‘Private sector development vital for the country’ says VP U Myint Swe to Myanmar entrepreneurs

VICE PRESIDENT U Myint Swe, Chairman of the Private Sector Development Committee (PSDC), attended the 18th regular meeting between the Private Sector Development Committee and Myanmar entrepreneurs at the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) office in Yangon yesterday morning.

Present at the meeting were Vice Chairman of the Private Sector Development Committee and Union Minister for Commerce Dr. Than Myint; Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein; Deputy Ministers U Aung Htoo, U Win Maw Tun and U Maung Maung Win, Yangon Region Ministers, officials from five work committees, UMFCCI President U Zaw Min Win, Vice Presidents and members, Permanent Secretaries, Directors-General and officials from Myanmar Retailers Associations, Magway Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Myanmar Arts and Crafts Association (MACA).

In his address to the meeting the Vice President said PSDC was formed over one and a half years ago by the Office of the President on 24 October 2016 to effectively implement Private Sector Development Framework of PSDC. Special emphasis is placed towards private sector development as it is vital for the country’s economic development as well as socio-economic development of the people. PSDC meetings were held once every two months in order to conduct the Private Sector Development Framework and seven such meetings have already been held.

Entry of illegal goods through the border is threatening the existence of SMEs (small and medium enterprises) and since no taxes were paid to the State, it is causing difficulties for foreign investors to compete in terms of technology and market share. As such, special groups were formed in states/regions adjacent to the border, in addition to setting up inspection gates in YePyu and Mayanchaung gates to prevent and control entry of illegal goods through the border.

Agreements on prevention of violence to children reached by working committees for peace conference

THE third day meeting of the political, economic, social, security, land and environment work committees in preparation for the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong (Third Session) was held at the Myanmar International Convention Centre II in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Matters to be submitted to the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong (Third Session) were discussed and approved.

On the social sector committee meeting, U Zaw Htay said there wasn’t much to argue about as it was regarding the social sector. Compared to other sectors, discussions were smooth and sufficient agreements were reached.

Two more agreements were reached this morning. The first topic agreed upon was to prevent Six Grave Violations against children. This was already included in the NCA (Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement) signed between the government and the EAOs (Ethnic Armed Organisations).

Some of these include the killing of children, sexual violence and the recruitment of child soldiers.
Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe arrives back from Israel

UNION Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U Kyaw Tint Swe arrived back to Yangon the afternoon of 6 July 2018 after paying a working visit to the State of Israel.

During the visit, Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe held talks with Mr. Ayoob Kara, Minister of Communications of the State of Israel, on 4 July at the Knesset Building in Jerusalem, and discussed matters on strengthening of bilateral relations and exchange of high-level visits, promotion of cooperation in multi-faceted areas between the two countries.

In the evening on that day, Mr. Ayoob Kara, Minister of Communications of the State of Israel, hosted the dinner to the Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem.

During the visit, Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe also held talks with Mr. Michael Oren, Deputy Minister of the Prime Minister’s Office and Maj. Gen (Retd) Mr. Amos Yadlin, Executive Director of the Institute of National Security Studies (INSS) respectively and discussed matters of mutual interest.

— Ministry of Foreign Affairs

UEC Chairman, Russian Ambassador discuss electoral process

UEC Chairman U Hla Thein, Chairman of the Union Election Commission, received Russian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Nikolay Listopadov and held talks over the electoral process for the by-election today and the 2020 General Elections.

At the meeting, they exchanged views on the measures taken by the UEC in preparation for holding the by-election in 2018 and the General Election in 2020 and the fair election process in accordance with the rules and regulations.

They also exchanged views on the process of examining complaint letters and advance voting by Myanmar citizens overseas.

The Russian Ambassador also offered Russia’s cooperation in the electoral process in Myanmar—Myanmar News Agency

Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe attends British NHS 70th anniversary celebration

UNION Minister Dr Myint Htwe attended the 70th anniversary celebration of the British National Health Services—NHS and the Myanmar-UK Health Forum on Improving Quality Health Services Towards Universal Health Coverage held yesterday at Sedona Hotel in Yangon.

In his opening speech, Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe said the NHS was established by British Health Minister Aneurin Bevan on 5 July 1948, based on three core principles to meet the needs of everyone, to be free at the point of delivery, and to be based on clinical needs, it is a model for Myanmar and other countries to get access to Universal Health Coverage.

He also lauded Britain and organisations from Britain, including the Department for International Development—DFID, which is helping Myanmar in the process of drawing up a National Health Plan.

He then expressed thanks to the Ministry of Health and Sports (Myanmar) for their serious efforts with a limited health staff population of over 110,000 and the annual allocated budget of around US$1 billion, whereas the health staff population of Britain is 1.7 million and the annual allocated budget is around £144 billion.

Medical universities in Britain and Myanmar are cooperating over technical issues and the skills of Myanmar doctors can be observed through data which shows that 628 doctors passed the MRCP exam (Membership of the Royal Colleges of Physicians) and 103 doctors passed the MRCPCH exam (Member of Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health) from 1991 till date.

“The long-term cooperation between Myanmar and Britain benefited Myanmar people and that cooperation will be strengthened in the future,” said the union minister.

Next, Head of Office of the Department for International Development (DFID—Myanmar) Dr. Gail Marzetti delivered a speech.

Many years ago, Britain played a main role as a donor in the health sector of Myanmar in which funds such as the 3MDG Fund, Global Fund, Gavi, Global Health Security and International Health Regulations, Fleming Fund and Anti-Microbial Resistance were supported.

Moreover, £97 million for the Access to Health Fund and bringing UK expertise will also be supported during the five-year period from 2019 to 2023. — Myanmar News Agency
‘Private sector development vital for the country’ says VP U Myint Swe to Myanmar entrepreneurs

In fiscal year 2017-2018, total foreign trade was US$ 33.52 billion out of which the private sector contributed US$ 27.24 billion or 81 per cent. Trade amount up to 22 June 2018 is US$ 7.983 billion and is over US$ 977 million for the same period last year. The private sector contributed US$ 6.924 billion which is 87 per cent of the total.

A group led by the Deputy Minister for Commerce is working with officials from the World Bank on improving the Ease of Doing Business ranking in the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business Index and it is believed that the ranking would improve. Departments and private sector companies need to reply patiently and systematically to questions raised.

The Vice President also spoke of organizations attending the meeting to openly discuss and raise matters in which they are facing difficulties.

Union Minister for Commerce Dr. Than Myint then explained the status of the works implemented by the ministry in the export/import and investment sectors.

Next, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein explained about economic development in Yangon Region and status of opening vocational training schools.

Afterwards UMFFCCI President U Zaw Min Win explained about sector-wise works conducted for private sector development.

