Weather bureau warns depression may cause possible landslides, flash floods

ACCORDING to the observations at (18:30) hrs M.S.T yesterday, the low pressure area over Bangladesh coast is crossing the Northeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining Bangladesh coast near Chittagong. It is forecast to further intensify into a depression during next 24 hours.

Meteorology and Hydrology Department forecasts on Sunday that regionally heavy falls are expected over lower Myanmar, warning the people, especially living in hilly areas and near rivers to be alert to possible landslides and flash floods.

MHD has warned people yesterday to be alert to possible landslides and flashflood these days as heavy rain fall, strong wind and flash floods are expected over the country due to the depression.

Monsoon is vigorous over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal. Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in the whole country with regionally heavy falls in Sagaing, Magway, Bago and Ayeyawady regions, Chin and Rakhine states and isolated heavy falls in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay, Yangon and Taninthayi regions, Kachin, Kayin and Mon states. Degree of certainty is (100%). Occasional squalls with rough seas will be experienced off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (40) m.p.h. Wave height will be about (10 - 15) feet in off and along Myanmar Coasts.

—GNLM
Rakhine Chief Minister meets local residents in Gwa Township

Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu and state ministers attended the award giving ceremony for students who exceptionally passed the matriculation exams for 2018 held in Basic Education High School in Gwa Township yesterday.

The Chief Minister and State Minister Dr. Chan Tar delivered opening speeches separately followed by State Educational Director U Aung Thant Myint explaining about the awarding process.

Next, the Chief Minister, state ministers and officials conferred the Chief Minister’s additional cash certificate and congratulatory certificate to one student with six distinctions, one student with four distinctions, and seven students with three distinctions. They then conferred the State Government and Chief Minister’s additional cash certificates and congratulatory certificates to twenty-four students with two distinctions, and ninety-six students with one distinction in the matriculation exams. They also conferred awards for first in township ranking, the school and teachers for educating a six distinction student.

Next, the Chief Minister and entourage travelled to Settwar Village and met with local residents from all the villages in Gwa Township there.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister said they are working to upgrade the basic infrastructure built in the last two years and called for public cooperation in developing the region while keeping free of bribery and corruption. He asked the local residents to give honest opinions and advice in developing the region.

The local residents from Setthua, Kwaychhang, Sarchet, Madawkyaw, Taingkyo, Zeegone, Kapan, Laungkyo, and Shweoogwin villages took turns discussing their needs to which the Chief Minister and officials responded.

The Chief Minister then donated money to the Kwaychhang funeral services to purchase a motor vehicle.

The Chief Minister then arrived at the meeting hall of Kyenti Township’s General Administration Department to meet with its local residents.

During the meeting the Chief Minister said the union government is giving priority to Rakhine State for its development and for its small and medium enterprises. This was followed by Kyenti Administrator U Tun Aye Khine explaining the progress report of 2018 projects and future projects. The Chief Minister and officials then listened to the local residents’ needs and gave advice and explanations. The Chief Minister then donated money to purchase a photocopier for Kyenti Basic Education High School.

—Myanmar News Agency

Booths must improve country’s image: Union Minister U Ohn Maung

Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Ohn Maung attended a photo contest titled Amyin Thit Photo Contest held by the Myanmar Hotelier Association (Yanha) at Inya Lake Hotel for the participation of Myanmar’s booths at JATA Tourism Expo 2018 and delivered a speech.

In his speech, he focused on Myanmar’s participation in the JATA Tourism Expo annually and the presentation of Myanmar’s existing and emerging destinations; the welcoming of Japanese businessmen, travel writers and bloggers to distribute true information about Myanmar’s destinations at the JATA Tourism Expo 2018 and the preparation of Myanmar’s booths to improve the country’s image.

A general round of discussions followed, and the ministry gave its advice.

Later in the evening, the Union Minister attended and extended greetings at a dinner hosted by World Chefs Without Borders and the Myanmar Chef Association at Pullman Yangon Centrepoint Hotel.

The dinner was hosted by 60 chefs from 24 countries to raise funds for Culinary Education and Community Aid in Myanmar.—Myanmar News Agency

NFME programme students achieve success in 2017-2018 academic year

According to Myanmar Scout Association, Under the programme of Non-Formal Middle Education (NFME) of Myanmar Literacy Resource Centre (MLRC) started some 10 years ago, students who overcame hardships have passed with distinctions in the matriculation exam of the 2017-2018 academic year.

One student passed with two distinctions, four students passed with one distinction and nine students passed with no distinction.

The programme was implemented with the help of the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, as well as international organisations, including UNICEF, UNESCO and World Education, in the 2017-2018 academic year.

Of the 7,500 students who pursued education under the programme until the 2017-2018 academic year, some 14 passed the matriculation exam, with Maung Ngwe Yan Soe from Pauk Township Magway Region passing with four distinctions.—GNLM
A three-storey hostel, a two-storey building dining and a two-storey library built with the funds allocated for the 2017-2018 financial year for Nationalities Youth Resource Development Degree College (Yangon), Department of Education and Training (DET), Ministry of Border Affairs, were opened at the degree college in Yangon yesterday.

The opening ceremony was attended by Union Minister for Border Affairs Li Gen Ye Aung, ministers from the Yangon region government, director-general of DET, as well as the principal, professor, faculties and students from the degree college. At the ceremony, the Yangon region minister for security and border affairs and the Yangon region minister for Rakhine ethnic affairs and the director-general of DET, principal of the college, and the official in charge of the construction of the buildings cut the ceremonial ribbon.

The construction company handed over to Principal Dr Min Thant the documents related to the buildings. The union minister, guests and ethnic students then took documentary photos. The union minister and his delegation visited the new college buildings.

The union minister and his delegation met the faculty members and students at the convocation hall and gave cash assistance to the students. Some 1,049 ethnic students from border areas across the nation are attending the degree college. In the afternoon, the union minister and his delegation arrived at the Central Training School and met the principal, lecturers and trainees. The union minister attended to the needs of the principal and lecturers and looked into the construction site at the Central Training School.

—Myanmar News Agency

Concrete road, school building put into service in Tada-U

A new concrete road section in a village in Tada-U Township, Mandalay Region was commissioned into service. The ceremony was held in Ngaryar Pyar Village yesterday in conjunction with opening of a new school building. At the ceremony, regional lawmaker U Wunna Aung and township administrator U Hla Win Aung gave speeches.

Then the deputy township education officer and chairman of committee for construction of the concrete road explained arrangements made to build the school facility and concrete road and the village administrator spoke words of thanks. The new concrete road and school building were formally opened by the regional MP township administrator, school headmistress and village administrator by cutting a ribbon.

The 2500 ft long, 13 ft wide and 6 inches thick concrete road was constructed at a cost of Ks. 31 million funded by the regional government and donated by local people.

The 60 ft long, 24 ft wide and 12 ft high one-storey school facility was built of bricks using Ks. 1.3 million of which Ks. 5 million was financed by the parliament and Ks. 8 million was contributed by local people.

