**Depreciation of Myanmar Kyat**

Analyzing the depreciation of Myanmar Kyat, although it started with the external impacts, the domestic factors that include, but are not limited to, weak economic fundamentals and structural issues have significant impacts on the exchange rate. Looking at trade, the trade deficit was US$3.8 billion in 2017-18 and it is actually lower than previous years.

In 2016-2017, trade deficit was US$5.2 billion and it was US$5.4 billion in 2015-2016. It is evident that these deficits have had a lot of pressure on the domestic currency.

Second, changes in seasonal foreign currency demands have also had impacts on the exchange rate. Especially during the period from July to December, demands for foreign currency had been usually high.

In order to reduce the trade deficit, to strengthen the domestic economy and to be resilient, and to withstand various impacts, the Union government has been going through various reform processes in cooperation with the private sector stakeholders.

(Excerpt from the report on the current work of the Union government, delivered at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 19 September 2018)

**Vice President U Myint Swe signs book of condolences for President of Viet Nam**

VICE President U Myint Swe signed the book of condolences for Vietnamese President Mr. Tran Dai Quang in Yangon yesterday.

PHOTO: MNA

**Myanmar signs Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons**

Myanmar signs Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

FROM PAGE-1

The High-Level ceremony was held in conjunction with International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. Together with the Union Minister, high ranking officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the United Nations were also present at the event.

The ceremony was also attended by the President of the 73rd United Nations General Assembly H.E. Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garces, Chairman of the International Committee of the Red Cross Mr. Peter Maurer, Under Secretary and High Representative for Disarmament Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, Executive Director of International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapon (ICAN) Ms. Beatrice Fihn, Under Secretary General of United Nations Office of Legal Affairs Miguel de Serpa Soares and Chief of Treaty Section Mr. Santiago Villagapando.

Myanmar has now become the 61st signatory to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Together with Myanmar, Antigua and Barbuda, Benin, Brunei Darussalam, Guinea-Bissau, Seychelles and Timor-Leste also signed the Treaty at the event. — MNA

30th Anniversary of National League for Democracy marked in Yangon

U Nyan Win, central executive committee secretary member of the National League for Democracy, remarked, “We need to evaluate the current situation of the country with dignity and poise and come together with collective strength in finding ways to practically implement fundamental changes and transitions. We have leadership capability as seen in the processes and experiences that we’ve gone through bravely. All of the challenges should be met with responsibility than fear. The value of greatness is responsibility.”

Then, U Thein Oo, central executive committee member of the National League for Democracy, read a statement regarding the 30th Anniversary of the founding of the National League for Democracy, and put on record messages sent to the ceremony.

U Tin Oo, patron of the National League for Democracy, member of chairmen group U Ohn Kyaw, members of central executive committee, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Yangon Region Hluttaw Speaker U Tin Maung Tun and Yangon Region Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Lin Naing Myint, regional ministers, Hluttaw representatives, veteran politicians, diplomats, responsible officials from other political parties, members of National League for Democracy and invited guests were presented at the ceremony.

It was reported that the National League for Democracy issued a six-point statement at yesterday’s ceremony. — Zaw Gyi

UNION Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin has called for adjusting efforts for elimination of TB and investment in the drive globally.

His remarks came at the UN High-Level Meeting on the Fight Against TB, held under the theme “United to End Tuberculosis: An Urgent Global Response to a Global Epidemic”, on 26 September at the UN Headquarters in New York.

The Union Minister is in New York and is attending the 73rd UN General Assembly. It is encouraging to see that the number of TB cases is downward globally, but it is painful to see millions of people in the world are suffering TB which is preventable and curable, said the Union Minister.

It is found that the number of TB cases is high in developing countries, causing a challenge for the sustainable development. Union Minister U Kyaw Tin also called for promoting research and development and funding the TB elimination drive worldwide, in attempts to provide effective and affordable access to TB test and treatment to the people.

U Kyaw Tin said Myanmar has pledged to bring down the number of TB patients who remain to be given treatment, as the country has reached to modern test for TB and drug-resistant TB.

Myanmar is implementing its National Strategic Plan (2016-2020) to end the tuberculosis epidemic as part of its commitment. The Union Minister called for practicing ASEAN and global-level means and ways to control and to fight the infectious disease.

“Myanmar is seeking ways to boost the local and foreign investment and to establish a multi-sectoral accountability framework for TB,” said Union Minister U Kyaw Tin. — MNA
Vice President U Henry Van Thio addresses World Tourism Day 2018 ceremony

VICE President U Henry Van Thio, Chairman of the Central Committee for the Development of National Tourism Industry, delivered an address at the World Tourism Day – 2018 ceremony held at Thingaha Hotel, Nay Pyi Taw hotel zone, yesterday morning.

The ceremony was attended by Union Ministers Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, Thura U Aung Ko, U Thant Sin Maung, U Ohn Win, U Thein Swe, Dr. Myint Htwe, U Ohn Maung, Deputy Minister U Min Thu, senior departmental officials, representatives of UN organizations, diplomats, representatives of development partners, executives from travel businesses, specially invited guests and officials.

In his opening address, Vice President U Henry Van Thio said since the time Myanmar re-entered as a member of World Tourism Organization in 2012, the World Tourism Day has been commemorated and this is the seventh time it was being held.

Every year on 27 September, World Tourism Day is commemorated in member countries of the World Tourism Organisation with the aim of increasing understanding on how tourism supports the long term development of a country. Therefore, conducting this ceremony can be taken as a practical way which has full potential to promote knowledge and insights on sustainable development of the country’s tourism.

