President U Win Myint delivers speech at ACMECS CEO Forum

President U Win Myint addresses the ACMECS CEO Forum at Shangrila Hotel in Bangkok. PHOTO: MNA

President calls for closer cooperation among stakeholders to promote growth of ACMECS members, region

PRESIDENT U Win Myint delivered an address at the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy-ACMECS CEO Forum, which was held under the theme ‘Connecting our Future: Enhancing ACMECS Cooperation and Integration’, at the Shangrila Hotel in Bangkok yesterday.

The opening of the forum was attended by Prime Minister of Thailand General Prayut Chan-o-chaa (Retd), Prime Minister of Cambodia Samdech Hun Sen, the deputy prime minister of Thailand; ministers, deputy ministers and officials from Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia, CEOs of ACMECS member countries and business representatives.

Following the opening address by Prime Minister of Thailand General Prayut Chan-o-chaa (Retd), President U Win Myint delivered a speech, in which he stressed the important role ACMECS member countries in developing links, not only among member countries, but also with other countries outside ACMECS.

The President also expressed his appreciation of the new initiatives to re-design ACMECS cooperation by working closely with the Government, private sector and financial institutions from both member countries, as well as development partner countries.

“In line with the objective of this forum, closer cooperation among stakeholders will enable us to promote the growth of each member country, as well as that of the region as a whole,” said President U Win Myint. SEE PAGE-7
Motion to fight terrorism, to provide security in Rakhine approved

By Aye Aye Thant
(MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY)

THE second Pyithu Hluttaw’s eighth regular session held its 13th day meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, debating a motion on fighting against terrorism in Rakhine in accordance with the Anti-Terrorism Law in attempts to prevent terrorist attacks in the state.

The motion submitted by U Thaung Aye of Pyaywwe Constituency has urged the government, in cooperation with international organizations, to crack down the ARSA terrorists who attacked Rakhine State in 2016 and 2017 and to prevent further terrorist attacks especially in Rakhine State as part of efforts for peace and stability, and the rule of law in the state.

Discussing the motion, Lt-Col Ye Min Oo, Tatmadaw Representative, said Myanmar’s sovereignty is under threat from international organizations, to crack down the ARSA terrorists as the United Nations and other international organizations have made an attempt to intervene the internal affairs of Myanmar by citing groundless news and information.

The current situation in Rakhine State demanded special measures to systematically respond to alleged accusations in the state, to restore the rule of law and to prevent further terrorist attacks in the state, said Lt-Col Ye Min Oo.

“It is urgently required a national security strategy which can guarantee the security to the live and property of the people, the sustainable development which can bring about perpetuation of the national characteristics,” said Lt-Col Ye Min Oo.

The Tatmadaw representative continued to say that it is required to review the Defence White Paper, which was released in 2015, in accordance with the constitution to be able to adopt a national security strategy as part of efforts for restoring the sovereignty which was violated in Rakhine State.

Afterwards, Daw Pyone Khin Naing of Kalaw constituency discussed, “Terrorism makes a threat to national security based on humanitarianism and basic human rights.

“We understand that it is needed to safeguard the inter-vension of great Powers by means of strategic diplomatic cooperation,” said Daw Pyone Khin Naing. “In order to maintain stability and sovereignty of the state, it is very important to tackle the root of the problem.”

As for the small countries which are weak in military and economy, it is hard to resist the international influence, without taking legitimacy and the rule of law into consideration, she added.

“All can cooperate with the incumbent government in making efforts for the rule of law without doubt,” said the lawmaker.

Regarding the motion, U Saw Tun Mya Aung of Papon constituency, U Aung Thaung Shwe of Buthidaung constituency said, “U Hla Tun Kaye of Maungtaw constituency, Daw Khin Saw Wai of Yathedaung constituency, Dr. Maung Thin of Meiktila constituency, Tatmadaw representative Lieutenant Colonel Toe Lwin, Tatmadaw representative MaJoer Kyaw Min Han, Tatmadaw representative Colonel Tun Than Ohn, U Aung Kyi Thein of Chaungzon constituency, U Thein Tun of Kayanngon constituency, U Oo Hla Saw of MyaukU constituency, U Mynt Taw of Owa constituency, Daw Zin Mar Aung of Yankin constituency, U Pw Than of Myaungpoo Constituency, Daw Ni Ni May of Taungup constituency and U Bo Bo Oo of Sanchaung constituency discussed it.

Then, Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Aung Thu answered that the government formed a Central Committee for the Implementation of Peace and Development in Rakhine State, which is led by the State Counsellor.

In order to achieve success in implementation of peace, stability and development, the four working committees namely Security, Peace and Stability and the Rule of Law Working Committee, Immigration and Citizenship scrutinizing Working Committee, Settlement and Socio-economic Development Working Committee and Working Committee on Cooperation with UN Agencies and International Organizations have been formed.

The government is working together with international organizations to bring the terrorists who attacked Rakhine State to court to while stepping up its efforts for development and restoring the rule of law in Rakhine State.

Finally, the motion was sought for approval by the Hlut-taw. The parliament approved the motion.

Amyotha Hluttaw holds Q&A session, discusses bill

By Aung Ye Thwin
MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY

A question-and-answer (Q&A) session on starred questions was held, and a bill was discussed, during the 12th-day meeting of the eighth regular session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw yesterday morning.

Q&A session
In the question-and-answer session, U Bwe Khane of Chin State constituency (3) asked a question on the budget to set up nature reserves across all nine townships of Chin State to preserve and protect wildlife. Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win replied that employing more staff (forest rangers), a requirement to expand and construct offices and conduct patrols, was difficult. It is not possible to set up nature reserves in all nine townships. However, plans are underway to set up small nature reserves, such as the 46,075-square-mile Bwepa mountain area and the 13,194-square-mile Kyarinn mountain area between Haka and Thanlwin townships, as well as in other areas. Once these are completed, attempts will be made to designate more nature reserves, said the union minister.

Regarding plans to prioritize the promotion and transfer of public servants serving in remote and border areas, raised by U Sai San Aung of Shan State constituency (12), Union Civil Service Board (UCSB) Chairman Dr. Win Thein replied that a policy was in place to transfer public servants who had served a minimum one year and maximum two years in remote and border areas. Ministries have been informed that if public servants apply for an early transfer because of family and social problems, the management committee must decide on transferring them to a post closest to the one applied for, if the post applied for is not vacant, said the UCSB chairman.