—Ye Tint (IPRD)

Myanmar has adopted gender equality as its goal

Myanmar has adopted policies for the successful realisation of the provisions of the UN’s Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women it has already ratified, said Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe at the plenary meeting of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conference in Geneva, Switzerland, on 4 June.

The country will write its laws from the gender angle, he added. The union minister expressed pleasure at the century-long ILO’s efforts to ensure full rights for workers all over the world, and the UN’s endeavours for the success of the Sustainable Development Goals. He said the country has adopted gender equality as its goal and accelerated its activities, as the report “The Women at Work Initiative: the Push for Equality,” presented by the ILO director-general, is in accordance with the current situation, and it also highlights the future programmes. The country will write its laws from the gender angle.

He said the country is conducting labour reforms with the technical help of dialogue partners, including the ILO. After holding the national-level tripartite meeting attended by the representatives of the government, employers and employees, the country laid down an appropriate employment programme and five action plans in the labour sector. It will also overcome the challenges and difficulties.

The union minister also took part in the informal meeting of the ASEAN labour ministers on 5 June.

At the head office of the ILO on the same day, the permanent representative of Myanmar and representatives of employers and employees explained Myanmar’s accomplishments on the observance of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No.87), during the meeting of the Committee on the Application of Standards.

At his meeting with Executive Director Dr Frank Hoffer of the Action Collaboration Transformation (ACT), the union minister discussed cooperation with international brands for the progress of the garment industry, improvement of worker qualifications and productivity and future negotiations among the employers, employees and the government after the ACT’s visit to Myanmar. Later, he met with a delegation led by Mr. Boris Zurcher, State Secretary and Chief of the Labour Division of Switzerland, and held talks on the four-year extension of the Myanmar-Switzerland cooperation programme, designation of priority areas, employment opportunities, collection of labour data, workplace safety, health assistance, and the visit of a Swiss tripartite for a closer cooperation with Myanmar in the labour affairs and market.

At his meeting with Associate Deputy Undersecretary Mr. Mark Mittelhauser and delegation, talks centred around the development of the labour sector in Myanmar after the country hosted the 3rd Stakeholder Forum, and amendment of the labour laws, in accordance with the resolutions of the tripartite meeting and international standards.

A Myanmar delegation led by the union minister arrived back home on 9 June. He was accompanied by high-level officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, representatives of employers and employees, and their advisers.

—Myanmar News Agency

President U Win Myint to visit Thailand in near future

AT the invitation of His Excellency General Prayut Chan-o-cha (Ret), Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, U Win Myint, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and wife Daw Cho Cho will pay an official visit to the Kingdom of Thailand in the near future. In conjunction with the official visit, the President will also attend the 8th Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) Summit and 9th Cambodia-Laos-Myanmar-Viet Nam (CLMV) Summit to be held in Bangkok—Myanmar News Agency
60,000 acres of monsoon paddy to be grown in Thanlyin Township

THE Thanlyin Township Agriculture Department has targeted to cultivate 60,000 acres of monsoon paddy crops in Thanlyin, a major port city of Myanmar, situated across Bago River from the city of Yangon, in the 2018-2019 financial year.

A spokesperson of the agriculture department said that it will achieve its goal to cultivate the targeted 59,701 acres of marketable species of quality paddy in 32 villages in 28 village-tracts in the township this monsoon.

As a marketable export item, the country is making continuous efforts to boost the productivity of rice on a national scale. Rice is considered the country’s most important crop. The country earns foreign currency from the annual overseas export of rice.

Myanmar exports rice to more than 60 countries, with the majority of the crop going to China, Bangladesh, African states, Sri Lanka, Senegal, Afghanistan and Poland. Also, Indonesia, Japan and Singapore, as well as some European countries, import rice from Myanmar.

Africa is a particularly important market, accounting for 60 per cent of the rice exports.

The country sends tonnes of rice to overseas traders mainly via sea. It largely sends rice to China, as a major rice importer, through both border and non-border trade. —Thet Khaing (Thanlyin)

Garment exports value increases by $230 million in past two months

THE value of garment exports from factories working on the cut, make and pack (CMP) basis was US$492 million in the past two weeks during the six-month interim period for the 2018-2019 fiscal year, up by more than $230 million compared to the 2017-2018 FY, according to the commerce ministry.

The garment sector is one of the prioritised sectors to drive exports up. Garments are primarily exported to Japan and the European markets. Additionally, they are also exported to South Korea, China and the United States.

Myanmar’s garment industry is running on the CMP basis, and those engaged in this industry are striving to shift the CMP into the free on board (FOB) system. However, it is not easy owing to the lack of infrastructure, and weak transparency in the banking system and capital injection, said market observers.

In the export sector, natural gas and agricultural products individually made up 25 per cent, while CMP garments accounted for 16 per cent, minerals for eight per cent, fishers for five per cent and forest, animal and other products for 21 per cent.

There are over 400 garment factories in Myanmar, with a labour force of over 300,000 workers. Myanmar’s cheap labour attracts foreign manufacturers to invest in the country, which sometimes leads to a conflict over wages between the workers and the employers. —Ko Khant

Bilateral trade with Philippines hits $52 million in 2017-18 FY

THE Myanmar-Philippines overseas trade totalled US$52.4 million at the end of the 2017-18 fiscal year, registering a decline in value by over $4 million as against the same period last year, according to the monthly data report of the Ministry of Commerce.

The total bilateral trade value between the two ASEAN member states included $19.919 million in exports and $32.512 million in imports. The 2017-2018 FY saw a significant decrease in the value of Myanmar’s exports to the Philippines, with exports declining by more than $21 million. However, Myanmar’s imports increased by over $17 million during the period.

According to the commerce ministry, the bilateral trade between Myanmar and the Philippines was valued at $56.483 million in the 2016-17 FY, $28.998 million in the 2015-16 FY, $28.2 billion in the 2014-15 FY, $33.353 million in the 2013-14 FY, $44.012 million in the 2012-13 FY and $48.959 million in the 2011-12 FY. Myanmar predominantly imports capital goods, consumer products and intermediate goods from ASEAN member countries, Southeast Asian nations and African states, European countries and some Western nations. Its exports include agriculture products, animal products, marine products, minerals, forest products and manufactured goods. —Shwe Khine
Trucks are seen near the 105-Mile Muse Border Trade Zone in northern Shan State. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

Sino-Myanmar border trade exceeds $994 million over two months

THE border trade between China and Myanmar between 1 April and 1 June during the six-month interim period for the 2018-2019 financial year (FY) was valued at US$994 million, up by $94 million compared to that of the same period in the 2017-2018 FY, according to the commerce ministry.

The Sino-Myanmar trade in the same period last FY was valued at $900 million. Myanmar trades with China through the Muse, Lweje, Chinshwehaw, Kanpiketee and Keng Tung gates. Muse is the major border trade gate in Myanmar conducting the largest trade volume. The Muse gate saw an increase of nearly $110 million over the past two months against that of last FY.

