Final rites of Myaing Gyi Ngu Sayadaw to be held on 27 Nov

Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye yesterday paid his last respects to Myaing Gyi Ngu Sayadaw, a monk renowned for his social and religious services in the interests of the nation and his native Kayin State.

Myaing Gyi Ngu Sayadaw Bhaddanta U Thu Za Na passed away at age 71 (Vasa 52) on 30 October. His remains are being kept at a temporary chamber in the Sone-nan-tha Myaing-sway town, Myaing Gyi Ngu region, Kayin State, so people can pay their respects.

The final rites and cremation ceremony will be held on 27 November.

Dr. Win Myat Aye offered food to monks and donated over Ks3.7 million during his visit yesterday.

The Union Minister also donated 500 copies of Myaing-gyingu Sayadaw’s biography, which details his services towards religion and peace.

Sayadaw U Thu Za Na passed away in a hospital in Bangkok and his remains were transported to his monastery in the town of Myaing Gyi Ngu in Kayin State. — MNA

State Counsellor to pay official visit to Nepal

AT the invitation of His Excellency Mr. K.P. Sharma Oli, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, will pay an official visit to the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal in the near future. In conjunction with the visit, the State Counsellor will also attend the “Asia-Pacific Summit 2018” to be held in Kathmandu. — Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Thandwe District receives Ks 1.3 bln in Maternal and Child Cash Transfer as of September

THANDWE District in Rakhine State received over Ks 1.3 billion between July 2017 and September 2018 under the Maternal and Child Cash Transfer - (MCCT) for pregnant mothers and children under two years old, according to the district’s general administration department.

The list of supported mothers and children under two include 2,770 mothers and 3,009 children from 257 villages in Thandwe Township; 4,196 mothers and 4,102 children from 215 villages in Tungup Township; and 2,268 mothers and 2,287 children from 219 villages in Sittway Township. — MNA

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UNION Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, U Ohn Win, visited the Forest Department in Pathein Township, Ayeyawady Region on 24 November, and heard a report on work conducted by the department in 2018-2019.

During the meeting, the Union Minister spoke on the need to strictly observe the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) issued by the Forest Department, take responsibility and supervise work position-wise, apply systematic reforestation methods, and report findings.

The Union Minister and his team visited a forest plantation on the Thakhidwara reserve and looked into their requirements. They also visited a 200-acre plantation of Pyingalo trees, inspected a 25-acre section for producing seeds on the Chaungtha reserve, and private elephant camps in Pathein Township. Officials presented a report on establishing a grazing ground for elephants, provision of social needs for maidouts and their families, and the number of people visiting the camps. The Union Minister later looked into the requirements of a community-based mangrove forest conservation project conducted by the Myanmar Forest Association (MFA), with the cooperation of Ramsar Center Japan (RCJ) and financial aid from Toyota Environmental Grant.

He toured the area where 1,800 acres of mangrove trees are being planted and conserved in Pathein Township. Officials presented a report on conservation of rare tree species and progress of work to the minister. Afterwards, U Ohn Win planted a sapling in the area. — MNA

Thandwe District receives Ks 1.3 bln in Maternal and Child Cash Transfer as of September

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1,769 mothers and 1,529 children from 162 villages in Gwa Township. The general administration department and the Ministry of Health and Sports donated Ks1,309,020,000 to the townships.

Officials will also provide support of Ks45,000 for October, November, and December 2018 for 890 pregnant mothers and 599 children between the ages of three urban townships and 36 villages in Gwa Township. The total financial support is Ks6,700,000.

The MCCT project is one of the 8 prioritized under the social welfare and protection master strategic plan. It aims to provide the required essential nutrition to mothers and newborns in the crucial first 1,000 days of a child’s life.

This aid is an important investment in the country’s future human resource development and is a State funded project intended to raise the morale of the public, said Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu.

The MCCT is available for mothers in Rakhine State who began their pregnancy after 1 July 2017, and is available in Chin State and the Naga Self-Administered Zone, with plans to expand services into Kayah, Kayin and Shan States and Ayeyawady Region in 2018. — Zin Oo (Myanma Alinn)

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Myanmar hosts IBSF meeting in Yangon

UNION Minister U Ohn Win inspects the community-based mangrove forest conservation in Pathein.

PHOTO: MNA

The annual general meeting of the International Billiards and Snooker Federation (IBSF) is in progress in Yangon yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

A mother receives the cash aid presented by officials of the Rakhine State Government. PHOTO THIHA SITHU

MYANMAR hosted the annual general meeting of the International Billiards and Snooker Federation (IBSF) in Yangon yesterday.

“The International Billiards and Snooker Championship 2018 enabled Myanmar to study the records of global billiards and snooker players and broaden the scope of its own players,” said Union Minister for Health and Sports, Dr. Myint Htwe, at the meeting.

“The meeting will present a wide array of subjects that will benefit the billiards and snooker games of countries around the world. Presidents of the federations of the respective countries will share their experiences and suggestions with their Myanmar counterparts.

“The meeting will serve as a venue where players, federations, and presidents make contacts for further progress of billiards and snooker,” he said. He then promised the ministry’s assistance for the development of billiards and snooker in Myanmar.

The President of IBSF, Mr. Mubarak Hamad MS Al-Khayarin, Vice President Mr. Joseph James Leacy, the President of the Asian Confederation of Billiards Sports (ACBS) Mr. Mohamed Salem AS Al-Nuaimi, federation presidents of Afghanistan, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, China, Chinese Hong Kong, Denmark, Germany, India, Iran, Iraq, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Latvia, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Poland, Qatar, Ireland, Romania, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Syria, Turkey, UAE, Vietnam, Wales, and host Myanmar took part in the discussions. —MNA

(Translated by TMT)
Union Minister U Win Khaing inspects factory, sub-power station

THE Union Minister for Electricity and Energy, U Win Khaing, yesterday inspected the Department of Hydropower Implementation (DHPM)’s natural pozzolan factory located near Nga Yant Gone village about two miles northeast of Popa town.

The factory’s in-charge and DHPM Director-General U Chit Toe explained the process of natural pozzolan production and distribution to the minister. The minister urged the factory staff to consider the environmental impact of the project and surveyed work conditions inside the factory.

Up till now, the factory has produced 568,089.9 tons of natural pozzolan. Natural pozzolans are typically used during the construction of concrete dams to control the alkali-silica reaction and lower the heat of hydration, and to reduce construction duration and costs.

Natural pozzolans are also mixed with cement to construct RCC dams (Roller Compacted Concrete dams). Two concrete dams in Myanmar, Ye Ywar and Ahlet Paunglang, were constructed using the mixture of natural pozzolans and cement. Additionally, pozzolan-mixed cement can be used to build a standard one-storey building, road, wall, or water tank at a lower cost.

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The four-day expo will showcase over 130 top brands from China, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Chinese-Taipei, Thailand, Viet Nam, and the Czech Republic.

Clothing, textiles, and modern machinery such as embroidery machines, sewing machines, printing machines, and flat knitting machines, will be displayed at the exhibition. In addition, the event will serve as a platform for knowledge-sharing on the latest machinery and techniques. According to the event’s organizers, the exhibition aims to build a well-connected and efficient communication platform for the domestic market.

Currently, Myanmar has more than 400 garment factories employing about 400,000 people and earning more than US$2 billion from foreign markets per annum, said the organizers. — Khine Khant (Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Gov’t grants Ks18.6m for portable water supply to rural Kayin State

THE Union Government has provided Ks18.6 million to Kayin State as assistance to help provide portable water to rural areas in the state yesterday.

Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye hands over Ks18.6 million to Kayin State Chief Minister Daw Nan Khin Htwe Myint as assistance to help provide portable water to rural areas in the state yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Later in the day, the Union Minister visited the Kyaukpadaung 66kVA Pannaetaw sub-power station where he was given the status of electricity distribution and power lines by the in-charge of the sub-power station. He also inspected the control room and the switchyard of the sub-power station. — MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

International textile, garment expo to be held 6-9 December in Yangon

MORE than 12 countries are expected to participate at the 5th Myanmar International Textile and Garment Industry Exhibition scheduled to be held in Yangon from 6 to 9 December, according to the event’s organizers.

The exhibition will be held at the Yangon Convention Center on the Kaba Aye Pagoda Road in Mayangone Township from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The event is jointly organised by the Myanmar Garment Manufacturers’ Association (MGMA) and the Myanmar Textile Manufacturers’ Association (MTMA).

The four-day expo will showcase over 130 top brands from China, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Chinese-Taipei, Thailand, Viet Nam, and the Czech Republic.

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Japanese-themed hotel opens in Yangon

A Japanese-themed hotel, Shin Ye Htut, was inaugurated in Yangon yesterday. With its theme and convenient location near the Japanese embassy, the Shin Ye Htut, will be a draw for visitors from Nippon, said a senior diplomat with the Japanese embassy.

“The hotel will provide a peaceful ambience to Japanese people visiting Myanmar for business or pleasure,” said Counsellor (Economic & ODA) Mr. Kazuyuki Takimi from the Japanese embassy at the hotel’s opening ceremony.

“We opened this hotel near the Japanese embassy to serve our friends from the Land of the Rising Sun, as Myanmar has already provided them visa exemption,” said U Ye Htut, the chairman of the Shin Ye Htut Group of Companies.

“After business meetings at the ministries, they will need a place for complete rest in Yangon before leaving for home,” said U Ye Htut.

“We expect many benefits from the visa exemption program which came into effect from 1 October this year,” said Mr. Kazuyuki Takimi at a follow-up press meet.

“But we need some time, as news about the visa exemption has not reached the entire Japanese public. Myanmar can be a favourite destination for Japanese people, and the number of visitors from Nippon will gradually increase,” he told the media.

“If Myanmar wants to see a rise in the number of Japanese visitors, the country should improve its transport infrastructure and raise awareness on the visa exemption program,” he said.

The Shin Ye Htut Hotel is located at No (1/B) on the Wingaba Road in Bahan, Yangon. It is the third hotel built by the Shin Ye Htut Group of Companies. The company is planning to open one hotel each in Magway and Bago, the two regional capitals lying north of the commercial city.—MNA

(Translated by TMT)

Police arrests elephant poacher, seizes flintlock guns

THE Thabaung Myoma police station is investigating Saw Thein Han @ Kayin Lay @ Thein Hein, 35, from Wa Ya Village; Kyaw Win Hlaing, 43, from Htau Kyant Kwin Village; Thein Aung, 58, from Ward 1, Aung Zeya Street, Thabaung Town; Nga Mae @ Thau Tung Aung, 34, from Taung Hta Village; and Nay Min Tun, 45, from Htin Pada Village, Taungup Town. They have been suspected of killing a male elephant that was found dead in a forest some 26 miles west of Thabaung Town, Ayeawady Region, in the afternoon of 22 November. The police found out that the elephant was killed by Saw Thein Han @ Kayin Lay @ Thein Hein with a flintlock gun made by Nay Min Tun and the gun was hidden by Kyaw Win Hlaing. The police personnel then went to the house of Kyaw Win Hlaing, along with him, and in the presence of witnesses, found the 42-inch-long flintlock gun used to kill the elephant and another 5-ft-long flintlock gun hidden in a bush behind the house.

The Thabaung Myoma police station has opened cases under the natural reserve protection law and weapon law.—Ko Lwin (Swa)

(Translated by Zaw Min)

Men’s slippers manufacturers in Kanbya Village face low demand

Myanmar traditional men’s slipper manufacturers in Kanbya Village, Monywa Township, Sagaing Region, are experiencing downward demand, according to the manufacturers.

They have noticed decreasing demand for six years, when foreign-made slippers began to flow into the Myanmar market.

Regarding the slipper industry, a slipper manufacturer, U Myo Myint, said, “At the time when the slipper business was good, buyers needed to order by paying cash in advance. But now, manufacturers are waiting for customers and making their slippers in advance. Our slipper manufacturing business was begun in the age of our grandparents. At that time, the business was quite good, but for now the demands are too low. Some slipper businesses are being closed, as they could not compete with foreign slipper manufacturers.”

Slippers manufactured in Kanya village were well known for their quality among residents of the upper Chindwin Townships. But within the past six years, cheap foreign slippers entering the local market resulted in falling sales for local slippers.—Win Oo (Zeyya Taing)

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)
Myanmar-Philippines trade increases slightly

BILATERAL trade between Myanmar and the Philippines from April through September this year reached US$28.6 million, a slight increase of $7.5 million, or 35 per cent, from the same period last year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar’s imports from the Philippines, one of Myanmar’s regional trade partners, usually exceed its exports.

During the six-month period this year, Myanmar exported $11.46 million worth of goods and imported commodities worth $17.2 million.

When compared with the same period in the 2017-2018 Fiscal Year, the value of both exports and imports saw an increase this year.

At this time last year, bilateral trade between the two countries stood at $21.19 million, with exports valued at nearly $7 million and imports totalling $14.19 million.


Myanmar imports capital goods, consumer products, and intermediate goods from other ASEAN member countries, Asian and African states, some European countries and Western nations.

The country mainly exports agricultural, animal, marine, and forest products, minerals, and manufactured goods. —Shwe Khine

(Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)

Border trade at Myawady registers over $20-million rise

THE value of trade through Myawady, a border gate between Myanmar and Thailand, over the first 40 days of the current Fiscal Year 2018-2019 exceeded US$90 million, an increase of $21.3 million from the same period last year, the Commerce Ministry reported.

Between 1 October and 9 November this year, bilateral exports reached $12.4 million, while bilateral imports exceeded $80 million at the gate. During the same period in FY2017-2018, the total value of trade through Myawady totalled $71.7 million, with $4.4 million in exports and $16.9 million in imports.

Thailand is one of the top foreign investors in Myanmar. According to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, Thailand brought $123.8 million worth of investment into Myanmar in the last FY2017-2018. Fresh investments from Thailand between April and September this year exceeded $64 million. There were no new investments in the first month of this FY. —Swe Nyein (Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)

Gov’t to spend over Ks900mn on projects in Kantbalu

THE Sagaing Region’s government will spend Ks965 million, allotted by the Union government for the current financial year, to implement development projects in Kantbalu Township, according to the township planning department.

The development projects will include construction of a 100 kVA transformer, a workshop, construction of agricultural roads and village-to-village roads, work on paving new asphalt roads and extending old roads, development of 450 acres of teak plantations and 40 acres of watershed plantations, upgrade of school buildings, construction of 50 concrete water tanks and other facilities, staff housing, and electrification plans.

As part of the government’s dry-zone greening project to protect the region from climate change, more than 10,000 saplings will be planted during this rainy season with the aim of developing the best practices for planting and maintaining trees.

The Sagaing Region has been using both regional and Union budgets to continuously carry out development projects, including those for the improvement of livelihood, every year to improve the socio-economic status of residents. —Aung Win Nyein (Kantbalu)

(Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)
Rakhine Chief Minister meets with local residents in Gwa Tsp

RAKHINE State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu met yesterday with local residents of Alae Chaung and Yae Kyaw village tracts in Gwa Township to discuss developmental affairs.

In the meeting with the Rakhine State Chief Minister and party, local residents from the villages discussed matters related to upgrading the dirt roads connecting the villages, solving farmland disputes, and protecting farms from intrusions by wild elephants in Yae Kyaw Village tract.