Ministries and departments follow specified rules and regulations on promotion, which is based on the education level, expertise, years of service, as well as the availability of the position. However, if a relevant assessment board supports a certain public servant for outstanding works, there are related rules and regulations for such cases, and the public servant will be promoted according to such rules and regulations, said the UCSB chairman.

Also, Dr. U Kywe Kywe of Mandalay Region constituency (6) asked whether there is a plan to provide information to develop the planting, production and trading of Sterculia versicolour, a source of fibre and gum (locally called saekalama).

Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw replied that it was the highest value, in high demand and the market information about it had been posted on the Ministry of Commerce’s website. The state/region trade centres and officials are also providing information about it, said the deputy minister.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation is also providing information on planting techniques, conducting demonstrations on plots and gum collection methods with skilled workers, as well as acquiring high quality seeds and saplings.

The ministry is also coordinating and cooperating with interested persons who want to plant it in their state/region and the state/region government, said the deputy minister.

Similarly, questions raised by U Saw Moe Myint (6) of Samuel of Kayin State constituency (1), Daw Nang Moe Moe Htwie of Kayin State constituency (4) and U Sai Tun Aung of Shan State constituency (6) were answered by Union Minister U Ohn Win and Deputy Minister U Hla Kyaw.

Amendment to fourth bill amending the Anti-Corruption Law approved
Following this, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khang Tha explained the decision of the Hluttaw on the fourth bill amending the Anti-Corruption Law, sent back by the Pyithu Hluttaw with amendment. As the Hluttaw agreed to confirm the amendment, an announcement was made accordingly.

Discussion on Myanmar dental, oral medical council bill
Dr. Pyae Phyo of Ayeyawady Region constituency (7) then discussed the Myanmar dental, oral medical council bill.

The 16th-day meeting of the eighth regular session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw will be held on 18 June.
VP U Myint Swe attends National Level Social Protection Committee meeting

THE National Level Social Protection Committee Chairman, Vice President U Myint Swe, addressed the National Level Social Protection Committee meeting 1/2018, held at the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday morning.

Present at the meeting were committee Vice Chairmen Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye and Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe, committee members Deputy Ministers U Win Maw Tun and U Maung Maung Win, Permanent Secretaries and departmental officials.

Formation of National Level Social Protection Committee

The vice president said the day’s meeting was an important development for the reduction of poverty and development of human resources, which was among the priority tasks of the State. According to worldwide research findings, social protection projects were most effective for poverty reduction and human resources development. It could be seen that in the past two decades, social protection projects were widely conducted in many countries. In Myanmar, the President’s Office formed an 11-member National Level Social Protection Committee, led by the Vice President, on 17 May 2018, and established 11 main projects to allow the government to conduct social protection programmes throughout the country.

11 work responsibilities of the committee

The 11 work responsibilities of the committee include reviewing and assessing the projects on implementing the National Level Social Protection Strategic Plan, setting up and conducting cooperation methods with each department, coordinating with the UN, INGOs and NGOs to collect technology and resources, coordinating with state/region governments to effectively draw up and implement regional level social protection projects, carry out social protection works as a priority for those age groups that are most vulnerable, establishing a protection and support system based on the requirements of women, handicapped persons, poor and other vulnerable persons at all levels and sectors, striving to provide healthcare, education, income and job assurance to all nationals, increasing the rights of workers and farmers by establishing an insurance system that provides full coverage, conducting redevelopment projects for those affected by any disaster, managing, evaluating and assessing the works implemented, as well as setting up a committee to form work committees and sub-committees, if required.

Implementation of National Level Social Protection Strategic Plan

As part of implementing the National Level Social Protection Strategic Plan, financial assistance to expectant mothers and children up to the age of two was provided in Chin State, Rakhine State and Naga Self-Administered Zone in the Sagoing Region, and a countrywide social pension programme and an all-round social protection programme in 37 selected towns were conducted. For the five-year period from the 2018-2019 fiscal year to the 2022-2023 fiscal year, a mid-term social protection programme had been drawn up.

In today’s meeting, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, which was the implementing ministry, would discuss the status of projects conducted, based on the 11 work responsibilities of the committee and future work. Committee members are urged to openly discuss and provide suggestions on future work and requirements, said the vice president.

Four main points to consider

The vice president then spoke about four main points to be considered when conducting the discussion. First, it must be ensured that it was in line with the policies and priorities set by the state. Care should be taken so that the sustainable development programme for Myanmar and the Myanmar National Level Social Protection Strategic Plan were carried out in accordance with one another. The second point was to obtain funds and the ability to bear the cost in the long run. These two points were to be considered together. Funds could be used from the State budget, but there was a limitation on how much could be used. As such, other resources, such as financial support/assistance and low interest loans, also need to be considered. Investments in the social protection sector would not show significant returns in the short term, but results such as reducing the income gap between the rich and the poor, rising nutrition and health indexes, and increased developments in childhood education need to be displayed as proof. Only then can this sector attract investments.

The third was to set up a system for country-wide implementation. This system would include management, and an information and funding system.

The fourth, a committee had been formed to coordinate among the government ministries. For coordination between government ministries and partner organizations, there must be social protection and disaster management sector coordination groups. These two would help establish better coordination.

The committee would expand the work responsibilities included in the Myanmar National Level Social Protection Strategic Plan.

The meeting concluded after the National Level Social Protection Committee chairman and vice president gave comments and suggestions to ensure effective coordination and delivered a closing speech. —Myanmar News Agency

Certificate Course in Basic Diplomatic Skills (40/2018) concludes

THE Graduation Ceremony of the Certificate Course in Basic Diplomatic Skills (40/2018), conducted by the Strategic Studies and Training Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was held at Wunzinnayar Hall of the Ministry at 10:00 a.m. yesterday, with a closing address delivered by U Myint Thu, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Present on the occasion were retired Myanmar Ambassadors, Directors-General and responsible officials of the departments under the Ministry, senior diplomats, professors and instructors as well as trainees. On this occasion, Directors-General and retired Ambassadors presented the certificates to trainees. The 12-week long course comprised the subjects related to diplomacy, negotiation skills, international relations, international law, international conferencing, contemporary international affairs, economics, etc., and also the simulation exercises for some subjects.

