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CABINET GETS GREEN LIGHT

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves appointment of proposed cabinet members

THE Pyidaungsu Hluttaw yesterday gave its nod of approval to the list of union ministers put forward by the president-elect.

The announcement came two days after president-elect U

Htin Kyaw submitted the list of his 18-member cabinet to the parliament for approval. The proposal met with unanimous support.

The proposed union ministers are Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Dr

Aung Thu, U Thant Sin Maung, Thura U Aung Ko, U Ohn Win, U Thein Swe, U Kyaw Win, U Khin Maung Cho, Dr Myint Htwe, U Win Khaing, Dr Win Myat Aye, U Ohn Maung, Dr Than Myint, Na-

ing Thet Lwin, Dr Phay Myint, Lt-Gen Sein Win, Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe and Lt-Gen Ye Aung.

The speaker announced the list of members to the constitutional tribunal. The final decision

will be made in today's session.

According to the constitution, the president and the two speakers of both houses are to propose three names each.—*Myanmar News Agency*



A fishing boat is seen at a jetty in Thailand. PHOTO: INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION

Myanmar fishing slaves in Indonesia to go home, “tip of the iceberg”

Alisa Tang

BANGKOK — A final group of 24 fishing boat slaves is preparing to return home to Myanmar this week from Indonesia, aid workers said at a trafficking meeting in Bali, one of them calling the 1,200 slaves repatriated since last year the “tip of the iceberg”.

Hundreds of migrants seeking work have been exploited or enslaved aboard fishing boats in Southeast Asian seas in recent years, their plight emerging in a growing number of media and other reports.

These reports, and a shift in Indonesian government policy in 2014, brought the scale of the problem to light, including the fact that many trafficked and enslaved fishery workers were stranded in Indonesia.

Some of the 24 Myanmar nationals expected to leave on Thursday have not spoken to their families since leaving Myanmar in search of work a decade ago, only to be duped into years of brutal, unpaid labour on fishing vessels.

“The departure of these men will bring to an end one chapter

of this tragic story,” Mark Getchell, head of the International Organization for Migration in Indonesia, said on Tuesday at the sixth ministerial conference of the Bali process on people smuggling and trafficking.

“But all the evidence suggests this is the tip of the iceberg, and much work needs to be done across the region to better protect the rights of migrant workers and ensure there is no repeat of the abuses they were subjected to over so many years.”

Southeast Asia, one of the world's largest sources of sea-

food, has struggled to control “illegal, unreported and unregulated” fishing.

In late 2014 Indonesia issued a moratorium on foreign vessels fishing off its coast, forcing several to port and leaving hundreds of men stuck in the port of Ambon, and blowing up boats fishing illegally in its waters.

Separately, media reports described hundreds of fishing slaves kept in captivity, buried in unmarked graves or marooned on Benjina, an island in eastern Indonesia.

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Meningococcal disease kills eight children in Mandalay Region

Aung Thant Khaing

NEISSERIA meningitis, a serious and potentially life-threatening infection has claimed lives of eight children in Mandalay as of Wednesday, with another child suspected of developing the infection under surveillance in Patheingyi Township, according to an official from the Mandalay Region Public Health Department.

Cases have been reported since 5 March in six villages in Thasi Township, said Dr Win Naing, head of the department, adding that a patient in Meiktila Township was detected as having Neisseria meningitis type A bacteria, one of the five types that cause meningococcal disease.

“The disease is commonly found in dry zones. The recent outbreaks are of the vaccine-preventable Type B variety which have occurred in dusty villages of the township”, said Dr Win Naing, calling for greater care to be given in regard to personal hygiene and staying away from dusty spaces.

“Those suspected of having the infectious disease are undergoing special treatment in addition to laboratory tests.”

Medical staff are currently making field trips to the villages with suspected patients being removed to nearby hospitals for special treatment. Blood tests are being taken from infected patients and their family members, said the department.

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Build rural access roads instead of building more flyovers, regional MP says

FUNDS should be allocated to the construction of village-to-township roads instead of constructing two more planned flyovers in Yangon, said a parliamentarian at the Yangon Region Hluttaw session yesterday.

It has been found that building more flyovers will not ease congestion in Yangon completely, said U Yan Shin of Mayangon Township Constituency 1, stressing the need to reconsider the construction of flyovers as traffic systems are going to be upgraded.

The Yangon Region government has planned to build two flyovers in Yangon during this fiscal year, requesting a budget of K32.2 billion for bridges on Kaba-Aye Pagoda Road and at North Okkalapa junction.

U Nyi Nyi of Dagon Myothit (South) echoed the suggestion, calling for the fulfillment

of needs in road transport, health care services and infrastructure development for sewerage instead of spending large sums of money on costly and intrusive flyover construction.

According to sources, K15.75 billion is set for an overpass at the junction between Kaba-Aye Pagoda road and Parami Road and K16.45 billion for another overpass at North Okkalapa junction.

Experts pointed out that traffic jams in Yangon are attributed mostly to weak enforcement and non-adherence to traffic rules, by bus drivers and bus-stops being built in unsystematic patterns.

Traffic systems installed at 8 Mile junction with the assistance of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) can ease congestion to a certain extent, they said.

The Yangon government

spent K104.291 billion on construction of six flyovers—Hledan, Myaynigon, Bayintnaung, Shwegondine, Kokkai and 8 Mile—in Yangon, with 22.5 billion set for the Tamwe flyover which is still under construction.

During a parliamentary session on Tuesday, Daw Sandar Min, chair of Yangon Region Hluttaw's finance, planning and economic committee, called for a review of the regional government's requested budget for 2016-2017 FY. According to the regional government, a project worth K20 billion for the establishment of a control centre for 154 traffic lights in Yangon is being implemented by the Myanmar Shwe Ying company in cooperation with the China Railway Construction Company (CRCC), with a schedule of completing the project within six months.—*Ko Moe*

Inspection team to be formed to determine extent of structural damage to Mandalay Mingalar market

AN inspection team will be formed to assess and release a report on the salvageability of the fire-ravaged Mingalar Market according to a meeting of the Mandalay City Development Committee on Wednesday.

The team is set to be made up of officials and engineers from the Mandalay City Development Committee, the Ministry of Construction, the Myanmar Engineering Society and University of Technology (Mandalay).

The market requires an inspection and a grading of structural integrity following serious damage caused by a massive fire that occurred on Tuesday, said U Khin Maung Tin, MCDC's secretary, adding that a decision will be made after determining

the extent of damage of the gutted building.

There should be no need to demolish or restructure Yangon's Mingalar market, said U Thant Zin Htway, joint secretary of the MES (Mandalay) based on a preliminary inspection.

However, it is required that an evaluation of fire damage be carried out to determine the buildings safety, he added.