They also discussed matters related to the continued flourishing of village libraries, fulfilling the need of rural health clinics in Pulm Maw and Yamar Kyun villages, promoting the post-primary school of Thabue Chaung Village to sub-middle school, the construction of rural roads, mainly for transporting goods, and assisting combine harvesters.

Further discussions included concerns about education, health, social and regional developments, which were coordinated by departmental officials.

The Rakhine State Chief Minister then provided two pregnant women and 35 children under 2 years in the two village tracts with cash assistance for three months. In addition, a donation of Ks 1 million each for the Maha Wizaya Pagoda in Alae Chaung Village and the public library in Yae Kyaw Village, and Ks 400,000 for the basic education sub-high school in Yae Kyaw Village, was also provided. —Zin Oo

Sri Lanka president vows never to reappoint ousted premier

COLOMBO (Sri Lanka) — President Maithripala Sirisena on Sunday reignited the power struggle that has crippled Sri Lanka’s government for more than a month, vowing never to reappoint arch-rival Ranil Wickremesinghe as prime minister.

Wickremesinghe’s party has a majority in parliament and Sirisena’s bid to bring back the country’s former strongman Mahinda Rajapakse has already failed.

But Sirisena choked back tears in a meeting with foreign correspondents as he accused Wickremesinghe, who he sacked on October 26, of being “highly corrupt”.

“Even if the UNP has the majority I told them not to bring Wickremesinghe before me, I will not make him prime minister,” he said, referring to Wickremesinghe’s United National Party.

“Not in my lifetime,” he added.

Sirisena dismissed Wickremesinghe following a host of personality and political clashes since they formed a coalition in 2015. He named Rajapakse as new premier and tried to dissolve parliament but the Supreme Court and legislators blocked the president’s moves.

Wickremesinghe, who occupies the prime minister’s residence, and Rajapakse, who has the premier’s official offices, have both refused to back down.

But the country officially has no prime minister; heightening international fears about Sri Lanka’s stability and looming foreign debt repayments.

Sirisena told foreign correspondents at his official residence that he will appoint a commission to investigate corruption under Wickremesinghe since January 2015.

“He is corrupt. His economic policies are not good for local industries. He pursed an extremely liberal form of government that is not compatible with our culture,” Sirisena said.

He added that there had been “over 100 instances” of open clashes between the two and that their power struggle had become an open secret in the cabinet.

“Told him that we lost the election because his economic policies had failed. I told Ranil in this very room to step down, but he refused,” Sirisena said.

He added that there had been “over 100 instances” of open clashes between the two and that their power struggle had become an open secret in the cabinet.

Sri Lanka’s parliament meets on November 27 and 29 to discuss a motion by the UNP to cut off government spending.

Government finances will stall on January 1 unless a 2019 budget is passed.—AFP

Fifth Film Analysis held in Yangon

THE 5th Film Analysis, an aspect of the Cinematheque Program, was held at the Film Development Centre under the Ministry of Information in Yangon yesterday. Film Promotion Committee member Dr Aung Min spoke at the event, saying the films for analysis in this event brings ideas from the film into the mind of the viewer. He said the ideas are artistic and filmmakers don’t need to follow traditional processes all the time. He said you need to just input your style into the film.

Attending the film analysis event were officials from the Film Development Centre, students from the Yangon University of National Arts and Culture, youths interested in filmmaking and students from external film schools.

Dr Aung Min watched The Turin Horse directed by Director Béla Tarr together with the attendants and then asked their personal opinions and interpretations based on the analysis process and then showed an interview with the director.

Writer Ko Naing Oo said youths need to create new works instead of repeating old films. He said they will need to research literature and new ideas.

The Turin Horse was explained about the thoughts of an old man but was about feelings and is based on Turin City in Italy from 1889.

The next monthly film analysis will take place on December 9 and will select Art House films that are more relevant to Myanmar. —Zaw Gyi

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena addresses the Foreign Correspondents Association (FCA) in Colombo on November 25, 2018. PHOTO: AFP

Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu meets with local residents in Gwa Township, Rakhine State yesterday. PHOTO: DISTRICT (IPRD)
Partial reopening of Baghdad’s Green Zone delayed: official

BAGHDAD (Iraq) — The partial reopening of Baghdad’s high-security Green Zone to through traffic, planned for Sunday, has been postponed for several days, a government official said.

The enclave has been home to Iraq’s parliament, government offices, United Nations agencies and western embassies since the US-led invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003.

Earlier this week, Iraqi authorities began removing concrete barriers to ease access to a key route that cuts across the enclave, ahead of a planned opening on Sunday, reportedly at the orders of Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi.

But on Sunday morning, a government official told AFP that “the reopening will not take place before the next two days, or perhaps by the end of the week”. “An important thoroughfare will be opened, but we must secure its surroundings and seal access to perpendicular streets,” the official said on condition of anonymity.

The road leads from the banks of the Tigris River northwest through the Green Zone and into other parts of Baghdad.

Authorities say allowing through traffic would ease congestion in other parts of the city.–AFP

‘Green fuel’: Bananas to help wean Angola off oil

CAXITO (Angola) — Boxes of still-green bananas were shifted one-by-one from a towering stack of crates into a refrigerated shipping container.

Stamped “From Angola, with love”, the fruit is shipped to consumers 6,000 kilometres (3,700 miles) away and are part of Luanda’s drive to diversify its economy and wean itself from its dependence on oil. Novagrolider, a privately-owned company, produces several dozen tonnes of bananas every week to be shipped to Portugal.

The firm, founded 10 years ago with Portuguese investment, has become a poster child for the economic transformation that the Angolan government is seeking.

At Novagrolider’s Caxito 600-hectare (1,500-acre) plantation 60 kilometres northwest of Luanda, the banana plants, protected with blue plastic bags, bend under the weight of their fruit.

In a nearby hangar with a corrugated iron roof, two staff delicately dip the freshly-picked bunches into vast washing pools.

The bananas are meticulously sorted after being washed and weighed with as many as 4,000 boxes prepared daily.

The best-looking fruit is earmarked for dispatch to foreign markets with the rest kept for sale locally.

“We have two grades – domestic and export,” said supervisor Edwin Andres Luis Campos as he watches the production line closely. “Domestic will be sold here in Angolan supermarkets in about four or five days. Export will be shipped to Europe in refrigerated containers that will arrive in Europe in between 20 and 25 days.”

Novagrolider’s output has grown exponentially in recent years and its parent company, Grupolider, which has interests in transport and property as well, employs 3,500 people.

It grows mangoes, pineapples and watermelons as well as bananas on its four fruit farms in Angola. After a cautious start, company boss Joao Macedo’s appetite and ambition grew rapidly.

“Two years ago we started exporting to the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo – but that wasn’t viable because of the state of the roads,” said Macedo in his air-conditioned office in Luanda.

Banananas, our ‘green fuel’

“Despite competition from South America, the quality of our products nonetheless allows us to sell in Portugal and Spain. And that’s not all.”

Macedo hopes to double production to 170,000 tonnes annually and establish a foothold in the lucrative South African market.

Back in Caxito, the province’s top agriculture official shares Macedo’s enthusiasm.

“We’re financially encouraging small-scale farmers to increase the size of the areas they cultivate,” said Eliseo Mateos.

“Until now they’ve mostly used their production for subsistence, but now we want them to grow more so they can sell their crops at market.

“Bananas are our ‘green fuel’ – here we have one possible way of diversifying the economy.”

In the decade that followed the bloody 27-year civil war that ended in 2002, Angola enjoyed strong double-digit growth fuelled by oil, which accounts for 90 percent of Angola’s exports and 70 percent of government revenues.

But the slump in the price of crude in 2014 shook the economic model of the country, which is one of the poorest in Africa, locking it into a vicious cycle of economic contraction. Unbridled inflation, recession, soaring debt and mass unemployment all followed.