Later, Myanmar Retailers Association Vice Chairman U Myo Min Aung, Magway Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry President U Sein Aye Maung and MACA Chairman U Thadu explained and discussed about work sector-wise difficulties faced.

This was followed by UMFFCCI Vice Presidents U Wai Phyo, U Ye Min Aung and Myanmar Pharmaceuticals & Medical Equipment Entrepreneurs Association Chairman U Zaw Moe Khang who commented and suggested on the suggestions made at B4B Insights Forum, standards on tax and customs duty and import of medicines and medical equipment.

The Vice President, Union Minister, Region Chief Minister and officials gave detailed comments to ensure coordination based on the discussions suggested at the meeting then came to a close after the Vice President delivered a closing speech.— Myanmar News Agency ■

Agreements on prevention of violence to children reached by working committees for peace conference

In the social sector, some 10 agreements are expected to be reached but about nine will remain: especially, resettlement, redevelopment and social development. This includes refugees displaced to border areas due to conflicts and those who are in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. Discussions with emphasis on these were conducted and agreements reached.

As such, nine to ten undisputed agreements are expected to be submitted to the upcoming conference. The agreements reached yesterday included frameworks on redevelopment, resettlement, drugs and mostly social development, redevelopment and resettlement.

Discussions were widely held on refugees displaced to border areas due to conflicts, IDP camps in the country and ownership of farmlands upon return to their places of origin.

These were completed in our sector.

But it needs to be discussed more in the land sector. As this is related to two work committees, it was not completed. In tomorrow’s Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) secretariat meeting, the attending five work committees will amend the policy papers. After it is amended, the UPDJC meeting will be held on 9 July. Policies, proposals and basic principles discussed by work committees will be submitted as agreements to this meeting. In some matters where there were disagreements and arguments, they will be submitted as proposals and options. It will be discussed again at the meeting and when the conference is held, it will be re-discussed, said U Zaw Htay.

On the land and environment sector work committee meeting, Daw Wah Wah Maung said the works include the registration of traditional ethnic national rights. Another issue is regarding the protection of land: illegal settling on land and non-citizens not permitted to own land. Only citizens can legally own land. We expect to reach an agreement on at least five points. It will include policy on land ownership and protection after the policy is enacted. There should be prior consultation and discussion with relevant local people on management, land development projects, land usage and environmental protection.

The day’s meeting was attended by members of the UPDJC’s secretariat group, joint committee members, working committee members from the government, Hluttaw and Tatmadaw groups and other officials.— Thura Zaw, Myo Thu Hein (MNA) ■
More vocational schools to be opened in Yangon

By May Thet Hnin

THE Yangon Region government will establish vocational training institutes for those who cannot reach higher education access, said Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein.

“The Yangon Region government will try to produce skilled labourers and professionals under the guidance of the Ministry of Education by opening vocational training schools. It is also a step toward fulfilling the needs of the labour force in commerce and industry.

At present, the Singapore Myanmar Vocational Training Institute has opened in cooperation with Singapore on Natmauk Road. More vocational training institutes are planned to be opened nearby.

The Yangon Region government, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Sports, will open a healthcare-related vocational training institute. Similarly, the government also plans to open a fisheries vocational training institute near Yangon Aquarium, U Phyo Min Thein said.

Additionally, more vocational training courses will be offered at the Government Technical Institute (GTI) in Insein Township.

“Vocational training courses will bring about smooth entry into the labour market for young people. Vocational training schools will enable their trainees to link with enterprises. Now, most of the educated young people are far removed from the work industry. The principals of Insein GTI are endeavouring to link with the private sector”, U Phyo Min Thein noted.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi also encouraged vocational education in the peace talk held in Mon State on 14 June, as vocational education also plays just as an important role as university education. Vocational education is increasingly improving in the world’s most developed countries such as Switzerland, Sweden and Germany. It is regarded as equally valuable with university education.

Photo exhibition highlights Myanmar’s jade industry

“JOURNEY of The Blood Jade”, a photo exhibition, is being held at the Jefferson Center, the US Embassy’s outreach hub for Upper Myanmar situated at the corner of 26th and 71st streets in Chanayethazan Township, Mandalay. The exhibit opened on Thursday and will continue until 13 July.

The exhibition showcases 76 works of four photographers, Ko Zaw (Phakant), Soe Win Nyein, Zaw Moe Htet and Nyan Hlaing Lynn. Video showing the impact of the jade trade in the Phakant area will also be shown.

The photographs depict the life of jade workers, jade fields and excavation sites in Phakant Township, Kachin State, environmental impacts, lifestyles of residents and narcotics addiction that is rampant in the area.

The event is open to the public between 9 am and 5 pm daily.—Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)

Eleven airlines to switch terminals at Yangon International Airport

ELEVEN airlines will eventually relocate from Terminal 2 (T2) to Terminal 1 (T1) of Yangon International Airport (YIA) with the opening of its inter-terminal connection this week, the Yangon Aerodrome Co. Ltd. announced yesterday in a news release.

This is the first step towards linking the two international terminals, according to the news release.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines lines will be the first air carrier to move from T2 to T1 beginning on 7 July, with the new check-in area at Row C, counters 11-13.

Other airlines scheduled for the move are Air Asia, China Airlines, Jetstar Asia, Malaysia, Myanmar National Airlines, Noi Air, Qatar Airways, Thai Airways international, Thai Smile Airlines and VietJet Air.

The move is expected to be completed by the end of this month.

During the period, Yangon airport will be deploying drive-way ushers and guides at T1 and T2 to ensure all passengers are directed to the right terminals.

Passengers may check airline updates at www.facebook.com/ymgonairport. Updates will also be posted on the YIA’s official website www.yangonairport.aero.

As the largest and busiest airport in Myanmar, Yangon International Airport is strategically located between India and China with two-thirds of the world’s population within six hours flying range, including cities such as Tokyo, Dubai, Singapore, Beijing and New Delhi. The airport handled a total of 5.92 million passengers last year. It serves 28 international airlines that offer 24 international destinations.—GNLM
Yangon Region Investment Cmte. approves nine endorsements for foreign enterprises

By May Thet Hnin

THE Yangon Region Investment Committee (YRIC) approved nine endorsements for foreign enterprises in accordance with Myanmar Investment Law at the YRIC meeting held on Wednesday at the Yangon Region government office.

Those foreign enterprises will bring in a capital of US$21.29 million, creating 5,729 job opportunities. Those foreign enterprises from Singapore, China, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia and British Virgin Islands put up a capital of $56.61 million into manufacturing, hotel and other sectors. Meanwhile, nine domestic enterprises invested Ks2.3 billion.