During the meeting Associate Professor Dr Hla Myo Aung of the Mandalay University of Technology informed the panel that the strength of a building decreases by around 20 per cent after a fire that reaches temperatures of around 150 to 200 degrees centigrade.

—*Aung Thant Khaing*

Thingyan crack down unlicensed alcohol shops in Tanintharyi

IN a bid to reduce the sale of unlicensed beers and spirits in Myanmar's southern Tanintharyi Region during Thingyan Water Festival, the Regional Police Department has made it known they will be stepping up security measures.

The police department of Tanintharyi Region will be carrying out education awareness talks throughout districts in the region in a bid to mitigate the selling of illegal beers and spirits. "We will try to mitigate as best as we can the presence of unlicensed beer and spirit shops

nearby water stages and podiums during the Thingyan period. We will also be conducting sweeps in the vicinities of such stages on the look out for bombs," said chief of the Tanintharyi Regional Police Department.

The police will first prohibit the selling of illegal alcohol, while shops will be closed down, and alcohol confiscated, should a shop be caught continuing to sell such alcohol after being issued with a warning. The next step on persistent sellers of illegal alcohol will be legal action, it is known.

"Police officers don't get a day off during Thingyan. They will work in shifts. We will also be picking up any bottles or stick like implements which could be used as weapons in quarrels that escalate into fights," the police chief continued. It is known that the police department will also carry out inspections on pharmacies in a bid to reduce the selling of libido drugs (Viagra, etc), while announcements will be made on the period during which water can be thrown. —*Myitmakha News Agency*



Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Kyaw Kyaw Tun is welcomed by Chargé d'affaires a.i. Mr Shakil Ahmed Siddiqui, of Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, at a reception to mark the Republic Day of Pakistan in Yangon on 23 March, 2016.

PHOTO: MNA

Mandalay Region Hluttaw forms four committees

THE second Mandalay Region Hluttaw's first regular session was held yesterday with the formation of four parliamentary committees.

The committees formed will be made up of seven members each. They are the Public Affairs Committee, the Public Accounts Committee, the Agriculture and Livestock Breeding Committee and the Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Committee.

The Mandalay Region Hluttaw session continues today. —*Aung Thant Khaing*



Visitors check pamphlets displayed at closing ceremony for Reinforcement of Research Ability for Communicable Diseases at the Department of Medical Research (DMR). PHOTO: SUPPLIED

KOICA-PNU holds Closing Ceremony for Reinforcement of Research Ability for Communicable Diseases

THE Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and Pusan National University (PNU) held a closing ceremony for the Reinforcement of Research Ability for Communicable Diseases at the Department of Medical Research (DMR) in Yangon yesterday.

Director of the DMR U Kyaw Zin Thant, Resident Representative of the KOICA Myanmar Office Ms. Chun Ji-heh, and other officials attended the ceremony to celebrate the successful program.

KOICA completed the Project on Establishment of Molecu-

lar Laboratory for Communicable Diseases in Myanmar from 2011 to 2014 with a budget of US\$3 million to establish a Laboratory for Research on Communicable Diseases. And as its follow-up program the PNU has implemented an Academy-Partnership program called Reinforcement of Research Ability for Communicable Diseases with KOICA in order to implement joint studies between Korea and Myanmar and to strengthen capacity for the diagnosis and management of the three epidemics of tuberculosis, malaria, and viral hepatitis in Myanmar.—*GNLM*

Dr Sai Mauk Kham attends BFA Annual Conference in China



Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham and leaders of China, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Viet Nam, Malaysia, Nepal and Australia pose for photo at Boao Forum for Asia. PHOTO: MNA

VICE President Dr Sai Mauk Kham yesterday addressed the opening of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2016 in Sanya, China.

The conference also drew addresses from the presidents and leaders of China, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Viet Nam, Malaysia, Nepal and Australia.

The vice president, together with other heads of governments, attended a luncheon hosted by by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang.

Dr Sai Mauk Kham and his entourage went on a study tour of the Xinglong Tropical Botanical Garden, where officials took them around the museum. The garden is regarded not only as a place for scientific research into tropical plants but also a public recreation centre.

The vice president also visited the Nanshan Buddhist Temple, where he paid obeisance to the presiding monk and made some financial contributions.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Military columns hold full-dress rehearsal for 71st Anniversary Armed Forces Day Parade

A FULL-dress rehearsal of the 71st Anniversary Armed Forces Day Parade which falls on 27 March was held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday with parade columns marching to the Nay Pyi Taw parade ground.

Six parade columns—Anawrahta, Kyansittha, Bayinnaung, Aung Zeya, Hsinbyushin and Aung San— took part in the full-dress rehearsal.

Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win inspected the parade columns and gave instructions.

Servicemen and service-women from the Armed Forces (Army, Navy and Air), Myanmar Police Force, Navy SEALs and armoured vehicles participated in the rehearsal.—*Myawady*

Myanmar fishing slaves in Indonesia to go home, “tip of the iceberg”

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The IOM, at the request of Indonesia and with support from Australia, has identified, assisted and repatriated more than 1,200 trafficking victims from Ambon and Benjina, the organisation said in a statement. Most of the men are from Myanmar, some from Cambodia and Thailand.

The IOM said it “strongly suspects” an additional 800 foreign nationals repatriated by fishing companies and through other means were also trafficking victims.

“No effort should be spared to pursue the companies involved and demand they compensate all of these unfortunate individuals who lost years of their lives to traffickers, solely to increase the profit margins of these companies,” Getchell said.

The IOM, acknowledging the need for labour on fishing boats, called for regional governments to come together to address this issue in forums like the Bali process conference, said Paul Dillon, IOM spokesman in Indonesia.—*Reuters*

Meningococcal disease kills eight children in Mandalay Region

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According to figures, 14 cases were reported in six villages. Eight people have died of the disease in Mandalay since 1992. An outbreak in 2001 claimed one life while a further outbreak in 2002 claimed seven.

Since 2000, meningococcal outbreaks have sporadically cropped up in Myanmar causing 34 deaths in 391 cases nation wide. 11 among 25 total infected died in 2001 while 22 among 53 infected died in 2002.

President U Thein Sein sends felicitations to Hellenic President

U THEIN SEIN, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Prokopis Pavlopoulos, President of the Hellenic Republic, on the occasion of the National Day of Hellenic Republic, which falls on 25th March, 2016.—*Myanmar News Agency*

President U Thein Sein felicitates Hellenic Prime Minister

U THEIN SEIN, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, on the occasion of the National Day of Hellenic Republic, which falls on 25th March, 2016.—*Myanmar News Agency*

FM felicitates Hellenic counterpart

U WUNNA MAUNG LWIN, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr Nikos Kotzias, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, on the occasion of the National Day of the Hellenic Republic, which falls on 25th March, 2016.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Myanmar Gazette

1. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has transferred the following persons as heads of service organisations shown against each from the date they assume charge of their duties.