The Sino-Myanmar border trade was worth $835 million at Muse, $41 million at Lweje, $35 million at Chinshwehaw, $62.5 million at Kanpiketee and $9.42 million at Keng Tung.

Myanmar’s rice, sugar, pulses, sesame seeds, corn, dried tea leaves, fishery products, minerals and animal products are exported to China, while capital goods, intermediate goods and consumer goods flowed into the country.

In a bid to promote bilateral trade, Myanmar’s Trade Department, operating under the commerce ministry, the Yunnan Provincial government and the Kunming People’s government are preparing to sign a memorandum of understanding soon, according to the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

This agreement will cover the export of rice, sugar, corn and other agro products to China. In turn, agriculture machinery, electrical appliances, iron and steel-related materials of the same value will be imported.

— Mon Mon

Forest product exports by private sector decrease in current FY

THE country’s export of forest products by private exporters in the current six-month interim fiscal year (FY) dropped to US$26.4 million from $41.5 million compared to the same period last FY, according to the commerce ministry.

Between 1 April and 1 June this year, the country exported marketable forest products, including bamboo and other non-wood products, which had a value of $30.62 million, including $4.23 million from the public sector. The total export value of forest products decreased to $12.5 million.

Despite a decrease in the exports of the same products by the private sector, the public sector saw a slight increase by $2.6 million against the same period last year.

Over the first 62 days of this FY, the overall exports between Myanmar and international traders topped $2.4 billion, including $1.9 billion from the private sector and $519.6 million from the public sector.

The ministry’s latest statistics showed that the country exported $13.7 million worth of agricultural products, $43.1 million worth of manufactured goods and miscellaneous products, with an estimated value of $277.4 million over the two-month period of this FY.—Khine Khant

Inflow of China-made vehicles likely to bring down prices in Mandalay automobile market

THE permit for the import of China-made vehicles through the Muse 105th Mile zone may scale down vehicle prices in the local automobile market, said U Kyaw Kyaw, a car dealer from Mandalay.

Earlier, pick-ups, machinery that cannot be driven on public roads such as excavators and bulldozers and express cars were allowed for import. According to a new policy of the commerce ministry, saloon cars of 2015 model and later ones will be allowed to be imported. The import of China-made domestic and used vehicles needs a document that states the country of origin and an export certificate issued by China’s custom, according to the notice of Myanmar’s commerce ministry.

The car import permit required at the Muse gate has reduced Japanese car prices in the Mandalay automobile market. —Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)
Private telecom Mytel Myanmar holds Empower My Myanmar Ceremony

THE Empower My Myanmar Ceremony of Telecom International Myanmar Company Limited (Mytel) which is the fourth operator of Myanmar being jointly conducted by Myanmar and Viet Nam took place at Fullman Yangon, Centerpoint Hotel in Yangon on 9 June, attended by Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

The government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has initiated reforms in the country’s telecoms sector in a transparent manner; giving nationwide operator licences in accordance with telecommunication law to two foreign telecom operators Ooredoo Myanmar Co Ltd and Telenor Myanmar Co Ltd in 2014, and local operator MPT and KDDI Summit Global Myanmar Co Ltd in 2015. Telecom International Myanmar Co Ltd (Mytel) is the only public company among these four telecom operators.

The Deputy Minister of Information and Communications of Viet Nam Mr. Nguyen Minh Hong spoke words of honour while the chairman of the Executive Committee of Telecom International Myanmar Co Ltd (Mytel) U Khin Maung Soe spoke words of thanks.

Next, the Senior General, the Vietnamese deputy minister Senior Lieutenant General Tran Don and officials pressed the button to unveil the Mytel brand and viewed education, agricultural and health services and other services provided by Mytel in the technological booths.

Telecom International Myanmar Company Limited (Mytel) was established under cooperation between Myanmar and Viet Nam. Mytel provides 2G and 4G systems. Nationwide, 30,000 kilometers of fiber cables have been installed so about 50 per cent of the whole fiber optic infrastructure across Myanmar can be provided. The network can cover over 300 towns or 80 per cent of the total population.

As VoLTE technology is used, users can use data and voice simultaneously with better quality. A Mytel SIM user will get free 1,500 MB data and 150 minute voice call that can be used in three months. When a voice call is made with the use of charging block 1s + 1s, the user will be charged depending on duration. For Myanmar’s socio-economic development, a wide variety of services such as modern agriculture, education and health are provided. Now, Mytel 4G SIM cards and top-up cards are available at 50 Mytel brand shops and 30,000 other shops across the country.

—Myanmar News Agency

RVI draws larges number of students this year

RVI Institute, a premier provider of education and consultancy services in the ASEAN region, hosted the 13th edition of its annual RVI Institute Study Overseas and Career Fair with events in Mandalay on 9 June in Hilton Mandalay Hotel and Yangon on 10 June in Myanmar Plaza. Approximately more than one thousand students attended the events, of whom many submitted applications to further their studies at renowned organisations, universities and institutes in Singapore, Australia, UK, US, Switzerland, Malaysia and China.

This year’s RVI Institute Study Overseas and Career Fair events drew the largest amount of students to date, reflecting the growing interest for students to explore educational opportunities overseas.

The fair was targeted at high school graduates or those who recently received their Matriculation examination results, Higher National Diploma (HND) holders, undergraduate degree holders who plan to do a Master’s degree, and those interested in joining the Singapore education system. Attendance to the fair was free of charge.

Mr Argus Ang, CEO of The RVI Group, said, “It is so rewarding for us to organise the RVI Institute Study Overseas and Career Fair each year with back-to-back events in Mandalay and Yangon. Together with our participating organisations, overseas universities and institutions, we have provided the platform for many students to explore higher education opportunities in Singapore and internationally. On behalf of RVI Institute and RVI Group, I wish to thank all our participants and partners who helped to make this year’s RVI Institute Study Overseas and Career Fair the most successful edition to date.”

—GNLM

Western style monastery

The Laybyinnyat warden in Mandalay hosts a large number of ancient temples built by the kings, queens and court ministers of the Yadana and Amarapura periods for Buddhist monks. Some monasteries were built entirely with teak while others serve as museums where sculptures and sophisticated floral patterns, decorations and architectural designs of the Yadana period can be seen intact.

Of these, two are unique as they are integrated with the western style architecture. Such kind of ancient edifice is rare in Mandalay, a city famous for its Myanmar traditional culture. They are Thakawun monastery or Kin Win Mingyi monastery, and Yaw Min Gyimonastery. Both Kin Win Mingyi and Yaw Min Gy were famous royal officials of their time. As soon as you see the Yaw Min Gyimonastery, you will notice its western style architecture including stone figures of a winged man, decorated pillars and L-shaped stairs.

The donor, U Po Hlaing, the administrator of Yaw, a town in central west Myanmar, hired famous royal officials of their time. As soon as you see the Yaw Min Gyimonastery, you will notice its western style architecture including stone figures of a winged man, decorated pillars and L-shaped stairs.