—AFP

22 dead, scores feared drowned after Uganda boat sinks

MUTIMA (Uganda) — Twenty-two people have died and more than 60 are feared drowned after a pleasure boat sank on Lake Victoria, Ugandan police said Sunday.

The vessel carrying close to 100 revellers sank during the weekend, Ugandan police said.

The boat, on which party-goers were drinking, dancing and listening to music, sank a short distance from the shore off Mutima in Mukono District, close to the capital Kampala.

Mugenyi said overloading and bad weather were likely to blame. “We expect (the number of passengers) is beyond the capacity of the boat.

It was overloaded and unfortunately people were drunk,” he said.–AFP

Mugenyi said. “We suspect the mechanical condition of the boat and the weather contributed to the sinking.” “A big storm hit,” said local government official Richard Kikongo. “It can be fine on land but bad weather on the lake.”

Kikongo said first responders were among the victims. “Fishermen on two small boats could see that the boat was sinking and went to help. People tried to jump onto the boats but they were too many and those sank. The rescuers died too,” he said.—AFP

It is not uncommon for ferries to capsize on Lake Victoria and the number of fatalities is often high due to a shortage of life jackets and the fact many local people cannot swim. PHOTO: AFP
Food systems: A powerful tool to prevent noncommunicable diseases

**Invitation to young writers to submit their works**

The Global New Light of Myanmar is accepting submissions of poetry, opinion, articles, essays and short stories. Please submit your work to the Global New Light of Myanmar, No. 150, 8 Mile Road, Kyauktada Township, Yangon, Myanmar. Your work should be no more than 1000 words. You can also submit your work by email to glu@myanmarnewlightmyanmar.com.

Food systems are powerful tools to prevent noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), which include major contributors such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and chronic respiratory disease. These diseases are major causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide, responsible for a large portion of the global burden of disease. A systematic analysis of available research shows that food systems have a significant impact on NCD risk factors, including diet and physical activity.

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**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)** has identified geographical areas that are vulnerable to the effects of El Niño and food security. These areas are crucial for the global food security system, as they provide important crops and livestock that are critical for international trade and food security. The impact of El Niño on agriculture and food security can be severe. For example, the 2015/16 El Niño – one of the strongest on record – affected almost 60 million people in 44 countries, increasing the risk of food insecurity and malnutrition. The FAO estimated that the impact of El Niño on agriculture and food security was significant. There are some regions in the world that are emerging as economic markets in the present age. Countries like China, Russia, India, and Brazil have shown a significant interest in global trade and foreign investment, and have invested billions of dollars in their national economies. These regions have shown a strong potential for conducting good business, and have the capacity to enter the top 100 ease of doing business within it. Business-related indicators have been used to determine the ease of doing business, and China, Russia, India, and Brazil have been able to improve their rankings in the past few years.

The FAO has issued an advisory on the 2018/19 El Niño, which has the potential to cause significant impacts on agriculture and food security. The advisory emphasizes the importance of early action and analysis to mitigate the effects of El Niño and food security. The advisory recommends that countries develop early warning systems, implement risk management strategies, and ensure that their food systems are resilient to the impacts of El Niño.

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Thai rubber farms stretched as US-China trade war saps demand

In this picture taken on 17 October, 2018 a woman cuts out stems from a raw rubber sheet at a factory in Rayong Province. They work in the pre-dawn gloom tapping trees for the “white gold” that has made their country the world’s top rubber producer — but as prices plunge due to the US-China trade war, Thai farmers are giving up the sap. [PHOTO: AFP]

BANGKOK (Thailand) — They work in the pre-dawn gloom tapping trees for the “white gold” that has made their country the world’s top rubber producer — but as prices plunge due to the US-China trade war, Thai farmers are giving up the sap.

Thai latex makes everything from tyres and condoms to baby pacifiers and surgical gloves, the fruit of the rubber trees cultivated across endless acres of the country. But the rubber trade is at a crossroads as a bitter dispute between the world’s two biggest economies ricochets across Southeast Asia with unexpected consequences.

Countries like Viet Nam are benefiting as manufacturers migrate from China to avoid punishing tariffs on exports to the US. But in Thailand, the price of rubber has Slumped twenty percent since June, as those same tariffs bite hard on demand from factories in China — the market for more than half its latex exports.

Some of Thailand’s rubber workers are being forced to abandon their plantation jobs for factory work.

“I couldn’t feed my children anymore,” said Anmita, who used to work 10 hours a day harvesting latex in Chiang Rai, northern Thailand, making just $7 a day less than the minimum wage and half the going rate several years ago.

So she has taken a job at a packing plant earning around $9 daily.

Nobody wanted to stay. The plantation owner even told workers anymore — the work is too difficult for the wages,” she told AFP.

While the plight of US soybean farmers hit by the tariffs has grabbed the headlines — they face a 25 per cent levy to access China, the world’s biggest soybean market — other troubles are quietly brewing across the world.

The bottom has fallen out of the once-booming industry as Thai rubber prices plummeted to about $1.21 a kilogram — they were five times that in 2011.

Too much rubber

Around one third of all the rubber in the world comes from Thailand’s forests, where latex is harvested at night or before dawn by tappers who make an incision and collect the sap as it bleeds out.

The country currently produces about 4.6 million tonnes of rubber a year and the sudden drop in Chinese demand has compounded a longer term global oversupply crisis to push prices off a cliff.

“A climate of uncertainty” pervades the industry after US tariffs hit nearly half of all Chinese imports, according to Kar-dak Kittipol, marketing manager at Thai Hua Rubber.

“Chinese companies don’t want to have too much rubber in stock,” he told AFP.

The value of the yuan against the US dollar has also dipped, making rubber more expensive for Chinese manufacturers to buy.

Thailand is a bystander in the trade war between the world’s two largest economies. But the ruling junta is trying to address the supply-side issues and is aiming to reduce the area under cultivation for rubber by more than 60,000 hectares per year over the next five years.

‘Not the right solution’

At the same time rubber remains an intensely political issue in Thailand.

Farmers and tappers — the majority of who come from the junta-aligned south — are notoriously quick to protest when times get tough.

So the government last week stomped up an initial handout — capped at roughly $700 per plantation — to ease their immediate pain.

But farmers remain unconvinced.

“(It is) not the right solution,” said Apichit Duangdee, who felled a third of the trees on his small plantation earlier this year.

“Very few countries can produce natural rubber. It is a rare product and the Thai government should promote it better,” he said.

If it fails to, the knock-on effects could be massive.

Tyre giant Michelin buys 40 per cent of its natural rubber from Thailand, keeping vehicles on the road all over the world.

“If prices continue to fall, many farmers and processors will lose interest in latex and quality could fall,” Lionel Danti-acy, Michelin’s president for Asia and Oceania, told AFP.

“If prices go too high, the tyre industry will suffer... with repercussions for the consumer.” — AFP

Holiday season business impacted for Italian luxury brand caught in China row: reports

NEW YORK — Business for Italian luxury brand Dolce & Gabbana, recently caught in a racism controversy that angered many in China, is also impacted in Manhattan as local Chinese Americans and visitors from China seem to be boycotting the brand.

Only a few Chinese or Chinese American customers could be spotted entering the D&G stores or patronizing the Italian fashion designer’s special counters in Manhattan in New York City in recent days, the Chinese language newspaper The China Press and the Chinese language TV news channel Sinovision both reported on Saturday.

“After nearly three hours of waiting at the entrance of the Fifth Avenue D&G store on Black Friday, I barely saw any Chinese faces going in,” a Sinovision reporter said in a news program run by the channel.

The Black Friday, which falls on the day after Thanksgiving, marks the start of the biggest sales and shopping season in the United States.