Name	Appointment
(a) U Aung Aung Director General Planning and Currency Department Central Bank of Myanmar	Director General Management and Human Resources Development Department Central Bank of Myanmar
(b) Daw Than Than Swe Director General Monetary Management Department Central Bank of Myanmar	Director General Internal Audit Department Central Bank of Myanmar

2. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has confirmed the appointment of U Saw Naing as Director General of the Labour Relations Department under the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security on the expiry of the one-year probationary period.

3. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed the following persons as heads of service organisations shown against each on probation from the date they assume charge of their duties.

Name	Appointment
(a) U Mya Win Ministry of Defence	Rector University for Development of National Races of the Union (Sagaing) Education and Training Department Ministry of Border Affairs
(b) U Naing Kyi Win Deputy Director General Department of Agriculture Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation	Director General Agricultural Research Department Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation
(c) U Saw John Shwe Ba General Manager (Timber Extraction) Myanma Timber Enterprise Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry	Managing Director Myanma Timber Enterprise Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry
(d) U Yan Naing Tun Deputy Permanent Secretary Office of Union Minister Ministry of Commerce	Director General Directorate of Trade Ministry of Commerce
(e) U Min Min Oo Deputy Permanent Secretary Office of Union Minister Ministry of Mines	Managing Director Myanmar Pearl Manufacturing and Trading Ministry of Mines
(f) U Kyaw Htin Ministry of Defence	Director General Customs Department Ministry of Finance

Hearing-impaired children receive free cochlear implant surgery

YANGON'S Victoria Hospital recently offered free cochlear implant surgeries to young children with congenital hearing loss.

Four children under six years of age received the free surgical operation which was performed by an experienced medical team at Victoria Hospital on 19 March.

"We plan to provide our free services to 42 needy children over this year. Currently we have collected enough funds to help 38 children," said Dr Daw Aye Aye Win, chairwoman of Victoria Health Care

Foundation.

Funded by community donations, over 20 hearing-impaired children from low-income families have undergone the surgery since the cochlear implant programme was launched in 2014 with the aim of creating a better life for children born deaf or with hearing losses.

A cochlear implant is small electronic implant that acts as an artificial sound-vibration device in order to give a sense of sound to a person who is profoundly deaf or severely hard of hearing.

"The price for a single

pair of cochlear implant devices is US \$8,500 and the cost for the whole operation amounts to around K1 million," said Prof Soe Tin, chair of the programme.

"Surgery at a young age can bring about better results for children in the long term. The parents of the children will be instructed on how to provide care after the operation," he added. While the country's first cochlear implant operation was conducted some years ago the device was introduced to the world over 30 years ago.—*Soe Win (SP)*

Works of contemporary painters being showcased in Mandalay

A COLLECTIVE art exhibition is being held in Mandalay Region featuring paintings by contemporary artists including internationally known artist U Win Pe.

"Recent Paintings Mandalay" is having its last day today at the Mandalay Hill Art Gallery located at the foot of Mandalay Hill near the prominent lion statue of Aungmyethazan Township.

Over 100 modern works

are being exhibited by the five-member group of artists, those artists are—U Win Pe, U Ko Ko Gyi, U Sein Myint, Ko Thet Naing and K2K.

On sale is a modern art book written by U Win Pe, U Paw Oo Thet and U Khin Maung Yin.

The five-day event is open to the public between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. daily.—*Aung Thant Khaing*

Crime NEWS

Train collides with vehicle in Kyunhla

A TRAILER was involved in an accident with a train around 3:50pm in Kyunhla town, Sagaing region on Tuesday. According to an investigation the trailer was being driven by one Pho Thar alias Hlaing Min Wai, 22 when he lost control of the vehicle and collided with the train between milepost 499/1-2 in Padauk Myaing ward. The accident caused a train schedual delay of 43 minutes. The vehicle driver was deemed guilty of careless driving by local police.—*Myo Win Nyo (Kyunhla)*



The Trailer seen overturned. PHOTO: MYO WIN NYO (KYUNHLA)

Ice and yaba seized in Loilem

A LOCAL anti-drug squad at Ta Hsan gate seized ice weighing approximately 4.8 kilograms and 199,600 yaba pills from a vehicle on Mong Pan- Mong Tung road on Monday. According to an investigation the police said that the vehicle driver and his companion on board fled police when officers attempted to stopped the vehicle for questioning. The police arrested the driver Ain Zain Yar beside Thanlwin River while his friend Yar Wah Poe jumped into the Thanlwin River and escaped. Yar Wah Poe

is currently on the run and wanted for questioning.

Similarly, members of the police seized 20,000 yaba pills and 2.8 gram of opium oil from a motorbike being driven by one Lin Aung near Seikmu village, Phakant township on Sunday.

Likewise, police seized 3,900 yaba pills from a motorbike being driven by one Lauk Phin on Humon village road, Lashio on Monday. The police have filed charges against all suspects under the Anti-Narcotic law.—*Myanmar Police Force*



Lin Aung. PHOTO: MPF

Fire destroys home in Teng Long village, Muse

AN outbreak of fire caused by electrical short circuiting destroyed a home and a warehouse in Teng Long village, Muse on Tuesday. The incident reportedly occurred in the evening with the fire breaking in the home of Daw Nang Thein Han. The fire quick-

ly got out of control and engulfed a warehouse next to the family home. The fire was put out within one hour by firemen with the help of neighbours. The police have filed charges against Daw Nang Thein Hlan, 34.—*Sayar Maung (Muse)*



Fire seen breaking out in Lashio. PHOTO: SAYAR MAUNG (MUSE)

House destroyed in fire in Kawthaung

A FIRE destroyed a house on Kyansithar road in Thiri Myaing ward, Kawthaung town on Monday.

According to an investigation the fire broke out when U Nyi Nyi Zaw left his home without putting out a small controlled fire (for cooking, etc).

The fire was brought under control by firemen with the help of local residents.

Action is being taken against the home owner who will be charged under the relevant law.—*Kyaw Soe (Kawthaung)*

Social welfare society's vehicle plunges into ravine

A VEHICLE belonging to the Thukha Yegyi Social Welfare Society en route to Monywa from Htan Taw Ma village, driven by one Ko Zaw Khine plunged over the edge of the road into a ravine between mileposts 58/2 and 58/3, at the

bend of Yaypoke creek and Sarlingyi- Kyar Tet Thwar road on Tuesday after the driver lost control of the vehicle. Nobody was injured in the accident. Police have filed charges against Ko Zaw Khine.—*U Nge (Sarlingyi)*

LOCAL Business



A farmer prepares to plant sugarcane in a farmland. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

Sugar re-export on the rise

Aung Thant Khaing

SUGAR re-export is on the rise again, a change noted since 20 March. Myanmar legally re-exports imported sugar from India and Thailand to China via two routes: The Tamu-Monywa-Mandalay-Muse route and the Kawthaung-Yangon-Mandalay-Muse route, according to Mandalay Sugar commodity depot.