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Residents want resumption of passenger airlines in Magway Region

RESIDENTS want the passenger airlines in Magway Region to be resumed for regional development, as the Magway airport has been suspended for 12 years.

The airport was used only for some three years. The construction of the airport started in 2001, and it was put into service on 6 June 2003. In the beginning, flights ran twice a week. After 2006, no airplanes landed in the region. U San Htway, chair of Magway Region Hoteliers Association, said: “Flights do not make a landing saying there are no passengers here. I would like to urge the airlines to make landings twice a week. I will bear the loss. It is needed for the region, as the aged need to make medical trips and NGOs visit the region frequently.” A jet with a seating capacity of more than 100 passengers can make a landing here. The airfield is built on an 818.82-acre land. Its runway is 8,500 feet in length and 200 feet in width.

U Min Aung, a manager of the Magway Airport, said the matter must be officially reported to the Ministry of Transport and Communications through the regional government to resume the aviation services.—Zeyatu (Magway)

Fraudster who scammed 97 Myanmar labourers held

AFTER investigating a complaint about fraud recruitment, a team comprising human-trafficking police and members of the Myanmar Police Force arrested Min Tun Aung, identified as Myanmar-Thailand interpreter during a signing event between Thailand agency and Star Pioneer Company in Hlinethaya Township on 7 June 2018. “Min Tun Aung was charged at our police station under section 26 of the Overseas Employment Agency Act,” said an officer from (North Dagon) police station. He scammed 97 Myanmar labourers promising to send them to their relatives’ homes in Thailand. He worked as an interpreter when local Star Pioneer Company and a Thailand recruitment agency signed a memorandum of understanding to send Myanmar’s labourers to SMP enterprises at Pinlon Hall, Yangon, according to an announcement of Myanmar Overseas Employment Agencies Federation (MOEAF).

He charged them additional money of 6,000 baht. Myanmar’s labourers made a series of complaints against Min Tun Aung to the Myanmar recruitment agency. Star Pioneer agency and Thailand agency discussed matters concerning this complaint and the fraudster was revealed. Star Pioneer Company took the responsibility and filed a complaint against that scammer with the MOEAF.—Nyein Nyein

Police find yaba pills, related objects; two arrested

THE police raided two homes in Htigyaing Township, Katha District, Sagaing Region, and arrested two people early Sunday morning after they found yaba pills and related materials inside their homes, according to a report. The police found 1,186 yaba tablets and related equipment hidden in the bedroom of Ma Nwet, 35, in Wegyi Village, Chountaung Village-tract. Further, the police recovered 51 yaba pills and related materials from the house of U Aung Win, 55, in the same village. The two suspects have been charged under the existing Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Law.—Win Naing (Kachinmye)
Building ENSO-resilient agriculture in East Asia

Elsie Bernardo

Elsie Bernardo is the Communication Specialist for CCAFS South East Asia. She is a native of the Philippines and has worked with the United Nations in Cuba, China, South Africa, and Peru. She is also a founding member of the Global Network of Women Scientists for Food and Agriculture (GNWSA). Elsie currently works for the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture & Food Security (CCAFS) based in the Philippines. She recently spent a year at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) headquarters in Rome as a Communications Associate, focusing on climate change and resilience. She holds a Master’s degree in Development Communication from the University of the Philippines and a Bachelor’s degree in Journalism and Mass Communication from De La Salle University, Philippines. Elsie has long been passionate about social change through communication. She is particularly interested in the ways communication can help address social injustices and help communities adapt to climate change. Elsie is a member of the Asian Women Communicators, the International Federation of Journalists, and an Associate of the International Association of Public Opinion Polls. She enjoys writing, traveling, and spending time with her family and friends.

In response, the World Bank’s Agriculture Global Practice is undertaking an Advisory Services and Analytical (ASA) program on agri-food resilience to ENSO in East Asia. The program aims to increase understanding among policymakers about ENSO’s impacts on agriculture systems in five selected countries, namely Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, PDR, Philippines, and Vietnam. It also seeks to provide recommendations to these countries to enhance their resilience to ENSO events and other climate hazards. It will provide analysis of past and likely future impacts of ENSO on agricultural production and access to food, high-price relevant good practices, and policy recommendations for improving the agricultural resilience of each country.

From September to October 2017, the World Bank worked with the CGIAR Global Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) to conduct bilateral meetings with government agencies and research partners, as well as consultation workshops, in the five countries. Government agencies, donor organizations, non-government organizations (NGOs), and private sector representatives shared their first-hand experiences of ENSO events, and the achievements and challenges in past ENSO responses, during meetings in the respective countries.

The panel discussion organized during the consultation workshops focused on the evidence of the impacts of El Nino and La Nina on agricultural productivity, domestic agri-food supply chains, international trade, and food prices and consumption; the institutional capacity, policy responses, and international support; and the current knowledge and response gaps, and how to improve agri-food resilience to future ENSO-related climate shocks.

Country notes were also presented to participants to introduce the country’s agricultural sector, including its role in the country’s economy and how this is influenced by ENSO; examine and present new analysis on the impact of ENSO on food security, agricultural production, food security and poverty, and assess effects on the broader economy; present the roles and responses of the government, private sector, civil society, and NGOs including development partners during extreme events; summarize international policy and sustain- able development initiatives that can improve the state of knowledge and enhance decision-making; and recommend practical solutions to enhance the vulnerability of the agri-food systems to ENSO-induced and other climatic shocks.

Building ENSO-resilient agriculture in East Asia

By Elsie Bernardo

(Phillipine Accent Foundation (CAAFS) Southeast Asia)
US farm belt tries to head off another surge in suicides

NEW YORK — Responding to signs of rising despair in rural America over a farming downturn exacerbated by the current trade war fears, agricultural leaders are mobilizing to try to prevent another suicide crisis.

Two high profile deaths in the past week, of celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain and fashion designer Kate Spade, have shined a spotlight on the issue of depression and suicide in the United States, where the latest data show rates are rising, especially in rural states.

Farm industry officials are bolstering outreach and counseling programs throughout the American farm belt and calling for more action from Washington.

“Things are tough in the countryside,” said John Sorbello, a vegetable and nursery farmer in upstate New York and a director of the state’s farm bureau, an affiliate of the nation’s biggest farm group.

Dairy farmers are facing especially tough times, he said.

“There’s nothing to do over the pricing of milk, they are worried about NAFTA, about the surplus in dairy products all over the world,” Sorbello said.

“It seems you have no control over it and it’s stressful.”

Earlier this year, one of the large dairy cooperatives took the drastic step of including suicide prevention information with the monthly check.

“Some people thought it was too extreme,” Sorbello said. “But it got everybody’s attention.”

