries from the IWT travel between Yangon and Dala four times daily.

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OVER 754,000 seedlings raised in Sagaing Region nurseries

IN a bid to distribute seedlings to growers in nine districts in the Sagaing Region, 754,580 seedlings were raised in the nurseries of the township forest departments of the Sagaing Region in the rainy season during the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

When the community planting event is held this rainy season, the Sagaing Region Forest Department will distribute trees and flowering plants free of charge. Those who cannot attend this event can take the seedlings from the respective townships’ nurseries, said U Than Soe, head of Sagaing Region Forest Department.

A total of 207,980 seedlings will be distributed in eight townships of Ymawmin and Monywa districts, 111,500 seedlings in three townships of Sagaing District, 189,800 seedlings in eight townships of Shwebo and Kanta Bah districts, 129,700 seedlings in seven townships of Katha District, 57,600 seedlings in three townships of Kalay District, 15,000 seedlings in Tamu Township, 25,000 seedlings in two townships of Mawlaik District and 18,000 seedlings in two townships of Khamlu District.

—Win Oo (Zayar Tine) ●

Pakokku residents affected by torrential rains

THREE houses were swept away by a severe downpour and other homes became relocated due to bank erosion of a creek after torrential rains hit Ward-3 in Pakokku Township, Magway Region early yesterday morning, according to the Information and Public Relations Department.

Heavy rains caused three houses and a vehicle to float away and forced another three homes and a religious building to relocate.

Regional lawmaker U Han Zaw Win, Deputy Commissioner U Kyaw Amin Maung, members of the district and township disaster management committee, firefighters and policemen rushed to the flood affected area to evacuate the locals to a safer location.—Myanmar Digital News ●

Illegal timber seized in Shwebo Township

A COMBINED squad comprising staff of the Township Forest Department, forest police officers and police officers from Kyaukmyaung Police Station, action on information on 6 June intercepted a vehicle and a Nissan AD Van driven by Kyaw Swa Tun, 20 years, of Shwebo with Kyaw Swa Lin, 41 years, of Tawseint Village, Salin Township and Bawgyi (a) Ko Shine (a) Ko Ko, 23 years, of Maha Aungmyay on board the Yadana Theinga Bridge tollgate and seized 12 blocks of Tamalan timber in their possession.

Action is being taken against the three including Kyaw Swa Tun under Section 6/1 of the Public Property Protection Law.—Myanmar Digital News ●
We inherit a good environment from our ancestors and pass on this heritage to our next generation. We should inherit a good environment from our ancestors and pass on this heritage to our next generation. If we do not, we will leave behind a world where plastic waste is rampant, and its effects are severe.

So, awareness campaigns should be carried out to educate our people. Environmental education should be placed on the fact that it is important to reduce, reuse and recycle plastic bags. The 3R (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle) are the way to control plastic waste.

In many countries, paper and fabric shopping bags that are degradable are being increasingly used. Also, reusable plastic bags and biodegradable plastic bags are rapidly replacing ordinary plastic bags.

In Myanmar, plant leaves were long used as containers in communities. Besides, we already have sound traditional practices for using renewable resources instead of plastics. Some of the significant examples are using bamboo instead of metal to store drinking water, and cane baskets and leaves for shopping purposes.

Every citizen applying these traditional practices can support the cause by reducing plastic pollution.

However, single-use plastic products have made their way into markets that previously utilized the natural resources around them. We should reinstate the use of our traditional packing materials, such as leaves, leaves and leaves for shopping purposes.

We should reinstate the use of our traditional packing materials — banana leaves, lotus leaves and certain species of palm leaves. They are abundant in our natural environment and were used from time immemorial, until the discovery of polyethylene and polystyrene, which are used in the manufacture of plastic and styrofoam containers.

In Myanmar, we must encourage the local small and medium enterprises to produce products that do not harm our environment by reducing, reusing and recycling our plastic waste materials.

It is time to put an end to our throwaway culture. We have a responsibility towards our future generations to leave the environment in a better state than we inherited. We can all make a difference. We hope that families across the country are taking up the challenge to reduce the amount of plastic they use on a daily basis.

By Thet On

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Advance voting announcement for voters outside of their constituencies in 2018 by-election

The Union Election Commission has announced in its notification 60/2018 that a by-election to elect Hluttaw representatives for vacant constituencies will be held on 3 November 2018 (Saturday).