The price of sugar per viss (approximately 1.6 kilograms) fell from around K1200 to around K1060 between 9 and 18 February. The price rose a little bit, according to sources, to K1070-1090 on 21 March. The price of re-export is K 20-30 higher than locally refined sugar.

"This is the high sugar yield season in Thailand. The price has dropped in Thailand due to the low de-

mand from China. We re-export the sugar to China by purchasing the produce from Thai and India because local sugar does not meet export quality, said U Htay from the Mandalay sugar commodity depot.

Great-Wall sugar and Pale sugar produced in Myanmar are of export quality and so exported to China in small batches. Sugar produced in Thailand and India can meet export quality on a much larger scale as they use more advanced refining techniques. Most of the sugar produced in the country has local market interest only.

The price of sugar depends on both the exchange rate and the demand from China. Usually, the price declines when demand is low. Now the price has risen, said Ko Ye Min Aung, a Tine Kyaw

sugar mill owner.

Sugar mill owners purchase the sugarcane from Ngar-oe, Myataung, Maungkon, Moehtar, Kyaukhtonegyi and Innywar. They produce sugar mainly for the local market as Myanmar sugar does not look appealing. Myanmar also lacks advanced refining machinery. Sugar manufactures from other nations make sugar directly from sugar cane. In Myanmar, however, the sugarcane is crushed for juice and it is from the liquid that the sugar is produced.

Transportation float between K70 to K100 per viss due to Mandalay-Muse road traffic jams. A bag of sugar weighing 50 kilogram sells for Yuan 200. The unstable Yuan exchange rate, high transportation charges and taxes are the main causes of current low profit in the industry.

Palm oil price rises

THE price of imported palm oil is currently high as the yield of palm tree oil has declined due to the effects of El Nino. Palm oil per FOB tonne is expected to usually get around \$650 between end of February and second week of March. The price rise has seen it get up to \$690 (K1565) as of 21 March.

The landed cost price of imported palm oil is around K1480 per viss (aprox. 1.6 kilograms) between the end of February

and the second week of March.

Wholesale price of palm oil per viss at Yangon Market is around K1585 and the retail price is K1605, it has been learned from brokers.

A company distributing directly from Bayintnaung sold out their palm oil at a wholesale price of K1505 as of the second week of March. The company halted sales in the third week, said a merchant from a township in Yangon.—Khin Saing

Animal-feed plant to be established within Myotha Industrial Park

AN animal feed plant is currently being constructed within the Myotha Industrial Park project in Myingyan Township, Mandalay Region, according to the regional government.

The construction of the new factory was initiated on 17 acres of land within the industrial park.

The Myotha Industrial Park has been developed and run by the Mandalay Region Government and Mandalay Myotha Industrial Development Public

Co. It will be a mixed use industrial park covering over 10,000 acres. Plans are afoot to open the park soon.

"A garment factory and related businesses will also be established on over 2,000 acres of land within the project area," said a spokesperson from the Mandalay Region Government.

Currently, construction companies are in negotiation with landowners, one of project implementers said.—200

Cross-border trade increases US\$500 million this Fiscal Year

THE volume of trade conducted at Myanmar's official cross-border trade points with its regional neighbours has seen an increase of US\$500 million over the last Fiscal Year according to official figures released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Up to 11 March this year the total volume of cross-border trade has reached US\$6.56 billion, including \$4.15 billion coming from imports and \$2.4

billion resulting from exports.

This number, according to the figures, is higher than during the same period last fiscal year. The country earned \$6.14 billion from cross-border trade over the 2014-2015 FY.

Muse, located in northern Shan State is a border town between Myanmar and China and is the biggest trade camp of its kinds in Myanmar.—NG/Union Daily

Local real estate market to become active again soon: experts

DOMESTIC property agents have claimed that the current cooling of the real estate market in Yangon can be expected to reverse within the next six months.

According to experts, direct foreign investment is likely to flow into the domestic market when the next government takes power.

"Aside from land and rental properties, the rest of the market is experiencing a slow down," one real estate agent said. "Local property rental fees are ex-

pected to stay above the rate of normal fees in future."

Currently, construction companies and investors are monitoring the market situation which is expected to see eight per cent growth this year, according to the property website House.com.mm.

The country's property market has boomed in recent years causing room, house, land and apartment prices to skyrocket. Owing to low demand, the market has been on the decline since late 2014.—ML/Union Daily

United Kingdom tops list of EU-Myanmar investment

THE United Kingdom tops the list of European member states making investments in Myanmar according to the Myanmar Investment Commission.

The UK stands first with over 4 billion US dollars invested followed by the Netherlands (\$989 million), France (\$541m), Luxembourg (\$45m), Switzerland (\$14m) and Norway (\$11m).

Investment from European countries in Myanmar has significantly increased over the past

11 months.

Between April and February of this fiscal year investment from EU countries reached nearly \$6 billion.

Among over 40 foreign investors China stands first with over US\$15 billion worth of investment followed by Singapore with over \$12 billion.

So far foreign direct investment from 43 countries world wide has come into Myanmar, most of which went into

the country's oil and gas sector which attracted over \$19 billion into 151 development projects. The next biggest was the energy sector securing \$19 billion in investment.

Myanmar has received a total of over \$23.84 billion in foreign direct investment between the 2011-2012 FY and the 2015-2016 FY, according to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.—NG/Union Daily

North Korea claims rocket engine success; South Korea on high alert

SEOUL — North Korea successfully tested a solid-fuel engine that boosted the power of its ballistic rockets, state media reported yesterday, as South Korea's president ordered the military to be ready to respond to the North's "reckless provocation".

Pyongyang's claim indicates it is continuing to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) at a rapid pace in defiance of UN sanctions, and amid assessment by the South's officials that it could conduct a new nuclear test at any time.

The isolated state has in recent weeks stepped up bellicose rhetoric, threatening pre-emptive nuclear strikes against Washington and Seoul, as well as making claims of advancement in its weapons technology.

The Rodong Sinmun, the North's ruling party newspaper, carried photos of leader Kim Jong Un on site as a rocket engine laid horizontally on the ground emitted a fiery blast. A two-page report detailed the testing of the engine's structure and thrust.

"He noted with great pleasure that the successful test ... helped boost the power of ballistic rockets capable of mercilessly striking hostile forces," KCNA news agency said.