The outreach push comes amid a big surge in suicides throughout the United States. The suicide rate rose nearly 30 per cent between 1999 and 2016 — and in many states by more than that — according to a report this week from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The report did not break out individual industries, but 2016 CDC data showed US farmers have five times the rate of suicide as the broader population.

The US farm belt also has bad memories of the 1980s when a bruising industry downturn saw an explosion of agricultural workers taking their own lives.

- Crisis -

“Farmers and ranchers already have the highest suicide rates of any occupation,” said Matt Perdue, of the National Farmers Union.

Those who work in rural areas point to myriad factors, including commodity price volatility, more extreme weather and worsening isolation as more young people leave for the cities.

And making matters worse, “About 60% of rural residents live in areas that suffer from a mental health professional shortage,” Perdue said.

The CDC study also pointed to research that suggests chronic exposure to pesticides “might affect the neurologic system and contribute to depressive symptoms.”

Financial stress is one factor that can lead to suicide and farm incomes have fallen around 50 percent since 2013 and revenues are expected in 2018 to come in at the lowest level since 2006. The National Farmers Union, at the urging of members who see growing numbers of growers fearful of losing the family farm, urged the US Department of Agriculture to “proactively address the farm suicide crisis.”

Lawmakers voted in 2008 to bolster mental health services in agricultural communities as part of an omnibus farm bill, but no funds have been allocated to the effort.

There is a chance Congress could provide support in a bill now being considered, but it’s too early to make a prediction one way or the other,” Perdue said.

The troubles facing farmers extend well beyond the United States.

France in early 2018 boosted its funding for anti-suicide programs following a rise in the number of calls for help.

And India has also suffered a wave of farm suicides after many in the sector became mired in debt.

‘Not an occupation’

NY FarmNet at Cornell University, which was founded in 1986 amid a rash of suicides, provides free aide to farmers in need.

“We send one financial consultant and one farm family consultant to each case, as we have found that even if the case presents itself as purely a financial matter, there are almost always underlying personal or communication issues that need attention,” said Hal McCabe, outreach director at NY FarmNet.

Hearing of rising concern in rural communities, the group has conducted suicide prevention workshops aimed mainly at agricultural services workers, such as bankers, suppliers or farm maintenance staff.

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Putin says ready to meet Trump ‘as soon as’ Washington is ready

MOSCOW — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday said he was ready to meet his US counterpart Donald Trump as soon as Washington was ready, adding Vienna could be a possible venue for such a summit.

“As soon as the American side is ready this meeting would take place depending on my working schedule of course,” Putin told reporters in the Chinese city of Qingdao.

“The US president himself repeatedly said that he would consider such a meeting helpful. I can confirm this. It’s true,” Putin said.

He said he did not discuss a possible meeting venue with Trump but “many” countries including Austria were keen to help in organising such a summit.

“But I believe it’s a technical issue,” he said.

“It’s important for such meetings — if they take place — to have concrete contents.”

The Wall Street Journal, citing a senior European official, reported that Putin asked Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz on a visit to Vienna earlier this week to help organise such a meeting and that Washington was considering it.

Despite Trump deal, China’s ZTE, Huawei face closed doors in US market

WASHINGTON — Chinese telecommunications companies like ZTE and Huawei face severely tightened access to the US market despite the Trump administration’s deal this week to give ZTE a lifeline after it agreed to a steep fine.

The operators of shinkansen, often praised for its speed and punctuality, also boast of the huge numbers of people using shinkansen.— Kyodo News

Underscoring that the US telecoms industry still remains broadly closed to under pressure to avoid their equipment.

Indeed, four Democratic and Republican senators, criticizing the deal that will permit ZTE to resume purchasing US electronics components, proposed legislation Thursday for an outright ban on the government buying products and services from both ZTE and Huawei.

The two Chinese companies are poised to become global leaders in next-generation 5G wireless networks in the United States. These companies have direct links to the Chinese government and Communist Party,” said Republican senator Marco Rubio.

Their products and services are used for espionage and intellectual property theft, and they have been putting the American people and economy at risk with consequence for far too long.”

But experts say the move could hinder the growth of China’s telecoms giant ZTE poses an espionage threat to the United States. PHOTO:AFP

Knife rampage aboard Japanese bullet train kills one, injures two

YOKOHAMA — A man with a knife went on a rampage aboard a shinkansen bullet train bound for Shin-Osaka Station from Tokyo late Saturday, killing one person and severely injuring two others, police said.

The police arrested Ichiro Kojima, a 22-year-old unemployed man, on suspicion of attempted murder when the Nozomi train made an emergency stop near Odawara Station southwest of Tokyo. Kojima told investigators he randomly stabbed the three because he was “feeling frustrated.”

The incident occurred around 10 p.m. on the No. 12 car of the shinkansen train of 16 coaches, when it was traveling between Shin-Yokohama and Odawara stations. There were around 880 passengers aboard the Nozomi 265, the day’s last train bound for Shin-OSaka, according to Central Japan Railway Co., also known as JR Central.

The rampage on the Tokaido Shinkansen Line killed one man in his 30s, believed to be an employee of a company in Osaka. Two women, aged 26 and 27, sustained severe injuries but are not in life-threatening conditions, the police said.

Witnesses spoke of 20 to 30 passengers including many young women panicking and escaping from the direction of the No. 12 car. The train was crowded with women thought to have attended an event.

Some of the women were crying as they were running to other coaches, shouting “Just keep going ahead” and “(the suspect) has a knife.” One woman was holding a removed seat, apparently to protect herself.

The operators of shinkansen, often praised for its speed and punctuality, also boast of the huge numbers of people using shinkansen. PHOTO:AFP

Under the conservative approach, Austria has strived to act as a mediator between Russia and the West. While the EU-state imposed sanctions on Russia over Crimea along with the rest of the bloc, Austria did not expel Russian diplomats like other Western nations following the March poisoning of a Russian former double agent and his daughter in Britain, an attack London has accused Moscow of being behind. —AFP

The operators of shinkansen, often praised for its speed and punctuality, also boast of the huge numbers of people using shinkansen. PHOTO:AFP
Nicaragua violence rages as prospect of crisis talks hangs in limbo

MASAYA (NICARAGUA) — Masaya, a city battling at the front lines of Nicaragua’s heated anti-government protests, once again became the scene of fierce street battles that a rights group said saw one man die of a bullet wound to the heart.

Firearm bursts rang out on Saturday in the city home to 100,000 people, where riots that started midday grew increasingly violent as masked demonstrators wielding homemade mortars and slingshots fought to fend off armed security forces.

Alvaro Leiva, head of the Nicaraguan Association for the Protection of Human Rights (ANPDH), said at least one sexagenarian had died after a bullet struck his heart.

Leiva said the gunman was a sniper — implying a member of Ortega’s security forces or government-backed vigilantes.

The mortal wound came hours after the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (CENIDH) had raised to 137 the death toll in the Central American country, where demonstrations demanding President Daniel Ortega’s ouster have raged since 18 April.

At least two people had died in violent protests overnight, the CENIDH told AFP, one in the northern city of Jinotega and another in Managua.

