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Vice President U Henry Van Thio attends second meeting of the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

"ETERNAL MEMORIES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MAN, OUR BOGYOKE"

President meets northern Shan State officials

PRESIDENT U Win Myint met with administrative, legislative and judicial officials in northern Shan State yesterday, sharing a message of unity and cooperation, which he said were essential in forming a democratic federal union.

The President, accompanied by Union Ministers Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, Dr. Aung Thu and U Thein Swe, Shan State Chief Minister Dr. Linn Htut, and other officials, arrived at Lashio Airport in northern Shan State, where they were met by North East Command Command-er Maj-Gen Aung Zaw Aye, state minister U Nyi Nyi Aung, and other officials. In Lashio, the President and his entourage were also welcomed by traditional dance troupes.

The President then attended a meeting with officials from the state government, the state high court, members of the Self-Administered Division and Zone, the state Hluttaw and state/district/township department officials at the Lashio town hall.  

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State Counsellor receives CPC delegation, World Bank’s Vice President

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received a delegation led by Mr. Huang Kunming, member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Secretary of the Central Committee Secretariat and Head of the CPC Propaganda Department, at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the meeting, they cordially and frankly discussed matters related to promoting bilateral relations and cooperation between Myanmar and China, especially close cooperation in cultural and information sector between the two countries.

Also present at the meeting were Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko, Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin, Deputy Minister of the Office of the President U Min Thu and officials concerned.

SEE PAGE-3

10 NCA signatories, northern alliance arrive in Nay Pyi Taw for peace conference

TEN signatories of the NCA (Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement) and members of the northern alliance arrived in Nay Pyi Taw on 9 and 10 July to attend the third session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong.

Representatives of the UWSA, KIO, the AA, the TNLA and the MNDAA, which are all members of the northern alliance, accompanied by Mr. Sun Guoxiang, Special Envoy for Asian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, arrived in Nay Pyi Taw from Kunming, China, and were welcomed by Peace Commission Vice Chairman U Thein Zaw, consultant group member U Hla Maung Shwe and other officials.

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President meets northern Shan State officials

FROM PAGE 1

President U Win Myint said the visit to northern Shan State was conducted with the aim to understand and observe the strengths and weaknesses of the reform processes being conducted for the national benefit. Policies were laid down for reform, with officials from relevant departments expected to carry them out. Only then can the socio-economic situation of the country develop. The administrative sector should be people-centred and oriented towards public interest, he said.

For instance, civil society organizations and local elders need to cooperate and work together in carrying out anti-narcotic work, the President said. Arrangements are being made to provide cash rewards to informants who provide information that result in drug arrests. The rewards will vary depending on the total value of the buildings, vehicles and materials seized. Anti-narcotic work is to be conducted as a national duty, and will be more successful if all the people cooperate and participate, the President said. Information and reports on narcotics can be made to the Office of the President and Zone in Lashio, Shan State, yesterday.

The President also said that the country is striving toward unbiased trials, the President said. “Responsibility should be taken at every level of states and regions”, he said. “Trials are to be conducted according to Union Judiciary Law and enacted laws on judiciary. Everyone is equal in the face of the law”.

The President pointed out that public servants are enjoying salary, wages and other benefits according to the state budget. “Enjoy the rights and perform the duties and responsibilities accordingly”, he said. “Public servants are being paid from public funds, and they are to conduct public work according to the law and to the full extent of duties assigned to serve the public”.

Reviews are to be conducted with a mindset toward reform, the President said. “Development work for the country can only be conducted when reform is made”, the President said. “All need to work diligently and fully for the country and the people. The beauty of public service is in serving the public”.

Next, State Chief Minister Dr. Linn Htut reported on the regional development work being conducted by the Shan State government.

In conclusion, President U Win Myint said that the aim is to march towards the establishment of a democratic federal union. Work is being implemented for the proportionate development of all states and regions. Solutions are made through political dialogues based on the Panglong spirit to fulfill the desire of the ethnic nationals. Special emphasis is placed to move towards a stable, peaceful and eternal existence of the union. All have the responsibility to be fair. Implementing fairness strengthens the society and supports the establishment of a democratic federal union. Only through the establishment of a democratic federal union can there be unity, peace and development. All are to play their respective parts, the President said.

After the meeting, the President met with meeting attendees. Later, the President and party left Lashio by Tatmadaw special plane and arrived in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. Earlier in the week, the President was in southern Shan State.—Myanmar News Agency

Chinese Communist Party delegation leaves Nay Pyi Taw

MR. Huang Kunming, member of the Politbureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Secretary of the Central Committee Secretariat and Head of the CPC Propaganda Department, and delegation left Nay Pyi Taw by air yesterday afternoon.

The Chinese delegation was seen off at the Nay Pyi Taw International Airport by Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun, Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Hong Liang, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Deputy Director-General U Aung Ko and officials.—Myanmar News Agency

UN assistant secretary-general arrives in Myanmar

UNITED Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Assistant Administrator and Director for Asia-Pacific office Mr. Hao liang Xu arrived in Myanmar yesterday morning.

During his visit, Mr. Hao liang Xu will meet with union ministers and partner organisations to discuss matters related to UNDP’s new project for Myanmar and the implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed on 6 June between the Myanmar government, UNDP and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

In addition to this, he will attend the third session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong to be held on 11 July and also open a new UN office that includes offices of the 12 UN organisations.—Myanmar News Agency
State Counsellor receives CPC delegation, World Bank’s Vice President

FROM PAGE-1

State Counsellor meets with World Bank’s Vice President

Similarly, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received the delegation led by Ms. Victoria Kwakwa, Vice President of the East Asia and Pacific Region of the World Bank Group, at 11:30 am yesterday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, the Vice President of the World Bank pledged support for peace, social inclusion and economic transition in Myanmar and exchanged views with the State Counsellor on priorities for programming the Bank’s concessional financial support for Myanmar. They also discussed matters on providing the Bank’s technical and financial support to Myanmar’s efforts towards achieving sustainable development in line with the goals laid out in the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan – MSDP and to assist in creating job opportunities and development of the regions where peace has returned.

Moreover, they exchanged views on progress in repatriation and resettlement of the displaced persons from Rakhine State, creating economic opportunities for all communities including those who are in conflict-affected areas in Rakhine State, development of projects focusing on micro-and small-enterprise development, and access to essential social services.

Also present at the meeting were U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation, U Set Aung, Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance, and senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.—Myanmar News Agency

VP U Henry Van Thio attends second meeting of the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

VICE President U Henry Van Thio, Chairman of the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, delivered a speech at the committee’s second meeting held at the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Present at the meeting were committee Vice-Chairmen Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye and U Aung Ko Myint, committee members including Deputy Ministers, Nay Pyi Taw Council members, state and region ministers for social affairs, Vice-Chairman of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission, Permanent Secretaries, Directors-General, officials from the Myanmar Federation of Persons with Disabilities and representatives from a diverse number of associations for various disabilities.

There are one billion living with some form of disability around the world, according to the 2010 World Report on Disability conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank, said the Vice President. He also said that persons with disabilities (PWDs) have a harder time accessing healthcare and education, entering society, politics and the economy, and finding employment, compared to the rest of us. He added that PWDs face higher rates of poverty and unemployment and receive a lower income.