The North said last week it



A rocket is launched during a demonstration of a new large-caliber multiple rocket launching system attended by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (not pictured) at an unknown location, in this undated photo released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on 22 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

had conducted a successful simulated test of atmospheric re-entry of a ballistic missile, and would soon test ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

On Wednesday, the North repeated the threat to attack the South's presidential office, saying its large-calibre multiple rocket launch systems are on alert to strike the Blue House and its special operations unit is

ready to go into action.

South Korean President Park Geun-hye ordered a heightened state of alert and put the military on standby to "respond actively to reckless provocations by the North," according to her office.

The current tension on the peninsula follows the United Nations Security Council's recent imposition of tough new sanctions against the North over its

nuclear and missile programmes, and as South Korea and the United States conduct annual joint military drills.

The North calls the exercises "nuclear war moves" and has threatened to respond with an all-out offensive, as well as a series of rocket launches in recent days.

Pyongyang has previously launched long-range rockets that used liquid fuel but it was seen to

lack the capability to build solid-fuel long-range or intercontinental missiles.

Solid-fuel rockets have advantages in military use, although liquid fuel rockets are considered more sophisticated as their thrust can be controlled in flight.

The North has deployed short and medium-range missiles and test fired them, but never flight-tested the KN-08 ICBM it is believed to be developing.

The KN-08, which has been put on display at military parades and in official news media, appears to have a three-stage design that is likely intended to use solid fuel, according to experts.

Despite its boasts to be making progress, many experts believe the North is a decade or more away from building an ICBM capable of threatening the United States.

The North's stepped-up rhetoric and weapons claims come ahead of its planned congress of the ruling Workers' Party, which will be the first in more than 35 years.

Some Pyongyang-watchers say the North may look to claim a splashy achievement, such as a fifth nuclear test, in the run-up to the conference as young leader Kim Jong Un looks to bolster his legitimacy domestically. —Reuters

GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Chief Executive Officer -

Nakagawa Kiyoshi
gnlmdaily@gmail.com

Chief Editor - Khin Maung Aye
khinmaungaye@hotmail.com

Deputy Chief Editor - Aye Min Soe
koayeminsoe2006@gmail.com

Chief Reporter
Ye Myint, uyemyint76@gmail.com,

Consultant Editors
Jacob Goldberg

jgold.news@gmail.com
Alec Wilmot

alec.wilmot.gnlm@gmail.com

Editors

Ye Htut Tin
mryehtuttin@gmail.com

Kyaw Thura, kthura.spk@gmail.com,

International news

Tun Tun Naing
tunyunaing@gmail.com

Reporters

Khaing Thanda Lwin
juniorlwin25@gmail.com

Tun Aung Kyaw
tunaungkyaw.31@gmail.com

Translators

Hay Mar Tin Win
haymarfat@gmail.com

Proof reader

Nwe Nwe Tun

Computer Team

Tun Zaw, Thein Ngwe,
Zaw Zaw Aung,

Ye Naing Soe, Nyi Zaw Moe,
Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win,
Sanda Hnin, Zu Zin Hnin

Circulation & Advertising

San Lwin (+95) (01) 8604532

Ads and subscription enquiries:

adv.gnlm@gmail.com

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Australia says Mozambique debris likely from missing MH370

SYDNEY — Australia said yesterday debris recovered this month in Mozambique was highly likely to be from missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, while Malaysia called for a stepped up search of Africa's coast for clues to the plane's fate.

Official analysis found two pieces of debris were "almost certainly from MH370", Australian infrastructure and transport minister Darren Chester said in a statement, referring to the Boeing Co 777 that vanished in March 2014 with 239 people on board.

"That such debris has been found on the east coast of Africa is consistent with drift modeling ... and further affirms our search efforts in the southern Indian Ocean," Chester said.

The flight disappeared en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, creating one of the most baffling mysteries in aviation history.

Investigators believe someone may have deliberately switched off the plane's transponder before diverting it thousands of miles off course, out over the Indian Ocean.

A search, led by Australia and one of the most expensive ever conducted, has focused on a 120,000-sq-km (46,330-sq-mile) band of sea floor in the

remote southern Indian Ocean.

In 2015, French authorities said a wing part found on the Indian Ocean island of Reunion was part of the plane.

The Mozambique debris was examined by investigators from Australia and Malaysia, as well as specialists from Boeing, Geoscience Australia and the Australian National University in Canberra.

The discovery is likely to add to pressure from the public for the search to go on beyond a mid-2016 schedule for it to be wound up. Most of those on board were from China.

"If they don't find the plane in the area where they're searching now, they and others need to continue to look," said US adventurer Blaine Alan Gibson, who found one of the new pieces of debris this month on his own independent search.

"They've got to solve this mystery. We can't give up after the current search area is completed," Gibson added in a telephone interview, shortly after being told by the authorities that his discovery matched the plane.

Malaysian Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai said the coasts of South Africa and Mozambique should be searched and Malaysia wanted to send a team.

"We are currently awaiting



A piece of debris found by a South African family off the Mozambique coast in December 2015, which authorities will examine to see if it is from missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, is pictured in this handout photo released to Reuters on 11 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

approval from the South African authorities," Liow said. "The coastal search will be by a Malaysian team and focused around South Africa and Mozambique."

Liow, however, said the location of the underwater search need not be changed.

The piece of debris that Gibson found is a white, metre-long chunk of metal with "No Step" printed on it. It arrived in Aus-

tralia for testing this week, along with another piece of debris found in Mozambique soon after.

"I can't use the word happy to describe how I feel, because that means that the plane crashed, and that the plane crashed in a forceful impact," Gibson said.

"I'd use the word 'hopeful'." —Reuters

Hong Kong press freedom seen to have deteriorated last year — survey

HONG KONG — Hong Kong residents and journalists believe the state of press freedom deteriorated in the city for a second straight year in 2015, a survey by a media group showed, apparently a reflection of general unease in the city about mainland Chinese control.

While there were no major attacks on the media last year, the case of five city booksellers who published gossip books about Chinese leaders, and who went missing only to reappear in mainland Chinese custody, contributed to an undermining of faith in free speech, said an official of the Hong Kong Journalists Association, which conducted the survey.

“The squeeze in the newsroom is now so telling in newspapers and TV programmes that

members of the public can sense it,” association vice chairwoman Shirley Yam, told Reuters.

Fifty-four per cent of the public and 85 per cent of journalists believed press freedom deteriorated in Hong Kong last year, as measured by a press freedom index, according to the survey released on Tuesday.

The survey of more than 1,000 residents and hundreds of journalists found that self-censorship was more common, with the greatest concern being over criticising China’s Communist Party-run government.

Former British colony Hong Kong returned to Chinese rule in 1997 under a “one country, two systems” formula meant to preserve its freedoms.