A female Chinese American, identified as a Miss Wang, told The China Press that she used to like the D&G brand a lot, but the latest controversy “changed my perception,” which made her “quit visiting the D&G stores this holiday season.”

“Although D&G and its designers have apologized for what happened, it seems to me that they did so just to save their markets and were not sincere enough,” Wang added.

According to the newspaper, sales staff at the D&G stores and counters in Manhattan have been reluctant to comment on the recent controversy or its impact on their business, but some have insisted that they are still expecting an increase in customer flow and sales revenues for this holiday season.

Transneft dispatches billion tonne of liquid hydrocarbons from Primorsk Port

Primorsk Port is the largest Russian oil loading port on the Baltic Sea and the endpoint of the Baltic Pipeline System. [PHOTO: TASS]

PRIMORSK — Russia’s oil pipeline company Transneft on Friday dispatched one billion tonnes of liquid hydrocarbons (oil and diesel fuel) for export via Primorsk Port in Russia’s north-west since loading its first tanker in 2001.

“The landmark billionth tonne of oil was shipped on 23 November, 2018 to Masta tanker en route to Porvoo Port (Finland),” Transneft said on Friday.

A total pf 901.2 mln tonnes of oil were shipped and 9,090 tankers were handled from the start of operations at Primorsk Port as of 23 November. Diesel fuel shipments totaled 98.3 mln tonnes, with 3,361 tankers handled. In total, 12,460 tankers and 1 billion tonnes of oil and oil products were handled.

Achieving such a landmark of oil throughput is a step towards establishing the futures market, Deputy Vice President of Transneft Vladimir Nazarov said. “A landmark is currently present, with activities implemented within its framework to create futures agreements or contracts for oil and diesel fuel from Primorsk Port,” the top manager says. “We cannot speak about the futures market without the commodity market. These are merely interrelated things. We should offer a continuous flow of oil and oil products of standard quality to the market — this is exactly what we have achieved at this terminal,” Nazarov told reporters.

Primorsk Port is the largest Russian oil loading port on the Baltic Sea and the endpoint of the Baltic Pipeline System. The shipment capacity of the port is 60 mln tonnes per year for crude oil and 25 mln tonnes per year for oil products. A total of 37.7 mln tonnes of oil and 15 mln tonnes of oil products are planned for shipment in 2018. — Tass
BRUSSELS (Belgium)—European Union leaders on Sunday approved a historic Brexit deal, holding out hopes of close future ties even as one declared Britain's withdrawal after four decades a “tragedy”.

The 27 leaders of the bloc met without Prime Minister Theresa May to endorse the agreement, which sets the stage for Britain exit from the bloc on 29 March. “EU27 has endorsed the Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration on the future EU-UK relations,” European Council President Donald Tusk tweeted, as the leaders waited for May to join them.

Arriving for a special summit in Brussels, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, head of the bloc’s executive arm, said it was a “sad day”. “To see a country like Great Britain ... leave the EU is not a moment of joy nor of celebration, it’s a sad moment and it’s a tragedy,” he said. Michel Barnier, the former French foreign minister who negotiated the deal on behalf of the bloc, added: “We will remain allies, partners and friends.” May, who arrived in Brussels on Saturday evening for final talks with Tusk and Juncker, was due to join the other leaders later in a highly symbolic moment. Fueled during 17 months of tough negotiations, the withdrawal agreement covers financial matters, citizens’ rights, Northern Ireland and arrangements for a 21-month post-Brexit transition phase.

A short political declaration that accompanies the text sets out hopes for future security and trade ties. But it is not the final stage, as the House of Commons in London must still approve the deal—and many MPs have warned they will not back it. Until the agreement is approved, all sides are still planning for the potentially disastrous possibility that Britain leaves the EU with no new arrangements in place.

No renegotiation

Media reports in London on Sunday suggested some of May’s own ministers were secretly working with EU diplomats on a “Plan B” in case parliament rejected the agreement next month. But Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, whose country holds the rotating EU presidency, said: “It is important that everyone in the UK is aware that the result that is now available is the result. ‘It will certainly not be renegotiated and there will be no further room for manoeuvre.’

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte added: “Overall, I think this is the max that we can all do, both Theresa May and her government as well as the European Union. ‘No victors here today, nobody winning, we’re all losing—but given that context, this agreement is acceptable.’

‘Reduce risks and losses’

Tusk said on the eve of the summit that “no-one will have reasons to be happy” when Brexit happens, but he said the terms agreed would “reduce the risks and losses”. In London, eurosceptics in May’s Conservative party and their Northern Irish allies warn they will not support the agreement, which they argue keeps Britain too close to the EU.

But in an open “letter to the nation” on Sunday, May said it delivered on the 2016 referendum vote to leave, and was a “deal for a brighter future”. Britain remains deeply divided over the decision, but the prime minister said that finally leaving could be “a moment of renewal and reconciliation”. “To do that we need to get on with Brexit now by getting behind this deal,” she said. A general view of UE leaders with Britain’s Prime Minister Theresa May (background) during a special meeting of the European Council to endorse the draft Brexit withdrawal agreement and to approve the draft political declaration on future EU-UK relations on 25 November, 2018 in Brussels. PHOTO:AFP

Tensions on Gibraltar, fishing

The summit risked being derailed by a late objection to the deal by Spain over the British territory of Gibraltar. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez threatened to reject it unless his country kept a veto over future changes to EU ties with “The Rock,” which borders Spain and which it has long claimed. The impasse was resolved when Britain promised to continue bilateral talks with Madrid after Brexit—although that itself caused further tensions. Sanchez claimed that discussions would cover the “co-sovereignty” of Gibraltar, but May rejected this.— AFP

Italy PM ‘confident’ Rome can avoid EU sanctions over budget

ROME (Italy) — Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said he was “confident” Rome could avoid unprecedented EU sanctions over its big-spending budget, rejected by Brussels, following talks with European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker.

Rome’s coalition government insists its 2019 budget will help kickstart growth in the eurozone’s third largest economy and reduce debt, but the EU says the country risks “sleepwalking into instability” and increasing its already massive debt burden.

After dinner on Saturday in Brussels with Juncker, Conte told Italian television: “I am confident that dialogue can avoid an infringement procedure.”

The EU’s rejection of the budget on Wednesday was widely expected after it had sent it back to Rome for reconsideration in a historic first for the bloc. Italy refused to back down, setting the stage for Wednesday’s final opinion that deplored “a marked backtracking” on past reforms.

Conte, who was accompanied for the working dinner by Finance Minister Giovanni Tria, said: “It was not a conclusive meeting but a meeting which reaffirmed, with mutual respect, the opening of a dialogue that we must preserve in everyone’s interests.” He insisted that his government — made up of Matteo Salvini’s League and Luigi Di Maio’s anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) — does not intend to reverse course on the budget.

He said earlier this week: “If it is in the interest of Italians, we are not willing to give up anything.”

The EU says the budget, which includes a basic monthly income for the unemployed and a pension boost, will not deliver the growth promised while increased spending will only increase Italy’s debt. Italy wants to run a public deficit of 2.4 per cent of gross domestic product in 2019 — three times the target of the government’s centre-left predecessor — and one of 2.1 per cent in 2020.

Brussels forecasts Italy’s deficit will hit 2.9 per cent of GDP in 2019 and 3.1 per cent in 2020 — breaching the EU’s 3.0 per cent limit. EU member states now have to decide whether to allow the commission to trigger the excessive deficit procedure, a lengthy process that could lead to fines. — AFP

47 US-backed fighters killed in IS in Syria over two days; monitor

BEIRUT (Lebanon) — At least 47 US-backed fighters have been killed in counter-attacks by the Islamic State group in eastern Syria over the past two days, a Britain-based monitor said on Saturday.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights raised the death toll from an earlier figure of 24 after it said 14 jihadists launched three fresh assaults Saturday. — AFP

French govt says 81,000 ‘Yellow Vests’ demonstrate

PARIS (France) — Nearly 81,000 “Yellow Vests” had taken to the streets by mid-afternoon Saturday to protest against higher motor fuel taxes, about a third of the previous week’s number, the French interior ministry said.