And it was attended by (188) trainees. Since 2000, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has conducted Basic Diplomatic Skills Courses for the public who are interested in diplomacy and international affairs. At present, there are (6,922) trainees graduated from the training programme. —Myanmar News Agency
Free course on fish farming to be opened at Hlwaga hatchery this month

By May Thet Hnin

A fish farming course, including the hatching technique, will be taught free of charge at Hlwaga hatchery, operating under the Yangon Region Fisheries Department, by the end of June.

The fish farming courses, including artificial breeding, maintaining the origin of fish, nursing fingerlings or larvae, quality control of water, fish disease and treatment, will be conducted by the Yangon Region Fisheries Department, said U Hla Htay, Deputy Director of Yangon Region Fisheries Department.

“The courses aim to share fish farming knowledge, which we learnt abroad, to enhance the fish farming sector,” he said. The course will start on 25 June, and it is a five-day intensive course free of charge, providing accommodation for 20 to 30 trainees.

Some 30 hatcheries are operating under the Myanmar Fisheries Department. Similar courses will be conducted once or thrice every year. The training course will expand the traineeship next year. In a bid to improve the livestock sector, the Fisheries Department is providing educational courses and raising awareness about illegal fish farming and the preservation of endangered fish species, as well as adding of fish into the rivers, creeks, dams and reservoirs and collecting fishery data, in cooperation with international organisations.

Currently, farmers want to do mixed farming. They have asked fish breeders about fish farming techniques to work on a manageable scale. The Myanmar Fishery Federation has requested the Fisheries Department to offer more classes.

‘Patent and Copyright’ forum to be held this Sunday

THE Intellectual Property Providers’ Association (IPPA) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) will jointly host a forum, entitled ‘Patent and Copyright’, to be held on Sunday, 17 June in Yangon.

The event is scheduled to take place on the 5th floor of Co-operative Business Centre in Sayasan Plaza, at the corner of Sayasan Road and New University Avenue Road in Bahan Township from 9 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. The public is invited to participate in the forum.

The forum is part of the efforts to educate the public about intellectual property (IP), which refers to creations of the mind, literary and artistic works, and symbols, names and images used in commerce. IP is divided into two categories—industrial property and copyright. Patents for inventions, trademarks, industrial designs and geographical indications are included in industrial property. Copyright covers literary works, films, music, artistic works and architectural designs.

The government of Myanmar is making concerted efforts to enact an intellectual property law to spur economic growth, create employment and establish industries, as well as enhance the quality of life. The forum will discuss legal protection for new creations and encourage a commitment to seek additional resources to ensure further innovations.

A certificate will be provided to those who attend the one-day discussion. For further information, dial 09-513419 and 09-798433183. —Khine Khant

Nearly 166,500 foreign day-trippers via Tachileik since April

THE number of day-trippers who entered Myanmar via Tachilek, a border town between Myanmar and Thailand, from April to mid-June, reached 166,498, the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism reported yesterday.

The foreign visitors toured the town’s well-known destinations, including Talaw Market, Mahamayatmuni Pagoda, Shwedagon Pagoda, the ethnic village and Chinese temples. During the second week of this month, 16,664 international visitors, including 16,435 day-trippers, entered the country through the Tachilek cross-border point. Most of the foreign travellers were from Thailand.

Foreigners visit Myanmar to enjoy its beautiful landscapes, scenic views along its mountain ranges, its archaeological and historical sites, as well as to observe the diverse range of customs, traditions and lifestyles of the ethnic people.

To enhance the country’s tourism industry, the hotels and tourism ministry is cooperating with tourism organisations and NGOs to develop community-based eco-tourism, marine tourism and cross-border trip planning.—Khine Khant
Sales of plots for Thilawa SEZ Zone B available

THE Myanmar-Japan Thilawa Development Limited (MJTD) yesterday announced that plots for the Zone B second phase covering 77 hectares of the Thilawa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) will be available for sale in July this year.

This will bring the total operating area in Thilawa SEZ up to 583 hectares, and open up more opportunities for businesses to further invest in the fast-growing economic zone.

Located on the southeast area of Yangon, Thilawa SEZ is the first development of its kind in the country.

In line with the top facilities offered throughout the SEZ, the new second phase of its Zone B provides locators international-standard infrastructure - from roads and utilities to supporting services such as maintenance.

Six years ago, a deal was signed to develop Thilawa SEZ between Myanmar and Japan, and it has flourished since its beginning of operations in 2015.

By 8June, Thilawa SEZ had 20,000 staff and a total investment amount of over 1.4 billion from 17 countries with 94 investments across various sectors with these numbers expected to grow. Myanmar notably has a sizable labor force and untapped areas for growth, which has been a focus for successfully attracting worldwide manufacturers.

“The opening of the latest phase of Thilawa SEZ’s Zone B, is yet another positive milestone in our objective to spur economic industrial growth in Myanmar. Among the total development area of 583 hectares, 49 locators have started the operations, 31 are under factory construction and over 90 locators will have been started the operations within the next two years.”

This has been a great achievement and a strong sign of investment interest in the zone and the region,” said Mr. Tomoyasu Shimizu, President of MJTD. —GNLM

Continued heavy rainfall causes shortage of raw fish

SOME fishing boats were suspended due to continuous heavy rainfall, causing shortage of raw fish and an increase in its price.

“The torrential rain caused a shortage of raw fish and an increase in price. It has been three days since the supply of fish has not been available at Yangon’s eight jetties,” said U Tun Sein, secretary of Myanmar Fish Paste, Dried Fish and Fish Sauce Association.

Following the lack of raw fish, dried fish processors are buying farmed fish, especially river catfish.

The banned fishing period is between 15 May and 15 August this year. Some businesses are trading in fish paste and dried fish made an advanced purchase of fish since April.

The dried fish businessmen are dependent on local consumers and so they purchased and stored both freshwater and saltwater fish. Currently, offshore fishing vessels are yet to return to the bank on account of the continued rainfall, harming businessmen. Additionally, the fuel oil price is also high. The shortage of raw fish harms dried fish production, said U Yan Naing, a fishery businessman from Mon State.