The UN’s Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was adopted in 2006 to reduce the aforementioned inequalities and to ensure all persons with all types of disabilities can enjoy human rights and fundamental freedom, said the Vice President.

Myanmar signed the CRPD on 7 December 2011 and since then the Union Government has been working to make certain the 2.3 million PWDs in Myanmar can exercise their rights and are entitled to their freedom.

Myanmar’s legislature passed the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law in 2015 and the bylaws on 27 December 2017. Additionally, the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was formed on 14 September 2017, with Union Government Announcement (70/2017) and is serving as a beacon of hope for the PWD community. The committee held its first meeting on 28 December 2017.

The Vice President said he believes the crucial first steps for the PWD community were taken at the committee’s first meeting, when decisions were made to form state- and regional-level sub-committees and the Nay Pyi Taw sub-committee, the Ministry of Construction made plans to make transportation more disabled inclusive, and the Ministry of Education arranged for children with disabilities to have access to free education.

He added the Working Committee for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was formed during the first meeting as well.

The Vice President said there are future plans to form a Fund Management Group, various relevant sub-committees under the working committee, and a Technical Support Group for the national committee backed by the Department for International Development (UK).
Shwedagon Pagoda’s donated estate tender sales cancelled

THE Shwedagon Pagoda trustees have decided against selling land, buildings and apartments, which were donated through a legal contract to the Shwedagon Pagoda, through a competitive tender system, according to the pagoda trustees.

“We have completely decided against our plan,” said an official from the Shwedagon Pagoda trustees.

The land, buildings and apartments, which had been donated under contract include a two-storey house located on 11th Street, a two-storey house on 12th Street, a two-storey house on Hledon Street, two ground floor apartments on Shwe Taung Dan Street, a two-storey house on Sin Oh Dan Street, all in Lanmadaw Township, a two-storey house on Htee Tan -1 Street in Kyeemyindine Township and a ground floor apartment on Ingapu Street in Sanyoung Township.

The pagoda trustees had put an announcement in Myanma Alinn Daily and the Mirror Daily newspapers on 30 June regarding selling the houses and apartments through a competitive tender system, in order to get funds for the pagoda, with the permission of donors.

However, the pagoda trustees have announced in the Mirror Daily newspaper on 10 July the cancellation of the plan to sell the houses and apartments.—Nyein Nyein

Agricultural garden planned in Mandalay Myotha

BY planting over 30,000 trees, an agricultural garden is planned to be set up in the Mandalay Myotha industry project area. Authorities have planted over 4,000 trees on 6 July, as part of a monsoon tree planting ceremony.

The ceremony was attended by Mandalay Region Planning and Finance Minister U Myat Thu, Hlutaw representatives, officials from related departments, Mandalay Myotha Industrial Development chairman U Aung Win Khine, local residents from around the project area and students.

“It is a good idea to plant trees in the project area, located in the Myanmar central region, in order to make it green,” said Minister for Mandalay Region Planning and Finance.

The agricultural garden, established in July, will have over 30,000 trees of eight different species. Currently, authorities have already planted 4,000 trees such as paaduak, eucalyptus and gold mohur tree.

“Previously, this region was a dry area. Even if the regional government goes ahead with the green project with the help of many companies, the most important thing is for local residents to participate.

Now, we have already arranged to receive sufficient water to set up the agricultural garden, said U Aung Win Khine.

—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)

Workshop on preservation of Chatthin wildlife sanctuary held

FRIENDS of Wildlife (FOW) conducted a workshop on the preservation of the Myanmar golden deer and Chatthin wildlife sanctuary in cooperation with Norway Environmental Agency (NEP) at Shwe Si Myaing hall, Kanhalu District cooperative office, Sagaing Region, on 9 July.

“The workshop was conducted with the aim of identifying the current difficulties with regard to drawing up an administration project on the preservation of the Myanmar golden deer and Chatthin wildlife sanctuary, to get effective information on drawing up a conservation project, which can effectively provide security to the Myanmar golden deer and Chatthin wildlife sanctuary, and to cooperate with local residents after enhancing their knowledge on the conservation of the Myanmar golden deer and Chatthin wildlife sanctuary,” said U Min Swe, administrator of the wildlife sanctuary.

Chatthin wildlife sanctuary was established as a forest protection area on 19 June 1941, covering an area of 66,560 acres. However, 2,295.38 acres of farming, village and religious land, which belonged to three villages, were excluded from the sanctuary.

Now, 4,064.42 acres remain and are located in Kanhalu Township in Kanhalu District and Kawlin Township in Katha District.

There were over 3,000 golden deer in Chatthin wildlife sanctuary in 2000. Now, the golden deer are facing extinction and only 889 deer live in the sanctuary.

The golden deer is a rare species of deer found in Myanmar, mostly in the Shwesettaw and Chatthin wildlife sanctuaries. The sanctuaries have been conserved for over 77 years, he added.

The workshop was attended by district management committee chairman U Kyaw Zarni Lwin and committee members, township management committee chairman U Zaw Naing Win and departmental staff, officials from Kyunhi township departments and administrators and local residents from over 30 villages near the Chatthin wildlife sanctuary.—Aung Win Nyein (Kanhalu)
Actual amount of FDI registered at $1.3 billion, approved amount at $842 million in three months

By May Thet Hnin

THE actual amount of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in the past three months was worth US$1.3 billion and the amount approved by the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) was registered at $842 million, according to the MIC.

“Investment differs from trading. Investment is for the long run. Approved enterprises might not bring in the entire submitted capital immediately, which means some investments flow in three or four years. Otherwise, only a small amount of approved investments might flow this year and the large capital can be made in the years to come,” said U Aung Naing Oo, secretary of MIC.

MIC releases the actual amount of foreign investments every three months. A total of 44 foreign enterprises were approved by MIC from April to the first week of July, with a capital of $692 million, including increased investments, while Thilawa Special Economic Zone absorbed an investment of $149 million.

China tops the list with the largest investment, while Hong Kong, Singapore, India, South Korea and Viet Nam also saw FDIs over the past three months. Agriculture, industrial estates, hotels and tourism, manufacturing and other service sectors attracted foreign investments.

MIC intends to receive $3 billion during the six-month interim period from April to September prior to the next fiscal year. Approved investments in the past three months were worth only $800 million and there is difficulty in reaching the target amount. However, if projects with large investments, which are delayed by some ministries, are permitted, the target can be exceeded, said U Aung Naing Oo.

Fifty domestic investments approximately valued at Ks710.63 billion were permitted by MIC. MIC is endeavoring to speed up the processing time of investments as soon as possible.

The actual amount of FDIs for the 2017-2018 financial year is $4.34 billion and the amount approved by the MIC is $6.11 billion, according to the MIC.

China’s purchase price, transportation hurdles bring down rice prices

THE price of rice exported from Mandalay Region is on the decline, as China is lowering the purchase price, in addition to difficulties faced during transportation, according to rice depot officials.

Chinese merchants are reducing the price of rice, as exported rice is sent from various townships to the Sino-Myanmar border trade channel. In addition, there is tight confiscation along the trade route, as China considers rice that exceeds the quota, as illegal. This being so, the price of rice is decreasing, said a merchant.