Leiva said conditions were growing increasingly grave “because we are talking about crossfire, not tear gas or rubber bullets.”

“The situation in this moment in Nicaragua is a crisis,” he said. “We are asking the world to pay attention to Masaya.”

The city just outside of the capital — known before for its tree-lined streets, traditional crafts and nearby volcano of the same name — has taken on the appearance of a war zone.

 Demonstrators, many of them young men, huddled Saturday behind barricades constructed from cobblestones, felled trees and sheet metal, the ground littered with broken glass and spikes to further guarantee no cars would pass.

“We are fighting here because of the massacre of many people, the death of many children,” one protestor told AFP, saying he’s been actively demonstrating in Masaya for 15 days.

“We can say that between the government and the police, the police are supposed to protect the people,” he said. “They’re the ones who are shooting bullets at us.”

No political will

The young man who died in Jinotega was killed during an armed attack on protesters who were guarding a road barricade intended to keep security forces back, according to student organizers.

“Paramilitaries linked to the government gunned down boys who were fighting in the streets for liberty and democracy,” said a statement from the city’s student movement, calling it “a night of terror.”

In Managua, a young motorcyclist died from a bullet to the neck after two armed men aboard motorcycles chased and shot him, according to local press.

Demonstrators continued to block roads throughout Nicaragua as part of the mass protests demanding the removal of Ortega, a former guerrilla who has held office for 11 years but who faces increasing opposition, even from onetime allies.

“Unfortunately they still aren’t showing political will — they continue to kill people,” one student leader, Victor Cuadras, told journalists upon landing in Managua after a trip to Washington. “They shed blood yesterday and early today,” he said of Ortega’s ruling Sandinista party. —AFP
As G7 feuds, Xi and Putin play up their own club

SHANGHAI — The leaders of China and Russia Sunday praised the expansion of their regional security bloc at a summit which put on a show of unity in stark contrast to the acrimonious G7 meeting.

President Xi Jinping gave the leaders of Pakistan and India a “special welcome” to their first summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), in the eastern Chinese city of Qingdao, since their countries joined the group last year. Founded in 2001, the SCO also includes the former Central Asian Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani, whose country is an observer member, also attended the meeting as he seeks Chinese and Russian support following the US withdrawal from the nuclear deal with Tehran.

Warning that “unilateralism, trade protectionism and a backlash against globalisation are taking new forms”, Xi spoke up for the “pursuit of cooperation for mutual benefit”. While never mentioning the United States by name, he added: “We should reject the Cold War mentality and confrontation between blocs, and oppose the practice of seeking absolute security of oneself at the expense of others, so as to obtain security of all.” Xi, whose government is locked in tough negotiations with the United States to avoid a trade war, said World Trade Organisation rules and the multilateral trading system should be upheld to build an open world economy.

“The G7 text made no mention of Russia being invited back into the group despite Trump’s support for such a move. Russia was expelled in response to its 2014 annexation of Crimea. Putin did not miss an opportunity to thumb his nose at the club of leading industrialised democracies, saying that the combined purchasing power of the SCO outstripped the G7. The People’s Daily newspaper, the ruling Chinese Communist party’s mouthpiece, also took a jab at the group by tweeting two pictures side by side.

The first was the now famous photo of German Chancellor Angela Merkel flanked by leaders such as a furrow-browed French President Emmanuel Macron, all tensely facing off against Trump — the only one seated, with his arms crossed. The second depicted Xi at the centre of the SCO leaders striding forward together in smiling unison, a grinning Putin by his side. “G7 vs. SCO: two meetings on the same day” it taunted.—AFP

15 militants killed in airstrike, ground assault in Southern Philippines

MANILA — Philippine security forces launched on Sunday airstrikes and ground assault on Islamist militants’ lair in Maguindanao province in southern Philippines, killing 15 militants and wounding eight others.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, an army commander in charge of the operations, said the predawn assaults on Liguan marsh destroyed a bomb-making “factory” of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), a splinter group of the large Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Sobejana said in an interview with a local media that 15 BIFF fighters were killed and eight others wounded in the offensive. The strikes also forced 1,700 families in the area to flee.—Xinhua

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**CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE**

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**THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR**

**MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY**

**MYANMAR OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE (INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)**

(11/2018)

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 11 June 2018. Tender forms will not be sold.

3. The interested Bidders should submit the Technical Specifications with Original Bid Bond and Commercial Quotation in separate sealed envelopes on which to be addressed to the Managing Director, Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise and should reach in Tender Box of the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise not later than 14:00 pm on 9 July 2018.

4. Tender Closing Date & Time- 9-7-2018, 14:00 pm

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

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JUNE 2018

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Bollywood star Chopra apologises over ‘Quantico’ Hindu terror plot

NEW DELHI — Bollywood superstar Priyanka Chopra apologised Sunday after a furor over a US TV series that showed her uncovering a terror plot hatched by Indian Hindu nationalists.

The episode of spy thriller “Quantico” showed Chopra’s character, an FBI agent named Alex Parrish, thwarting the plot and noticing one of the terrorists wearing a Hindu rosary.

The terrorists had tried to frame Pakistanis for the attack planned ahead of a summit on Kashmir, a disputed Himalayan territory that arch-rivals India and Pakistan claim as their own. Pakistan has been a source of historical tension between the nuclear-armed neighbours who have fought two wars over it.

The episode, aired on June 1, triggered outrage in India with many fans taking to social media to “shame” the Indian-born actress and calling her a “traitor”.

Chopra, a former Miss World, said she was “a proud Indian and that will never change”.

“I’m extremely saddened and sorry that some sentiments have been hurt by a recent episode of Quantico,” Chopra, 35, wrote on Twitter.

“That was not and would never be my intention. I sincerely apologise.”

ABC Studios, the producers of the crime drama, have also offered an apology while defending Chopra who is the lead actor of the show.

The episode has stirred a lot of emotion, much of which is unfairly aimed at Priyanka Chopra, who didn’t create the show, nor does she write or direct it, according to the Spanish actor, Harvey Weinstein subjected her, never told Antonio Banderas

LOS ANGELES — Salma Hayek never told Antonio Banderas about the abuse to which she says Harvey Weinstein subjected her, according to the Spanish actor, who classifies her a close friend.

When he learned about it years after the pair had filmed the Weinstein-produced movie “Frida,” Banderas picked up the phone and called to ask her why she had never said anything.

She said she was “trying to protect us.” Hayek was one of the many alleged victims of the disgraced film producer who had the power to make – or break – a career. She said he had harassed her for sexual favors and forced her to do a lesbian sex scene in “Frida.” “I’ve worked with Harvey Weinstein, he has produced films I have been in, but I was not aware” of the allegations, Banderas told AFP in a telephone interview.

“When the issue of Salma came up, the first thing I did was call her to ask, ‘Why didn’t you tell me anything?’”