Fishing vessels have departed yesterday after being suspended recently. However, raw fish supply is seen only three or four days per week during the banned fishing season, said U Maung Maung Soe, president of Myanmar Marine Fisheries Association.

Farmed fish are supplied chiefly in the domestic market once the banned season starts. The fish price is up by 20 per cent, said the merchants.

The banned fishing period was 45 days in 2013, with 75 per cent of the fishing vessels allowed to fish. The banned season extended to 60 days with 65 per cent authorised for fishing, while in 2015, it was further extended to 90 days, with 50 per cent authorised fishing vessels. Authorised fishing vessels were reduced to 40 per cent in 2016 and 30 per cent in 2017 during the 90 days of the banned season.—May Thet Hnin/ Htet Htet (W)
The Committee for Implementation of Recommendations on Rakhine State

Report to the People on the Progress of the Implementation of Recommendations on Rakhine State (January to April 2018)

(Continued from yesterday)

Border Issues and the Bilateral Relationship with Bangladesh

To enhance mutual understanding and bilateral cooperation between Myanmar and Bangladesh, Lieutenant General Kyaw Swe, Union Minister for Home Affairs and Dr. Win Myat Aye, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement visited Bangladesh from February 15 to 17, 2018 and from April 11 to 13, 2018 respectively.

The first coordination meeting of Myanmar-Bangladesh Joint Working Group was held in Nay Pyi Taw on January 15, 2018. And this resulted in the signing of the “Physical Arrangement for Repatriation of Displaced Myanmar Residents from Bangladesh” between the two nations. Discussions and negotiations with UNDP and UNHCR have started since 23 February 2018 to sign MoUs to support the repatriation work.

A total of 1,308 housing units - including 1,126 housing units for displaced ethnic nationals and Hindus, and 182 housing units for displaced Muslims - are being constructed with support from the regional and state governments of Ayeyawady, Mandalay, Yangon, Bago, Sagaing Regions and Kachin, Kayin and Shan States, the Ministry of Border Affairs, UEHRD, Daw Khin Kyi Foundation, CB Bank, the Tatmadaw and the Indian Government. Additionally, Magway and Taninthari regional governments, Chin State government and the Tatmadaw also supported construction of 4 schools and 2 hostels for school teachers, 4 monasteries and roads and pagodas etc. These returnees will be resettled in their villages of origin after construction of their houses are completed.

Efforts are taken to enhance bilateral cooperation for security and border area management between Myanmar and Bangladesh. During this reporting period, 4 regiment-level flag hoisting ceremonies between the two border guard forces took place on Myanmar side, and one ceremony on Bangladesh side, as well as one Myanmar-Bangladesh district administrator level meeting.

The establishment of Ka Nyin Chaung Trade Zone in Maungdaw started in FY 2015-16 for trade promotion in the area. And construction of infrastructure including 2 concrete jetties, 1 main building, and 20 buildings for trade fair/exhibition are now completed. Business is resuming as usual at Sittwe and Maungdaw Border Trade Centres. The actual trade value at Sittwe Trade Centre from January 1 to April 27, 2018 was USD 7.01 million, and this is a USD 5.747 million increase in comparison with the same period from the previous year. Similarly, the actual trade value at Maungdaw Trade Centre from January 1 to April 27, 2018 was USD 6.958 million, a net increase of USD 4.365 million in comparison with the same period of the previous year.

Regional Relations

Senior figures of the State and Myanmar government officials continue their efforts to inform and update the international community with regards to measures taken in Myanmar. Notable events include:

- President H.E. U Win Myint attending the 32nd ASEAN Summit hosted by Singapore from April 25 to 28, 2018, and updating the progress made in Rakhine at ASEAN Summit Retreat;
- The State Counsellor H.E. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi attending the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit and the Leaders’ Retreat in Sydney, Australia from March 17 and 18, 2018, and discussing the challenges of the country including Rakhine issue;
- Union Minister H.E. U Kyaw Tin attending the ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Retreat in Singapore on 6 February 2018, explaining the efforts taken by the Government of Myanmar for Rakhine State.

Three diplomatic visits to Rakhine State were arranged for heads of diplomatic missions and UN agencies in Myanmar to see for themselves the situations on the ground. These visits took place on February 6, 9 and 15, 2018.

(TO BE CONTINUED)
The Government of Myanmar has recognized, in the context of the market-oriented economic system, the private sector as a prime mover and a market mechanism, and places great emphasis on its development, he added.

“All efforts are being made to encourage the active participation of the private sector in international trade and investment and support is given from every possible angle,” said the President.

In conclusion, the President stressed the importance of coexistence with understanding and cooperation in the region, urging the peoples of the Great Mekong Region to march towards the region’s goal of peace and development.

Established in November 2003, the ACMECS aims to strengthen bilateral economic collaboration, tap comparative advantages of member regions and countries, and narrow development gaps. The ACMECS now covers eight cooperation fields of trade-investment, agriculture, industry-energy, transportation, tourism, human resources development, health care and environment.

ACMECS countries include Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand. Also, Prime Minister of Cambodia Mr. Samdech Hun Sen delivered a speech.

The opening ceremony of the ACMECS CEO Forum concluded after the President, Thai Prime Minister, Cambodian Prime Minister and party then left Maungtaw for Sittway in the afternoon, it is learnt.

The Deputy Minister and party then left Maungtaw for Sittway in the afternoon, it is learnt. — Myanmar News Agency
Strict and severe actions should be taken against those who caused the flash floods. In my humble opinion, considerations should be given to banning the legal logging until the depleted forests can be fully replenished.

By Khin Maung Myint

The rainy season had just begun. However, we are witnessing two incidents of flash floods and rivers overflowing and inundating the country already. To my judgement, they are becoming a regular and frequent phenomenon more severe in recent years than before. In the past, there may have been flash floods and inundation of towns and villages due to heavy rains. However, now, according to any official records, my guess is that the flash floods and the overflowing of the waterways causing the inundations, we are witnessing now, are the most severe of such incidents we had ever been exposed to. So, what could have triggered those conditions? Well, I am defining dam is mainly due to the deteriorating climate conditions or either the effect of human activity behind all those devastations. If that’s the case, we should expect them to become worse. Besides, we can’t avoid the impact of the climate change, a subject which is interwoven with the economic stability. Myanmar’s economy is growing, and has been one of the fastest-growing in the region.