Rice meant for export is primarily produced in Magway, Yamenhin and Sagaing areas. The price of rice has decreased from Ks24,000 to Ks22,000 per bag weighing 30.75 viss (one viss equals 3.6 lb). The rice market needs to be traded through a government-to-government agreement or policy change. Nevertheless, the price of rice is likely to continue to be on the decline.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)

More demand for Pakokku textiles from Japan

AFTER Myanmar displayed its Pakokku textiles at the Myanmar Festival, which was held in Japan for two days, the fabrics have been seeing an increasing demand from the Japanese market, according to Galonmin Nyi Naung textile business in Pakokku.

“Most of the Japanese are interested in Myanmar’s Pakokku fabrics. We did good business there and also saw a lot of demand. Three Japanese businessmen offered to send us updated textiles. The Japanese Prime Minister’s wife, Madam Akie Abe, also visited the Myanmar Festival and said she liked our Myanmar textiles. She also bought the Pakokku fabrics, which were displayed. Some of the Japanese businessmen, who want to sell Pakokku textiles in Japan, were buying them from us even after our arrival at the Japan airport to return to Myanmar,” said Daw Nilar, director of Galonmin Nyi Naung Textiles Co. Ltd. in Pakokku.

The price of textiles in the Japan market is double the price in the Myanmar market. The Japan market demands longyis, skirts, cushion covers, bags and linen, she added.

“From the SME point of view, when SME businessmen find new markets for textiles, the whole supply chain of SME businesses will be developed, said Daw Myint Myint Thein, deputy director of SME in Magway Region.—Zaya Tu (Magway)

IPPA negotiation meeting held between Myanmar and Singapore

A two-day negotiation meeting on the Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (IPPA) between Myanmar and Singapore was inaugurated in the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) Office, Yangon, on 9 and 10 July, according to recent information from the MIC.

The agreement aims to minimise investment barriers, facilitate investments, and create more opportunities for Singapore expatriate workers in Myanmar as well as people from Myanmar working in Singapore.

Also, IPPA would govern the labour exchange between the two nations and protect investors in both countries from government-imposed work stoppage or confiscations.

Eleven countries, including China, India, Thailand and Japan, have already entered into the IPPA with Myanmar.

Singapore’s investment in Myanmar has reached US$19 billion so far, since the 1988-1989 fiscal year, according to statistics released by MIC.—Ko Khant
VP U Henry Van Thio attends second meeting of the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Various strategic goals and projects are being implemented with international organizations to provide support, rehabilitation and personal development to a wide range of people with disabilities in Myanmar, said the Vice President. These include a project to develop blind massage training for people with visual impairment, a project to enable people with auditory impairment easy access to news and information, a project to provide vocational training to people with physical disabilities, and a project to provide personal development to people with mental disabilities, such as autism and Down syndrome.

The Union Government is allotting monetary aid from its respective fiscal year budgets to fund community-based inclusion campaigns for PWDs concerning their education, healthcare, employability, legal affairs and disability awareness.

The Vice President said the people of Myanmar have inborn empathy and a willingness to help others, which can be combined with the knowledge and experience gained from the aforementioned campaigns to support the personal development and empowerment of PWDs.

The Vice President said if respective ministries in Myanmar can fulfill the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) set by the UN for 2015-2030, then PWDs, other vulnerable populations, and all of society can reap the benefits.

The Vice President requested all relevant government departments and other organizations to plan for more disabled inclusion in their development programmes, as regional or national development requires every member of society to be involved.

The modern world is facing a multitude of global issues which can be solved hand in hand with PWDs if we adhere to the 2017 International Day of Persons with Disabilities theme—Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies for all’, said the Vice President. He added that PWDs can utilise the skills they acquired from the various campaigns to aid in disaster risk management projects and rural development.

Later, Vice-Chairman of the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities U Aung Ko Myint explaining plans for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all citizens, the ability to join political and social sectors, full access to education and social benefits, non-discrimination against PWDs, and setting up policies and pre-planning for the rights of PWDs.

Next, national committee Secretary Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Soe Aung gave a presentation on the implementation progress of the first meeting’s decisions, the working committee’s decisions and the committee’s future plans.

Vice President U Henry Van Thio then took a photograph with the meeting attendees.

The second part of the meeting continued later, with the meeting attendees discussing the rights of PWDs, future plans, requirements for implementation and possible collaboration.

—Myanmar News Agency

U Thaung Tun receives World Bank’s VP

U THAUNG TUN, Union Minister for the Office of the Union Government, received World Bank’s Regional Vice President for East Asia and Pacific, Ms. Victoria Kwakwa at 09:30 am yesterday at the Ministry of the Office of the Union Government, Office No.18 in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they cordially discussed matters related to renting of the Myanmar Press Council office, the process of electing new council members for the next three years and the development of the Myanmar news media sector.

Present at the meeting were Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun, officials from the Ministry of Information, MPC Vice Chairman (1) U Ohn Kyaing, U Min Han, Daw Thin Thin Thar, U Kyaw Swar Min, U Khawng Myat Kyaw and U Zeya.—Myanmar News Agency

Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint receives Myanmar Press Council

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint received the Myanmar Press Council (MPC) yesterday at the office of the Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they cordially discussed matters related to renting of the Myanmar Press Council office, the process of electing new council members for the next three years and the development of the Myanmar news media sector.

Present at the meeting were Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun, officials from the Ministry of Information, MPC Vice Chairman (1) U Ohn Kyaing, U Min Han, Daw Thin Thin Thar, U Kyaw Swar Min, U Khawng Myat Kyaw and U Zeya.—Myanmar News Agency
Deedok U Ba Cho, a reporter at heart

By Min Thit (MNA)
PHOTO: ZAW MIN LAT

“That was the last day we saw your grandfather,” Daw Hla May told her grandson U Zaw Myint Cho about her husband Deedok U Ba Cho, who left for a meeting at the Secretariat before the martyred leaders were assassinated.

“According to my grandmother, my grandfather told her on that day that he had a strong premonition that something unpleasant is going to happen,” said U Zaw Myint Cho.

Deedok U Ba Cho was working for Myanmar’s independence when he was assassinated along with other martyred leaders inside the Secretariat on 19 July 1947.

“Grandfather was well-versed in astrology. He warned Bogyoke Aung San that the future of the country was bleak, and he repeated that again when 19 July was approaching. When Bogyoke asked him if he was scared, grandfather replied that he was just looking at things from an astrological point of view,” U Zaw Myint Cho recounted what his grandmother said.

Deedok U Ba Cho and his wife Daw Hla May had four daughters. At the time of his death, only his wife and two of their younger daughters, Ma Khin Nu and Ma Khin Khin Oo, were left behind. Their two elder daughters, Ma Khin Nu and May May Khin passed away during the Japanese occupation of Burma. U Zaw Myint Cho was born to Deedok U Ba Cho’s youngest daughter Ma Khin Khin Oo.

Deedok U Ba Cho began publishing Deedok Journal in 1925 from his house at No. 84, Bogyoke Road in Pazundaung Township. The journal was at the forefront in advocating national independence, national education and preserving national culture.

“A group of grandfather’s friends kept his journal running after his death for some time. We still have the publishing license, and it hasn’t been renewed,” said U Zaw Myint Cho.