Tourism is a business that everyone is involved in and is a business that is developing rapidly in the world. In the world today, tourism business is creating job opportunities not only in developing countries but in developed countries as well, and is a source that provides huge revenue to a country. Development of the tourism business is also more effective for socio-economic development and poverty reduction work processes. It can be seen that with the advancement of technology in the world today, for attracting travellers and implementing travel tours it can be observed that digital technology is being used over traditional methods. That is why the World Tourism Organization is urging the usage of digital technology and innovation in tourism business to overcome the challenges and achieve sustainable development.

The World Tourism Day – 2018 is held with a theme “Tourism and the Digital Transformation.” The World Tourism Organization is learnt to consider digital technology in the tourism sector as the main factor in supporting preparing of future works and innovation.

As per figures released by World Tourism Organization in 2017, there were about 1.323 million travellers in the world which is an increase of more than 84 million compared to the previous year. 2017 saw the highest number of travellers going to Europe and Africa. Due to the increase in numbers of arrivals, income from the tourism sector increased to US$1.6 trillion and it contributed 7 percent of the world’s export sector.

For 2018, it is estimated that worldwide, there will be an increase of 6 percent over last year. In Southeast Asia the increase is estimated to be 10 percent. By 2020, there will be about 1.6 billion travellers in the world and of those about 123 million is expected to come to Asian countries so the prospect for the travel business sector is heading towards a better future.

Looking at the Myanmar tourism sector, international tourist arrivals was 3.4 million in 2017 and as of July 2018 tourist arrivals stand at 1.93 million. The tourism sector plays a main role in the country’s development and it needs to be in line with development of transport, basic infrastructure and financial management sectors so efforts should be exerted towards department and sector wise development.

Even though there are many challenges for development of the Myanmar tourism sector, by conducting Sustainable Tourism, Responsible Tourism and Pro-Poor Tourism, jobs are created and related works are developed, supporting the increase in the country’s revenue. All need to plan ahead to maintain the development momentum of the Myanmar tourism sector and to share the benefits obtained from it with all the nationals.

Relevant state/region governments should work in close coordination and cooperation for more travellers to visit Myanmar, convenient arrangements made for ease of travel to the travel destinations, relaxing entry/exit restrictions and requirements, increase travel product state/region wise and arrange for year-round visit, developing community based travel, creating new travel destinations and to develop local travel businesses.

Due to one-sided and exaggerated reports on Rakhine issue by media, Myanmar witnessed decrease in tourist arrivals. Tourist arrivals from Europe and Australia dropped 2 percent.

It was observed that efforts were made towards increasing visitors to Asia and Southeast Asian countries that has high market potential. On the other hand, it is required to spread actual true news to western countries. As travel business has a fragile nature, systematic preparation and arrangement need to be made to respond immediately to anything that could affect it. In doing this it is especially required for the government and the private sector to establish and implement joint strategies.

World travellers are to be informed through news media, inviting travel writers, distributing pamphlets, conducting study tours, participating in travel shows and international travel shows that they can visit without any dangers to peace and stability of the tourism destinations. Digital promotion systems that are cost effective and could be organized in a short time frame need to be conducted increasingly.

The State is planning to relax entry visas to ASEAN+3 countries to redevelop the travel business and is taking steps to coordinate with relevant ministries. In the same way relaxing visa requirements to western countries that have potential will also be considered.

During September, a new brand for Myanmar travel business “Myanmar: Be Enchanted” was launched in Japan at the travel show held in Tokyo, Japan. The Myanmar travel business will take an upward trend as it is learnt that groups were formed to conduct market wise promotion to increase visitors from Japan, South Korea, China, ASEAN countries and European countries.

The travel business is a business that can develop the socio-economic development of all the nationals in the country in a short time with very little investment, and it also raises the image of the country. Therefore, for the systematic and sustainable development of the travel business that supports the economic development of Myanmar; not only the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism but all stakeholders need to work together.

The Vice President then urged all entrepreneurs in the travel sector to use innovation to create new travel products, transform and raise the travel business using digital technologies, and work together.

Next video messages of UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization) Secretary General Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili and UN Secretary General were shown and an official explained about the new brand of Myanmar travel business “Myanmar: Be Enchanted.”

Afterwards, winners of university and college level essay competition, winners of debate, winner of best performing hotel awards, best service award, winning travel companies and best public toilet award winners were presented with awards by Union Ministers Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, Thura U Aung Ko, U Thant Sin Maung, U Thein Swe and U Ohn Win, respectively.

Officials from a travel booth representing Myanmar in the 33rd Korea World Travel Fair – 2018 that won the Best Booth Operation Award and a travel booth representing Myanmar in the 21st Busan International Tourism Expo that won the Best Tourism Publicity Award then handed over the awards they received to Ministry of Hotels and Tourism. Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Ohn Maung accepted the awards and presented certificates of honor to first prize winners who won it under the title, “Action Plan for Capacity Building of Shan Plateau, Myanmar (2020-2023)” at the 2018 Knowledge Sharing Seminar on Sustainable Tourism Development.
Daw Khin Myo Kyi unanimously approved as Yangon Region advocate general

By Nyein Nyein

THE Yangon Region Hluttaw unanimously voted Daw Khin Myo Kyi to replace former Yangon Region Advocate General U Han Htoon, who was relieved of his post for allegedly accepting bribes to drop the murder case of comedian Aung Ye Htwe.