According to Myanmar Investment Law, region and state investment committees are authorised to grant endorsements of an investment proposal with a capital of not more than $5 million (Ks6,000 million), with an aim to facilitate the verification process of investment projects.

Border imports decrease slightly

IMPORTS through all cross-border trade camps in the first three months of the present fiscal year was valued at US$790.7 million, which was a slight decrease, by almost $3 million, from the same period last year, the Ministry of Commerce announced yesterday.

From 1 April through 29 June this year, the country’s total border trade topped $2.926 billion, consisting of $1.325 billion in exports. Despite a decrease in the value of border imports, this year saw an increase in value of border exports by $247 million, compared to the similar period last year.

Myanmar carries out border trade with China mainly through Muse, Lweje, Kanpikete, Chinshwehaw and Kengtung.

Of these, the Muse border sees the largest volume and value. From 1 April to 29 June, the Muse border crossing handled trade amounting to $1.416 billion, while trade value from the remaining border points was lower than $220 million.

High feed cost impacts poultry egg production in Thaton

SMALL-scale egg growers in Thaton Township in Mon State are currently facing hardships due to high cost of feed in the domestic market, even though they are receiving a good price for eggs, local producers said.

U Sein Win, who has operated poultry farms on a manageable scale in the region for the last 20 years, said, “Egg-producing ducks are usually fed broken rice and dried powder of prawn shells. At present, the price of broken rice has increased by Ks7,000 per bag. However, the egg price hasn’t increased yet. Eggs produced from Thailand are also found in the market. Those eggs are bigger than that of local produce. But the imported eggs are not marketable due to a durability problem.”

Last year, a bag of broken rice sold for Ks14,000, and a bag of dried prawn shell powder was Ks28,000. A bag of broken rice has risen to Ks21,000 and a bag of dried prawn shell powder sells for Ks27,500.

Currently, one egg is worth Ks130-Ks135 in the wholesale market depending on size. In the retail market, an egg is worth Ks150-Ks160.

There are about 40 egg producers who run businesses on a manageable scale in Thaton Town. Egg production has decreased slightly this season. — Thet Oo (Thaton)
7th coord meeting held for updated Myanmar encyclopedia

A coordination meeting for publishing an up-to-date Myanmar encyclopedia was held yesterday afternoon at the meeting hall of the Printing and Publishing Department on Theinbyu Road in Yangon.

At the meeting, Myanmar Encyclopedia Republishing Steering Committee member and Printing and Publishing Department (PPD) Director General U Aung Myo Myint, Vice-Chairmen writers Dr. Khin Aye (Maung Khin Min – Danubyu) and Dr. Tin Hlaing (Bo Hlaing), and Secretary Dr. San Win discussed and suggested works that are completed and future works to be done.

At the meeting, Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint said efforts should be made to get rid of errors, to be precise in the facts, and to include detailed facts and figures in Myanmar for the Myanmar Encyclopedia. It is learnt that a draft version of Myanmar Encyclopedia Volume One is 90 per cent complete. —Myanmar News Agency

Film studio project in Nay Pyi Taw brings investment opportunities

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint has called for private businesses to consider investment opportunities in the film sector as the Union Government, ministries concerned and the Nay Pyi Taw Council have been working on establishing modern film studios in the capital.

Speaking at a ceremony to show a documentary about establishing modern movie studios at the Motion Picture Promotion Division of the Information and Public Relations Department in Yangon, Dr. Pe Myint said the Ministry of Information has joined hands with people from the film business to step up efforts for development of Myanmar’s movie industry, as the State Counsellor has expressed a desire for improvement of the art of motion pictures.

Promoting the socio-economic life of the people of the country’s movie industry, their creativity and needed investment in the movie industry are parts of the development of Myanmar motion picture industry, he said.

High quality products of the motion industry can attract the interest of local people and neighbouring countries as well, and the country’s image can be improved through the movies, he added. Afterwards, the documentary by director Zaw Myint Oo about the strong points for using Nay Pyi Taw as a location for shooting a movie was shown.

Next, Nay Pyi Taw Council-member U Min Thu and Deputy Director-General of the Myanmar Investment Commission U Thant Sin Lwin spoke about assistance for establishing modern studios and investment opportunities in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, suggestions on establishing movie studios, cinemas, and film schools were made by chairman of the Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation U Zin Waing, Secretary U Nyi Nyi Tun Liwn, Director U Zinaw Maung Maung, Director Maung Myo Min, Daw Swe Zin Hluke and Patron of Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation Director U Soe Moe, Managing Director of Mingalar Company Ltd and Mingalar Zaw Film Production U Zaw Min and Script Writer U KoKo Lay. The efforts for establishing modern movie studios are also aimed at entertaining the people who visit Nay Pyi Taw and to develop Nay Pyi Taw.

Learning from foreign countries which are famous for their movie industries, plans are being formed to establish a park for a movie studio and film schools, and a cinema-based entertainment city.—Myanmar News Agency

Stake driving ceremony held for Myanmar Medical Association (Central) Training Centre

A stake driving ceremony for a Training Centre to be construct- ed by the Myanmar Medical Association (Central) was held in the compound of the Myanmar Medical Association (Central), Mingala Taungnyunt Township, Yangon, yesterday morning.

The Training Centre is being constructed with an aim to train, inform and disseminate the ever changing and progressing medical information and experiences to the medical community. Stakes were driven and scented water sprinkled by the Myanmar Medical Association Vice Chairman Dr. Khin Pyone Kyi, Secretary Professor Dr. Hsin Aung Saw, Treasurer Professor Dr. Mya Thida and officials from Ah Yone Oo (Dawn) Company. The Training Centre is a five-stor y building that includes a skill lab and lecture halls and is being constructed at a total cost of Ks1,029.2 million with funds from the Myanmar Medical Association donations, it is learnt.

—Myanmar News Agency

Request to voters

1. For the by-election which will be held on 3 November 2018, the Union Election Commission has completed the compilation of voters lists in constituencies in townships based on voters lists from the 2013 General Elections.

2. The voters lists will be made available to the public at the ward/village election sub-commissions for 14 days from 9-7-2018 to 22-7-2018. Only if voters check their names on the lists on notice boards at respective constituencies will the voters lists be correct and perfect.

3. Hence, voters are urged to check their names on the list, and to demand for inclusion of their names by filling out Form 3 if they do not find their names on the list, and to make objections to the sub-commissions concerned if they find names which should not be included on the list, and to correct the list by filling out Form 4-c to correct mistakes on the list. Required forms are available free of charge at ward/village election sub-commissions. After completion of amendments, rejections and corrections in the voters lists, they will be made available to the public again for 14 days in October 2018 and voters can demand their voting rights, corrections and objections again during that period.