Deedok U Ba Cho was fond of music and literature. A Myanmar harp he used to play and his written works, kept as historical records, are in the possession of his granddaughter Dr Daw Khin Hla Cho.

Deedok U Ba Cho was attending BA High School when he had to quit due to an eye disease. He later became a teacher in Paungde and Hinthada. After the emergence of national colleges, he quit his government post and taught Burmese language at one of them.

In 1920, he married Daw Hla May. Deedok U Ba Cho and his wife had four daughters. At the time of his death, only his wife and two of their younger daughters, Ma Khin Nu and May May Khin passed away during the Japanese occupation of Burma.

Deedok U Ba Cho began publishing Deedok Journal in 1925 from his house at No. 84, Bogyoke Road in Pazundaung Township. The journal was at the forefront in advocating national independence, national education and preserving national culture.

U Zaw Myint Cho remembers his grandfather telling him that Deedok U Ba Cho upheld the principles and ethics of journalism and to report news accurately.

“If he were still alive, he would be working as a reporter,” said U Zaw Myint Cho.

**Deedok U Ba Cho**

(24 April 1893 – 19 July 1947)

* He was born on Monday, 24 April 1893 in Myaungmya. His parents were Saya U Boe Sar and Daw Myit.

* While he studied at Myaungmya Primary School, he was awarded a scholarship. He also matriculated in A Grade and earned an honourable scholarship again.

* Deedok U Ba Cho was attending BA High School when he had to quit due to an eye disease. He later became a teacher in Paungde and Hinthada. After the emergence of national colleges, he quit his government post and taught Burmese language at one of them.

* In 1920, he married Daw Hla May. Deedok U Ba Cho and his wife had four daughters. At the time of his death, only his wife and two of their younger daughters, Ma Khin Nu and May May Khin, were left behind. Their two elder daughters, Ma Khin Nu and May May Khin passed away during the Japanese occupation of Burma.

* He worked together with Bogyoke Aung San and Thakhin Mya as a member in the Constitution Drafting Committee at the Union Parliament and later served as the Minister for Information in Bogyoke Aung San’s pre-independence period cabinet.

* With other national leaders he was assassinated on 19 July 1947 at 10:37 am, and later succumbed to his injuries at 1:45 pm.
Democracy demands responsibilities from civil servants

T he contributions of civil servants are essential for those who have the responsibility of building an electoral office. The role of civil servants is becoming of even greater importance as Myanmar moves forward towards a truly democratic system.

Members of an elected government may come and go, but a government machinery with civil servants goes on forever. It is civil servants who enable the ship of State to maintain its course.

Democracy demands responsibilities from civil servants. For establishing democracy in our country, the most important thing for civil servants to be aware of is their responsibility and accountability. It is not just the responsibility of the elected government to defend the interests and lives of the people.

To say that the success of a democracy is totally in the hands of government is an oversimplification. Members of an elected government may come and go, but a government machinery with civil servants goes on forever. It is civil servants who enable the ship of State to maintain its course.

The policies of government are implemented by civil servants from the administrative, judicial and legislative sectors.

Today, we are all getting a real opportunity to transform our country from an old and a new system of governance. Therefore, all civil servants should be proud of what they do, and of what they can contribute every day towards the realization of the aspirations of the people of our country for a peaceable, secure and prosperous future.

At the same time, all should understand that they are at the assigned posts to serve the public and not to mislead the electorate.

They are to serve the people loyal to the State and follow the laws, rules, procedures and instructions. At the same time, they will have to follow the rules and regulations of their respective entities. All civil servants are encouraged to come up with innovative ideas for improving the efficiency of government processes, cutting administrative waste, breaking down inter-departmental and inter-ministerial silos, and enhancing the effectiveness of government as a whole.

Care must be taken so that they do not benefit the State and the people. They are to respect and value the people and conduct themselves with fairness and according to the law.

Civil servants are accountable to the government elected by the people, and must act with integrity, professionalism, intelligence and dynamism in delivering the government’s programmes.

We would like to pay tribute to the civil servants, who today are working across our nation, often in challenging circumstances, not for recognition or personal gain or glory but simply to be of service to the public.

By Than Phyo Naing
(Ka Ninyin Kpyaw)

Eternal memories of an extraordinary man, our Bogyoke

A t Martyrs’ Day approaches, it is inevitable to reflect on a poem, composed by poet Daya Yoe (Tu Gyi Group in tribute of General Aung San) that I came across on the social media. The beautiful poem is an accolade to our Bogyoke, composed with poetic justice such as ‘the July rains’, ‘weepings and heavy crying’, ‘an extraordinary tune made for eternal memories’, and ‘u human being being missed by one and all’.

Martyrs’ Day has now entered its 71st anniversary. The gloomy dark day of 19 July 1947 is a day of mourning for Bogyoke Aung San and other Arzarni leaders. For instance, Thakin Mya, Dethok U Bo Chau, U Abladi Binok, U Bo Win, U Hakun Bo Khuan, U San Tun and U Ohn Maung were gunned down.

Annual observance of the Martyrs’ Day

Amidst the July rains, it is an unforgettable day indeed for middle-aged 35-year old citizens, like me, or the seniors who have a sound knowledge about Bogyoke Aung San and other Arzarni leaders. I gained thorough knowledge of different sources at different times. It was told as bedtime stories by parents, lectured by teachers at schools and rallyed round the national flag flying at half mast, and saluted it at the dot of 10:37 am, in my school.

Moreover, on each and every Arzarni Day on 19 July, rain or shine, we gathered at school and rallied round the national flag flying at half mast, as a mark of respect and of avoiding a single dime from the government budget for personal advantage, that of avoiding a single dime from the people, that of avoiding a single dime from the citizens. He was equipped with all the fine characteristics, such as that of a good chieftain, that of the perfect way of living, and that of serving for the nation and the people.

Bogyoke paved the way of a noble life as he could stand against the litmus test of overall quality and standard criteria of a good leader, working for the nation until the day he was assassinated. The most salient point of his character was that he had hard rock mentality with good faith in working for the people and the nation. Youth of today should study about the lifestyle of Bogyoke and his biographies, including the dress he wore during his different capacities and diverse portfolios while serving for the country.

Every parent must nurture heroes

There is a most popular local song entitled ‘Aisan Heroes’, in which the lyrics contain some phrases or sentences, like, ‘all parents must nurture heroes like Bogyoke Aung San’, and ‘parents must raise Arzarni kids’. In other words, parents must take care of and train their kids into heroic young citizens.

To follow his policy and work for the country

In conclusion, the author of this article would like to urge all that we should remember Bogyoke not only during the July rains, but to reflect throughout the year, and in every rain or winter; on what he and other Arzarni leaders have done for us and for the country.

We have our own duty to fulfil wherever our country needs us, such as that of national unity, the eternal peace, and the development of the country. These tasks should be carried out with a similar mindset of Bogyoke. While we remember Bogyoke forever in our hearts, we also must work like Bogyoke, and parents must train and nurture kids to grow up like our heroic Bogyoke.

Translated by CMT (HR)
Chairman of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw’s Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission Thura U Shwe Mann received Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Myanmar Mr. Jaroslav Dolecek at the Hluttaw Building (I-11) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

During the meeting, they exchanged views and cordially discussed matters related to bilateral friendship and cooperation. — Myanmar News Agency

**New steps toward peace**

By Maw Si, Hmway Kyu Zin

PHOTO: AYE THAN

The third session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong will be held in Nay Pyi Taw from 11 to 16 July, after unified steps were taken toward peace by seeking solutions through dialogue.

The Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) did their utmost to hold the third session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong in a grand manner and reach accords that are part of the Union Agreement.

Numerous meetings were conducted by ministerial department representatives representing the government, Tatmadaw representatives, a group that includes Hluttaw representatives, a group representing ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) that had signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and a group representing political parties that were part of UPDJC.

Following are the words of UPDJC secretariat members on the policy papers submitted regarding the political, economic, social, land and environment, and security sectors and agreements reached after the conclusion of the 16th UPDJC meeting.

**U Zaw Htay, secretariat member, UPDJC**

Seven points were submitted in the political sector. Two were agreed upon. The economic sector submitted 11 points of which one was agreed upon. The land sector submitted five points, out of which two were agreed upon. The social sector submitted nine points and seven were agreed upon. These will be discussed in some groups. After this discussion, there can be further agreements – two to three in the economic sector; one in the social sector and about two in the political sector.

In the final meeting for the conference, the UPDJC achieved a total of 12 agreements. By the time the conference is held, this could increase to 13, 14 or 15 agreements. The government side had proposed them in the last UPDJC and it had officially proposed again in this UPDJC. The last conference achieved 37. Only 12 were achieved for this conference. Our government side had proposed a draft decision of the 700 representatives attending the conference. This draft was submitted in today’s meeting. The political parties group supports this. The EAOs side needs further permission, so they are taking it back. If permission is granted, the decision of the conference representatives will be announced. The promise made is the desire of the government. During the remaining period of 2018, another conference will be held. In 2019, two more conferences will be held. All of us will try to hold these three conferences.

Once these three conferences are held, attempts will be made toward laying a democracy and federal foundation. The agreement of this conference is for the conference representatives to strive toward this end.

In the last conference, there was no decision made. During the term of President U Thein Sein, decisions were made at the peace conference. But this was not carried on when the new government came in. Once the forthcoming UPDJC approves this, attempts will be made toward making a conference decision.

A proposal from the EAOs side to the three conferences was to conduct political discussion according to the framework. The government side only proposed federal framework and democracy was not included. As they want to include the democracy framework, we amended the words. After the amendment was made, the EAOs side openly asked why the government wants to issue this. They asked what is being aimed to be done after the conference. We explained in detail as this was the policy mentioned by the State Counsellor at the last NCA signing event. We are doing this so that the policy set by the government is confirmed in the conference.

Thirty-seven agreements were reached in the second conference. Those were reviewed mainly for strengths and weaknesses. Meanwhile, we do things according to process. As we try it in such a way, a total of 12 agreements to be submitted to UPDJC were obtained. Three or four more agreements, or at the most a total of about 20 agreements, could be reached this time. For this, we must not despair. Looking at international peace processes, we could see that those were far worse off than we are. Some even went backward. Till now, we haven’t gone backward.

We are going forward but we will have to calibrate how much forward we can go.

In the forthcoming conference, the entire seven (groups) from the north (northern alliance) will participate. We want decisive leaders who can discuss and meet with our seniors. We want to discuss thoroughly with them, too. We are inviting real decision makers to come. Based on this, there will be meetings with the State Counsellor and Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief. All depend upon who is attending from their side.

**U Sai Kyaw Nyunt, secretariat member, UPDJC**

In the political sector, all agree on two points. Agreement can still be reached on some more points in the following days. In the economic sector, all agree on one point. Of the 11 points in the economic sector agreements on many more points could still be reached. Seven points were agreed upon in the social sector and two points were agreed upon in the land and environment sector. Proposals obtained and agreements achieved will be submitted to the conference.

Discussions and coordination were conducted on proposals made to the work committee by the government group, the EAOs group and political parties. As per work guidelines, matters agreed upon by all will only be submitted to the conference. Discussions were conducted in the best possible way. Some were not agreed upon by all and we should accept that as how it is.

After each conference is completed, reviews had to be conducted. The government side will review these for sure. Reviews had to be conducted to find ways on how to complete the peace process smoothly and quickly. Our political group will also review it. I believe that the EAOs group will also review on how to overcome this stage. Are any other ways in which things can be done quicker? How will we do things according to NCA? This is what I believe.

**U Myo Win, secretariat member, UPDJC**

The security sector is at a stage where discussion is to be conducted at the union level. To conduct union-level discussion, working discussions were held four times between the government and EAOs on the security sector. Collections of opinions were obtained from the four discussions that are very good results for future security sector work. These will be submitted to the conference.
**Four reporters arrested for extortion**

FOUR men were arrested yesterday for disguising themselves as police officers on special duty and demanding money from local businessmen in Nanmailek Village-tract in Phaunggyin Township, Sagaing Region.

The four men, describing themselves as representatives of the intelligence unit, the criminal oppression unit and the Special Branch of the Myanmar Police Force, demanded a total of K1.5 million from 10 businessmen running sawmills in the village on 9 July. The men, who are crime reporters for the *Nay Pyi Taw Times*, arrived at the village on 9 July and asked Ks150,000 each from them after they allegedly found about one ton of illegal wood in a house in the village.

Police said that Maung San, 36, of Kangyi Village, and Ki Aung Min, 46, of Kyantvar Village, Kalay Township, threatened the businessmen with arrest and torture if they denied their demands.

According to local authorities, the four reporters also extorted Ks20,000 each from a grocery in Hehlaw Village in Phaunggyin Township on 1 July, accusing the owner of selling alcohol illegally.

Action will be taken against the four reporters, said local authorities.

The Ministry of Home Affairs issued a statement to state media on 17 January, warning reporters for media outlets not to wear uniforms similar to State security organisations and not to demand money from people.

The statement was released after it was found that some reporters were found gambling, providing legal counsel, extorting money, collecting fees from people applying for “press membership,” and accepting monthly payments from illegal criminal work.

Crime reporters, as well as reporter associations, are registered under the association registration law, and if they are found to not follow the rules enacted, the renewal of their registration will be rejected. —Myanmar News Agency

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**10 NCA signatories and northern alliance members arrive in Nay Pyi Taw**

FROM PAGE-1

The representative group includes Deputy Secretary-General of the UWSA U Pao Yu Yi and Kyaikauk An, General Gun Maw and Sinwa of the KIO, Dr. Nyo Tun Aung of the AA, TNLA Deputy Chairman Tar Ku Lan and 36 members of the MNDA delegation led by Yan Win Zhong and Phone Shin.

Similarly a 21-member delegation led by U San Pae of the NDAA arrived on Monday night, and a delegation led by U Hsein of the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP) arrived in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.—Myanmar News Agency

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**Advertising promotion for MDN website held in Yangon**

AN advertising promotion for the website and mobile application of Myanmar Digital News (MDN) was held at the Park Royal Hotel in Yangon yesterday morning.

Advertising promotions will be offered by MDN on its website, on its mobile application and also on its Facebook account for their clients if they purchase advertising. Users can read the *Myanmar Alinn*, the *Mirror* and the *Global New Light of Myanmar* newspapers using MDN’s mobile application. The advertising promotion offers birthday wishes, wedding anniversary announcements and obituary notices.