Advance voting of voters who will be outside of their constituencies are to be conducted as follows:

(a) Relevant head of a training course, school, hospital and detention center are to contact their election sub-commissions to request form (13).
(b) Relevant head of a training course, school, hospital and detention center are to send form (13) filled up by the voters to township election sub-commision by 24-8-2018.
(c) Township election sub-commissions are to send the advance ballots and envelopes to relevant training course, school, hospital and detention center by 3-10-2018.
(d) Relevant training course, school, hospital and detention center are to arrange for advance voting to be conducted at a convenient date from 5-10-2018 to 12-10-2018.
(e) The advance votes in envelopes are to be sent to relevant township election sub-commission not later than 4 p.m. 3-11-2018.
(f) Relevant head of a training course, school, hospital and detention center are to inform and coordinate with the relevant township election sub-committee three days ahead of the date on which advance voting will be conducted as specified in subsection-(d) of the second paragraph.

Relevant election sub-commission needs to be informed and coordinated if anyone is hospitalized or is detained in a police station or correctional department, detention center after 24-8-2018.

Relevant head of a training course, school, hospital and detention center are requested to cooperate with relevant election sub-committee so that the voters who are outside of their constituencies and are in a training course, school, hospital or detention center do not lose their voting rights.—Union Election Commission (Unofficial translation)

National Literature Award Selection Committee holds press conference

FROM PAGE-6

U Kyaw Naing then said that none of the 11 literary organisations involved represented the whole of the literary community in Myanmar. He said the union minister only offered assistance and solicited a donation from Yangon Chief Minister U Pyo Min Thein of Ks240 million; however, the donation did not involve a single cent from the Yangon Region Government or the Ministry of Information.

He said the voting at the conference was split into 60:40 ratio by the attendees, and the results will be sent to each respective ministry and department, and every individual concerned reserved the right to share this information.

He said the decision of the conference was not absolute, and the majority had voted to give out two poem awards; thus the decision was not made by the National Literature Award Selection Committee, and the Ministry of Information has not decided to follow the conference’s decision.

Some 40 points concerning the poem awards surfaced, but the union government did not decide to follow or implement them. U Kyaw Naing said these points were submitted by the literary professionals concerned on their free will. He said the National Literature Award Selection made the final decision to give a fair review of the poems and give out only one award.

U Kyaw Naing said that there were 23 individuals who voted for giving out two poem awards but not all of them quit when the decision was finalised to give out only one award. He added that those who did quit after the results came out should have conducted themselves with professionalism and dignity.

He concluded that the change in modern poetry is a global phenomenon that no one can halt or contain.

U Khin Maung Soe (Maung Thamanya)

There are a lot of misconducts and misstatements. The biggest misstatement is about the Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint. He said the literature conference had told him to think about giving two, three or four awards for poems. He continued and said you all (the committee) should discuss it and decide. He said the exact same thing in the last meeting. Some said Saya (Dr.) Pe Myint didn’t do as he said. But they are going back to the past when things were done as per the instructions of the top person, the minister. Something is wrong with these people if they do everything a minister says. Another thing is that they consider this committee to be doing things as ordered.

Some say two awards were not given because there was not enough award money or we didn’t want to give more awards to others and hence gave just one award. Literature is not about money. The award is to honour the dignity of literature. Media personnel who are present need to raise questions so that the public knows (the truth). A request is being made to the media to make the people aware about this. Later, questions raised by the media were answered by the 2017 National Literature Award Selection Committee.

Fishing training conducted to promote fish farming technology in Mandalay

The Fisheries Department provided fishing training courses to the fisheries department staff in the project regions for social development by promoting fish farming technology in Myanmar’s tropical region.

The opening ceremony of the training courses was held in Mandalay region on 6 June. The Fisheries Department started this training in March 2014, in cooperation with the Japan International Cooperation Agency. The department has provided fish farming technology in 13 towns of Myanmar’s tropical region. The project will be finished in February 2019.

“We are providing the training course to the staff in the region who are implementing the Small-scale Aquaculture Extension Project. We have already drawn the plans and submitted the annual report. The manageable fish farming training was provided to the staff, who will then train the fishermen in the region. We have also provided training to the local villagers directly,” said U Kyaw Moe Aung, project coordinator from the Fisheries Department.