During the tenth-day meeting of the seventh regular session of the Second Yangon Region Hluttaw, held on 26 September, the Speaker read the Yangon Region Chief Minister’s nomination for Daw Khin Myo Kyi to be the new advocate general of Yangon Region. The Speaker then announced that MPs opposed to the nomination can voice their reasons with sufficient evidence.

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish “Letter to the Editor” that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words, please be aware that your letter will be edited.

2018 AMPA, Power Expo kick off in Yangon

FOUR day-expos by AMPA Myanmar (Myanmar International Auto Parts, Accessories and Motor Show) and Power Expo (Myanmar International Electrical, Electronics & Electric Power Equipment Fair), organized by Taipei World Trade Center, kicked off yesterday at the Yangon Convention Center.

The two shows are being held from 27 to 30 September with an aim to raise awareness on the role of tourism within the international community, and to demonstrate how it affects social, cultural, political and economic values worldwide. Tourism and the Digital Transformation is the theme of this year’s World Tourism Day (WTD).

World Tourism Day 2018 is a unique opportunity to raise awareness on the potential contribution of digital technologies to sustainable tourism development, while providing a platform for investment, partnerships and collaboration towards a more responsible and inclusive tourism sector, according to United Nations World Tourism Organization.

Tourism destinations in Southeast Asia, including Myanmar, are struggling with mountains of trash. With the lack of efficient waste management systems, plastic waste winds up in rivers and oceans, not only polluting our waterways, but also killing birds and marine life, state a press release of Thant Myanmar.

On the occasion of World Tourism Day on September 27, Thant Myanmar is encouraging key players in Myanmar’s tourism and hospitality sector to help promote the recently released, “Be Enchanted”, official Myanmar tourism slogan by “cleaning up their acts”, and stepping up measures to refuse, reduce and recycle single-use plastics.

At a recent event, 45 hotels pledged to reduce their use of disposable plastics by the end of 2018, according to Thant Myanmar press release. Thant Myanmar is raising public awareness through social media, and will continue to provide free digital information to all tourism stakeholders. —GNLM
Myanmar-Australia trade decreases by $20 million in four months

BILATERAL trade between Myanmar and Australia, a country in Oceania, within the four months in the present six-month fiscal period, totalled US$43.9 million, down by $20.039 million from this time last year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

In bilateral trade, Myanmar’s imports always outdo its exports. From 1 April to 31 July this year, Myanmar imported a wide range of products amounting to $36 million from Australia, whereas its exports to the island nation were valued at $7.9 million.

At the same period last year, Myanmar imported $56.2 million worth of foreign goods to Australia and exported $7.742 million worth of domestic products, totalling $63.9 million.

When compared with last year, this year saw a significant decrease in value of bilateral imports by $20.183 million, however, the export value slightly increased by $0.144 million.

Australia imports crustaceans, fish, seafood and vegetables from Myanmar, and exports wheat, medicaments for veterinary purposes, pigments and paints, as well as varnish and coal.

Myanmar conducts bilateral trade with Australia mainly through sea. According to the ministry’s data, the bilateral trade was at its peak in the last financial year 2017-2018, reaching $170 million. Trade between the two countries was $77 million in the 2011-2012 FY, $86 million in the 2012-2013 FY, $102 million in the 2013-2014 FY, $74 million in the 2014-2015 FY, $84 million in the 2015-2016 FY and $144 million in the 2016-2017 FY.

According to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), Australia’s new investment in Myanmar in the past five months reached $1.865 million. There was no FDI from the island nation in the last 2017-2018 FY. Australia’s investment in Myanmar totalled $16.29 million in the 2016-2017 FY. As a partner country, Australia continues its support to help Myanmar carry out political, economic and social change.—Shwe Khine

Individual imports from nine border crossings exceed Ks14 billion

THE value of imports at borders using individual trading cards (ITCs) topped Ks14.3 billion over the past 160 days, in the current six-month fiscal period, while individual exports value was Ks4.6 billion, according to trade authorities. This year saw individual imports through nine border crossings: Tamu, Muse, Myawady, Tachileik, Kanpaitkkee, Kawthoung, Reed, Mawtaung and Kengtung.

Between 1 April and 7 September this year, individual import was the highest, both in terms of volume and trade, at the Myawady border gate, reaching more than Ks10 billion in value, followed by Mawtaung at Ks2.2 billion, Kawthoung at over Ks500 million, Kanpaitkkee at Ks82 million, Tamu at Ks136 million, Reed at Ks121 million, Tachileik at Ks33 million and Kengtung at Ks7 million.

During the period, individual exports from borders were Ks4.56 billion in total. According to the ministry, the total individual trade at all border points of entry, as of 7 September, amounted to Ks18.8 billion. The Ministry of Commerce has been issuing individual trading cards to merchants at borders since 2012-2013 FY. Since the programme was launched, some 1,036 ITC holders are operating at the border crossings. According to the ministry, it has issued 74 cards to individual traders over the past five months.—Swe Nyein

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Seminar on business and human rights held

A SEMINAR on business and human rights was jointly held by the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at Park Royal Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

First, MNHRC Chair U Win Mra delivered an address, saying local and foreign investment is needed to develop the nation, and that it is necessary for business ventures to adhere to enacted laws and human rights standards. He said the forum will cover the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, as well as the good practices and challenges faced concerning it. He added that it will also support understanding the issues concerning business and human rights.