In addition, users can make their restaurant advertisements interactive. For instance, a pop-up mini video of the birthday celebrant, family and friends can be seen after clicking on the advertisement. Myanmar Digital News (MDN) is operating its advertisements on its website and mobile application with the cooperation of Megalink Advanced Technologies Co. Present at yesterday’s ceremony were businessmen, clients from advertising agencies from the *Myanmar Alinn*, the *Mirror* and the *Global New Light of Myanmar*. —Aye Hnin Nyo
KIO vice chairman: ‘We are hoping for the best’

UPON arrival in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday for the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong, the KIO vice chairman expressed optimism and hopefulness for a successful outcome from the meetings between the KIO and the Tatmadaw, who have a long history of conflict.

“I want to tell the government and Tatmadaw that we are here to meet, and we are hoping for the best”, said General Gun Maw, Vice Chairman (1) of the KIO.

The KIO Vice Chairman added, “We come with hopes. Holding discussions are not a priority. The main thing is to re-establish the contact that was broken. We have to find a link to continue the peace work. Let’s meet tomorrow morning.”

Two members of the northern alliance, the NDAA and the SSPP arrived in advance of the parties that came from Kunning to attend the conference.

Peace Commission Vice Chairman U Thein Zaw and Secretary U Khin Zaw Oo went to meet with the seven groups from the northern alliance at Horizon Lake View Resort in Nay Pyi Taw.

“It is good that the vice chairman came to the conference. The chairman wanted to come, but was unable to do so because of a health situation. It is not related to the conference, but they will meet officially with State leaders. When they meet, they can discuss about their views. After this discussion, it will be easier to follow up at a lower level”, the Peace Commission secretary said.

Of the three peace conferences, China took up the responsibility of bringing the seven groups from the northern alliance starting from the second conference.

Commenting about the current peace process, Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UP-DJC) secretary U Hla Maung Shwe said, “It is good that the seven groups from the northern alliance are participating in the peace process. I heard that they will meet with responsible officials. This is a process of building trust. Hope to find ways for this.”

Rakhine implementation committee holds sixth meeting

THE coordination meeting 6/2018 of the Implementation Committee on Recommendations on Rakhine State was held at the meeting hall of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

Present at the meeting were Committee Chairman Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye, Joint Chairman Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu, Committee Vice-Chairman Deputy Minister for the State Counsellor’s Office U Khin Maung Tin, Secretary Deputy Minister for Border Affairs Maj-Gen Than Htut, Joint Secretary Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Soe Aung, committee members and departmental officials.

In his opening speech at the meeting, the chairman said today’s meeting was the 6th coordination meeting in 2018, as well as the 13th committee meeting since the committee has been formed.

“We have been implementing the main three points: security and socio-economic development of the whole Rakhine State, and getting the right entitlements according to rules and regulations. Of the 88 recommendations made on Rakhine State, all are urged to suggest and discuss the remaining recommendations. Regarding the publications of the implementation measures, efforts had been made to release the second report of the committee in the state-owned media with Myanmar language on 2 June, and English version on 17 June. We are also carrying out to release the third report and to review ground situation, with the cooperation of the Rakhine State government”, the chairman said.

Joint Chairman Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu said, “As for the state government, we are striving to implement works and remaining processes and to close down the internally displaced people (IDP) camps systematically. Currently, arrangements are being made to close down the Kyauktalone IDP camp in Kyauktalone Township. Moreover, plans are under way to set up the regional development scheme and the process of NV cards is gaining momentum. We are working hard to bring about harmony between the different communities in the state and to give priority to restoring security and stability of cooperation local residents”, he said.

Committee Vice-Chairman and Deputy Minister for the State Counsellor’s Office U Khin Maung Tin said, “Efforts are being made to increase the numbers of government staff at the IDP camps from different ministries – the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population and the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Ministry of Border Affairs has been conducting to form the Hla Poe Khaung management committee and to construct the Maungtaw-Shwezer-Pyinphyu Tar Road, which leads to Hla Poe Khaung.

Next, Secretary Deputy Minister for Border Affairs discussed the work being carried out by the ministry, the process of closing down the IDP camps and construction of the road.

Following this, U Soe Aung, Joint Secretary Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, presented important matters to the committees such as timely monthly reports, to increase staff number and to provide requirements of the staff. Officials from the ministries then discussed the works conducted ministry-wise in Rakhine State, future work and requirements.”

Myanmar News Agency
All 12 boys and coach rescued from Thai cave

MAE SAI (Thailand) — The final five members of a young football team were rescued from a flooded Thai cave on Tuesday after spending 18 harrowing days trapped deep inside, completing an astonishing against-the-odds rescue mission that captivated the world.

Elite foreign divers and Thai Navy SEALs extracted the final batch of four boys, plus the 25-year-old coach, on Tuesday afternoon via a treacherous escape route that required them to squeeze in darkness through narrow, water-filled tunnels.

“All 12 ‘Wild Boars’ and coach have been extracted from the cave,” the SEALs said in a Facebook post, referring to the boys by the name of their football team.

“All are safe,” they added, then signed off with what has become their trademark “Hooiyah” that they used to celebrate the successful extractions of the other eight boys over the previous two days.

The children, aged from 11 to 16, and their coach, ventured into the Tham Luang cave in mountainous northern Thailand on 23 June after football practice and got trapped when heavy rains caused flooding that forced them to take shelter on a muddy ledge.

They spent nine days in darkness until two British divers found them, looking gaunt but offering smiles to the divers and appearing to be in remarkably good spirits.

The initial euphoria at finding them dissipated as authorities struggled to devise a safe plan to get them out, with the shelf more than four kilometres (2.5 miles) inside the cave and the labyrinth of tunnels leading to them filled with water.

Mission Impossible

Authorities mulled ideas such as drilling holes into the mountain or waiting months until monsoon rains ended and they could walk out, with the rescue chief at one point dubbing the efforts to save them “Mission Impossible.”

With oxygen levels in their chamber falling to dangerous levels and monsoon rains threatening to flood the cave above the ledge where the boys were sheltering, rescuers decided on the least-worst option of having divers escort them out through the tunnels.

The escape route was a challenge even for experts — a former Thai Navy SEAL diver died when he ran out of oxygen in a flooded area of the cave on Friday while trying to prepare the escape route.

Many of the boys could not even swim and none of them had diving experience, so the rescuers trained them how to use a mask and breathe underwater via an oxygen tank.

One fear had been that they would panic while trying to swim underwater, even with a diver escorting them.

Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha revealed on Tuesday the boys had been given some medication to help them remain calm.

“It was a minor tranquilliser to prevent (the) boys from being anxious,” Prayut told reporters.

The ups and downs of the rescue bid entranced Thailand and also fixated a global audience, drawing support from celebrities as varied as US President Donald Trump, football star Lionel Messi and tech guru Elon Musk.

“On behalf of the United States, congratulations to the Thai Navy SEALs and all on the successful rescue of the 12 boys and their coach from the treacherous cave in Thailand,” Trump tweeted.

“Such a beautiful moment — all freed, great job!”

Manchester United also invited the “Wild Boars”, as well as those involved in the rescue, to travel to England and visit the club.