The training was provided for social development by promoting fish farming technology in Myanmar’s tropical region. Currently, local farmers who received the training directly from the department are producing and distributing the fingerling fish. In this rainy season, the local farmers will distribute 500 fingerling fish each to their neighbours who want to breed fish.—Shwe Parami Health Care Foundation provides free eyes treatment in Sedoktaya

The Shwe Parami Health Care Foundation provided eye treatment to those suffering from eye diseases through its free mobile medical services at Mogok Vipassana Centre Insight (Mediation Centre) in Sedoktaya Town, Magway region, on 5 June. The Shwe Parami Health Care Foundation, led by U Aye Ko Ko and nine members, treated some 348 patients, including 304 patients who had come for eye-testing and 44 patients for eye operations. The foundation provided the treatment free of charge to the patients on 5 and 6 June 2018, according to Shwe Parami Health Care Foundation.—Shwe Parami Health Care Foundation.
Facebook deals with Chinese firm draw ire from US lawmakers

BEIJING — Facebook drew fresh criticism from US lawmakers following revelations that it allowed Chinese smartphone makers, including one deemed a national security threat, access to user data.

Nonetheless, lawmakers expressed outrage that Chinese firms were given access to user data at a time when officials were trying to block their access to the US market over national security concerns. Senator Ed Markey said Facebook’s chief executive has some more explaining to do following these revelations.

“Mark Zuckerberg needs to return to Congress and testify why @Facebook shared Americans’ private information with questionable Chinese companies,” the Massachusetts Democrat said on Twitter. “Our privacy and national security cannot be the cost of doing business.” Other lawmakers zeroed in on the concerns about Huawei’s ties to the Chinese government, even though the company has denied the allegations. “This could be a very big problem,” tweeted Senator Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican. “If @Facebook granted #Huawei special access to social data of Americans this might as well have given it directly to the government of #China.”

Representative Debbie Dingell called the latest news on Huawei “outrageous” and urged a new congressional probe.

“Why does Huawei, a company that our intelligence community said is a national security threat, have access to our personal information?” said Dingell, a Michigan Democrat, on Twitter. “With over 184 million daily Facebook users in US & Canada, the potential impact on our privacy & national security is huge.

‘Approved experiences’

Facebook, which has been blocked in China since 2009, also had data-access deals with Chinese companies Lenovo, OPPO, and TCL, according to the Chinese commerce ministry.

Some lawmakers say Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, seen here at an April congressional hearing on personal data protection, should return to explain its deal allowing smartphone makers to access user information. PHOTO: AFP

World robot finals to be held in China in July

WUHAN — More than 5,000 contestants from around the world will assemble at the 2018 World Robot Contest Finals next month in Wuhan, capital of central China’s Hubei Province, the organizer announced Thursday. The finals will be held from 26 to 29 July in the economic and technological development zone of Wuhan, an important robotics development area. This year’s contests include a brain-computer interface (BCI) controlled contest, a cooperative-Cognitive (Tri-Co) contest, an industrial skills contest, as well as a competition for young designers. According to Li Yang, secretary-general of the contest, this year’s competition will have several hundred teams from about 20 countries and regions along the Belt and Road — Xinhua

China offers to buy $70 bn of US goods, says official

WASHINGTON — China has offered to buy $70 billion worth of US goods if Washington drops plans to impose tariffs in return, an official in President Donald Trump’s administration told AFP on Wednesday, confirming an earlier report.

Top Chinese economic advisor Liu He made the offer during weekend trade talks in Beijing with a US delegation led by Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, The Wall Street Journal reported Thursday. The new purchases would include soybeans, natural gas, crude oil and coal.

The Commerce Department on Wednesday told AFP no definitive agreement had been reached and no further information was available.

During a regular news briefing Thursday in Beijing, the Chinese commerce ministry confirmed the talks had discussed detailed proposals during the trade negotiations.

“China and the US carried out in-depth and concrete discussions in some specific areas of trade cooperation, especially agricultural products and energy,” said Gao Feng, the ministry’s spokesman, when asked about the $70 billion figure.

“China is willing to expand imports from the US under the precondition of both sides walking towards each other,” Gao said. US exports to China last year hit $130.4 billion, according to the Department. A $70 billion package of purchases would amount to a 33.8 per cent increase.

For goods alone, the US trade deficit with China hit a record $375 billion last year, and the White House has demanded Beijing cut the imbalance by $200 billion.

“If the United States introduces trade sanctions including tariffs, all the economic and trade achievements negotiated by the two parties will be void,” China’s official news agency Xinhua said Sunday. According to the Wall Street Journal, Liu personally explained to Ross the offer would be void in the event Washington imposed additional tariffs.