Of the total about 8,000 demonstrators — named for their bright yellow high visibility safety jackets — were in Paris where there were clashes with police who fired tear gas and water cannon on the Champs-Elysees.

The ministry said there had been 35 arrests nationwide, with 18 in the capital, while eight people were hurt, including two police, compared with 106 injured Saturday last week. — AFP

Trump confirms refugee deal with Mexico

WASHINGTON (United States) — President Donald Trump on Saturday announced migrants seeking asylum in the United States via its southern border would need to wait in Mexico while their claims are processed, appearing to confirm a report regarding a new bilateral deal.

“Migrants at the Southern Border will not be allowed into the United States until their claims are individually approved in court,” he tweeted. “All will stay in Mexico.”

The tweets came after The Washington Post reported the US had reached a deal with Mexico’s incoming government that would represent a major overhaul of border policy. — AFP

Trump confirmed the deal on Friday, though it was not immediately clear how it would work.

The US deal is going to have other conditions, two people familiar with the discussions told The Washington Post. — AFP

Trump said: “We are still discussing the details, but it will be very powerful, very strong.”

Trump is expected to announce the deal during his first visit to Mexico as US president. — AFP
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**Viet Nam’s central, southern regions brace for Typhoon Usagi**

**HO CHI MINH CITY**—Viet Nam’s central and southern localities have employed many measures to brace for Typhoon Usagi, the ninth typhoon to hit the South China Sea so far this year.

In 2017, typhoons claimed the lives of 286 people in Viet Nam, damaged more than 600,000 houses and caused economic losses of about 60 trillion Vietnamese dong (2.6 billion US dollars), according to the country’s agriculture ministry.—**Xinhua**

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**Police face-off with tribe in missionary killing**

**PORT BLAIR (India)**—Indian officers had a nervous long-distance face-off with the tribe who killed an American missionary in their latest bid to locate his body on a remote island, police said on Sunday. The police team, who took a boat just off Indian-owned North Sentinel island on Saturday, spotted men from the Sentinelese tribe on the beach where John Allen Chau was last seen, the region’s police chief Dependra Pathak told AFP.

Using binoculars, officers—in a police boat about 400 metres from the shore—saw the men armed with bows and arrows, the weapons reportedly used by the isolated tribe to kill Chau as he shouted Christian phrases at them. “They stared at us and were looking at us,” said Pathak. The boat withdrew to avoid any chance of a confrontation. Police are taking painstaking efforts to avoid any disruption to the Sentinelese—a pre-neolithic tribe whose island is off-limits to outsiders—as they seek Chau’s body. The death of the 27-year-old on 17 November has cast a new spotlight on efforts to protect one of the world’s last “uncontacted” tribes whose language and customs remain a mystery to outsiders.

Fishermen who took Chau to North Sentinel—which is one of the Andaman and Nicobar islands in the Bay of Bengal—saw the tribe burying the body on the beach. The Sentinelese normally attack anyone who goes to the island and Pathak said police are monitoring to see if there is a repeat of an incident after two fishermen who strayed onto the island were killed in 2006.

One week after their deaths, the bodies of the two Indians were hung on bamboo stakes facing out to sea. “It was a kind of scarecrow,” Pathak said. “We are studying the 2006 case. We are asking anthropologists what they do when they kill an outsider,” the police chief added. “We are trying to understand the group psychology.”

Though Chau’s death is officially a murder case, anthropologists say it may be impossible to retrieve the American’s body and that no charges will be made against the protected tribe.—**AFP**

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**Fukushima farmers see need to better publicize food safety**

**FUKUSHIMA (Japan)**—Farmers and fishermen in Fukushima called for further efforts to convince the public that their food is safe to eat on Sunday after Taiwan decided to maintain its import ban on Japanese food from areas affected by the 2011 nuclear disaster. Taiwan’s public voted in a referendum Saturday to maintain the ban on agricultural products and other food from Fukushima and four other prefectures. “All we can do is to work harder until people understand that our products are safe,” said Massa Koizumi, a rice farmer in Fukushima.

The prefectural government of Fukushima has been conducting radiation checks on all rice produced in the prefecture. Since 2013, all shipments cleared the screening, with radioactive cesium levels below the 100-becquerel-per-kilogram limit set by the central government.

“When people see the inspection readings, they will know that there is no threat of radioactive materials,” Koizumi said.

Tetsu Nozaki, the head of an association representing fishery cooperatives in the prefecture, said, “We are disappointed, but we just need to make sure that we keep communicating the safety of our products.”—**Kyodo News**

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**Friendship run held in Malaysia to promote ties with China**

**KOTA KINABALU** (Malaysia)—Nearly 2,000 people joined a friendship run here Sunday to mark the establishment of bilateral ties between Malaysia and China as well as to promote greater relations among the two peoples. The event was held in the capital of Malaysia’s Sabah state in North Borneo, of which the beautiful beaches, tropical rainforest, mountain trails and cultural diversity are increasingly attracting tourists from China.

Oh El Sun, president of the Sabah Malaysia-China Friendship Association that hosted the event, said the great participation showed the local government and people were keen to further ties with China, and to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative. “We hope such healthy and positive events could help the participants to have deeper understandings on the friendship between China and Malaysia, especially with Sabah,” he said. Liang Caide, Chinese consul-general in Kota Kinabalu, said the event is a meaningful way to mark the 44th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Malaysia.—**Xinhua**

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Climate change could cost US ‘hundreds of billions’ a year: study

TAMPA (United States) — Climate change is already hurting the global economy and will cost the US hundreds of billions of dollars annually by century’s end unless drastic action is taken to cut carbon emissions, a major US government report warned on Friday.

“With continued growth in emissions at historic rates, annual losses in some economic sectors are projected to reach hundreds of billions of dollars by the end of the century — more than the current gross domestic product (GDP) of many US states,” the latest edition of the National Climate Assessment said.

“Without substantial and sustained global mitigation and regional adaptation efforts, climate change is expected to cause growing losses to American infrastructure and property and impede the rate of economic growth over this century,” it added.

The effects will spill over into global trade, affecting import and export prices and US businesses with overseas operations and supply chains, it added.

Some of these impacts are already being felt in the United States, the report said, and recent extreme weather and climate-related events can now be attributed “with increasingly higher confidence to human-caused warming.”

Compilied by more than 300 scientists, the Fourth National Climate Assessment Volume II is a congressionally mandated report that spans more than 1,000 pages.

US President Donald Trump dismissed last year’s report, and just this week appeared to confuse weather with climate when he tweeted: “Brutal and Extended Cold Blast could shatter ALL RECORDS - Whatever happened to Global Warming?”

Trump also yanked the United States out of the landmark 2015 Paris climate accord, signed by more than 190 nations to limit carbon emissions.

David Easterling, director of the technical support unit at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Centers for Environmental Information, said there had been “no external interference” in the report.

Scientists found “clear and compelling evidence that global average temperature is much higher and is rising more rapidly than anything modern civilization has experienced,” he told reporters.

“And this warming trend can only be explained by human activities, especially emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.”

**Cascading effects**

Reporters questioned the timing of this year’s release, which came on the Friday after Thanksgiving, a national holiday when many people are traveling and shopping.

A NOAA spokeswoman said the report was “out earlier than expected” and was released ahead of two major scientific meetings on climate change in the coming weeks.

Meanwhile, the report warned that even if major cuts are made to harmful greenhouse gases (GHGs) like carbon dioxide and methane, the damage will linger for years.