4. To get perfect voters lists, at least one member of a family of voters should check the voters list without fail.

Union Election Commission
(Unofficial Translation)
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Food safety a top priority for Myanmar

By Meaung Soe Ei (Ma Bai Myaw)

It is with much sincere and sadness to remember that Bogoye Aung San and his key leaders were assassinated by the hands of the British on 19 July 1947. Many people have passed, but all remember these martyrs in their hearts.

As the country is experiencing the situation, Bogyoke Aung San devoted his whole life for his country. Through his efforts, the country regained independence from the imperialists.

Despite his late enrollment to school, he was a brilliant young man and passed the matriculation examination from Yangoon in 1932. As a university student, he studied hard, and at the same time he kept the political developments of the country and world affairs. He organized his fellow students and launched the Student Union under the watchful eyes of criminals, and fought against the colonial unknown forces.

Formation of the Tatmadaw

On 8 August 1948, he left the country with Thakin U Maung with the aim of forming the Tatmadaw to liberate the country. In 1949, he returned to the country with an independent plan and sincerely teamed up with patriotic youth. The courageous team was later known as the ‘Thirty Comrades’.

After acquiring military training in Britain, they entered Bangkok, Thailand on 27 December 1949 and formed the Burma Independence Army (BIA). This article is an attempt to recall, remember and cherish all the ‘loyalty, loving kindness and selflessness’ of Bogoye that he enveloped over the nation and the people during the independence struggle for the future generations.

Crush the nearest enemy

Bogyoke Aung San spoke on the brutality of Japanese forces towards the people of the Union. (This situation is being observed at present). They always opposed the soldiers of the enemy to attack the enemy, and crush the nearest enemies.

In August 1949, a time of Myanmar’s independence struggle, Bogoye urged and advised the political parties and political leaders to unite. He pointed out that the difficult situation could be resolved in a peaceful atmosphere if the people and the leaders were united. Bogoye and the Tatmadaw also made this concept in this highlight. He pointed the importance of unity, which is reflected in the current situation in the country.

Meaning of politics

At this point, the author would like to recall the speech of Bogoye delivered on 20 January 1947 at the Shwedagon Pagoda, Bogoye clarified that politics was not a dirty game, but some persons thought that it is a dirty game.

Politics was the business of human beings, and that our daily household chores regarding food, clothing and shelter were all politics of the political philosophers. Those valuable words of Bogoye are still compe- tent and appropriate.

On 20 October 1947, in the backdrop of purging the Communist Party from the APPF, Bogoye called out to those who wanted to work in politics, and said he engaged himself in politics not to boost himself. He solemnly said that he was fighting for the masses of the country. He said that he was able to have something to say by entering politics, but working in politics was a lost. These words were valuable, and should be emulated by the new generation.

Politics never descends from the sky above

On 24 February 1947, Bogoye delivered a speech, saying that independence was not a matter to lie low, and that it never comes down from the sky. He said that he went to Britain as a strategic maneuver to acquire independence for the future generations.

With this speech, he convinced the public. At different occasions and events, Bogoye spelled out concept, notion and perception as he deemed it.

Regarding the collective performances, he de- livered a speech on 11 February 1947 at the Panthang Dinner by saying that unity was very important and that the national races such as Bamar, Kayin, Kachin, Chin and other nationalities should not split in their activities, but must work in unity and union. This concept is sorely needed today.

It was a time when the_specified action was taken in the Tatmadaw. This concept was sorely needed to bring them to the right track.

The Tatmadaw was formed to inspire the soldiers before they engaged in war strengthen the resolve of the nation. The words that he spoke were most valuable to inspire the soldiers to fight against all odds.

The words of Bogoye encompassed ‘loyalty, loving kindness, leadership, leadership’ and developed the whole country. If the people and the new generation depend on the political parties and leaders to develop the whole country, they must take lessons.

The future is in the hands of the new generation. Bogoye did his utmost step towards freedom for the country in hard struggle to regain independence of the country. During a 52-year lifespan, he sacrificed his life to fight for the country and for the masses of the people.

Bogyoke Aung San gave words of inspiration to the soldiers before they engaged in war.

The words of Bogyoke to inspire the soldiers are very important, which is reflected in the current situation in the country.

Invitation to young writers for Sunday section

The Global New Light of Myanmar is accepting submissions of poetry, opinion, articles, essays and short stories from young people for its weekly Sunday Next Generation Platform. Interested young people can send their works to the Global New Light of Myanmar, No. 19, Kyauk Than Pagoda Road, Sago Lane, Rangoon, with the following information:

Section your work should be included: Sunday Next Generation Platform

Your full name (Surname, first name, age)

Your level of education

Name of your school/college/university

A brief biographical note for your submission

Contact information (name, address, mobile number, etc.)

Read the Sunday Next Generation Platform on the Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper for more information.
Chinese cartoon series with Myanmar dubbing to be broadcast in August

A ceremony to introduce a Chinese cartoon series with Myanmar dubbing, jointly organised by Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV) and Guangxi People’s Broadcasting Station (GPBS) was held at the MRTV compound in Yangon yesterday afternoon.

The cartoon series is about a white-headed Langur and his animal friends in the mountains of Guangxi Province and is aimed at protecting and conserving the natural surroundings and the environment in the mountains.

At the ceremony, MRTV Director General U Myint Htway and GPBS Director General Mr. Fan Yi delivered messages of greeting and children conducted quizzes, drawing and painting.

Next, a review was conducted on the broadcasted Chinese series with Myanmar dubbing and prizes were given to two first place, four second place, six third place and 38 consolation prize winners. The first prize winners will undertake a five-day visit to Guangxi Province.

MRTV Director General U Myint Htway said the cartoon series is planned to be broadcast in August. The series includes some 30 parts and is planned to be broadcasted roughly on Sunday mornings. As per the agreement, the Chinese series will be broadcasted for some three years. Movies with Myanmar dubbing are not broadcasted much, so in the beginning it might be awkward. But the elderly and youngsters who have just learned to read may find it difficult to read subtitles, so this may be more convenient for them. The current cooperation agreement was to make Myanmar movies here and to broadcast them in China. We are discussing this. We have many interesting stories such as the Bagan era and Inwa era stories. They will be shown here, as well as there. We are still working it out, as it might be costly.

The agreement between MRTV and GPBS was signed in September 2013. As per the agreement, representatives from GPBS and MRTV conducted study tours from 2013 to 2015. An additional agreement was signed in March 2017 and a joint production agreement for Chinese movies was signed in June 2017. GPBS Director General Mr. Fan Yi said this arrangement was made to showcase popular cartoon series from China. The Chinese would like to know how the Myanmar people live, so Myanmar movies here and shown in China with Myanmar dubbing.