She told Banderas she was trying to protect herself and her friends, because she “knew he was a very powerful character and that if she said something to us and we confronted him, we would pay a very high price.”

Mexican-born Hayek, writing in The New York Times last December, described Weinstein as a “monster” and detailed the tortuous filming of a movie that won her a best-actress Oscar.

They would go on to work together in other films, including “One Upon a Time in Mexico” and “Pass in Boots.” The Weinstein scandal first erupted last October, drawing in other big names in the entertainment industry and leading to movements like #MeToo and Time’s Up.

**Dance star Akram Khan returns to roots in last solo show**

LONDON — Britain’s best-known choreographer Akram Khan has drawn on his roots for the final solo dance performance of his career, with a show that pays tribute to Indian soldiers who fought in World War I.

“Xenos” — which means stranger in Greek — opens with two musicians on stage, playing an interpretation of Indian music in a festive atmosphere.

Dressed for a performance, a dancer arrives, stumbling. The lights flicker, the music stalls and the dancer, a former soldier, is overcome by memories of war.

For the show, which he choreographed and stars in, the 43-year-old Khan returns to the traditional Indian classical dance kathak that he learned as a boy, and which has been present throughout his career.

“That is my home if you like — the most amount of time I spent in my life in one form was in kathak,” he told AFP.

But in place of the elegant grace of that dance, Khan’s movements are disrupted. His clothes and accessories become chains that tie his hands to his feet.

The musicians leave the stage, parts of the set disappear, as if sucked away into the darkness, and the dancer finds himself in the middle of no man’s land.

“This is not war — it is the ending of the world,” a voice says from offstage.

The performance was commissioned by 14-18 Now, the British organisation tasked with a programme of cultural events to mark the anniversary of the 1914-1918 war.

Almost 1.2 million Indians took part in the war, fighting for the British empire.

“I wanted to focus on them because their stories were never truly told,” said Khan, who was born in London to Bangladeshi parents.

“When I studied history, they were never there. I was pretty frustrated by that fact, that their story was omitted and they sacrificed their lives.”

**Physical battle**

Khan, who in 2012 snapped his Achilles tendon and feared his dance career was over, admits the show has tested him.

“It was a very tough process, physically. I am in a good place now, but through the process of creating I was really uninspired from my body,” he said.

“I know my body doesn’t respond the way it used to, so that’s a fight, in itself, and that has to do with time.”

Since he created his company in 2000, Khan has become a leading figure on the contemporary dance scene, and was awarded an MBE in 2005.

He has worked with world-class artists from ballerina Sylvie Guillem to visual artist Anish Kapoor, composer Steve Reich and singer Kylie Minogue.

He won an Olivier Award in 2012 for DESH, a highly personal solo show about being a child of immigrants. One of the highlights of his career remains choreographing a section of the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games.

**Banderas: Hayek stayed mum on abuse ‘to protect us’ from Weinstein**

LOS ANGELES — Salma Hayek never told Antonio Banderas about the abuse to which she says Harvey Weinstein subjected her, according to the Spanish actor, who classifies her a close friend.

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Antonio Banderas says Salma Hayek never said anything about the abuse she had suffered at the hands of Harvey Weinstein. PHOTO: AFP
OPPO launches F7, F7 Youth with new brand ambassadors

OPPO launched two new smart phones, the F7 and F7 Youth, at Melia Hotel in Yangon on 30 May alongside its brand ambassadors actor Witt Hmone Shwe Yi and singer Shwe Htoo, customer relations ambassadors actress Paing Phyo Thu, model and actor Paing Ta Khon, singer Myo Gyi, and other celebrities.—GNLM

Polish folk instrument revival brings lost music to life

KAMINSKO (POLAND) — Dancing couples spin, whirl and pirouette on their heels transported by the lively tempo of traditional Polish dances like mazurkas, obereks with, “Like in the forest”

KAMINSKO (POLAND) — Dancing couples spin, whirl and pirouette on their heels transported by the lively tempo of traditional Polish dances like mazurkas, obereks with, “Like in the forest”

Musician and instrument-maker Mateusz Raszezowski is reviving the art of designing, building, stringing and playing this unique bass, traditionally carved by hand out of a single block of softwood like poplar or willow.

Its design was “only officially documented in the 1950s and it exists only in a small region near the river Prosna,” the bearded 38-year-old, dressed in a thick flannel shirt and leather apron, told AFP in his workshop in the village of Kaminsko, just north of the western Polish city of Poznan.

It is reminiscent of a cello, but with a shorter, thick neck and just two, or sometimes three, strings.

One foot of its bridge pierces its front panel to act as a sound post sending vibrations to the back panel of the sound box.

“This is a very old design that one finds in the Welsh crwth,” Raszezowski says, referring to an archaic type of bowed lyre, a string instrument, popular in medieval Europe.

“God only knows how these Kalisz peasants managed to find this design,” he added.

Tourism keeps Viet Nam’s ancient water puppets afloat

HANOI — In a darkened theatre in central Hanoi, a wooden dragon emerges from a pool to the sound of cymbals crashing in a traditional water puppet show that lures hundreds of tourists daily but is largely shunned by locals.

Backstage behind a thin bamboo screen, around 20 puppeteers slash around waists deep in rubber overalls yielding the marionettes with long rods.

“The puppets are pretty heavy... and the water also creates resistance,” said puppeteer Nguyen Thu Hoai, who swapped her galoshes for flip-flops between sold-out shows.

“But our years of training and experience helps us control them,” added Hoai, who like many of her colleagues graduated from Hanoi’s College of Theatre and Cinema.

Some of the puppets weigh as much as 10 kilogrammes (22 pounds) and the largest ones, like the one-metre-tall (three-foot) fairy, require four people to manipulate.

The shows at Hanoi’s Thang Long theatre have become a staple on the well-trod tourist circuit and draw thousands every week, including many first-time viewers.

“I’ve never seen a puppet show that way with the water,” American tourist Caroline Thomoff told AFP after a show.

“I could really see people fishing, dancing and all the different performances that happened.”

Viet Nam is the birthplace of the centuries-old art form that emerged in the northern rice paddies as entertainment for farmers.

The earliest record of the performances is on a 12th century stele that still stands at a pagoda in northern Ha Nam province, but historians say water puppetry likely originated even earlier.

The shows traditionally featured age-old fables and mythical lore, like the famous Hanoi parable about a Viet Namese king’s treasured sword that was used to fight off Chinese invaders.

Overseas appeal

The tropes haven’t changed much, and neither have the hand-carved wooden figures of animals, boats, farmers or fish painted in brilliant golds, reds and greens, according to Chu Luong, the director of Thang Long theatre.

“When our children and later generations see performances they will be just like the original versions,” he told AFP.

Despite its ancient roots — or perhaps because of them — the shows draw little attention from local Viet Namese viewers, especially millennials.

More than half of Viet Nam’s 93 million people are under 30 and often prefer their entertainment in digital form.