“Because several GHGs, in particular carbon dioxide, reside in the atmosphere for decades or longer, many climate-influenced effects are projected to continue changing through 2050, even if GHG emissions were to stop immediately,” said the report.

Sea levels are continuing to rise, and extreme events like heavy rain and floods continue to increase worldwide, which will “cascade across economic sectors,” Easterling said, warning of “substantial net damage to the US economy.”

The report said it was “very likely that some physical and ecological impacts will be irreversible for thousands of years, while others will be permanent.”

The publication is designed to inform policy makers but does not make any specific recommendations on actions to take.

“In light of the report’s findings, it’s critical that federal, state and local governments take aggressive action to protect US residents by both reigning in emissions and helping communities adapt to the climate impacts that are now inevitable,” said Brenda Ekwurzel, the director of climate science at the Union of Concerned Scientists and one of the study’s authors.

Rush Holt, chief executive officer of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, said the economic warning shows that “policymakers can no longer afford to dismiss or ignore the overwhelming scientific evidence of climate change.” —AFP

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Harry and Meghan announce move to Windsor in early 2019

LONDON (United Kingdom) — Prince Harry and his pregnant wife Meghan Markle will move into a historic cottage on the royal family’s Windsor Estate early next year, Kensington Palace said on Saturday.

The couple, given the titles the Duke and Duchess of Sussex after marrying in Windsor in May, will live in Frogmore Cottage, a two-storey stucco-faced house in Windsor Home Park close to the castle.

They will relocate to their new home, around 20 miles (32 kilometres) southwest of London, “as they prepare for the arrival of their first child,” the palace said in a statement.

“Windsor is a very special place for their royal highnesses and they are grateful that their official residence will be on the estate,” it added.

Prince Harry and Meghan, who returned earlier this month from a 16-day tour Pacific tour; currently live in Nottingham Cottage on the grounds of Kensington Palace in west London. Described as cozy and “modest”, it consists of two reception rooms and two bedrooms.

The Palace said the couple’s office would remain there. It provided no further details on the new official residence.

Historic England, a public body which maintains a register of old buildings given special protections, lists Frogmore House in its Grade II category.

The status is awarded to just 5.8 percent of approximately 500,000 listed buildings in England, marking them out as particularly important sites.

The organisation dates the cottage back to the early 19th century but does not detail how many bedrooms it contains.

It sits on the grounds of the far grander Frogmore House, built in 1680-84 and a royal residence since 1792 — and where Harry and Meghan had their evening wedding reception.

“The name derives from the preponderance of frogs which have always lived in this low-lying marshy area,” according to the royal family’s website. —AFP

Photo exhibition highlighting 30-year Heisei Era opens

TOKYO — A photo exhibition chronicling major episodes during Emperor Akihito’s 30-year reign opened at Tokyo International Forum on Saturday before his scheduled abdication in April next year.

On display at the exhibition titled “Footprints of The Heisei Era - A news agency as eyewitness” are about 130 photos, taken after Emperor Akihito, now 84, ascended the Chrysanthemum throne in 1989 upon the death of his father Hirohito, posthumously known as Emperor Showa.

These photos include the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Emperor Akihito’s historic trip to China in 1992, the Tokyo subway gas attack in 1995 and the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami in 2011, as well as many other natural disasters and sporting events.

The photo exhibition, which runs through 2 December, is the 16th and latest in a series of photo exhibitions organized by the nonprofit Japan Press Research Institute since 2012.

A limited version of the Heisei Era photo exhibition will be also held at the Japan Newspaper Museum, popularly known as Newspaper, in Yokohama from July to September next year.

Kyodo News has assisted the institute in this exhibition project.

Emperor Akihito will abdicate on 30 April next year, and his 58-year-old elder son, Crown Prince Naruhito, will succeed to the throne the following day. —Kyodo News

Osaka, Japan picked to host 2025 World Expo

PARIS — The western Japanese city of Osaka was selected Friday to host the World Exposition in 2025 that is expected to attract tens of millions of visitors, beating Ekaterinburg in Russia and the Azerbaijani capital Baku.

Osaka won the final run-off against Ekaterinburg. It has vowed to stage an event from 3 May and 3 November, 2025 focusing on health and medical technologies.

It is the second time for Osaka Prefecture to host the World Expo. The 1970 World Expo was held there and attended by around 44 million people, the second most in history after the Shanghai Expo in 2010.

Japan expects the 2025 expo to attract 28 million visitors and boost the local economy by 2 trillion yen ($18 billion), underpinning growth after the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

“We’ll strive to make the expo a success. There is a big responsibility because this is everyone’s expo,” Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Hiroshige Seko told reporters in Paris where the voting took place by member countries of the event’s governing body, the Bureau International des Expositions.

Osaka Governor Ichiro Matsui said the expo in the Japan’s second-largest metropolitan area will “shock the world.”

Under the theme “Designing Future Society for Our Lives,” Osaka aims to spur a global effort to achieve sustainable societies.

Osaka hopes to bring people and ideas together in the pursuit of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals — 17 objectives to be achieved by 2030, including no poverty, zero hunger, gender equality, sustainable cities and communities and climate action.

Baku, sitting on the Caspian Sea in oil-rich Azerbaijan, offered as the theme of its proposal talent, vitality and achievement of humanity.

Ekaterinburg, located near the Ural mountains and Russia’s fourth-largest city, based its bid on the idea of future technological innovation as a catalyst for improved living conditions.

Neither Azerbaijan nor Russia has ever hosted an expo.

Known officially as International Registered Exhibitions, expos are held every five years, their themes based on the great challenges of the time.

The French government had sought to host the 2025 exposition in Paris, but withdrew its candidacy earlier this year, citing financial concerns.

Japan most recently hosted the event in 2005 in Aichi Prefecture, a vibrant area of central Honshu where the city of Nagoya is located and Toyota Motor Corp is headquartered.

The next expo will take place in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, in 2020, while the most recent one was held in Milan, Italy in 2015.

Earlier Friday, the three candidates made their final presentations at the general meeting.

Japan’s Seko somewhat nervously took the stage and extended an invitation to visit Osaka from which he hails, after which the “Pokémon” character Pikachu introduced a short video showing the planned site for the 2025 expo on the man-made island of Yumeshima in Osaka Bay. — Kyodo News
Shimadzu to commercialize new blood test for colon cancer screening

OSAKA—Shimadzu Corp will soon commercialize a blood test designed to detect early stage colon cancer, which tends to go unnoticed until symptoms become apparent at a more advanced stage. The precision equipment maker introduced the new diagnostic method on a trial basis at a hospital in Kyoto in October and plans to start a commercial screening service in 2019, aiming to offer it across the country in a few years.

A stool examination to detect signs of bleeding in a digestive tract is commonly used to diagnose colon cancer in Japan, but the method is not very accurate. The new method can detect colon cancer with 96 per cent accuracy by measuring eight types of biomarkers in blood, according to Shimadzu.

The company plans to apply the latest method to diagnosis of early stage breast cancer and pancreatic cancer in the future.

From parcel delivery to security, Singapore bets big on drones

SINGAPORE—Hi-tech Singapore is planning to roll out a swarm of drones for tasks that include delivering parcels, inspecting buildings and providing security, but safety and privacy concerns mean the initiative may hit turbulence. Companies have already started testing the devices for commercial use, mainly in an area of over 200 hectares (500 acres) dotted with high-rise buildings and shopping malls, specially designated by the government for the trials.

It is part of the affluent city’s drive to embrace technological innovation, as well as an effort to tackle a manpower shortage in an industry that relies on foreign migrant workers in many low-paying sectors. Commercial use of unmanned aerial vehicles is already taking off around the world, in areas as diverse as crop-spraying and surveying for insurance claims, but Singapore’s push represents a particularly ambitious bet on the technology. Singapore’s civil aviation authority has got behind the project, saying it recognises the potential for drones “to transform mobility and logistics”, and is working with industry players as it seeks to shape regulations for the sector.