As per the agreement, some Chinese television series were already being broadcasted with Myanmar dubbing. —Nyunt Ko Ko

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Headmaster killed in Madaya Township

A headmaster of Pwetaingkyaw village, Thekyaw village-tract, Madayarownship, Mandalay region, was killed on 5 July.

Daw Nyo Nyo San, 60, of Pwetaingkyaw village, informed the village administrator and her relatives that U Tin Wan, her husband, 61, A headmaster of Myitkauk BEPS, was found lying dead supine with bruises, open wounds and cuts under his left eye and upper forehead.

The Madaya/Myoma Police Station filed a criminal case before launching an investigation into the incident.—Soe Kyaw Thu Htwe

Body found in Sancheinhmi Ward, Kyauktan

A body was found in a plot near Kyetkhatu village, Sancheinhmi ward, Kyauktan, at around 12 a.m. on 4 July.

Policemen from Kyauktan Myoma Police Station, together with local authorities, acting on information rushed to the scene and identified the deceased as Ko Ko Maung, 27 years old, son of U Barlar (Hindu/Buddhist) of Kyetkhatu village. According to his family members and relatives, Ko Ko Maung was a heavy drinker and was missing since 1 July. The body was transported to Kyauktan People’s Hospital and an investigation is ongoing to check for any foul play.—Kya San Myint (IPRD)

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Video Business Scrutinizing and Supervisory Central Committee to fight video, film piracy

VIDEO Business Scrutinizing and Supervisory Central Committee held its 1/2018 meeting in Yangon yesterday, discussing amending license fee for video business, fighting piracy of videos and online piracy of video and films.

At the meeting held at the Motion Picture Promotion Division of the Information and Public Relations Department of the Ministry of Information, U Ye Naing, Director-General of the IPRD U Ye Naing, in his capacity as the chairman of the central committee, made coordination between the central committee and representatives of the region/state governments.

The central committee was reformed with nine members on 1st April, 2018 in conformity with the 1996 Myanmar Broadcasting and Video Law.—Myanmar News Agency
Fireworks explosions kill 24 in central Mexico

MEXICO CITY — At least 24 people were killed in a series of explosions Thursday at fireworks warehouses in the town of Tultepec, in central Mexico, including rescue workers who died saving others’ lives, officials said.

The initial explosion occurred around 9:30 am (1430 GMT), then spread to other warehouses just as police and firefighters began attending to the first victims.

Tultepec, a town of 65,000 people just north of Mexico City, is known for its artisanal fireworks — and a history of deadly accidents.

“We deeply regret the deaths of those who were killed this morning in Tultepec, including our firefighter and police colleagues who lost their lives saving those of many others,” read a tweet from the Red Cross in the state of Mexico, where Tultepec is located.

At least 24 people were killed — including a minor — and 49 wounded, officials said.

The victims included four firefighters and five police.

Hundreds of soldiers, police and firefighters deployed to the neighborhood of Xalquiento, on the outskirts of the town, cordoned off a wide area around the smoldering workshops where the explosions occurred.

An anguished teenager was asking rescue workers for news about his father, a fireworks maker who worked in the area.

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Hours later, his father reappeared, badly shaken but safe.

“I was in my workshop when I heard the explosion. I ran out and was immediately enveloped in the cloud of smoke,” said the father, 43-year-old Osvaldo Urban, his voice trembling.

“I’m so grateful to be OK.”

Tultepec, in the cloud of smoke,” said the father.

A 69-year-old woman from Osaka said, “I have seen the Kamo River for more than 30 years while commuting to work but I have never seen it swollen to the extent that the walking trail along it was flooded. It is terrifying.”

Sanyo shinkansen bullet train services in western Japan were partially halted from Thursday night due to heavy rain and the risk of mud flowing onto railway tracks in some areas. But West Japan Railway Co. resumed operations Friday morning.

Many people were left stranded in train stations and lined up for taxis due to a number of cancellations caused by the heavy rain. Some shinkansen bullet trains were opened as temporary “hotels” for people who needed to stay overnight and about 420 people did so.

A city rescue worker said the river was rising at the rate of 1 meter per hour.

Atmospheric conditions have become very unstable as warm and damp air is flowing into a seasonal front, potentially causing gusts and tornadoes, the agency said.

It warned of particularly heavy rain of up to 80 millimeters per hour with lightning on Saturday. In the 24-hour period through Saturday noon, 400 mm of rain is forecast in the Shikoku region, 300 mm in the central and southwestern Japan regions and 250 mm in the eastern and western regions.

— Kyodo News

Two dead, five missing as heavy rain hits wide areas of Japan

TOKYO — Heavy rainfall continued in wide areas of Japan on Friday, leaving two dead and five missing due to landslides and swollen rivers in western prefectures.

The Japan Meteorological Agency forecast record amounts of rain through Sunday, warning of flooding, mudslides and lightning strikes.

Evacuation orders were issued for nearly 170,000 people in nine prefectures in the Kansai and other regions, including those affected by last month’s strong earthquake in Osaka Prefecture, according to the Fire and Disaster Management Agency.

A man was confirmed dead after being found in a swollen river in Hiroshima Prefecture around 6 am Kazuhiro Miyanaga, 59, is believed to have been washed away from near his house, police said.

A landslide struck some homes in Fukuoka Prefecture, around 7:30 am Six people were rescued from the site, rescue workers said, adding they were trying to confirm information that a man and his wife, both in their 60s, had been buried alive.

The southwestern Japan prefecture asked the Ground Self-Defense Force to send members to assist with disaster relief.

A woman in her 50s went missing in Kyoto Prefecture, after leaving home in a car that was found in a swollen river around 2:40 am, according to local authorities that said she was thought to be the other person confirmed dead.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a press conference, “I want people to try to evacuate at an early stage and ensure their safety.”

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— Kyodo News

The initial explosion occurred around 9:30 am (1430 GMT), then spread to other warehouses just as police and firefighters began attending to the first victims.

Tultepec, a town of 65,000 people just north of Mexico City, is known for its artisanal fireworks — and a history of deadly accidents.

“We deeply regret the deaths of those who were killed this morning in Tultepec, including our firefighter and police colleagues who lost their lives saving those of many others,” read a tweet from the Red Cross in the state of Mexico, where Tultepec is located.

At least 24 people were killed — including a minor — and 49 wounded, officials said.

The victims included four firefighters and five police.

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“I’m so grateful to be OK.”

T’rained fire’

An overpowering smell of gunpowder hung in the air, and occasional detonations could still be heard hours after the original accident.

Charred furniture and bricks hurled by the explosions could be seen lying in the grass, even outside the ample security perimeter.

“I was having breakfast when there was a terrible blast. We left the house running and I saw a huge white cloud in the sky, as if it were going to rain — except today it rained fire,” said Alondra Perez, 62, who lives across the road.