Next, UNDP Departmental Director Mr. Peter Batchelor delivered the opening speech, saying that in considering the history of setting business ethics for international corporations, the difficulties faced, the priority for each sector, and of human rights can create opportunities in Myanmar’s sustainable development programmes.

The forum then commenced with various individuals leading discussions on various topics, including: Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Sein Aung on ‘The role of Special Economic Zones in promoting responsible investments and Myanmar’s sustainable and balanced development goals’; UNDP’s Chief Technical Adviser Mr. Scott Ciment on ‘Rule of Law and the UN’s guiding principles’, UN Technical Expert Mr. Livio Sarandrea on ‘UN’s guiding principles, understanding the contents of the guiding principles, challenges and effectiveness’ and ‘National level corporate strategies on business and human rights’, a representative from The Heineken Company on ‘How businesses require government support in respecting human rights’, and Ms. Claire Kirkham, the Head of Economic and Prosperity from the British Embassy in Yangon, on ‘Considerations and views from the diplomatic community on promoting investments in Myanmar that are in accord with responsible ethics’.

Next on the agenda, the expert panel discussion on businesses and human rights commenced with Mr. Sean Lees, UNDP’s Business and Human Rights Specialist, acting as moderator.

The topic of the panel was ‘Opportunities and Challenges in Myanmar’ and was discussed by MNHRC member U Nyunt Swe, International Labour Organization, Myanmar’s Liaison Officer Mr. Rory Mungoven, UMFCCI General Secretary Daw Khine Khine Nwe, and Director Vicky Bowman of Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business. The panelists also replied to questions from the attendants.

NATIONAL 28 SEPTEMBER 2018

Local, foreign media continue reporting in Maungtaw

A GROUP comprised of local and foreign media toured villages in Maungtaw Township, Rakhine State, yesterday.

First, they visited Inn-din Village and collected information on terrorist attacks that happened in the village.

After the visit, they met with local authorities at the General Administration Office in Maungtaw and Maungtaw District Deputy Administrator U Ye Htoo briefed about the efforts for repatriation and resettlement for returnees, peace and stability and development in the region.

At the meeting, the journalists interviewed the authorities.

In the afternoon, the media group visited the village of Shwezar where the two different communities are living in peaceful coexistence.

At the meeting with the villagers of Shwezar, the journalists interviewed about their situation, including current livelihood and getting National Verification Cards.

In the evening, the media group interviewed a family which returned from Bangladesh on 4 September.


The local and foreign journalists groups visited Rakhine State for 26 times after the terrorist attacks in October 2016. They visited the conflict areas one time in 2016, eight times in 2017 and 17 times in 2018. —Thura Zaw, Thet Lwin Soe (IPRD)
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The Commission's recommen-
dation to have local government that is aligned with the Rakhine State led by the late Dr. Kofi Annan.

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The Commission's recommen-
dation to have local government that is aligned with the Rakhine State led by the late Dr. Kofi Annan.
Analysing the Report of the Investigation Commission for Maungdaw

FROM PAGE-9

Conflict Prevention and the situation of humanitarian assistance

It is reported that the donor countries and organizations need to follow the Government’s policies in providing humanitarian assistance to ensure equitable and effective distribution of aids where it is needed.

The report highlighted that the provision of humanitarian assistance requires transparency and equity as well as thorough coordination between the Government and donors in adopting aid allocation criteria and programmes and on-ground distribution of assistance.

External allegations

While conducting the investigation, the Commission gave the special emphasis on the external allegations such as rape, torture, arson, human rights violations, discrimination and genocide in Muslim villages.

With regard to the cases of sexual violence against Muslim women in the foreign media, the Commission investigated the allegations in a thorough manner. The Commission investigated Noor Ayesha from Kyet Yo Pyin village whose husband was killed and her two daughters were raped, and the cases of Ma Jamali Haar from Pyayg Pake village and Daw Than Than aka Ma Oordan from Kyet Yo Pyin village, who presented their cases directly to the Commission. The members of the Commission personally interviewed men and women of different ages and social classes individually and in groups, but as the allegations could not be confirmed it was concluded that the cases require further investigations.

A field investigation to the villages where buildings had been burned down indicated that the fires might have been caused either during the crossfires or by the arsonists. Practically, it was difficult to confirm the culprit who had set fire to village.

In any case, the Commission managed to file the arsons cases in accordance with the law so that actions may be taken against the perpetrators.

The investigation processes have been continued to confirm the human rights violations and torture. Appropriate legal actions have been taken in some cases.

It is also stated that allegations of excessive use of force by security personnel may be taken as weaknesses on the part of the security forces. It is necessary to learn lessons to avoid recurrence of such actions in future. If the disproportionate use of force happens, the responsible personnel will be accountable.

Appropriate actions have also been taken in some cases. It is stressed that in order to have a better understanding on the international norms and rule of engagement, awareness-raising campaigns for the ranks and files of security forces should be further implemented.

During the conflicts, there could have been actions that were not in compliance with the law, and excessive action on the part of individual members of security forces.

The report also mentioned that the Commission took sufficient time in conducting field investigations to the affected villages including 20 villages mentioned in the OHCHR Report to verify whether the serious allegations raised in the report were true or not, whether there had been unlawful indiscriminate shootings, disappearances, rapes or gang-rapes to women, severe beatings, torture, racial and religious discrimination, looting, theft, burning and destruction of properties in Muslim villages, whether there had been incidents in which the right to life of Muslims in Northern Rakhine State has been disregarded, and whether there were any grounds of concerns that crimes against humanity had potentially been committed, possibly leading to ethnic cleansing. However, there were no testimonies and difficulties to interview in some cases so that immediate legal actions cannot be taken. The commission, however, coordinated to file cases and has been continuing the investigation.