Trump has announced last week that the US was pressing ahead with plans to impose 25 percent tariffs on $50 billion worth of Chinese imports tied to the tech sector, which Washington says has benefitted from the alleged theft of US know-how and intellectual property.

Washington’s trade battles with China, Europe, Mexico and others are an effort to make those countries buy more US goods and force down the US trade deficit, which Trump sees as a job killer and threat to the American industrial base.—AFP
At least 16 dead as arms depot blows up in Baghdad

BAGHDAD — At least 16 people were killed and dozens injured after an arms depot exploded in the Sadr City district of the Iraqi capital late Wednesday, security and medical sources said.

"An arms depot exploded... The security forces have opened an inquiry to determine the cause," Baghdad's security operations command said in a statement. A senior police source told AFP on condition of anonymity that the blast was caused by heavy weapons, including rocket-propelled grenades and shells, belonging to an armed group and stored in a house.

He said at least 16 people were killed and some 32 injured in the explosion.

Medical sources confirmed the toll and said that women and children were found among the victims. Sources said the blast struck near a Shiite mosque in the district of northeast Baghdad.

Witnesses reported heavy material damage to homes and other buildings in the Sadr City district, which is a stronghold of populist Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr. — AFP

Iraqis inspect the aftermath of an explosion in Baghdad’s Sadr City district, on 7 June 2018. PHOTO: AFP

Nicaragua president to meet Catholic bishops for new crisis talks

MANAGUA — President Daniel Ortega will meet Nicaragua's Catholic bishops Thursday to discuss resuming church-mediated talks on ending a political crisis and protest violence that has left more than 120 people dead, the bishops' conference said.

The announcement came as the Nicaraguan opposition ramped up the pressure against Ortega's government, blocking streets and roads around the country after seven weeks of protests.

The bishops called off the peace talks after a crackdown last week on a protest led by victims' mothers that left at least 16 more people dead, and said they would not resume for as long as the government failed to end the repression.

But the Nicaraguan Episcopal Conference said Wednesday in a statement that after listening to "various sectors" both in Nicaragua and abroad, the bishops had proposed the new meeting and the president had accepted. — AFP

Kim Jong Un lookalike set to make impression at summit

HONG KONG — As the world awaits the historic summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un, one man who has risen to prominence for his impressions of the North Korean leader is preparing for his own appearance in Singapore.

The Hong Kong-based Kim impersonator, who goes by the name Howard X, will take part in an alternative summit on the sidelines of the meeting between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un scheduled for Tuesday.

There he was hauled away by police after dancing and waving the unified Korean flag in front of North Korea's female cheerleading team.

Howard says the duo have been hired by a Singapore hotel to give their own take on the landmark meeting. Their aim is to encourage the public to discuss politics via satire, Howard told AFP in Hong Kong Thursday.

But he admits his family have reservations about his new career path.

"The first thing they said was 'Don't get killed,'" Howard told AFP, adding his mother had taken out a life insurance for him. "But his impressions of Kim have become the main act since he began work as a lookalike in 2012. To prepare for each performance, Howard, who says he is in his 30s, applies foundation and trims his eyebrows, but spends the most time perfecting Kim’s slicked back hairstyle with copious amounts of spray.

Onstage he dresses in a black Mao-style suit with a North Korean flag pin and thick-rimmed glasses.

"You could say I’ve been blessed with this face," he told AFP.

"Kim Jong Un is president for life, unlike an American president, or other prime ministers. Career-wise, I’ve got a very long and profitable one," Howard says he now makes a living out of being Kim through gigs, film and commercials and has also become an agent for other lookalikes in Asia.

But while his impressions pay the bills, he disagrees strongly with Kim's authoritarian regime.

"It’s total control over the population, mind and body,“ — AFP

Announcement

In preparation for the commence of the Myanmar Companies Law 2017, the establishment of the Myanmar Companies Online (MyCO) electronic registry system, the company affairs divisions of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration will be temporarily closed from Monday 23rd July 2018 to Wednesday 31st July 2018.

During that time, company registration and filing processes will be temporarily suspended. All company registration and filing processes will re-commence on Wednesday 1 August 2018 under the new electronic registry system, MyCO.