Two badly damaged firetrucks were visible beside one totaled workshop, and a police officer told AFP an ambulance had been completely charred in one blast.

“People here insist on continuing to make fireworks. It’s their tradition. But they don’t gauge the consequences of these tragedies. It’s infuriating because our firefighter colleagues... end up dead saving these people,” he said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

History of accidents

Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto sent his condolences to the victims’ families on Twitter and said the army and interior ministry were supporting the state rescue effort.

Authorities suspended all fireworks sales in the area.

State Interior Minister Alejandro Ozuna said an “exhaustive review” would be conducted of all workshops’ permits.

“We know it’s a way of life and a tradition, but we have to send the community the message, and they have to understand that it must be regulated, for their own safety,” he said.— AFP
Thai military diver dies as window for cave rescue narrows

MAE SAI — A former Thai navy diver helping to rescue a football team trapped inside a flooded cave died Friday as officials warned the window of opportunity to free the youngsters is “limited”.

The diver’s death raises serious doubts over the safety of attempting to bring the 12 boys and their football coach out through the cramped, waterlogged passages of the Tham Luang cave.

But Thailand’s Navy SEAL commander indicated that rescuers may have little choice but to attempt the tricky extraction of the group, in the first official admission that they cannot wait out the monsoon underground.

“At first, we thought the children could stay for a long time... but now things have changed, we have a limited time,” Apakorn Yookongkaew told reporters.

A sombre mood has clouded the elation from earlier in the week, when the boys were found dehydrated and hungry but alive on a ledge several kilometres (miles) inside the cave.

Many of the boys -- aged between 11 to 16 -- are unable to swim and none has scuba experience, further imperilling any attempt to dive out of the cave.

Those risks were made all the more immediate by the death of the diver, identified as Saman Kunan, who passed out and perished while returning from the chamber where the boys are trapped.

He was part of a team trying to establish an air line to the chamber where the children are awaiting rescue.

The SEAL commander said oxygen levels in their shelter had dropped, but said a doctor was with the team monitoring their health.

“Still have faith’

Chiang Rai deputy governor Passakorn Boonyaluck delivered the “sad news” of the diver’s death to reporters massed at the entrance to the cave complex.

But Navy SEAL commander Apakorn vowed the rescue bid will continue. “We lost one man, but we still have faith to carry out our work.”

Saman resigned from the Thai military in 2006 before working at Bangkok’s Suvarnabhumi airport, according to a post on the Thai Navy Seals Facebook page, which said he was a triathlete and a “skilled and able diver.”

Tributes poured out across social media in Thailand.

Asked how the boys could make it out safely if an experienced diver could not, Apakorn said they would take more precautions with the children.

Even for expert divers the journey is an exhausting 11-hour round trip.

“It’s very risky (diving out). Think about it, a Navy Seal just passed away last night, so how about a 12-year-old kid,” said Rafael Aroush, an Israeli volunteer helping the rescue bid.

Officials vowed to investigate the death, and have sent the body to a local hospital for an autopsy. —AFP

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Thai soldiers and police officers pay their respects as a Thai Navy plane carrying the body of Saman Kunan flies by. PHOTO: AFP

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CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE
M.V DYANMIC OCEAN 01

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V DYANMIC OCEAN 01 are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 9-7-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of SPW-2 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 RK SHIPPING & TRADING PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301928

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CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE
M.V EF ELENA VOY. NO. ( 1833/1834 )

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V EF ELENA VOY. NO. ( 1833/1834 ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 7-7-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT (S’PORE) PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

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CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE
M.V ROYAL PROBE VOY. NO. ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V ROYAL PROBE VOY. NO. ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 7-7-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of 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 BLPL SHIPPING LINE

Phone No: 2301185

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CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE
M.V CAPE FLORES VOY. NO. ( 093NS )

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V CAPE FLORES VOY. NO. ( 093NS ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 7-7-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA SHIPPING LINES

Phone No: 2301185
From vine to seabed, Spain’s winemakers dive in

MADRID—With the aid of a small crane, Borja Saracho lowers five cages loaded with 2,500 bottles of white wine from a fishing boat into the Cantabrian Sea.

He then plunges into the sea wearing a wetsuit to check sensors that monitor temperature and water pressure around the precious load. “We are a winery,” says the 44-year-old founder of Crusoe Treasure in the picturesque bay of Plentzia near Bilbao in Spain’s northern Basque region.

Until several years ago this diving enthusiast did not even drink wine. Now he sells wines that have been aged underwater — a growing niche market — in Spain as well as in Belgium, China, Switzerland, Germany and Japan. “I have always been interested in sunken ships and hidden treasures,” said Saracho, whose company has been in business since 2013 and is the largest underwater winery in Spain.

Crusoe Treasure expects to sell 30,000 bottles of red and white wine this year, up from just 7,000 in 2017. The prices of its wines start at 58 euros ($67.50) a bottle. It is one of about a dozen firms that age wines underwater in Spain. Other firms which age wine underwater exist in Italy, France and Chile.

The underwater conditions — total darkness and constant temperature — are thought to accelerate the ageing process, adding complexity to the wine. But it comes at a price — the technique costs 25-70 percent more for the winemaker than ageing wine on land because of the logistics required.

Entrepreneurs are investing in this sector “thinking it is not a fad, but a technique that in the medium term can be very useful” and “add qualities to a wine that make it more attractive to the public,” said Rafael del Rey, the director of the Spanish Wine Market Observatory, an independent foundation.

Fresh, floral wines

Ageing wine under the sea, with its tides, currents and waves, can be “very rough” so it is best to work with “very robust wines”, said Crusoe Treasure’s chief oenologist, Antonio Palacios.

The company works with wineries from different parts of Spain, and since it is not restricted by the system of geographical indications, or designation of origin protection linked to where a wine is produced, it can mix labels from different regions.

In the medium term can be very profitable, the director said. “The price can be up to 40 euros if it was underwater.”

It keeps them only six months underwater because “any longer and wine can lose its edge”, said its sommelier Josep Lluís Vilarasau.

The hotel uses young and recently bottled wines which they store 17 metres underwater. One of its wines sells for 30 euros a bottle for the traditional earth produced version and 40 euros if it was underwater.

—AFP
Let the Games begin: Netflix releases first Indian series

MUMBAI — Netflix’s first original Indian series premieres on Friday as the US streaming giant battles with Amazon Prime for a slice of the country’s fast-growing on-demand video market.


Analysts say the gritty underworld thriller sets a new benchmark for Indian-produced internet shows as providers seek to capitalise on the country’s burgeoning number of smartphone users.