Through its economic reforms, Myanmar has released rules and regulations to attract foreign investment and domestic consumption.

The Government of Myanmar has recognized, in the context of a market-oriented economic system, the private sector as a prime mover of market mechanisms, and places great emphasis on its development. The private sector is the most significant component of the country’s economy; it is expected to continue to play a critical role in economic growth and development.

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The private sector provides employment opportunities, contributes to the country’s growth, and is instrumental in the implementation of national policies and strategies. Through its economic reforms, Myanmar has released rules and regulations to attract foreign investment and domestic consumption.
Union Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor receives UNSG’s Special Envoy

UNION Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U Kyaw Tint Swe received United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Envoy Ms. Christine Schraner Burgener and the delegation at the Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. During the meeting, they discussed matters relating to the cooperation between Myanmar and the United Nations. They also discussed the issue on Rakhine State.

—Myanmar News Agency

All-round youth development festival to be held in Mandalay

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint delivered a speech at the coordination meeting to conduct an all-round youth development festival in Mandalay, which was held at the meeting hall of the Information Ministry in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the meeting, the union minister said he met Mandalay Region Chief Minister Dr. Zaw Myint Maung, cabinet members and officials, and visited Mandalay University, where the festival will be held.

He invited the meeting’s attendees to discuss creative programmes that could be included in the festival, targeting university and high school level students. He also invited discussions and suggestions on holding a festival, in which the public would be able to participate, along with the youths.

Further, Information and Public Relations Department Director-General U Ye Naing explained the arrangements made to hold the Mandalay all-round youth development festival.


Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun, the permanent secretary and directors-general also joined in the discussion.

The Mandalay all-round youth development festival will be held with the aim of promoting youths’ skills, knowledge, ethical values, as well as developing their five strengths – physical, mental, ethics, friendship and strength – and establishing a future Myanmar society based upon their views and ideas. The all-round youth development festival (Yangon) was held at Yangon University from 1 to 3 December 2017.

The all-round youth development festival (Mandalay) is to be held mid-August 2018 at Mandalay University.

—Myanmar News Agency

Magway’s Bailey bridge 80% complete

A bailey bridge on Myothit-Natmauk route in Myothit Township was washed out by flash floods on 31 May this year.

A temporary detour was made for the convenience of locals due to current weather conditions by officials from the Magway Region. However, the temporary detour was closed because of torrential rains that hit on 12 June. So, a 150 feet long and 14.75 feet wide temporary bailey bridge was constructed starting at 12 pm on 13 June and 80% of the construction was completed at 5 pm yesterday. “Approach roads will be constructed as soon as the bridge has been completed. If the weather is good, it may be finished on 16 June and the weight limit of the bridge is 36 tons” said an official from the Township Road Department.

—Zaw Zaw (Myothit)/MDN
Rakhine State Chief Minister meets boat crash survivors at Nga Khu Ya Reception Centre

RAKHINE State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu, went to Nga Khu Ya Reception Centre and met with survivors of a boat crash.

The survivors were stranded at Thaze Village after their motorboat crashed on 11 June.

Rakhine State Chief Minister asked the requirement and wish of the boat mishap survivors, telling them to systematically inform the reception centre authorities and giving instructions to the authorities to handle the matter according to set policy.

The Chief Minister then inspected the houses where the survivors are staying.

A total 104 survivors including 44 men and 60 women were rescued by the authorities and transported to the camp on 11 June.

Later, the Chief Minister and party went to Kyeinchaung Taung village and inspected the construction of buildings where returnees will be relocated.

The Chief Minister remarked on conducting the necessary in time and Deputy Minister for Construction U Kyaw Lin gave additional suggestions to the work process.

They then went to Hla Phoe Khang Transilt Centre and inspected the constructed buildings.

The Chief Minister urged the authorities to complete the repair work and drainage system timely as the rainy season began.

Throughout the trip, the Chief Minister and the Deputy Minister conducted and established work programmes to repair the damaged roads and bridges caused by the continuous rain.

Aung Thu Ya, Nay Win Tun

School library opened in Letpadan Township

A ceremony to mark the opening of a school library was held at Kyay Ni Basic Education affiliated High School in Letpadan Township, Bago Region, yesterday.

During the ceremony, Township Administrator U Zaw Moe Aung and Township Education Officer Daw Aye Aye Than delivered speeches, followed by discussions by Mr. Iwase Keita, Second Secretary of the Embassy of Japan, and Mr. Aki San, Director of Shanti Volunteer Association, on the purpose of providing support to school libraries.

Later, Daw Mya Mya Hwe, headmistress of the school, gave a note of thanks, followed by officials cutting a ribbon to mark the opening of the library. Mr. Iwase Keita then handed over the signboard commemorating the donors’ names to the headmistress.

The ceremony was attended by education officials and teachers, led by U Zaw Moe Aung and Daw Aye Aye Than, together with parents of the school children and students.

—Mg Shwe Win (Pyay)
Birth of test tube baby becomes medical milestone in Myanmar

Interviewed:
Yi Yi Myint
PHOTO: HLA MOE

TUESDAY 12 June is a day of historical significance for Myanmar medical history. The reason is the birth of a first test tube baby in the Fertility Centre of Central Women Hospital (Yangon).

Following are interviews conducted. With superintendent of Central Women Hospital (Yangon), Professor, head of departments as well as the parent of the test tube baby.

Professor Daw Khin Pyone Kyi
Superintendent, Central Women Hospital (Yangon)

I’m happy for successfully conducting a caesarean delivery of the first test tube baby conceived at Fertility Centre of Central Women Hospital (Yangon).

After In-Vitro fertilization or IVF treatment was made, health care for the mother and the conceived child was provided. The successful delivery of this baby is an important and invaluable milestone for this hospital. It is a milestone of success for Ministry of Health and Sports which provided guidance and support to the hospital. Fertility Centre will strive toward providing this service. This is not a basic health care service. This is a special treatment.