The Commission's Investigations in Bangladesh

A six-member team from the Commission led by its Secretary went to Bangladesh from 11 - 22 March 2017 to conduct an investigation with the displaced persons in three camps.

The commission found out that the displaced persons were living in makeshift tents in dire situation at the camps. Because of the political instigation, some of the displaced persons mentioned that the recognition of Myanmar government to them as Rohingya would be a precondition for their return to Myanmar.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) made arrangements for the Commission members to conduct face-to-face interviews with male and female Muslim refugees at Kutupalung Refugee Camp. At Balu Khali, refugees spoke only from behind a piece of yellow cloth that covered their face and upper body. At Ledo, the displaced person refugees took interviews from the back of a piece of white cloth that hid them from head to toe.

The Commission was not allowed to take photographs, video or audio recordings. The IOM also prohibited the use of Myanmar language with those refugees who can speak Myanmar.

Although there were many restrictions imposed by the IOM, the Commission did not make complaint, and focused on confirming what had actually happened, the responsible persons and responsible personnel will be accountable.

In some cases, interviewees were selected by local organizations and in other cases, by the Commission on a random basis. The names and addresses of the interviewees were kept confidential according to their wishes. If information on possible crimes came to light, the respective crime scenes were visited and investigated to a possible extent.

Moreover, the Commission report’s annexure contained statements, full account of the terrorist attacks in the Maungdaw District, photographic documents of field trips and supporting photographs of the incidents.

Overall Assessment

The Commission’s recommendations reflect the on-ground situation in Rakhine State, and some of these recommendations are generally similar to those of the Advisory Commission on the Rakhine State led by the late Dr. Kofi Annan. The ARSA terrorist group launched attacks on 25 August 2018 as predicted in the assessment submitted by the Investigation Commission on 4 August 2017 that there would be possible terrorist attacks.

It is found out that most of the reports on the rape cases in Rakhine State were just compilations based on the narrative of the so-called victims and hearays. In contrast, the recommendations of the Investigation Commission led by Vice President U Myint Swe were based not only on the narratives but also on the findings of the Commission from its investigations carried out during its field trips to the villages where the reported incidents occurred.

In connection with the terrorist attacks and conflicts, it was found out that the Commission investigated not just one single community but also other communities and ethnic groups in Maungdaw and its surrounding areas. It is obvious that the Commission exerted its efforts by reflecting fair and square statements of the affected communities.

All in all, the report of the Investigation Commission led by Vice President U Myint Swe is reliable, objective and a good source of reference for stability, development and social harmony in the Rakhine State. It contained the method of investigation, the efforts to explore the root-causes of the terrorist attacks and complexity of the issues and the background, through making frequent visits to the scenes where the incidents occurred, investigating the allegations of Human Rights violations, the observation and analysis on lasting stability and harmony, and the recommendations for reducing tension among the diverse communities thus leading to the harmonious life, etc.********
Tatmadaw (Army, Navy, Air) families, donors donate hospital equipment to Yangon General Hospital

TATMADAW (Army, Navy, Air) families and donors jointly donated hospital equipment to Yangon General Hospital at the nurse hall of the hospital yesterday morning. Present at the event were Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla, high ranking officers from Commander-in-Chief Office, Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Thet Pon, Yangon General Hospital superintendent Prof. Dr Yi Yi Myint, departmental officials, donors, doctors and nurses from the hospital.

First, Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief explained about the reason for donating, and then, the Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief and wife, family members donated hospital equipment to the hospital superintendent.

Next, on behalf of the Tatmadaw (Army, Navy) families, Adjutant-General Lt-Gen San Oo, Chief of Staff (Navy) Rear Admiral Moe Aung and Chief of Staff (Air) Maj-Gen Tun Aung donated hospital equipment, donors U Aung Myo Hein, Authentic Co., Ltd, U Hla Moe, Aung Myin Thu Company, U Kyaw Hein, Chan Hein Company, and Dr. Htet Aung of Star Nilar Company donated hospital equipment and the hospital superintendent gave words of thanks.

An average of more than 1,600 patients were undergoing treatment every day, and yesterday Tatmadaw (Army, Navy, Air) families also donated lunch for the patients. According to the news released by Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, Tatmadaw (Army, Navy, Air) families and donors jointly donated five small and 10 big suction machines, 30 trolleys, 10 ambulance structures, 10 syringe pump, ten ECG Machines (3 channel and ten ECG Machines (1 channel), 10 Patient Transport Trolleys, a total of eight items numbering 95 units worth more than Ks 60 million.

Submission Deadline for ASEAN Prize extended

SUBMISSIONS for ASEAN Prize are extended until 3-10-2018 instead of 27-9-2018. The ASEAN Secretariat is calling for nominations for the first ASEAN Prize, which aims to recognize inspiring achievements and contributions of an individual or organization that foster the ASEAN identity, promote the ASEAN spirit, and champion the ASEAN way in designated focus areas such as:

(a) collaboration between ASEAN Member States;
(b) collaboration between ASEAN and the world;
(c) people-to-people engagement among ASEAN Member States;
(d) economic integration and promotion of standards between Member States, or (e) outstanding contributions towards ASEAN Community Building.