“Sacred Games” is probably the most high-profile content that has been made. Others have not been on the same scale,” Girish Menon, who tracks media and entertainment for KPMG, told AFP.

Revenues from India’s entertainment streaming industry are expected to be $823 million by 2022, up from $297 million in 2017, according to a PricewaterhouseCoopers report released this month.

Netflix, which is blocked in China, is investing millions in the world’s second-most populous country to attract young consumers with access to cheap mobile data and an appetite for something different.

“It is the 4th of July and I’m feeling patriotic,” wrote Kaplan, as a “political liberal,” according to his conservative views.—AFP

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“Sacred Games” is also a punt that high-quality Indian content will prove popular overseas and forms part of Netflix’s worldwide drive to produce programmes in many different languages, including Spanish and German.

The eight-part series — filmed mainly in Hindi — centres on the attempts of police officer Sartaj Singh, played by Khan, to capture mafia boss Ganesh Gaitonde (Siddiqui).

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“A challenge for Netflix is to make up ground on market leader Hotstar. “One needs to have local content. It’s a given,” Frank D’Souza, a media and entertainment analyst with PwC in Mumbai, told AFP.

Hotstar dominates India’s mobile entertainment media providers, as streaming sites are known, are not subject to the country’s notoriously stuffy censor boards which regularly cut scenes from films at the cinema and on TV.

“The content that appears on television is very homogenous. It’s typically soap operas aimed at women. We can expect slightly edgier, differentiated new-age type content on OTT platforms,” said KPMG’s Menon. Netflix, which has 125 million subscribers in 190 countries, will be hoping that “Sacred Games” and its other Indian dramas will become global hits like blockbuster shows “Narcos” and “Stranger Things”.

“Netflix is trying to create original content which can travel across the world,” Menon said.

—AFP

LONDON: British pop star Ariana Grande has responded to Criticism that Pete Davidson’s joke about the Manchester bombing didn’t find it funny. It was months ago and his intention wasn’t and it was never malicious but it was unfortunate.”

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Following the incident, Davidson’s representative told Metro that for the comedian, “no subject is off limits and that includes jokes about his father and 9/11.”

Davidson had lost his father, a firefighter, in the 9/11 terrorist attack. Grande and Davidson got engaged last month after dating for a few weeks. Grande’s new album ‘Sweetener’ will release on August 17 and includes a song titled Pete’. —PTI

Ariana Grande responds to Pete Davidson’s Manchester bombing joke

NEW YORK — US actor James Woods, one of the rare Hollywood celebrities to openly support President Donald Trump, has been dumped by his talent agent — apparently over politics.

The Emmy Award-winning actor shared on Twitter the email he received from Ken Kaplan on Independence Day. Informing him he no longer wished to represent him.

“It’s the 4th of July and I’m feeling patriotic,” wrote Kaplan, whose list of clients includes “Twilight” star Kristen Stewart.

“Dear Ken, I don’t actually,” he wrote. “I was thinking if you’re feeling patriotic, you would appreciate free speech and one’s right to think as an individual.

“Be that as it may, I want to thank you for all your hard work and devotion on my behalf. Be well.”

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Actor James Woods says dumped by agent over politics

LOS ANGELES — Ariana Grande has responded to the controversy over her fiancé Pete Davidson’s joke about the Manchester bombing during her concert last year.

The blast at Grande’s Manchester Arena concert on 22 May last year had left 22 dead and hundreds injured. The 25-year-old singer has admitted to suffering from PTSD following the incident.

At a stand-up benefit show at the Laugh Factory in Los Angeles last year, Davidson had reportedly joked that Grande became famous only after the bombing, adding, “Britney Spears didn’t have a terrorist attack at her concert.”

Ever since reports of Davidson’s joke surfaced last week, the 24-year-old comedian has been subject to severe criticism.

“Responding to a fan, who had criticised Davidson’s joke, Grande admitted that the entire incident had been “very tough and conflicting” for her.

But she defended her fin ance and wrote, “He uses comedy to help people feel better about how f**ked up things in this world are. We all deal with trauma differently. I of course didn’t find it funny. It was months ago and his intention wasn’t and it was never malicious but it was unfortunate.”

Following the incident, Davidson’s representative told Metro that for the comedian, “no subject is off limits and that includes jokes about his father and 9/11.”

Davidson had lost his father, a firefighter, in the 9/11 terrorist attack. Grande and Davidson got engaged last month after dating for a few weeks. Grande’s new album ‘Sweetener’ will release on August 17 and includes a song titled Pete’. —PTI
Steeped in history but crumbling, Albania’s ‘slanted city’

GIROKAstra — The Lolomani dwelling, formerly the home of the Ottoman period family of that name, was once an impressive sight in the mountainside town of Gjirokastra in southern Albania.

Now the house lies in ruins, like dozens of others in the “City of Stone”, defined by its castle, steep cobblestone roads and silvery-coloured limestone structures with views of the Drino Valley near the border with Greece.

Many of the centuries-old, fortified buildings, which won the town a place on the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage List in 2005, are a tourist attraction but at risk of disappearing.

Some are deserted or have not been maintained for years, others underwent changes that have destroyed their historic value, or have too many owners to agree on the necessary work or too poor to do it.

Authorities in the Balkan nation don’t have the means to restore them either.

“I feel pain for every stone, every wall that is getting damaged,” sighs Emal Nacea, a 58-year-old house painter, who remembers the collapse of the Lolomani house in winter 2016.

Below, the roof of his own house has half fallen in.

“I’m scared here, but my mother does not want to leave,” he says. Even if he had the money, he couldn’t do anything – his cousin, who lives in the capital, Tirana, and is a co-owner, refuses. Out of 615 monuments in the town’s historic centre “more than half are subjected to illegal or out-of-context constructions, while 189 are in critical condition or at risk of collapse,” warned Europa Nostra, a pan-European federation of heritage NGOs, early this year.

‘Once upon a time...’

Most of the buildings date from the 17th and 18th centuries, although the town’s origins go back further and its walls were built in the 3rd century.

Albania’s most famous writer Ismail Kadare famously described his native Gjirokastra as the “slanted city, set at a sharper angle than perhaps any other city on earth”.

“It was surely the only place in the world where, if you slipped and fell in the street, you might well land on the roof of a house,” he wrote in his 1971 novel “Chronicle In Stone”.

Massive emigration has compounded the buildings’ fate, as Gjirokastra has not been immune to the trend plaguing Albania.

The town’s population has dropped from 34,000 in 2011 to less than 25,000, according to Engjeli Seriani, head of tourism at the town hall.

Its houses are named after their original owners, dignitaries of the Ottoman Empire such as Lolomani, Karauli, Fico, Zeko, Babameto, whose power was measured by the number of chimneyies on their homes.