Professor Daw San San Myint
Head, Central Women Hospital (Yangon)

Fertility Centre of Central Women Hospital (Yangon) was established in February 2016. We conducted IVF treatment on 16 couples out of which Ma Zin Mar Lin successfully conceived a child. On 12 June 2018, a seven pound five ounce baby boy was successfully delivered through C-section. It was not because of IVF treatment that C-section was conducted. C-section was conducted because of the position of umbilical cord.

Ko Bo Tun, father of the baby

I’m from Magway Region. After getting married, we have problems conceiving a child. We made enquiries. We even thought of going to Bangkok to have a test tube baby. Later, we discussed with Dr. Daw San San Myint in Fertility Centre and decided to try it out. If we are to do this in Bangkok, it will cost more than Ks 30 million. If travel and other costs are included it will be over Ks 30 million. Here, it only cost Ks 5.8 million to the time of conceiving and the payment is made in instalments. Once the baby was conceived, we stay in Yangon. (Hospital provided pre-birth care).

Ma Zin Mar Lin, mother of the baby

My healthy 7 pound 5 ounce son was born on 12 June. I’m so happy to give birth to a healthy son when I dearly wanted him. Thanks a lot to the doctors and nurses who help me give birth.

Tube baby delivered by specialists in the Fertility Centre of Central Women Hospital in Yangon.

Independent journalists report from Maungtaw, Rakhine State

A delegation of local media visited Maungtaw yesterday to gather reports on stability, providing security to local people, and peaceful coexistence between different communities. Following the visit to Maungtaw, the independent media group went to Kanpyinchaung Economic Zone and interviewed Vice Chairman of the economic zone U Aung Myint Thein about progress of completion of the zone and prospects for development of the region when Maungtaw Economic Zone is opened.

Afterwards, the journalists visited Shwezar Village where Rakhine, Islam and Hindu people have been living in harmony.

At the village, they interviewed the villagers about situation of the region, their livelihood, issuing of National Verification cards.

Afterwards, the media personnel went to a temporary relief camp for Hindus opened in Maungtaw and interviewed displaced Hindu people about providing aid by the government to them, construction of housings and medical care.

In the afternoon, the independent media delegation arrived back Yangon by air—Min Thit

Journalists interview villagers at the temporary relief camp for Hindus in Maungtaw. PHOTO: MIN THIT

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE
MLV MAENAM-1 VOY.NO. (018 N/S)
Consignees of cargo carried on MLV MAENAM-1 VOY. NO. (018 N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 16-6-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of AWPT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim’s Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S INTERASIA LINES.
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE
MLV PACITA VOY.NO. (024 W/E)
Consignees of cargo carried on MLV PACITA VOY. NO. (024 W/E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 16-6-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT/AIP where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim’s Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S INTERASIA LINES.
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE
MLV YU RONG V-1804
Consignees of cargo carried on MLV YU RONG V-1804 are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 18-6-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MIPT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim’s Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S WILHELMSEN SHIPS & LOGISTICS SERVICES CO, LTD
Phone No: 2301928
Union Election Commission Chairman receives UN Special Envoy

Union Election Commission Chairman meets with United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Envoy Ms. Christine Schraner Burgener in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Sanitation services to be extended along Ayeyawady River

ARRANGEMENTS are being made to extend sanitation services along the Ayeyawady River, especially in the area near Lapha jetty in Kachinsu ward, Myitkyina Township, Kachin State, said U Ah Lay, head of a hundred households.

Waste materials are commonly found along Lapha jetty in Kachinsu and in Lekhon wards, situated on the bank of the river. To clear the garbage along the river bank, residents, their ward administrators and those from Myitkyina Township Development Affairs will soon carry out a sanitation project. The project is expected to start when the water level in the river decreases, U Ah Lay said.

Water pollution largely affects aquatic life and disrupts the natural food chain, as well. A resident noted that water pollution occurred in Ayeyawady River because of the improper disposal of waste. Also, a villager residing near Lapha jetty said that residents obtain drinking water from tube wells, while other villagers drink purified water. Kachinsu ward houses some 1,968 people, living in 229 homes.—Myitkyina District IPRD
Music boss urges open ears as songwriters enter Hall of Fame

Rebel Wilson vows to appeal defamation payout cut

MELBOURNE (AUSTRALIA) — Australian actress Rebel Wilson has vowed to challenge an “absolutely flippant” Australian appeals court ruling that slashed a record US$3.4 million defamation payout to her from a magazine publisher to US$200,000.

The “Pitch Perfect” star was awarded Aus$4.5 million in damages against Bauer Media last September over articles claiming she lied about her age and damaged her reputation.

Wilson, 38, said the appeals court ruling that slashed her payout was “absolutely flippant” and there were “errors of law in the judgment. It was the largest defamation win in Australian legal history and Bauer appealed, arguing the size of the settlement set a dangerous precedent and there were errors of law in the judgement.

The Victorian Court of Appeal agreed on Thursday, cutting the payout to Aus$200,000.

Breaking from Europe, Where she is filming, Wilson, 38, said the appeals court ruling included “some really bizarre things... that are so obviously challengeable.”

Everybody knows I lost money after those maliciously defamatory articles were printed about me by BauerMedia in 2015. The learned trial judge and Australian jury on the case who heard all the evidence clearly agreed,” she tweeted.

“Sweet Caroline,” the audience joyfully singing along the “ba ba ba” of the chorus.

Beautiful experience

Grainge, the chairman and chief executive officer of the world’s largest label group Universal, was presented an award as a long-time “hitmaker.”

Befitting the status of one of the most powerful people in the music industry, Grainge was welcomed with previously unannounced appearances by two of Universal’s top stars — Ariana Grande, who sang her hit “Be Alright” to a jazzy piano, and The Weeknd, who flew in from Paris to briefly introduce his label boss.

Grainge, whose father ran a record store in London, spoke of his lifelong passion for music and how he spent a third of his career in the songwriting business, sometimes thrusting out tunes with composers over a solitary piano or guitar.—AFP

Sophie Bush talks about Mark Schwann, allegations against him

LOS ANGELES—Actress Sophia Bush has spoken in depth about facing sexual harassment at the hands of “One Tree Hill” creator Mark Schwann.