A judging committee, consisting of incumbent and past Secretaries-General of ASEAN, will select the eventual winner, who will be awarded a cash prize of US$20,000. The inaugural prize will be presented at the ASEAN Leaders Summit in November 2018.

To be eligible, the nominee must be a citizen or an organization in any ASEAN Member States. The nominee need to elaborate within three to five pages in English highlighting the verifiable achievements that the nominee has contributed to the building of a rule-based, people-oriented, people-centred ASEAN Community, and intra-ASEAN collaborative efforts, for the period of April 2017 to March 2018. The nominee should also share their future plans in continuing the work after winning the prize.

The detailed information for the summary is mentioned in the nomination form. The nominee can download the nomination form from ASEAN Secretariat’s website https://asean.org/?static_post=asean-prize-2018 and can submit it to the ASEAN Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Office No. 9, Nay Pyi Taw or dgasean@gmail.com by 3-10-2018.

For further information, please visit http://asean.org/?staticpost=asean-prize-2018.
Hong Kong banks hike lending rates for first time in 12 years

HONG KONG — Two of Hong Kong’s biggest banks raised their lending rates on Thursday for the first time in 12 years, ending an age of cheap cash that could hit the city’s famously red-hot property market.

The moves by HSBC and Standard Chartered came after the Hong Kong Monetary Authority — the city’s de facto central bank — lifted its borrowing costs following an increase by the US Federal Reserve.

The HKMA is required to lift rates in line with the Fed owing to the dollar peg.

HSBC boosted its lending rate 12.5 basis points to 5.125 per cent, before Standard Chartered lifted its rate from 5.25 per cent to 5.375 per cent.

“This is the first step of the normalization cycle for local interest rates and we believe Hong Kong is well prepared for the change,” said Diana Cesar, HSBC’s chief executive in Hong Kong.

More of the city’s commercial banks are expected to follow HSBC’s lead and hike their prime rates, meaning higher mortgage payments for loans that are linked to it.

The Federal Reserve raised the benchmark interest rate on Wednesday and said it had raised for the third time this year in a widely anticipated decision, citing the strong US economy and jobs market.

After the HKMA raised interest rates to 2.5 per cent, its chief executive Norman Chan warned the public to be “on high alert” over increases and to manage associated risks, adding that property and assets would be affected.

“The current global economic conditions and financial environment are full of uncertainties for Hong Kong,” he said.

Hong Kong’s finance secretary Paul Chan wrote in his blog earlier this week that the city’s low interest rate environment was “coming to an end”.

—AFP

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The End of Plastic: Eco-fasion becomes catwalk reality

PARIS—It may have been a long time coming, but eco-fashion is no longer a hippie pipe dream. Bike jackets made from pineapple leaves and leather tanned with olive extract rather than hugely polluting chemicals are now within reach, experts say.

Everyone from young avant garde designers to the big-name brands are racing to hop on the bandwagon, with trainers with soles made from recycled plastic bottles already selling by the million.

Last year alone Adidas sold one million of its Parley trainers—made from plastic fished from the ocean—and the German sportsware giant is ramping up production of a range of similarly recycled styles.

And on Wednesday Yolanda Zobel, the new designer at the futuristic French brand Courreges, did the “unthinkable” and declared that she was doing away with the space-age vinyl that has been the label’s stock and trade since the 1960s.

After a final numbered capsule collection called “Fin de Plastique” (The End of Plastic) that will count down its stocks of vinyl, the German will try to source sustainable or recycled versions of the shiny fabric. “There’s no better world coming if we don’t take actions today,” Zobel said. Attitudes to eco-fashion have “totally changed in the last few years”, said Marina Coutelan, who helps run Premiere Vision, a hugely influential twice-yearly trade fair in Paris where the movers and shakers of the fashion industry flock in search of new materials and ideas.

Claimant's Day Notice

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With the millennials (those born between 1980 and 2000) now beginning to call the shots in the fashion industry, “we are seeing lots of trendy products from sustainable materials because they have grown up with them,” Coutelan said.

She points to the French giant Kering, which owns Gucci, Saint Laurent, Balenciaga and Alexander McQueen among others, as one of the pioneers of sustainability.

**Second biggest polluter**

“It has reduced its environmental impact by a quarter and hopes to cut it by 40 percent by 2025,” she said. Even so, fashion is still by some measures the second most polluting industry the world.

Kering until recently owned the label that has pushed the ethical and environmental envelope the furthest, refusing to use fur, leather or feathers.

The British designer uses recycled wool and polyester made from plastic water bottles, and intends to stop using “vigin” nylon entirely within two years and new polyester by 2025. Invitations for her Paris fashion week show on Monday proclaim that “Green is the new black” and feature a new cartoon where she stars with Minnie The Minx in a story entitling the virtues of regenarated cashmere.

McCartney told AFP that she would like to go faster but “the technology we need to reach this point is not yet available in a susstainable and circular way.”

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Saint Laurent walks on water at Paris fashion week

PARIS — Anthony Vaccarello made a splash by having his models walk on water for his Saint Laurent Paris fashion week show Tuesday.

The Belgian designer may have divided opinion since he took over from the “Sultan of Skinny” Hedi Slimane at the French label two years ago, but there was no doubting the chutzpah of his spring summer collection.

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With the Eiffel Tower glittering in the background, Vaccarello sent his models down a flooded open-air runway bordered by neon palm trees.