PHOTO: AFP

PHOTO: AFP

Announcement

Announcement

Announcement

Directorate of Investment and Company Administration
At least 99 dead as Guatemala volcano threatens new eruptions

GUATEMALA—Explosions boomed from Guatemala’s fearsome Fuego volcano Wednesday, unleashing fresh torrents of mud and ash down slopes, as the death toll from a previous eruption rose to at least 99.

Pears of a new blowup of the 3,763-meter (12,346-foot) volcano have stalled rescue workers since Sunday’s eruption buried entire villages on its southern flank.

The National Forensic Sciences Agency said in a report Wednesday that morgues had received the remains of 99 people killed as a result of the eruption.

Only 28 have been identified so far, it said.

“We already have data with names and locations where there are missing persons and that number is 192,” Sergio Cabanas, head of Guatemala’s disaster management agency, told reporters earlier in the day.

Experts warned Wednesday that heavy rains in the area could provoke avalanches due to the large flows of volcanic mud, known as lahars, since the eruption on Sunday.

Volcanologists recorded the volcano exploding several times an hour Wednesday, which generated moderate avalanches that have an approximately 800 to 1,000 meters,” the Volcanology Institute said. It said the lahars could sweep down the mountain laden with concrete, rocks up to a meter (yard) in diameter and tree trunks.

“Everything in the search area was covered in a thick blanket of dust. In the murk created by the dust, police were using red ink to mark homes that had already been searched for bodies. More than 12,000 people have been evacuated from their homes, the disaster management agency said, with over 3,000 of them housed in temporary shelters. Regular search operations were ongoing to find 10 people dead on the spot,” a police official said.

“Rescue workers in the affected area,” it said.

Emergency workers had to temporarily suspend their search late Tuesday after a new eruption triggered a landslide.

Hundreds of people were evacuated from seven communities in the Escuintla area near the summit, as panicked locals rushed to their cars to escape, causing chaotic traffic.

An AFP photographer saw a large plume of ash rise into the sky, prompting an evacuation of everyone’s authorities could find before the police, the military and rescuers were ordered to stand down.

Hundreds of rescue workers, including firefighters, police and the military, were battling adverse conditions to search for remains in the tangled morass of rubble, dust and earth left behind by the landslides.

General Walter Sanchez, in charge of operations around the epicenter of the destruction near the village of El Rodeo, said the heat from the ash and hot sediment made rescue work difficult.

Volcanologists record explosions causing chaotic traffic.

The victims were returning home in a thick blanket of dust.

NEW DELHI— At least 10 people were killed and 12 others injured after a minibus rammed into a parked truck in the western Indian state of Maharashtra Thursday, police said.

The accident occurred on a national highway near Chandwad in the state’s Nashik district, some 160 km from state capital Mumbai.

“The minibus carrying some 25 people, including two drivers and a helper, hit the stationary truck from behind after its driver lost control of the vehicle, following a sudden tyre burst. The impact of the crash was such that 10 people died on the spot,” a police official said.

There had been a 30 percent increase in the number of road fatalities in the state.

Road accidents occur mostly due to poor driving or badly maintained roads and vehicles.—Xinhua
Kate Spade was under treatment for depression, anxiety: husband

NEW YORK — Designer Kate Spade, who committed suicide in New York this week, had been treated for depression and anxiety for five years, her husband said Wednesday.

“She was actively seeking help for depression and anxiety over the last five years, seeing a doctor on a regular basis and taking medication for both depression and anxiety,” her husband Andy Spade said in a statement carried by The New York Times.

It was a blunt rebuke to claims by the designer’s sister that Kate Spade needed mental health care but refused treatment over concerns about potentially hurting the light-hearted brand.

The death of the 55-year-old star designer, whose body was found Wednesday in her Park Avenue apartment, “was not unexpected by me,” Spade’s older sister Reta Saffo told The Kansas City Star from her home in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Spade — a Missouri native who first worked as a journalist, including as a stint as an accessories editor at Mademoiselle magazine — launched her Kate Spade fashion label in 1993 with her husband Andy and the help of outside investors.

Her cheerful use of bright colors and prints proved a hit with career women. Over a decade ago, she sold the business and later launched a luxury line Frances Valentine.

Celebrity news website TMZ cited police sources as saying Spade had fallen into depression in recent weeks after her husband left her and was seeking divorce. Andy Spade said that the couple had been living apart but in the same neighborhood, caring for their 13-year-old daughter Beau.