“There are new types of entertainment now, electronic devices and the internet, so apart from festivals we can’t perform all the time because (local) people don’t watch a lot,” said Pham Dinh Viem, a third-generation puppet carver from a craft village in Thai Binh province.

Like other puppet craftsmen in the village, Viem doesn’t earn enough to support his family making the marionettes so he picks up work on the side as a manual labourer.

But he perseveres, hoping the next generation might pick up a passion he says runs in his blood.

Yet as interest wanes at home, there are signs water puppetry may be gaining traction abroad.

Canadian Director Robert Lepage returned to Toronto this year with an adaptation of Stravinsky’s opera “The Nightingale”, in which the orchestra pit was transformed into a pool of water for singers-come-puppeteers commanding marionettes.

For puppetmaker Viem, such innovative approaches may be the secret to reviving the centuries-old tradition among locals.

“If the script and the performance don’t change, it’s impossible to serve the audience in the long-term,” he said.

—AFP
**AFC fitness coaching course concludes in Yangon**

A conclusion ceremony of the AFC Fitness Coaching Certificate course (Level 1B) was held at the conference hall of the Myanmar Football Federation (MFF) in Yangon on Saturday.

The ceremony was attended by MFF’s CEO U Bhone Naing Zaw, Instructer from AFC Mr. Abdolhossein Parnow and officials from the MFF and trainees.

As it was an AFC Fitness Coaching Certificate course (Level 1B), all the trainees were those who had passed the Level 1A course. ‘After the course, they need to undergo sustainable study. The MFF is also arranging to launch such courses again. We aim to have many talented fitness coaches in Myanmar, and we want them to try their best,’ said U Bhone Naing Zaw in his speech at the ceremony. The ceremony concluded with the certificate being given to each and every trainee who had passed the course by Mr. Abdolhossein Parnow, followed by his words of greeting.—Lynn Thit(T’gj)

**Myanmar to attend 68th FIFA Congress in Russia**

OFFICIALS from the Myanmar Football Federation (MFF), led by MFF’s President U Zaw Zaw, will attend the 68th FIFA Congress in Moscow, Russia, which will be hosted on 12 and 13 June, according to a statement on the MFF website.

FIFA’s governing body will hold its congress meeting ahead of the men’s World Cup in Russia.

The 68th Congress of FIFA in Moscow will be launched before the first match of the FIFA World Cup, Russia and Qatar are hosting the 2018 and 2022 editions, respectively. The United States, Mexico and Canada have submitted a unified bid for the 2026 tournament, and FIFA has invited countries from its member associations to bid on hosting, according to football officials from Russia.

The congress will decide on hosting for the 2026 tournament. The FIFA congress has been held annually since 1998. It was previously held every two years. Congresses were not held between 1915 and 1922 and 1939 and 1945 due to the first and second world wars.—Lynn Thit(T’gj)

**Salah joins Egypt training, but doesn’t take part**

CAIRO — Liverpool star Mohamed Salah turned up for Egypt training in Cairo on Saturday ahead of the Pharaohs’ departure for the World Cup in Russia but didn’t take part, AFP witnessed.

Thousands of supporters turned up to watch Egypt’s final training session before taking flight for Russia, cheering wildly.

The training session began just before 10pm. Although dressed in kit, Salah stood around in the middle of the pitch chatting to backroom staff while his team-mates trained.

The record seven-time African champions have qualified for the World Cup for only the third time and first since 1990.

They begin their Russian campaign on 15 June against twice former winners Uruguay.

Salah has been picked in the Egypt squad despite suffering from a shoulder injury picked up in Liverpool’s 3-1 Champions League final defeat to Real Madrid that many fans feared would keep him out of the global football showpiece.

After scoring 44 goals for Liverpool last season following his move from Roma, Salah is vital to Egyptian hopes in Russia.

The Egyptian football federation said after his injury that he could be out for three weeks, meaning he would miss their opening Group A match but could then subsequently be available against Russia and Saudi Arabia.

The national team’s doctor, Mohamed Abu al-Ela told ON Sport TV that they would soon know when Salah will be fit to play and to what extent he’ll be available in Russia. “We won’t be able to tell until after two days,” he said, declining to give any more details.—AFP

**Neymar set for start as Spain, France labour in warm-ups**

MOSCOW — Neymar is set to make his first start since February in Brazil’s final World Cup warm-up on Sunday as he battles for full fitness after Cristiano Ronaldo touched down in Russia with European champions Portugal.

And as the clock ticks down to Thursday’s World Cup opener in Moscow between hosts Russia and Saudi Arabia, fancied teams France and Spain failed to impress in their final friendlies.

Neymar, who broke a bone in his foot in February, made an explosive return to action against Croatia in Liverpool last weekend, scoring a stunning goal in a 2-0 win for the five-time world champions after coming on as a substitute.

The Paris Saint-German star declared himself “90 per cent” fit and Sunday’s run-out in Vienna should leave him fully primed for Brazil’s opener against Switzerland on 17 June.

Brazil coach Tite is approaching Sunday’s game with a certain amount of trepidation.

“Emotionally, this match could be the most difficult,” he said. “That’s because it falls one week before our first World Cup game, and there’s a risk of injury, of a loss of confidence.”

Although Neymar has trained normally this week, he may not play the full 90 minutes in Vienna, according to the Selecao’s doctor, Rodrigio Lamas.

Drawn in Group E, Brazil, who are second behind defending world champions Germany in the FIFA rankings, will face Costa Rica and Serbia after Switzerland.

Ronaldo’s Portugal arrived on Saturday to begin final preparations for a campaign that pits them against arch-rivals Spain in Group B.—AFP

**Santa Cruz wins rematch to hold onto WBA featherweight title**

LOS ANGELES — Mexican boxer Leo Santa Cruz retained his WBA title by earning a unanimous decision victory over Abner Mares on Saturday in a rematch of a 2015 featherweight title fight. Santa Cruz improved to 34-1-1 with 19 career knockouts by winning on all three judges scorescards, 115-113, 116-112, 117-111 at the Staples Center arena. “I did what I had to do to win the fight,” Santa Cruz said. “Mares is a tough fighter. Thank God I got the victory.”

Santa Cruz won despite suffering a cut over his left eye which was the result of a head butt from Mares in the eighth round. The cut bled for the remainder of the fight but didn’t appear to bother Santa Cruz much. The pair fought once before on 29 August, 2015 as Santa Cruz actually lost the title to Gary Russell for the WBC featherweight title. Mares, also of Mexico, drops to 31-3-1 (15 KOs) as he pushed for a third fight between the two. “I am sorry I came out short,” said Mares. “It is always a problem trying to get inside on him. I fought my heart out but at the end of the day I did my best. “Let’s do a third fight.”

On the undercard, WBC super welterweight champ Jermell Charlo successfully defended his belt for the third time, by flooring Austin Trout twice en route to a 12-round majority decision. Charlo improved to 31-0-1 overall, while Trout fell to 31-5.—AFP