During recent tests, a drone buzzed through the air; snapping pictures of a tower block’s facade, trials for a system that could see hilarious human inspections of the city’s ubiquitous high-rises replaced by automated checks. “Today’s existing building inspection process is extremely slow, expensive, tedious, prone to accidents, fatigue and human error,” said Shawn Koo, chief technical officer of Hi Zoom, a unit of the firm Hi Dynamics, which is behind the tests.

Such inspections are typically carried out by workers from South or Southeast Asia, who hang precariously outside buildings on platforms suspended by ropes. The new system will see high-resolution images taken by drones and analysed to check for defects, with inspections taking a few days rather than a few weeks, as they do at the moment. Hi Zoom hopes to fully launch the inspections next year.

Robotic guards

Drones are also being tested as robotic guards by local firm ST Aerospace. At its command centre, screens show a simulated security breach in a fence. A black drone is deployed, which chases an intruder while transmitting live images that direct security officers towards him to make an arrest. Tests have also been carried out for drone parcel delivery while a hospital operator plans to use the devices to transport blood samples and specimens between its hospitals and central laboratory. But transforming the futuristic vision into reality faces hurdles. The prospect of having a drone suddenly whizz by your apartment or office has sparked privacy concerns in the land-scarce city—AFP

Probiotics no help to young kids with stomach virus: study

CHICAGO—A major US study led by Washington University School of Medicine in St Louis showed that a commonly used probiotic is not effective in improving symptoms in young patients with gastroenteritis. The study involved 971 children aged three months to four years that treated between July 2014 and June 2017 in the emergency departments at St Louis Children’s and nine other geographically diverse US academic medical centers. Participants were eligible if they had come to the emergency room with symptoms of gastroenteritis: watery stools, vomiting, diarrhea or other signs of acute intestinal infection. They also had to have not taken probiotics in the preceding two weeks.

Half of the children in the study were randomly assigned to receive a common probiotic known as Lactobacillus rhamnosus GG, or LGG, twice daily for five days, while the others took a similar placebo. Otherwise, the children received standard clinical care. Neither the researchers nor the parents knew which children had received the probiotics. Regardless of whether the children took a placebo or probiotic, their symptoms and recovery were nearly identical. The data showed that diarrhea in both groups of kids lasted about two days and the kids missed an average of two days of day care. “We tested many different scenarios—infants compared with toddlers, whether the patient had taken antibiotics, whether the gastroenteritis was caused by virus or bacteria, and how long the diarrhea had been going on before the treatment was given. We also had the probiotic independently tested for purity and strength. Every time, we reached the same conclusion,” said the study’s lead author David Schnadower, a Washington University professor of pediatrics and a physician at St Louis Children’s Hospital. “LGG did not help,” Schnadower said. A similar study in Canada evaluated effectiveness of a different probiotic, Lactobacillus rhamnosus GG, in children with gastroenteritis, and the findings of that study mirrored those in the US study. There are no treatments for pediatric acute gastroenteritis other than giving children fluids to prevent dehydration and, sometimes, medication to relieve nausea. Gastroenteritis accounts for 1.7 million pediatric emergency room visits and more than 70,000 hospitalizations each year—Xinhua
**Football festival for children kicks off in Taunggyi**

THE Grassroots Football Festival which aims to identify and nurture young talent from Myanmar was organized at the Taunggyi Stadium in Taunggyi yesterday.

The festival was supervised by the Myanmar Football Federation (MFF). Officials from Taunggyi, the MFF, players, and coaches from basic education schools in Taunggyi took part in the festival yesterday.

The event was well-attended, with children kicking balls into the net, eager to flaunt their skills.

The festival concluded in the afternoon after extensive training by instructors and coaches.

Grassroots Football Festivals are being organised to use the power of soccer to educate, inspire, and mobilise youth in Myanmar to overcome health challenges, live productive lives, and be agents of change in Myanmar’s communities, said Dr. Myo Tun, Shan State Minister for Social Affairs.

Grassroots Festivals have been held in Yangon, Mandalay, and Mawlamyaing, said a source with the MFF.

The MFF plans to hold similar events later in other cities in different states and regions.—Lynn Thit(Tgi)

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**Shan United head coach eyes young talent for AFC Cup**

SHAN United plans to use talented young players in some crucial matches, including the upcoming AFC Cup, which starts 26 January, said head coach U Min Thu.

“I want young players to get big match experiences. If they try, they will become worthy of playing in such matches. By using them in some big matches, my team can narrow the gap between senior and young players,” he said.

In the previous 2018 AFC Cup, Shan United suffered a big loss: five defeats and one win out of six matches played.

“Targeting every home plays is important. We will grab full marks in home play,” said U Min Thu. Shan United was placed in Groups G during the drawing ceremony of the 2019 AFC Cup held on 22 November at the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Shan United will compete together with Viet Nam Club BecamexBinh Duong, a club from the Philippines Cere Ne-gros or Davao Aguilas, and the champion or third place team from the Indonesian club.—Lynn Thit(Tgi)

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**Ronaldo, Mandzukic on target as Juventus ease past SPAL**

ROME (Italy)—Cristiano Ronaldo continued his hot form for Juventus on Saturday as he and Mario Mandzukic scored both goals in the second consecutive game to help the Serie A leaders open up a nine-point lead at the top of the table with a 2-0 win over struggling SPAL.

Ronaldo slotted home Miralem Pjanic’s free-kick after 29 minutes in Turin to join Genoa’s Krzysztof Piatek at the top of the Serie A scoring charts with nine goals, before Mandzukic sealed the three points on the hour mark in a simple warm up for Tuesday’s crucial Champions League visit of Valencia. The pair also scored both in Juventus’ 2-0 win over AC Milan before the international break, and Ronaldo’s strike was his seventh in as many games in all competitions for his new club, for a total of ten goals this season.

“Cristiano does things that catch opponents off guard and that’s exactly what we need,” said coach Massimiliano Allegri. “Sometimes we play one pass too many and the moment is lost. “Cristiano moves and thinks so quickly, he saw Douglas Costa coming out the corner of his eye and pulled the pass back. We need to all improve in that sense, being able to think ahead to the next move.”

SPAL, fighting relegation, were no match for Allegri’s reigning champions who are nine points ahead of Napoli, with Carlo Ancelotti’s side gunning to close the gap when they play bottom club Chievo on Sunday. Following his opener, 33-year-old Ronaldo sent wide a chance for a brace after the break.

But he played a role in the second goal scored by Mandzukic, who was wearing the captain’s armband for the first time. Ronaldo latched onto a long ball and pulled it back for Douglas Costa, whose shot was cleared into the path of Mandzukic and gobbled up by the Croatian. “The opening goal changed the game and I was very angry that we were slow to react and allowed Ronaldo to go clear,” said SPAL coach Leonardo Semplici.

“It’s the first time I’ve seen Ronaldo up close and my forwards should learn from the attitude that a champion like this puts into every game.” We need to improve on the details if we want to avoid being put under pressure.” Roma suffered a setback ahead of Tuesday’s Champions League game against holders Real Madrid at the Stadio Olimpico, falling to a 1-0 defeat at Udinese.

Eusebio Di Francesco’s side were sluggish against the hosts, who pulled away from the relegation zone thanks to Argentine Rodrigo De Paul’s 44th-minute goal. “When you have almost 80 per cent possession in the first half, what you lack is determination to finish the game,” Di Francesco said after his side drop to seventh, 18 points behind Juve. Later on Saturday third-placed Inter Milan take on second-from-bottom Frosinone.—AFP