Embodying authenticity

“Our daughter was our priority. We were not legally separated, and never even discussed divorce. We were best friends trying to work through our problems in the best way we knew how: We were together for 35 years. We loved each other very much and simply needed a break,” Andy Spade added.

“There was no substance or alcohol abuse. There were no business problems. We loved creating our businesses together. We were co-parenting our beautiful daughter,” he stressed.

“My daughter and I are devastated by her loss, and can’t even begin to fathom life without her,” Anna Wintour, the grand priestess of fashion and editor-in-chief of Vogue magazine, hailed Spade as a woman who “defined” authenticity.

“There was a moment when you couldn’t walk a block in New York without seeing one of her bags, which were just like her; colorful and unpretentious,” Wintour said in a statement.—AFP ■

Penelope Cruz reveals she walked away from her first Hollywood film

LOS ANGELES—Penelope Cruz says she lost her first lead role in a Hollywood movie because the team wanted to include a nude scene at the last minute.

The actor, who was just 21 years old and on the cusp of stardom, said she decided to follow her heart even when it meant losing a big opportunity.

The Oscar-winning star, who recently played the role of Donatella Versace in FX’s “The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story”, said she was sent an “amazing script” for a lead role in a major American movie and she took four months of English lessons before flying to Los Angeles for her final audition.

“When I get there, completely jet-lagged... they say, 'Oh, we have to see you in the office.' They wanted to add something to (my contract). They said, 'If you want to do the screen test, you have to accept that there are going to be some naked scenes that were not in the script'.”

“I said, ‘Why didn’t you tell me 24 hours ago, before I got on the plane?’ Even if I did movies before that had scenes at that time, I didn’t want to go through that. I felt like, for a few years, I’m just going to say no to whatever, when my heart is telling me no,” Cruz said in an interview for the SAG-AFTRA Foundation.

The actor said she refused to sign the new contract but decided to go through the screen test as planned even though the director was livid and had stopped talking to her.

“I called the heads of the studio. I didn’t speak English, but in that meeting, I spoke English. I said, ‘If you think you can treat people like this with me, it’s not going to work. My family loves me, I’m gonna get back on the plane, and I don’t care if I don’t do your movie. But you know what? I’m gonna do your screen test.’ They looked at me like something was wrong with me.”

Cruz did her screen test before leaving Los Angeles.—PTI ■

‘Ocean’s 8,’ a glamorous crime tale for the #MeToo age

NEW YORK—They’re eight women, poised to take over from the men for an “Ocean’s” reboot full of glitz and glamor — a particularly #MeToo affair that does away with the saga’s traditional masculinity.

“Ocean’s 8” is to be released Friday, more than 10 years after “Ocean’s 13,” the third volume following the escapades of Danny Ocean (George Clooney) and his casino-robbing gang.

But to freshen up the latest installment, Warner Bros bid farewell to Danny — killed in 2018 in unknown circumstances — and replaced him with his sister Debbie (Sandra Bullock), who, like her brother at the beginning of the saga, has just been released from prison. Meanwhile, there’s another change of scenery: Rather than casinos, Debbie’s focus is one of the most extravagant events in New York’s calendar: the Met Gala.

It’s at this party — organized by Vogue editor Anna Wintour — that Debbie wants to get her hands on a $150 million Cartier necklace. In preparation, she’s gathered an expert team — all women, of course, echoing the likes of “Set It Off” (1996).

But “Ocean’s 8” does away with testosterone, darkness and dramatic tension — elements synonymous with the crime genre and prominent in the first three “Ocean’s” films.

There are no guns, bombs or physical violence. No enemy opposition, such as Terry Benedict (Andy Garcia) in the first three films, either. Once that’s all stripped away, all that remains is planning the heist and its precise execution.

“A lot has shifted”

And while historically, female gangs have often been portrayed as clumsy or inexperience, “Ocean’s 8” presents Debbie and her accomplices as a diverse force to be reckoned with — with skills matching those of her brother’s team.

“One of the things we’re celebrating is not just their community but their differences,” director Gary Ross (“The Hunger Games”), told a New York press conference at the end of May.

“These are eight distinct women with eight distinct back-grounds and that roughly look like what the world looks like, not just what Hollywood has made the world look like.”

But the director and co-screenwriter added the film did not see the light of day for “three or four years” — despite its hefty budget, and three Oscar-winning actresses and the singer Rihanna among its cast.