Bush, 35, detailed her experiences on Sirius XM’s Andy Cohen Live, where she recalled how she had to hit Schwann when he groped her.

“The first time Mark Schwahn grabbed my a**, I hit him in front of six other producers, and I hit him f**king hard,” Bush said, according to Entertainment Weekly.

“We knew about things he’d say to people, we knew about, like, the late-night texts, we knew when he was super-obsessed with one girl on our show that he started trying to bang down her hotel room door in the middle of the night. She had to be moved, her rooms were moved. And then her boyfriend came and stayed with her the next month and literally, like, it almost came to fisticuffs between the two of them,” she added.

In November last year, Bush, 35, detailed her experience working on the show for nine seasons was “wonderful” when Schwann was not around.

“We’re not the only group of girls that’s ever had a boss who was a pig. That show for us was very interesting because at times it was wonderful and at times it really wasn’t. Our writers’ room was in LA, so we had plenty of time where (Schwahn) wasn’t on set.”

“We had great highlight-reel, coming-of-age, rom-com s** to gether, and then we also had like, batten down the hatches, he’s coming,” Bush said.—PTI
‘Fallen Kingdom’ caps 25 years of ‘Jurassic’ thrills

LOS ANGELES — “God creates dinosaurs, God destroys dinosaurs, God creates Man, Man kills God, Man brings back dinosaurs,” Jeff Goldblum deadpanned in “Jurassic Park,” released 25 years ago this week.

It was a pitchy summary of Steven Spielberg’s landmark monster movie and the series it launched that left audiences gasping in wonder as they handled over a dino-sized $3.8 billion for tickets over four films.

“Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom” — the fifth episode — comes to the US having already opened in 48 territories, shooting to the top spot in each, breaking several records and grossing $151 million.

“It’s wonderful that it’s still popular and not yet extinct,” Spielberg, an executive producer on “Fallen Kingdom,” said at its Los Angeles premiere on Tuesday.

He praised the imagination and creativity of Michael Crichton, the late author of the novels, and revealed that he thought of the “Jurassic” series as part of his family. “It’s kind of like being a birth parent, and you give your kid up for adoption but you’re really proud of the adoptive parents for doing a great job with your original idea,” he said.

China will be running for its life from T. rex this weekend, where experts are predicting a $100 million-plus debut, followed by Latin America and North America on 22 June.

Mass extinction

‘Jurassic World’ (2015) remains among the all-time top five grossing movies, despite competition in the intervening years from four “Star Wars” episodes and eight releases in Disney’s Marvel comic book stable.

The latest foray among the Cretaceous critters of Isla Nublar — T. rex and the velociraptor are far too young to be considered Jurassic-period animals — involves the high-octane action that audiences have come to expect, including all manner of terrifying theropods and oversized marine predators.

“We’re really thrilled. It’s been received really well critically and commercially around the world so far,” Chris Pratt, who plays swashbuckling raptor wrangler Owen Grady, said on the red carpet in LA.

“If the rest of the world is any indication, I think people are really loving it and are really going to go out and see it, which is fantastic. It means we can probably do another one.”

Directed by J.A. Bayona (“A Monster Calls”) and co-written by Colin Trevorrow, who helmed “Jurassic World,” the movie opens three years after the theme park was abandoned, with the dinosaurs roaming freely.

Isla Nublar’s long-dormant volcano has woken and is spewing lava, threatening another mass extinction.

Goldblum briefly reprised his role as Ian Malcolm, the grumpy but perspicacious chaos mathematician from the first and second films, to make his case for letting the big, scary lizards die off.

Stiletto backlash

But Claire Dearing (Bryce Dallas Howard) has been transformed from the frosty, corporate-styled suit introduced in the last movie into a bleeding heart animal rights activist — and she has other ideas.

Howard’s stilettos sparked a backlash to “Jurassic World,” mainly because it was seen as absurd, if not a little sexist, to have the female lead continually running for her life in vertiginous heels.

In a move interpreted as the franchise thumbing its nose at the critics, Howard is still wearing six-inch pumps as she drives to old flame Owen’s lakeside cabin to talk him into joining her on a mission to round-up and rescue the dinosaurs. “We hope to just honor the legacy that Michael Crichton and Steven Spielberg began with ‘Jurassic Park’ 25 years ago. The fact that people liked ‘Jurassic World’ and also that we got to do another movie, that’s incredible,” Howard said.

“My son is 11 and when I saw ‘Jurassic Park’ for the first time I was 12. That means so much to me that he’s going to go to the theater and watch this movie opening weekend with his friends.” A sixth film, tentatively titled “Jurassic World 3,” is scheduled for release on 11 June 2021.— AFP

Hawking’s voice to be beamed into space during memorial

LONDON — A message from late British astrophysics giant Stephen Hawking will be beamed towards the nearest black hole as his remains are laid to rest in London’s Westminster Abbey on Friday.

As the ashes of the British theoretical physicist are interred, a specially-written composition featuring his famous synthesised voice will be beamed into space by the European Space Agency.

“This is a beautiful and symbolic gesture that creates a link between our father’s presence on this planet, his wish to go into space and his explorations of the universe in his mind,” said his daughter Lucy Hawking.

The wheelchair-bound professor, who dedicated his life’s work to unravelling the mysteries of the universe and fought to overcome his disability, will be buried by the graves of fellow science greats Isaac Newton and Charles Darwin.

“The broadcast will be beamed towards the nearest black hole, 1A 0620-69, which lives in a binary system with a fairly ordinary orange dwarf star,” Hawking’s daughter said.

“It is a message of peace and hope, about unity and the need for us to live together in harmony on this planet.”

Time-travellers welcome

Hawking, who captured the imagination of millions around the world, died on 14 March at the age of 76.

Propelled to stardom by his 1988 book “A Brief History of Time”, an unlikely worldwide bestseller, Hawking’s genius and wit won over fans from far beyond the rarefied world of astrophysics.

His death triggered a flood of tributes from Queen Elizabeth II to NASA, reflecting his impact as a scientist but also a beacon of hope for people affected by motor neurone disease.