“Our thoughts and prayers are with those affected. We would love to welcome the team from Wild Boars Football Club and their rescuers to Old Trafford this coming season,” the club said in tweet.

Health concerns

Now they are out, concerns are set to focus on the physical and mental toll of the ordeal.

Experts warned that drinking contaminated water or otherwise being exposed to birds or bat droppings in the cave could lead to dangerous infections.

They also said counselling would be needed to deal with the psychological toll of spending so long not knowing whether they were going to survive.

But there were some promising initial signs.

Medical chiefs reported on Tuesday morning that the eight boys rescued on Sunday and Monday were in relatively good mental and physical conditions.

“All eight are in good health, no fever... everyone is in a good mental state,” Jedsada Chokdamsongkuan, permanent secretary of the public health ministry, said before all 13 had been rescued.

Nevertheless, the boys would remain in quarantine in hospital until doctors were sure they had not contracted any infections from inside the cave.—AFP

An ambulance allegedly transporting rescued members of the children’s football team leaves Tham Luang cave area in Khun Nam Nong Non Forest Park in the Mae Sai district of Chiang Rai province on 10 July. ( PHOTO: AFP)
Canada extends NATO mission in Latvia to 2023: Trudeau

RIGA, Latvia — Canada has extended its leadership of the NATO battalion based in Latvia until 2023, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Tuesday in Riga, a day ahead of the alliance’s summit in Brussels.

Canada leads one of four battalions deployed by the Western defence alliance on its eastern flank in 2017 in a deterrence and defence posture following Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014. “We are ready to support our allies while facing global threats to security,” said Trudeau, adding that Canada’s current mission initially slated to expire in 2019, “will be prolonged for four years.”

“Canada will not change its attitude towards security of the Baltic countries,” Trudeau told reporters at a press conference with his Latvian counterpart Maris Kucinskis. The Latvian premier hailed Ottawa’s decision to extend its mission as “the perfect gift to Latvia on its centenary.”

Later on Tuesday, Trudeau was due to visit some 450 Canadian troops deployed for Operation Reassurance, which is Canada’s largest sustained military presence in Europe in more than a decade.

In total, over 1,000 NATO troops from nine other alliance members are deployed in the Latvian battalion. The other three NATO battalions are based in Estonia, Lithuania and Poland and are led by Britain, Germany and the United States, respectively. Trudeau’s visit is the first ever by a Canadian head of government to Latvia, his office said. He now heads to Brussels for the NATO summit on 11 and 12 July.—AFP
Habit of cleaning at World Cup a chance to spread Japanese culture

TOKYO — The routine of cleaning up stadium stands by Japanese supporters that became the standard at the World Cup in Russia is spreading to soccer fans of other countries. While most people in Japan are well-acquainted with cleaning rituals from their school-days, the practice of tidying up stadiums from a worldwide perspective is extremely unusual.

Now not only has cleaning — including the Samurai Blue’s immaculate treatment of the bench and dressing room at stadiums in Russia — become a hot topic of the World Cup but it has gone beyond the scope of sports as a way of spreading “Japanese cleaning culture.”

“It has been 10 years since I started to attend international football matches as a spectator, but this is the first time I have cleaned with supporters of opposing teams,” said Hirokazu Tsunoda, a 48-year-old Japanese supporter from Chiba Prefecture, east of Tokyo, who notably wears a “chomage” traditional topknot wig as part of his outfit.

After Japan’s first match in the group stage of the World Cup, a Colombian supporter unexpectedly asked Tsunoda for trash bags, and then proceeded to help the Japanese group of supporters with the cleanup effort in the stands at Mordovia Arena in Saransk.

“I was surprised because I assumed that he just wanted trash bags as a souvenir,” the 55-year-old Tsunoda said.

According to Tsunoda, the stadium cleanup activities date back to when Japan debuted at the World Cup in France in 1998.

In the beginning, Japanese supporters brought blue trash bags with them because blue is the national team’s color and they would use them to turn the stands blue. Gradually, however, supporters began to use them not only to cheer on the team but as the actual trash bags they were meant to be.

Participants in the clean-ups have increased over the years.

In Japan, cleaning is almost revered as a spiritual practice from the time children are young. Students, in fact, develop a custom of cleaning their schools from an early age.

This is in stark contrast with many Western countries where generally cleaning is left to sanitation workers, experts say. “In Japan where cleaning is closely related to education, it is prized as good conduct,” said Midori Otake, an honorary professor at Tokyo Gakugei University who specializes in home economics.

The response to the supporters’ cleanups has been big on social media, and their conduct has given the Japanese team a reason to be proud as well. Japanese players have even been questioned by foreign media about the custom of leaving areas spick-and-span.

“In Japan, we have a saying that you leave a place cleaner than when you came,” Japan defender Maya Yoshida said when answering a question about Japanese supporters cleaning stadiums at a press conference during the tournament. In recent years, picking up garbage has caught on in cities and towns overseas.

Green bird, a nonprofit organization established in Tokyo’s Harajuku district in 2002 whose volunteers are dedicated to keeping streets clean, says in the past several years it has received an increasing number of inquiries from overseas about how to conduct cleanups.

Members of the NPO who have relocated abroad have expanded their cleaning activities to various countries, including Dakar, Helsinki, Paris and Shanghai. Initially, they would often receive bizarre looks from people wondering why they got out of their way to pick up litter. Slowly, their continued efforts have borne fruit. In Paris, the number of participants grew suddenly after the local media drew public attention by reporting on the trend.

“Our goal is not simply cleanup, but rather to raise public awareness about littering and the environment through cleanup,” said green bird representative Toshinari Yokoo, 37. “I’m confident that picking up garbage will firmly take root overseas as well as cool Japanese culture.” — Kyodo News

‘Ant-Man and Wasp’ builds buzz at the box office

LOS ANGELES — Marvel’s “Ant-Man and the Wasp” swatted away the competition over the weekend to log $75.8 million in domestic ticket sales, box office data showed on Monday.

The superhero movie has outpaced the opening weekend for 2015’s “Ant-Man” by about a third, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported.

The 20th release in Disney’s Marvel Cinematic Universe sees ex-con Scott Lang (Paul Rudd) languishing under house arrest in San Francisco after being caught as his shrinkable superhero alter-ego fighting some of the other Avengers in “Captain America: Civil War” (2016). Struggling to balance home life and his responsibilities as Ant-Man, he’s confronted by old flame Hope Van Dyne (Evangeline Lilly), alias the Wasp, with an urgent new mission.

The dynamic insect duo far surpassed sales for the weekend’s runner-up, Universal’s “Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom,” which is in its third week and has already passed the $1 billion mark globally.

The movie, which took $28.6 million, has Chris Pratt and Bryce Dallas Howard struggling to contain dinosaurs rescued from a tropical Pacific island and sheltered temporarily at a California mansion. A shade behind at $28.4 million was “Incredibles 2” — a big enough weekend to push the superhero adventure past Pixar stablemate “Finding Dory” (2016) as the top-grossing animated film of all time. Written and directed by Brad Bird, who helmed the original, the sequel has earned $593.8 million at home and another $258.5 abroad. Fourth spot went to another Universal-distributed film, the newly released “The First Purge,” at $17.4 million.