“Isn’t it interesting that two or three years ago, this seemed like an impossibility. Like how could you possibly get this made. And it’s so great that it’s being released now when you go: well, of course!” said Cate Blanchett, who plays Debbie’s partner-in-crime Lou.—AFP ■
British nightclub pioneer Stringfellow dies aged 77

LONDON—Peter Stringfellow, Britain’s legendary nightclub owner who pioneered strip-tease, died Thursday at the age of 77 after suffering from cancer, his publicist said.

He began his career in the 1960s booking acts such as The Beatles, Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix, but made his name with glitzy clubs filled with scantily clad women, becoming the first to win a licence for nude shows.

“IT’s very sad news. He passed away in the early hours of this morning. It was kept very private, he didn’t want to tell,” said his publicist Matt Glass.

With his long hair and habit of posing on a gold throne with a gaggle of beautiful girls, Stringfellow came to personify a particular type of playboy debauchery and was often a target of campaigners.

But those who knew him say he was warm and kind, and he claimed he was a feminist.

He was a firm supporter of the Conservative party, in particular Margaret Thatcher, but threatened to quit over his opposition to Britain’s withdrawal from the EU.

Stringfellow was born in Sheffield, northern England, in 1940, and began booking acts in small venues in the city -- some, the Beatles, turning out to be huge stars.

The son of a steelworker, Stringfellow had a brief brush with the law, serving a prison sentence in 1962 for selling stolen carpets, which he said was a sharp lesson.

He opened his first eponymous club in Covent Garden, in London’s West End, in 1980, and also bought The Hippodrome, starting its first ever gay night.

Other clubs followed in New York, Miami and Beverly Hills, although the expansion was too quick and he was declared bankrupt.

Back in London, he started again, providing what he called “adult entertainment” with topless dancers, and later becoming the first night club owner to secure a licence for fully nude dancers.

Stringfellow claimed to have welcomed many A-list stars into his clubs, everyone from late physicist Stephen Hawking to Marvin Gaye, Tom Jones, Prince and Rod Stewart.

He underwent treatment for lung cancer after being diagnosed in 2008, but kept it a secret, and the seriousness of his latest illness was also kept under wraps. He was married three times and is survived by his wife, Bella, and four children. —AFP

Scans reveal newsprint, second painting under Picasso

TOKYO—Infrared imaging technology has helped peel back the layers of a Pablo Picasso painting on display in Japan, and revealed a page from a 1902 newspaper and another compositional section below.

US and Japanese researchers scanned the piece “Mother and Child by the Sea”, owned by the Pola Museum of Art in Hakone, west of Tokyo, and uncovered a page of the French newspaper Le Journal from January 18, 1902.

“While the reason for the presence of newsprint in the paint layers in a mystery, the discovery is significant for Picasso scholars due to the proximity of the date to the artist’s move from Paris to Barcelona,” said the Washington-based National Gallery of Art, whose researcher John Delaney led the project in Japan.

Picasso is thought to have moved to the Spanish city in early January 1902, bringing a few canvases with him, and the newspaper article revealed in the painting suggests the work was completed some time after his move.

The scan also provided clear images of an underlying painting of a woman sitting down next to an absinthe glass with a spoon in it.

Picasso frequently reused canvasses or incorporated previous sketches into a final work.

However, it was not immediately clear why the artist used a page from Le Journal, which he was known to have read frequently.

“It may have been used... to cover previous layers before he painted another layer or the final composition of the mother and child,” scientists said.

The section of newspaper brought readers news of parliamentary clashes in London and the creation of a new annual exhibition of painting and sculpture at the Automobile Club of France, a gentleman’s club in Paris.—AFP

Pakistani motivational coach

PESHAWAR—Several hundred Pakistani university students sit enraptured as Hammad Safi lectures them on the merits of bettering their diction by watching Barack Obama speeches on YouTube.

The elegantly dressed motivational speaker is something of an internet sensation in Pakistan and regularly draws large crowds.

But it’s not just because of his infectious enthusiasm and engaging smile. It’s also because he’s only 11 years old.

Safi speaks into his wireless microphone, his hand gestures practised and his confidence unwavering before the attention of his elders at the University of Spoken English (USECS) in the northwestern city of Peshawar.

The pint-sized motivational coach is already an online star with his own YouTube channel and 145,000 subscribers. Some videos have been viewed millions of times.

Some of his advice may sound hackneyed: “every second is a challenge,” he says in one video. “Failure is the basis of success.”