Known for his hyper-sexy leggy aesthetic and for never using an inch of fabric more than the most elastic definition of decency requires, the designer insisted on his addition to the power dresser's wardrobe — black leather hot pants.

For those with doubts, they also come in snake skin.

There were also splashes of unaccustomed colour from a man who has up to now at Saint Laurent mainly stuck to a leather-heavy two-tone diet of black and white.

With actress Charlotte Gainsbourg, models Kate Moss, Cindy Crawford, Korean star Lee Sung Kyung and former French first lady Carla Bruni in the front row, Vaccarello went as far as matching a red retro jacket with a green spotted blouse.

A hippy chic 1970s vibe seemed to spill over from Saint Laurent’s Kering stable mate Gucci — minus the irony.

Lots of red and blue velvet, hussar jackets and wide-brimmed hats summoned up the dying days of flower power.

But despite the odd disarmingly innocent Jean Seberg/young Mia Farrow look, it still remained Vaccarello, who cannot help himself turning out killer rock chick party animal silhouettes.

As Indian fashion critic Manish D Mishra tweeted dryly, the show was all “nipples blazing and python boots flashing”. —AFP

Wooden library lures bookworms outside Beijing

BEIJING — Deep in the heart of a valley surrounded by rocky hills, a wooden library sits just over a creek on the outskirts of Beijing, seemingly in the middle of nowhere.

Every weekend, hundreds of bookworms flock to Liyuan Library in Jiaojiehe village, a book sanctuary surrounded by chestnut, walnut and peach trees whose branches were used to decorate the building.

The lush environment is what first drew architect Li Xiaodong to the village — the library has a steel and glass base but its facade is clad with branches and twigs arranged in vertical rows. Visitors cross a narrow wooden bridge which leads to a bright and airy space, sunlight seeping in through gaps in the uneven wood, a design feature.

Bookshelves that double up as walls line the reading area — basically one large room — and readers lounge with tomes on the floor or on elevated platforms.

With space for just 40 people at a time, visitors stand in line to enter the library, which only opens on weekends.

The library, which opened in April 2012, draws hundreds of visitors every weekend, many of whom are attracted by the design, which makes for great pictures on social media.

“We have now banned taking pictures inside, as some people come here just for taking pictures. They even come in costumes, that’s really disturbing,” owner Pan Xi told AFP.

“We still want to give those who love reading a conducive environment.” —AFP

Elderly stars give love one last go in sequel to film classic

CAEN — French director Claude Lelouch has started shooting a sequel to his classic romance “A Man and a Woman” with the same actors, 52 years after the original was a box office smash.

The movie has gone down in film legend for its theme tune of the same name, with its “chabadabada, chabadabada” refrain. Lelouch’s production company confirmed Wednesday that filming had begun in Deauville on the northern French coast, the same resort where the 1966 double-Oscar-winning love story unfolded.

Its co-stars Anouk Aimee, now 88, and 87-year-old Jean-Louis Trintignant have both taken up their original roles as a widow and a widower who find love.

Lelouch told AFP that he wanted to go back to the heart-breaking story one more time after making a first sequel, “A Man and a Woman: 20 Years Later”, in 1986.

“I want to tell how life is stronger than death. “A Man and a Woman” is a homage to life. It is a love story that tells us that there is always a second chance,” he said earlier.

“The same actors have taken up their roles. The script is secret, it will be a surprise,” his production company Films 13 said in a statement. As well as its double Oscar victory, the original film won two Golden Globes and the Palme d’Or at the Cannes film festival.—AFP
Scientists find how brain encodes speech, closing to making brain-speech machine interface

WASHINGTON — American researchers have unlocked new information about how the brain encoded speech, moving closer to developing speech-brain machine interface that can decode the commands the brain is sending to the tongue, palate, lips and larynx.

The study published on Wednesday in the Journal of Neuroscience revealed that the brain controls speech production in a similar manner to how the brain controls the production of arm and hand movements.

Northwestern University researchers recorded signals from two parts of the brain and decoded what these signals represented. They found that the brain represented both the goals of what we are trying to say (speech sounds like “pa” and “ba”) and the individual movements that we use to achieve those goals (how we move our lips, palate, tongue and larynx).

The different representations occur in two different parts of the brain.

The discovery could potentially help people like the late Stephen Hawking communicate more intuitively with an effective brain machine interface (BMI) and those people with speech disorders like apraxia of speech.

“This can help us build better speech decoders for BMIs, which will move us closer to our goal of helping people that are locked-in speak again,” said the paper’s lead author Marc Slutzky, associate professor of neurology and of physiology at Northwestern.

Speech is composed of individual sounds, called phonemes, which are produced by coordinated movements of the lips, tongue, palate and larynx. However, scientists didn’t know exactly how these movements, called articulatory gestures, are planned by the brain.

Slutzky and his colleagues found speech motor areas of the brain had a similar organization to arm motor areas of the brain.

Scientists recorded brain signals from the cortical surface using electrodes placed in patients undergoing brain surgery to remove brain tumors, keeping the patients awake during surgery and asking them to read words. After the surgery, scientists marked the times when the patients produced phonemes and gestures. Then they used the recorded brain signals from each cortical area to decode which phonemes and gestures had been produced, and measured the decoding accuracy.

The brain signals in the pre-central cortex were more accurate at decoding gestures than phonemes, while those in the inferior frontal cortex, a higher level speech area, were equally good at decoding both phonemes and gestures, according to the study.

This finding helped support linguistic models of speech production and guide engineers in designing brain machine interfaces to decode speech from these brain areas.