Mainland China has rejected calls for full democracy in a 2017

city election compounding concern about what many residents see as growing mainland restrictions.

The mainland government and Hong Kong’s pro-Beijing city government have dismissed such concerns.

The Hong Kong government said on Wednesday it was firmly committed to safeguarding press freedom.

“Every endeavour should be made for journalists to report news professionally and accurately under the principle of editorial autonomy,” a government spokesman said.

In response to the case of the booksellers, China has said its law enforcement officials would never do anything illegal, especially overseas. —Reuters



Journalists take pictures of a Correctional Services van departing the high court in Hong Kong, China, in August 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Cambodia’s anti-corruption agency to investigate deputy opposition leader for alleged corruption

PHNOM PENH — Cambodia’s Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) Chairman Om Yenteng announced yesterday that the agency will launch a probe into deputy opposition leader and lawmaker Kem Sokha for allegedly committing corruption.

“The ACU decides to accept the complaint filed by the group of students against Kem Sokha,” he said in a meeting, adding that as a lawmaker, Sokha had previously declared his asset to the ACU three times in 2011, 2013 and 2015.

Yenteng said the ACU will

open an asset declaration by Sokha. The investigation was made after ACU experts concluded that recently leaked audio recordings of alleged telephone conversation between Sokha and mistresses are “authentic.”

A group of university students lodged a complaint to the ACU last week, requesting for an investigation into Sokha, deputy leader of the kingdom’s main opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party, for alleging committing corruption.

The complaint said that audio recordings suggested that

Sokha buy land, houses and a car for his mistresses with funds from unknown sources.

On Monday, the National Assembly also asked Sokha to clarify about the audio clips in which he allegedly spoke with mistresses, discussing sex, pregnancy and paying for an apartment.

Sokha has remained silent on the sex scandal since a series of audio recordings between him and mistresses went viral on the Internet since early this month.

Moreover, he has advised supporters not to respond to provocations.—Xinhua

Japanese held in Turkey for trying to join Islamic State

CAIRO — Turkish security forces have detained a Japanese man attempting to join the Islamic State extremist group near the Syrian border, Turkish media reported Wednesday.

The 23-year-old man was detained with several Syrians late Tuesday in the Nizip district of Gaziantep Province in southern Turkey, according to the media reports.

The Japanese government has confirmed the man’s detainment by Turkish authorities through its embassy in Turkey, Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters in Tokyo yesterday morning.

A senior Foreign Ministry official said, however, that he is not aware of the man’s motive, including whether he wanted to join the Islamic State, adding, “The Turkish authorities are looking into it.”

A Japanese government source said the man was from Wakayama Prefecture south of Osaka, and that after being deported by Turkey, he may return to Japan as soon as Thursday night on a flight to Kansai International Airport in Osaka Prefecture.

After his detainment, the man was handed over to immigration authorities in Gaziantep, according to Anadolu news

agency.

According to the reports, the Japanese man had made contact with the militant group through social media and was trying to go to Syria via Turkey. Police confirmed by examining his mobile phone that he had made contact with the extremists.

The man said during an interrogation that a Syrian person he made contact with convinced him to join the group, Dogan News Agency reported. He was captured during a search of a suspicious car.

Images published by several media organisations show a man wearing glasses kneeling on the ground with his hands above his head while armed guards stand near him. The media reports identified him only as “M.M.”

It is believed to be the first case in which foreign security authorities have detained a Japanese citizen for trying to join the extremist group.

In October 2014, Japanese police questioned a Hokkaido University student and several others, and raided several locations in Japan as part of a police investigation into allegations the student planned to travel to Syria to fight for the group. —Kyodo News

New Zealand rejects flag change: preliminary referendum results

WELLINGTON — New Zealand looked set to keep its current national flag after the preliminary results of a referendum released yesterday indicated 56.6 per cent of people voted against changing it.

After two postal vote referendums, one to choose an alternate design and another to decide whether to make the change, voters opted to retain the current flag featuring the Union Jack and Southern Cross constellation.

The second referendum saw 67.3 per cent of eligible New Zealanders participate.

The alternate flag design was created by Australia-based New Zealander Kyle Lockwood and included a New Zealand silver fern and the Southern Cross on a black and blue background.

Polling prior to the result had shown a strong majority in favor of keeping the current design.

Political analyst Jon Johansson of the University of Wellington said the decision not

to change is not necessarily an endorsement of the current flag.

“What comes through really loud and clear is that the alternative flag choice is so mediocre that young voters particularly, but also people who want New Zealand to become a republic, regard voting against change, voting for the status quo, as the best way of preserving their future choices when we discuss a republic,” he said.

Voter Anthony Wong, 21, agrees with Johansson. “I merely voted for the old flag in the hope that in the future there will be another attempt to change it to something I feel better represents New Zealand,” he said.

The flag change has been a key policy for Prime Minister John Key and, despite stepping back from the debate in recent weeks, he has been a strong supporter of the Lockwood-designed flag.

The official, final result of the referendum will be announced Wednesday. —Kyodo News

OPINION

Just step up the tempo of reform

Kyaw Thura

THE Pyidaungsu Hluttaw yesterday was unanimous in giving the green light to the list of cabinet members proposed by the president-elect, with Speaker U Mahn Win Khaing Than declaring that all the 18 nominees

were appointed as union ministers.

President-elect U Htin Kyaw proposed that his new cabinet be formed with 21 ministries, four of which will be held by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, chairperson of the ruling party National League for Democracy (NLD), while the three ministries of home affairs, defense and border affairs will be under the control of three lieutenant-generals. There are 36 ministries under the incumbent government.

The announcement sparked a barrage of criticisms and doubts on social media of her calibre for the posts. On the other hand, her supporters responded with their absolute confidence in her capacity and efficiency with which she would handle the four ministries. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will hold office as union minister for foreign affairs, education, electric power and energy, and president office.

Nevertheless, the Lady's fertile imaginations hatched over the past 25 years cannot be overes-

timated. It is better to practice a wait-and-see policy in anticipation that the whole lot of her ambitious parliamentarians are waiting in the wings. Nevertheless, it is better for each of us to become a cog in the machine so that the incoming government will be able to step up the tempo of the reform ignited by the outgoing government.

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email khinmaungaye@hotmail@gmail.com with your name and title.

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.

Bagan, the glory of magical Myanmar

Myo Myint

NO history of Myanmar is complete without recounting the greatness of the Bagan period (9th to 13th century AD). So also for foreign tourists, no visit to Myanmar, however perfect, it may be is complete without seeing the ancient landscape of Bagan be-decked with the spires of over 2200 pagodas and temples within a radius of about two and a half miles, a sight unparalleled in the world that will always remain in the visitors' memory. So also, for a Myanmar Buddhist, life is not fully lived unless he/she has worshipped in the famed ancient pagodas of Bagan and seen for themselves their ancestors' strong faith in Buddhism.