Today, Sokol Karauli, a descendant of one of those noble families, says his way of life is a far cry from the ostentation of his home’s substantial five chimneyies. A former soldier but not yet eligible for his pension, he says they only survive thanks to the salary of his pastry chef wife.

“The day when we will say ‘Once upon a time there was Gjirokastra’ can happen,” the 60-year-old warned.

Karauli cut off the electricity on the first floor and placed plastic washing-up bowls to collect the leaking water that had already rotted the wooden frame of his crumbling house.

‘Worsening daily’

Around the town’s bazaar, the clean facades are down to a three-million-euro ($3.5-million) restoration footed by an Albanian-US association and the World Bank. Small stalls tout souvenirs to tourists, 77,000 of whom visited the citadel last year. Their numbers grow 10 to 15 percent annually.

“However Gjirokastra is not only the bazaar and those emblematic places,” said architect Lejla Hadzic, of the NGO Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB). Elsewhere, “the situation... is getting worse day by day,” she told AFP.

In 2014, the NGO had warned of the “rapid destruction” of the historic districts of the town, where Albania’s former communist dictator Enver Hoxha grew up.

Of the 650 buildings it took into account, CHwB said that 40 were in a very poor condition, 34 were in ruins while 15 were on the verge of collapse.

Now, the number in ruins has gone up to 47, it says.

‘Only one Gjirokastra in the world’

Today about 80 houses are uninhabited, raising the possibility that a leaky roof will affect the wooden structure.

“Every day, I see something that is wrong, as if the building is whispering to me to do something,” said deputy mayor Vangjel Muco.

With a total overall budget of 2.5-3.0 million euros, his municipality cannot tackle the issue properly. Albanian Culture Minister Mirela Kumbaro insists Gjirokastra is no longer in danger and that the government has taken the problem in hand. PHOTO: AFP

First live-action film of Gundam anime in works

TOKYO — The first live-action film of sci-fi television animation series “Mobile Suit Gundam” will be co-produced with a US media company Sunrise Inc., the Japanese creator of the franchise said Friday.

Sunrise and Legendary Entertainment both made the announcement, but details such as the release date and starring actors are still yet to be decided.

It will be the first live-action film of Gundam since the original television series started in 1979, according to Sunrise, a group firm of Bandai Namco Holdings Inc. Gundam has spawned a globally successful franchise including sequels, spinoffs, plastic models and video games.

The story revolves around characters piloting giant robots, known as “mobile suits,” to fight battles in space and on Earth.


Kyodo News

I ...
France beat Uruguay to reach World Cup semi-finals

NIZHNY NOVGOROD (RUSSIA) — France became the first team to reach the World Cup semi-finals as goals from Raphael Varane and Antoine Griezmann gave them a deserved 2-0 victory over Uruguay on Friday.

It is the first time France have been in the last four since 2006 and sets up a mouth-watering clash against either Belgium or Brazil, who play later on Friday, in St Petersburg on Tuesday.

France took the lead in the 40th minute from the unlikely source of defender Varane, who glanced home a fine header from Antoine Griezmann free-kick.

It was only the Real Madrid player’s third goal for France and represented redemption for Varane, who was largely blamed for the goal which saw France lose at the quarter-final stage to Germany four years ago.

Griezmann, who counts several of the Uruguay players as close friends, scored a second in the 61st minute, but it was mostly due to a howler from La Celeste’s goalkeeper, Fernando Muslera.

The usually dependable stopper flapped at Griezmann’s 20-yard shot and agonisingly saw the ball float over the line.

It was Griezmann’s third goal of this World Cup, but his first not from a penalty.

That goal secured the victory but did not end the drama in Nizhny Novgorod, as Uruguay’s frustration boiled over in the 67th minute when Kylian Mbappe fell to the floor.

Uruguay skipper Diego Godin gestured with the teenager to get up, then tried to pull him from the turf, sparking a melee which involved most of the players and saw French coach Didier Deschamps come onto the pitch to try to calm tempers.

France’s victory was merited as it was they who had the bulk of possession and always looked the most likely to score.

They might have scored as early as the 15th minute when Mbappe mistimed a close header.

Without Cavani, Uruguay posed little threat.

The lightning-quick Mbappe and Griezmann struck fear into the Uruguayan defence all afternoon.

In midfield, France’s N’Golo Kante and Paul Pogba snuffed out any potential threat posed by Uruguay.

And up front for La Celeste, Luis Suarez cut an isolated and agitated figure as his team desperately went in search of an equaliser as Edinson Cavani was ruled out with injury.

Increasingly, Suarez vented his frustration with Argentinian referee Nestor Pitana, who, coincidentally, was the official in charge of France’s quarter-final 2014 defeat.

The Barcelona star was partnered by Cristhian Stuani after a week of will-he-won’t-he speculation surrounding Cavani ending up with the Paris Saint-Germain striker failing to recover from a calf strain.

Without Cavani, Uruguay posed little threat.

A tight and nervy encounter began with the game burst into life after Varane’s goal.

Until that point Uruguay had struggled to get into the French penalty area, but within four minutes of the goal the would have been level except for an exceptional save by Hugo Lloris.

The French skipper saved superbly with one-hand from defender Martin Caceres, whose header from a free kick looked destined to go in.

Diego Godin could have scored from the follow-up, but that was the closest the South Americans would come to scoring all afternoon.—AFP

FIFA boss invites Thai cave boys to World Cup final

MOSCOW — FIFA president Gianni Infantino has invited the Thai boys’ football team trapped in a cave to the World Cup final, as messages of support poured in from top players. Infantino said he hoped the Wild Boars team, who were stranded by rising floodwaters two weeks ago, would be rescued in time to watch the final in Moscow on 15 July.

“If, as we all hope, they are reunited with their families in the coming days and their health allows them to travel, FIFA would be delighted to invite them to attend the 2018 World Cup final as our guests,” he wrote in a letter to the head of the Football Association of Thailand.

“I sincerely hope that they will be able to join us at the final, which will undoubtedly be a wonderful moment of communion and celebration.”

The Thai footballers, aged 11-16, have been stuck in darkness deep underground after setting off to explore the cave with their 25-year-old coach after training on 23 June. The players remain trapped despite being reached this week by cave-diving rescuers, who released footage of them looking emaciated but calm, some wearing football shirts. Their harrowing ordeal coincides with the World Cup in Russia and it has not escaped the attention of players.

“I’ve been speaking about it with a few of the boys,” said England defender John Stones, according to British media. “It’s so sad to see where they are and we hope they get out safe and sound.” Japan’s World Cup squad tweeted a video urging the team to “Hang in there!”, while Brazil legend Ronaldo called their plight “terrible”. —AFP