The next step for the research is to develop an algorithm for brain machine interfaces that would not only decode gestures but also combine those decoded gestures to form words.—Xinhua

Japan firm signs with SpaceX for lunar missions

TOKYO — A Japanese start-up is to send spacecraft to the moon in a deal signed with Elon Musk’s SpaceX, the Tokyo-based firm said Wednesday. Private lunar exploration company ispace said it would blast a lander and rovers towards the moon on a SpaceX rocket on two separate missions.

The spacecraft will first orbit the moon in mid-2020, followed by a moon landing attempt for mid-2021.

It comes a week after SpaceX confirmed Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa will be the first man to fly around the moon on a SpaceX rocket as early as 2023.

“We share the vision with SpaceX of enabling humans to live in space, so we’re very glad to making brain-speech machine interface,” said Gwynne Shotwell, SpaceX President and COO.

Hakamada also told reporters the company chose SpaceX as it is “highly credible” and “capable”. SpaceX President Gwynne Shotwell said in a statement that the company is “proud to have been selected by ispace to launch their first lunar missions”.—AFP

Ending decades of doubt, ‘biggest bird’ dispute put to nest

PARIS — After more than a century of conflicting evidence, Anglo-French animosity and a H.G. Wells novel, involving murder most fowl, scientists said Wednesday they have finally solved the riddle of the world’s largest bird.

For 60 million years the coosial, flightless elephant bird — Aepyornismaximus — stalked the savannah and rainforests of Madagascar until it was hunted to extinction around 1,000 years ago.

In the 19th century, a new breed of buccaneering European zoologist obsessed over the creature, pillaging skeletons and ossified eggs to prove they had discovered the biggest bird on Earth. But a study released Wednesday by British scientists suggests that one species of elephant bird was even larger than previously thought, with a specimen weighing an estimated 860 kilograms (1,895 pounds) — about the same as a fully grown giraffe. “They would have towered over people,” Hansford said, referring to the 860-kilogramme specimen. “And there were some that led up to that too, so it’s not an outlier — there was a range of masses that are extraordinarily large.”

Extinct, but not forgotten

A close cousin of the now-extinct moa in New Zealand, the elephant bird belonged to the same family of flightless animals that today includes the kiwi, emu and ostrich. Its petrified eggs still fetch large sums at auction, and it stars in Wells’s 1895 work “Aepyornis Island” alongside a pugnacious mercenary named Butler who improbably ends up living with — and eventually killing — one of the creatures.—AFP

PHOTO: AFP

PHOTO: XINHUA

PHOTO: AFP
Juventus extend Serie A streak, Roma back winning

MILAN—Paulo Dybala and Blaise Matuidi scored early as Juventus extended their perfect start to their Serie A title defence to six games on Wednesday with a 2-0 win over Bologna, as Roma ended their losing streak with a 4-0 success over promoted Prossimione.

The reigning champions have a maximum 18 points, three ahead of Napoli who beat Parma 3-0, with the top two set to go head-to-head in Turin on Saturday.

“We made some mistakes at the end of the match and we were sometimes vulnerable,” said Ju-ventus coach Massimiliano Al-legri.

“On Saturday it’s a head-to-head with Napoli and it’ll certainly be a great game. I don’t have a line-up in my head right now, as on Friday in training we’ll see everyone together and decide.”

Lazio are third, a further three points adrift, after their fourth win on the trot 2-1 against Udinese ahead of this weekend’s Roman derby against Roma.

Barca and Madrid endure surprise La Liga defeats

MADRID—Barcelona conceded twice in 68 sec-onds and Real Madrid were three down at half-time as La Liga’s two title favourites were each stunned by surprise defeats on Wednesday.

Barca’s 2-1 loss to relegation fighters Leganes was the greater shock but Madrid’s beating was more emphatic, blown away by Sevilla during a torrid 39 minutes at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan.

For both, it was their first defeat of the season and for both, defensive fragility was the key factor and a major concern with the second round of Champions League games to come next week.

By the end, Atletico Madrid, who had cruised to victory over Huesca on Tuesday and played Real on Saturday, were the biggest winners. After a stuttering start, Diego Simeone’s side will jump above Real with a win at the Santiago Bernabue.

Sevilla can be a formidable opponent on their own patch but few expected Leganes to inflict what was only Barcelona’s second league defeat in 17 months.

Gerard Pique committed the decisive error, his fluffed clearance allowing Oscar Rodriguez to score Leganes’ second goal in two incredible minutes at Estadio Municipal de Butarque.

Nabil El Zhar had nodded in an equaliser just 68 seconds before and by the end Philippe Coutin-ho’s scintillating early volley was reduced to little more than a footnote.

After drawing at home to Girona on Sunday, albeit with 10 men, Ernesto Valverde’s selection also came under scrutiny, after he opted to rotate for the second time in three days.

Against Girona, it was Coutinho, Ivan Rakitic and Samuel Umtiti on the bench and just as they all had to be called upon in the second half at the Camp Nou, so were Luis Suarez and Jordi Alba this time.

“Of course the coach is responsible, a losing coach always feels responsible,” Valverde said.

“But obviously it is easy now to talk about the rotations—in the end, matches are analysed on results—but you can’t win the league with only eleven players.”

Barcelona face Athletic Bilbao on Saturday and then Tottenham at Wembley in the Champions League four days later but one point from two of La Liga’s a concern. So is who was also Girona and tainly start with Umtiti sus-