Lured by Bagan's glorious history, legends, its pagoda-studded landscape, thousands of Buddha images and stone inscriptions of pagoda donors, royal and humble, I have travelled there three times, with a gap of about a decade after every visit. The first visit was in 1991, the second in 2004 and the third a couple of weeks ago. The first visit was made memorable entering dreamlike the old city through the ancient Tharaba gateway at twilight, with the awe akin to that of a country boy first setting foot in the mystical royal city, the centre of one of the largest kingdoms in Southeast Asia during its heyday. Two and a half decades ago, when I first set foot in Bagan, most of the pagodas were still untouched and unrepaid by eager merit seekers. There were few tourists and still fewer hotels, the most well-known being the Thande hotel located romantically on the eastern bank of the Ayeyarwady River and within reach of many of the famous, or in Myanmar terms, the potent pagodas. The second

visit saw the ghastly renovations done to centuries old pagodas by inexperienced and ignorant labourers funded by the donations of equally ignorant but wealthy donors hungry for merit to atone for their many sins. The third and most recent visit, after a gap of another decade saw further changes. This time it is the change wrought by the huge influx of hotels in faux-Bagan architecture, some of them of international standard, and glass-fronted restaurants some built close to archeological sites. At one time, the road leading from Nyaung Oo to Pagan was an almost empty narrow tarred road with just a few horse carts transporting the handful of tourists around the city during the day, and with unlighted ruined pagodas dotting the roadside, at night the road looked ghostly in the pale moonlight. Now the road is in a much better condition, probably because it has been widened, and it is lined by liquor-serving restaurants, some with foreign sounding names, shops selling lacquer ware souvenirs, and bicycle and motorcycle renting services. More lanes have now been added giving easy access to some pagodas that had been inaccessible before. Those who have visited the tourist resorts like Bali, and the famous beaches of a neighbouring country will be reminded of the atmosphere of some parts of the places, while they make their way in sedans to the numerous pagodas in the heart of Bagan. The touristy atmosphere is enhanced by the sight of mostly Westerner tourists, practicing economy, making their way from one pagoda to another on motor bikes and bicycles. The number of horse carts seems to have declined; obviously, the carts drawn by weary horses have given way to vehicles with engines of a vari-

ety of horse powers.

As we attempt to visit as many pagodas as possible during the limited time available, we catch sight of those pagodas that have been renovated during the past decade which stand out like sore thumbs among the thousands of ancient pagodas of a variety of sizes, heights and architectural styles because the modern bricks made in the style of the broad Bagan bricks that have been used in the renovation have still not lost its modernity and does not merge in too well with the ancient bricks. Fortunately, most of the pagodas that has undergone renovation are minor ones and not the highly venerated ones. Still, one sees here and there, the touch of modern civilization and convenience among the pagodas which unfortunately has affected their unique architectural beauty and will in the long-term probably affect the stability of the ancient pagodas. One such edifice is the Alo Taw Pyay Pagoda which attracts thousands of worshippers drawn by its name, meaning wish fulfilling. The windows of the pagoda have been fixed with clumsy looking glass panes, electric lights and air conditioners with ugly air-conditioning pipelines running within and outside the pagoda (now switched off) have been installed and the floor carpeted. One can see no logical reason for the modern contraptions and additions (unless it had delighted some VIPS who came there to recite long prayers to grant their wishes for longevity, prosperity and glory) because the Myanmar architects of more than a thousand years ago, with their local wisdom and knowledge of the prevailing weather conditions have designed many of the religious buildings in such a way that they are serviced with ade-

quate natural light and ventilation.

Those fortunate enough to travel to Bagan in their car will be able to get to the many isolated pagodas and temples standing close to cultivated land among tall toddy palms and thorny plum trees and connected to the main road by dusty unpaved country lanes. From afar, one is struck by the rustic picturesque scene vying for attention with finely architected multi-tiered ochre coloured pagodas, lanky palm trees and clear blue sky until one gets closer to the pagoda and is shocked by the unsightly piles of garbage among the bushes close to the pagoda dumped by god knows who. So also, pilgrims and tourists are, and also if the spirits of donors of the religious edifices were still floating about would be, much troubled by seeing small pagodas with unknown titles being utilized as storage places for baskets full of goods and rickety bicycles, and as places to take a nap. Having being born in the vicinity of countless numbers of thousand year old pagodas, the dwellers of Bagan are not awed by, and are less respectful to the smaller pagodas. The state of some of the bigger pagodas does not seem to be too different. They seemed to have been turned into temporary residences for caretakers who have placed old makeshift wooden beds in the interior of the pagodas right under the eyes of massive Buddha images. Moreover, the presence of too many stalls selling souvenirs, food, local products and their by-products, the piles of rubbish, affect the charm of the magnificent edifices. Lack of hygienic restrooms at the pagodas is one of the difficulties, pilgrims, and local and foreign tourists face which needs to be redressed quickly because many of the vis-

itors are old. Tourist information centres are another facility that should be set up in places highly frequented by tourists for the convenience of those who go sightseeing without guides. One of Bagan's attractions I miss is the simple traditional Myanmar restaurants with thatch roofs, in their rustic setting, serving authentic Myanmar food with their generous owners rushing to put in more curries even before the plates have become empty. In their places, now are Myanmar buffet-style restaurants in places that are more frequented by tourists, but served by less friendly and less generous staff. Still, I am happy to see foreign tourists tucking into the dozen or so Myanmar style dishes set before them.

It must be said that Bagan amply makes up for the lack of certain modern amenities, with its uniqueness, grandeur, beauty and charm and the unrivalled breathtaking views of the city of pagodas from pagoda terraces at sunset, and the friendliness of its people. It is certain that as transportation and communication improve within the country and more people abroad learn about the fame of Bagan, the number of visitors both from within the country and abroad will certainly double and triple. For those government officials and entrepreneurs keen to exploit Bagan's attraction as one of the most important archaeological sites in Southeast Asia, there is much work for them to do as there are many rival attractions in the ASEAN region managed by more experienced entrepreneurs, such as the Borobudur in Indonesia, the Angkor Wat in Cambodia, and Ayutthaya in Thailand. But when entrepreneurs think of further developing it into a

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First training of improved cookstoves producers brings hope to Myanmar's forests

GERES in Myanmar has completed the first training of cookstoves producers, under the SCALE Project, funded through the SWITCH Asia Programme of the European Union. During the ten days of intense practical apprenticeship, ten men and six women were introduced to the importance of standardization of production and technical quality control.