But his audiences don’t seem to mind.

Bilal Khan, a political science student who has listened to his speech, said the boy wonder had had a profound effect on him.

“A few months ago I was really disappointed with life... I was (thinking) about suicide, because there are no jobs and no success in life,” he told AFP.

“Then I saw a movie of Hammad Safi. I thought, if an 11-year-old child can do anything, why can’t I?”

Online comments also shower him with praise.

“People love him because he’s just talking, he’s a hit every time,” says Samiullah Waql, one of his former English teachers.—AFP
Yangon vs Ayeyawady match to be held at Aung San Stadium

THE Yangon United vs Ayeyawady United match, scheduled for Sunday, will be shifted from the Yangon United Sports Complex (YUSC) to Aung San Stadium due to the renovation of YUSC, according to the Myanmar National League (MNL).

YUSC, the home stadium of Yangon United, is being renovated since April 2018. It is nearly completed, but the rain affected the works and the match between Yangon United vs Ayeyawady United has been shifted from YUSC to Aung San Stadium, according to a statement on the MNL page.

I am a fan of Yangon United and even if the venue of the match has changed, we will always stand with our team, Yangon United. It is more convenient to commute to Aung San Stadium than YUSC, as the stadium is located in downtown Yangon and this is better for us, said Myat Khauk Kyaw, a medical student from Yangon.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Premier League booming in stable football market

LONDON — The Premier League delivered its “most impressive results” ever in a European football market worth a record 25.3 billion euros – reflecting a new era of financial stability, analysts Deloitte said on Thursday.

The big five European leagues generated 14.7 billion ($17.3 billion) revenue in 2016/17, a nine percent increase from the previous year, with the Premier League 86 per cent bigger than its nearest competitor, Spain's La Liga. The 92 Premier League and Football League clubs generated a record 15.5 billion ($17.4 billion) and it is now more than five years since an English football club entered insolvency proceedings, reflecting better financial discipline and the positive impact of regulation, Deloitte said.

Roar Power - Annual Review of Football Finance 2018, from the Sports Business Group at Deloitte, said new broadcasting arrangements in England, Spain and France had had a major impact on revenue growth.—AFP

What sort of welcome will World Cup visitors get in Russia?

MOSCOW — World Cup organis- ers say the competition will draw more than one million fans to Russia, creating challenges that range from the logistical to the cultural for the hosts and their guests.

One million expected

There won't be an “Orange army” in Russia, because the Dutch failed to qualify, but there will still be the clapping Icelanders, the chanting English and the distinctive personalities of the supporters of the other 29 visiting countries. The differing languages, songs, flags and fan cultures of the world will energise the streets of Russia’s host cities until the middle of July. The figure of one million seems to have been reached by a surprisingly unscientific manner. FIFA has deducted the number of tickets sold to Russians, 872,578, from the two million it says have been sold in total. The biggest demand, outside the host nation, has come from the United States, whose team failed to qualify, with 86,710 sold. Then comes Brazil (71,787), Colombia (64,231) and Germany (60,457). The English are not even in the top ten. Russia’s objective, organising committee chief Alexei Sorokin said, is to show fans “an unforgettable, colourful Russia.”

Around $450 million was spent on Sochi’s Fisht Olympic Stadium in Sochi.

PHOTO: AFP

$13 billion in infrastructure

Russia has spent a whopping $13 billion (11 billion euros) on infrastructure.

“The airports in six cities have new terminals, 21 new hotels have been built in host cities,” Sorokin said in May, adding that “14 hospitals have been re-equipped for the tournament.”

“Nothing is superfluous,” he said. “We needed them.”

“This fulfils a regional planning objective which is in effect catching up on the lack of investment over the last 20 years,” said Jean-Baptiste Guegan, one of the authors of a book investigating Russian football.

He added that the goal was also to present a “radiant and attractive” image and give visitors the best possible experience so they would go home and recommend Russia as a tourist destination.

Free transport and Fan ID

FIFA president Gianni In- fantino told AFP this week that “I have never seen a country that has done so much to welcome the fans”. They will certainly be able to get between the host cities on trains, although in reality the vast majority who benefit will be Russian nationals. Sorokin said 700 additional trains would be laid on. “It’s a good system but what they are offering is insufficient and the vast majority of trains are already reserved,” said Ronan Evain, head of Football Supporters Europe (FSE), an umbrella organisation of supporters in 40 countries.—AFP