The British government announced on Monday that exceptional students in mathematics and physics can compete for research fellowships in Hawking’s honour Friday’s service attended by family, friends and colleagues will celebrate not only his achievements as a scientist, but also his character and endurance living with a devastating illness. “We are so grateful to Westminster Abbey for offering us the privilege of a service of thanksgiving for the extraordinary life of our father and for giving him such a distinguished final resting place,” said his children Lucy, Robert and Tim.

Around 1,000 members of the public drawn from more than 100 countries were due to attend the service, following an online ballot in which 25,000 applied for tickets.

Applicants needed to give their birth date — but eagle-eyed fans spotted that it could be any day up to 31 December 2038, opening the door to time-travelling guests from the future.

‘He inspired me’

Three young people who use electronic communication devices to speak, just as Hawking did, will also be among the guests.

“He has inspired me to be the best that I can be and not let anything, including my disability, hold me back,” said Jason Felce, 20, who controls his equipment with eye movement.

Drama student Rose Brown, 20, was hit by a drink-driver in 2009. “I am going to be an actress. Everybody who puts their mind to something gets to be it. Stephen Hawking proved this more than anyone,” she said.—AFP
We will try to win: Shan United head coach

Defending champions Shan United will play Magwe FC today in an MPT Myanmar National League (MNL) 2018 match at Taunggyi Stadium.

After playing 14 matches, Shan United has been placed second in the tournament with nine wins, three draws and two losses, while the Magwe FC, comprised with local youth players, is ranked third with seven wins, four draws and three losses.

In his pre-match comments, Shan United head coach Mr. Marjan Sekulovski said, “Magwe is a good team and disciplined in defence. They have many good players — some of them are national team players. We have to display a high level of performance, with full concentration and confidence. We need to be disciplined in defence, in attack and in our transition.”

“All players must put in their best performance and display a strong team spirit. We will try to win the game,” added Sekulovski.

“As we are born in Taunggyi (in the Shan State), we love Shan United and its style of play. We will support our team in the match against Magwe at Taunggyi Stadium,” said Zaw Lynn, a technological university student from Taunggyi.

The match will be broadcast live on MRTV at 3:30 pm today.

- Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Week 16 MNL matches begin today

The Week 16 matches of the MPT Myanmar National League (MNL) will start today, including the match between defending champions Shan United and Magwe. Three matches will be played in Yangon and other cities. Defending champions Shan United will play Magwe FC at 3.30 pm at Taunggyi Stadium today. The match will be broadcast live on For Sports and MRTV.

Also, Rakhine United will take on Yadanaon FC at Waihaung Stadium in Sittwe and GFA FC will lock horns with Mawlamyine FC at 4:00 pm at Thawunna Stadium in Yangon today.

On 17 May, Southern Myanmar will battle it out with Ayeyawady United at Mawlamyine Stadium, while Yangon United will play Zwekapan United at Thwunna Stadium.

On the same day, Sagaing United will face Hantharwady United at Myoeywa Stadium. The match will be broadcast live on MRTV and For Sports.

- Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Russia prove doubters wrong — for now

MOSCOW—Russia have proved the doubters wrong — for the moment. The World Cup hosts showed nerves of steel and ruthless finishing in thumping Saudi Arabia 5-0 in the tournament’s opening match before an anxious crowd of nearly 80,000 in Moscow’s Luzhniki Stadium on Thursday.

The emphatic result transformed the men in red from World Cup hosts and regional leaders to President Vladimir Putin himself rejoiced.

Everyone from senators and regional leaders to President Vladimir Putin himself congratulated coach Stanislav Cherchesov for Russia’s biggest World Cup victory in post-Soviet history.

It came at Luzhniki Stadium — the crucible of both Russian and Soviet sport — with the weight of an expectant but sceptical nation on their shoulders.

“The head of state called me and congratulated me,” Russia’s moustached manager said matter-of-factly after the match. Putin “told me to keep playing the way we were, to keep going.”

“Give me five!” Moscow’s Sport Express newspaper exclaimed in a front-page headline. “Russia, we love you!”

It was not always like this for Cherchesov and his charges.

The team entered the tournament without tasting victory in more than eight months.

They had registered just one shot on target in their last two World Cup warmups.

Four of Russia’s defenders and a starting forward had been ruled out for the tournament with injuries.

One Moscow news website dubbed the matchup between the 70th-ranked Russians and the 67th-ranked Saudis — the two worst teams in the tournament — as “Bad vs. Worse”.

“We’re not so bad” Cherchesov kept fiddling around with formations and few could tell which players he would start once British pop star Robbie Williams finished belting out his opening ceremony set.

It all worked out in the end.

But it will all get that much harder from here on out.

“It could have easily been 1-1 if we were not careful,” said Cherchesov.

“And our opponents will be getting stronger by the match.”

Russia next play Egypt on 19 June in Saint Petersburg and finish off Group A against two-time World Cup winners Uruguay in Samara on 25 June.

They are still not guaranteed the top-two finish that would ensure they do not join South Africa as only the second World Cup host nation to fail to qualify from their group.

And the Egypt match got that much bigger with the return to fitness of Mohamed Salah ahead of the Pharaohs’ own clash on Friday with Uruguay.

MOONEY — Lionel Messi’s Argentina aim to put to a shambolic World Cup build-up behind them and make a statement in their opening match against tournament debutants Iceland on Saturday.

The two-time champions arrived in Russia dogged by poor form, injuries and controversy. But Messi is a man on a mission as he chase his first World Cup winner’s medal and will not tolerate complacency against the minnows at Moscow’s Spartak stadium.

“Iceland showed they could compete with anyone at the last Euros,” he said, referring to their giant-killing run at the 2016 European Championship in France.

Messi was devastated by Argentina’s loss to Germany in the 2014 World Cup final, with the agony compounded by.back-to-back Copa America defeats to Chile in 2015 and 2016.

Despite his achievements with Barcelona, the five-time world player of the year is yet to win a major international tournament and time is running out as his 31st birthday looms.

He briefly retired from international football after the 2016 Copa America and has hinted he will do so permanently if the campaign in Russia ends in failure. The Group D clash pits an Argentine side that critics say is too focused on superstar Messi against a band of grafters who pride themselves on teamwork.

On paper, the South Americans should have little trouble disposing of Iceland, an island nation of 330,000 that is the smallest country to ever reach the finals.

- AFP