The dystopian horror — the fourth movie in the series — is a prequel set during the original “purge,” a 12-hour period when all crime is legal but certain government officials may not be harmed. In fifth was Sony’s “Sicario: Day of the Soldado” with $7.6 million in its second week. The action thriller has Benicio Del Toro and Josh Brolin teaming up to fight drug cartels smuggling terrorists across the Mexican border. All the top five were sequels or prequels, Exhibitor Relations noted.

Rounding out the top 10 were: “Uncle Drew” ($6.6 million), “Ocean’s 8” ($5.1 million), “Tag” ($3 million), “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” ($2.6 million), and “Deadpool 2” ($1.7 million).

Australia monster croc caught after eight-year hunt

SYDNEY (Australia) — An elusive monster saltwater crocodile weighing 600 kilograms (1,328 pounds) has finally been caught after an eight-year hunt in Australia, officials said on Tuesday.

The 4.7-metre (15.4-foot) beast was found in a trap downstream from the northern outback town of Katherine after first being spotted in 2010. Authorities had tried in vain for years to bag the croc, which is estimated to be 60 years old.

“We’ve called it a lot of things over the years because it’s been so hard to catch,” senior wildlife officer John Burke told broadcaster ABC. “It is a bit of a thrill, but you’ve also got to admire the size of the animal and how old it is. You’ve got to have a bit of respect for it.”

The animal was taken to a crocodile farm to keep it separate from the local human population, said Northern Territory wildlife operations chief Tracey Duldig.

“He is the biggest crocodile ever removed from the Katherine River by the Wildlife Operations Unit,” Duldig said in a statement. Wildlife rangers capture around 230 “problem crocodiles” each year.

Saltwater crocodiles are a common feature of Australia’s tropical north and kill an average of two people a year.

The crocodile population has exploded since they were declared a protected species in the 1970s, with the killing of an elderly woman last year reigniting calls to curb their numbers. — AFP
England thrive in World Cup ‘bubble’ ahead of Croatia semi-final

REPINO (Russia) — As excitement builds in England in the run-up to the country’s first World Cup semi-final for 28 years, midfielder Dele Alli insists Gareth Southgate’s team are keeping a cool head in their tournament “bubble”.

England’s matches so far in Russia have attracted huge television audiences at home and wild celebrations, with affable coach Gareth Southgate and his vibrant young squad capturing the hearts of a nation.

In sharp contrast to the feverish atmosphere, Alli and his teammates are in relaxed mood in the sleepy seaside resort of Repino, 45 kilometres (28 miles) northwest of Saint Petersburg.

“You are in your own little bubble when here — training camp, coming back, getting ready for the next game. It is not until you look at social media and the internet that you realise how big it is,” Alli said on Monday.

“Obviously we know we are playing in the World Cup, in the semi-final. We are so focused on the games that you forget what we have done so far.

“It is important that we stay like that, keep going and hopefully we achieve something to make it even more special to get to the final and win it.” Alli scored his first World Cup goal as England cruised into the last four with a 2-0 win over Sweden on Saturday.

A much tougher test is expected in Moscow on Wednesday against a Croatia side that swept past Argentina in the group stages and boasts the midfield talents of Real Madrid’s Luka Modric and Ivan Rakitic of Barcelona.

But while many pundits and even England fans are surprised by their progress, Alli says the squad always believed they could go far. “We had to believe and we know how talented we are as a squad,” he added. “We know we have some unbelievable players and a great manager and everyone is clear on what we want to do. When you have such a solid foundation, you have the basics and clear understanding of what we want to do and achieve, it’s not a surprise that it’s going well for us.”

**Croatia defy controversy**

The calmness in England’s camp on and off the field is in stark contrast to Croatia’s experience.

In the latest in a series of controversies, former international Ognjen Vukojevic was kicked out of their delegation on Monday and fined by FIFA for posting a pro-Ukraine video clip following their penalty shootout victory over Russia on Saturday.

Defender Domagoj Vida, who scored against Russia, escaped with just a warning from FIFA, which bans political statements, for also appearing in the video and shouting “Glory to Ukraine!”

Earlier in the tournament, AC Milan striker Nikola Kalinic was sent home, reportedly over a disagreement with coach Zlatko Dalic about his fitness.

Croatia’s build-up to the tournament was overshadowed by the graft trial of former Dinamo Zagreb chief Zdravko Mamic and charges against captain Modric for alleged false testimony in that case.

Despite that, Modric’s three man-of-the-match performances and two winning penalties from Rakitic in shootout wins over Denmark and Russia have seen them match Croatia’s best-ever World Cup performance 20 years ago in France.

Physical exertions to reach the last four could take their toll but Dalic believes his side will have the energy reserves to end England’s dream.

“Of course there is some power left for the English,” said Dalic. It will be a battle again but I trust us. I have belief in us.”

---AFP

Jaded Croatia look to master Modric to carry them through against England

REPINO, Russia — “We keep hearing the same question and we give out the same answer”, said Croatia’s Ivan Perisic last week.

Every time a Croatian player appears before the media at this World Cup, he knows a question about Modric is coming, and every time the answer reflects the admiration there is in the squad for their captain.

The 32-year-old has been outstanding in his team’s run to a semi-final against England in Moscow on Wednesday, picking up the man-of-the-match award in three of Croatia’s five matches.

Modric has scored twice in Russia, including a fabulous goal in the 3-0 win over Argentina in the group stage, and twice netted in nail-biting penalty shootouts against Denmark and Russia.

The coolness displayed by the Real Madrid playmaker in the last-16 tie against the Danes was particularly impressive — having missed a penalty late in extra time, he still stepped up to score another spot-kick only a few minutes later.

After once again starring as Real won a fourth Champions League crown in five seasons by beating Liverpool in Kiev in May, Modric will be almost assured of winning the Ballon d’Or if he can lead Croatia all the way to improbable World Cup glory.

“I’ve known Luka for a number of years, not only with the national team. We played together at club level as well,” says striker Mario Mandzukic, who played with Modric at Dinamo Zagreb a decade ago before the latter joined Tottenham Hotspur.

“He deserves all the accolades he gets from the media and public. He has worked very hard to get to this point.”

---AFP

Myanmar loses to Malaysia but advances to semi-finals

The Myanmar U-19 youth football team lost to the Malaysia team, with a score of 1-0 yesterday in Group B of the 2018 AFF U-19 Championship, but advanced to the semi-finals, which will be played on 12 July in Indonesia.

The Myanmar team will compete against the Thailand team of Group A at the semi-finals, whereas the Malaysia team will play against Indonesia. Both semi-final matches will be played on 12 July.

A total of 11 teams from two groups of five and six teams took part in the 2018 AFF U-19 Youth Championship. In Group B, Myanmar competed against Malaysia, Cambodia, Timor-Leste and Brunei, while there were six teams in Group A — Thailand, Indonesia, Viet Nam, Laos, the Philippines and Singapore.

Myanmar played four matches in Group A, of which they won two, drew one and lost one. They now have seven points, while Malaysia have 10 points.

The final and third place matches of the 2018 AFF U-19 Youth Championship will be held on 14 July at Sidoarjo in Indonesia.

So far, the top scorers of the 2018 AFF U-19 Youth Championship are Bounphachan Bounkong from Laos with six goals, followed by Win Naing Tun from Myanmar and Korravit Tasa from Thailand with five goals each.

---GNLM