GERES and its local partner, EverGreen Group, are leading the implementation of a national cookstove dissemination project in the country. Aiming to make 300 000 improved and standard-

ized cookstoves available to satisfy increasing demand for locally appropriate and affordable cooking solutions, the project could avoid over 250 000 t eqCO₂ from reduced use of fuel wood. Along with the target to train 30 producers and contribute to the creation of 200 new jobs, SCALE has stimulated policy discussions on the importance of biomass energy and household air pollution in Myanmar.

The training took place in a monastery, tucked right beside the picturesque village Hlaingdet, approximately 50 km from Meiktila in the heart of the Dry Zone, where sparse

vegetation and the few remaining forests fight perpetual droughts. Mr. Chen Cheth and Sann Saly, technical advisors from GERES Cambodia, led the training which focused on the practical challenges of using innovative production technologies to achieve high level of efficiency and standardization. Trainees were introduced for the first time to durable moulds that can significantly reduce production time and allow more cookstoves to be manufactured. The hands-on approach to the apprenticeship benefits from GERES' extensive expertise in Cambodia, where over 3 million standardized cookstoves have been already sold.

During the opening ceremony, U Thant Zin from the Dry Zone Greening Department reiterated the commitment of Myanmar government to support the dissemination of standardized cookstoves to reduce pressure on the few remaining forests in the area, while producers expressed their desire to sell more of their products. GERES recognizes the importance of the market-based approach, which forms the core of SCALE.

Following the training, GERES will provide each producer with specific moulds and recommendations for using the optimum clay mix, based

on the available resources in the area. Quality assurance and control teams will monitor production for an extended period of time to ensure manufacturing is abiding by the detailed standards developed in partnership with Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry. The process has been lengthy, as no governmental or individual agent was previously tasked with the preservation of technical standards for cookstoves. GERES is leading the development of Generic National and Specific standards that will ensure the availability of clear production guidelines for producers and efficiency rates for consumers.

Supporting Myanmar SMEs to increase the sup-



ply of standardized and affordable cookstoves, GERES continues its mission to nurture sustainable solutions to local cooking practices in Southeast

Asia. A mission that saves trees, helps women cook in healthier environment and champions local businesses.—Geres (Energy Environment Solidarity) NGO



Bagan, the glory of magical Myanmar

>> from page 8

tourist attraction, they must bear in mind that Bagan is no ordinary archaeological site, but it is the site of the largest collection of ancient religious buildings in Myanmar much revered by Buddhists all over the country. I have no doubt that a survey of the people of Myanmar will reveal that they would rather see Bagan as it is, than see its cultural and religious values degraded as a recreational place for tourists. After all, there are enough beaches, mountain resorts and other attractions in Myanmar to generate income from the tour-

ism industry. Hence, if Bagan is to be made into a tourist attraction, entrepreneurs must ensure that its religious, historical and cultural dimensions are respected and remain unspoiled. In addition, both the government and entrepreneurs must not forget reinvest a generous portion of the income from tourism back into the conservation of the pagodas, and the development of the facilities needed for the convenience of tourists. Undoubtedly, a certain amount of the income must be spent to keep the ancient city clean, green and attractive and reach the standards

of other archaeological sites in the region and educate the people of Bagan to take pride in their city and take good care of it. Entrepreneurs must also find other attractions in Bagan so that tourists can be channeled to other areas reducing pressure on the ancient edifices and causing less degradation to them. This is not a difficult task as Bagan is sited close to the Ayeyawady River and there still remain many untapped sources such as riverine cruise along the Ayeyawady River, and rest and recreation by the river, and visits to local cottage industries.

On return home, a few miles from Bagan, we catch sight of groves of toddy palm trees and the huts of toddy palm product sellers. One shop draws our attention as in front of the huts was a traditional oil extraction device with the labour of a cow being used to operate it. Just before we stop in front of the shop, two coaches, one loaded with Japanese tourists and another with French tourists stop before us and the tourists get off. They take keen interest in traditional oil mill, as well as in the demonstrations on climbing the toddy palm tree to extract the juice and

the production of jaggery from the toddy palm juice. I silently praise the entrepreneurial spirit of the owner who is helped by the whole family to run the business. Many customers, both local and foreign, also enjoy the toddy palm drink with deep fried quail. It makes me happy to note that there are also hardworking and creative people in the countryside, and hope that many more will follow suit and hasten the development of the country and lift the people in the rural as well as urban area out of the economic hardship they face.

Belgians hunt 'third man' after Islamic State bombings



A woman consoles her children at a street memorial following Tuesday's bomb attacks in Brussels, Belgium, on 23 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

BRUSSELS — A "third man" seen with two Islamic State suicide bombers at Brussels Airport was the focus of a Belgian man-hunt yesterday after police identified three others, including two brothers, who killed at least 31 people at the airport and on a city metro train.

Turkey's president criticised Belgium for failing to track Brahim El Bakraoui, a convicted Belgian armed robber whom it deported last year and who blew himself up at the airport on Tuesday an hour before his brother Khalid, a fellow convict, killed some 20 people at Maelbeek metro station in the city centre.

The third bomber, security sources told Belgian media, was Najim Laachraoui, a veteran Belgian Islamist fighter in Syria suspected of making explosive belts for November's Paris attacks and who also detonated a suitcase bomb at the airport.

The "third man", captured on airport security cameras pushing a

baggage trolley into the departures hall alongside Laachraoui and Brahim El Bakraoui, is now the target of police searches.

The suspect fled the scene on Tuesday, federal prosecutors said, and a third suitcase bomb, the biggest of the three, was later found.

US Defence Secretary Ash Carter said the bloodshed in the capital of the European Union, not far from NATO headquarters, showed that Washington's European allies should do more to fight Islamic State alongside American efforts in the Middle East.

"The Brussels event is going to further signify to Europeans that, as we have been accelerating our campaign to defeat ISIL in Syria and Iraq and elsewhere, they need to accelerate their efforts and join us," Carter told CNN, using another acronym for Islamic State.

About 300 people were wounded. Casualties came from some 40 nationalities, drawing an

international outpouring of support for the cosmopolitan city during three days of mourning.

US President Barack Obama offered "any assistance that we can" to Belgium in bringing surviving assailants to justice.

Washington announced that Secretary of State John Kerry would visit Belgium on Friday to demonstrate solidarity.

The Belgian government deflected the criticism from Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, saying the elder Bakraoui brother, 29, had not been deported back to Belgium but to the neighbouring Netherlands. Officials have said that as in the case of one of the Paris suicide bombers, they cannot detain militant suspects expelled from Turkey without clear evidence of a crime.

"Belgium ignored our warning that this person is a foreign fighter," Erdogan said of Brahim El Bakraoui, who was detained near the Syrian border and deported last July. —Reuters

US to charge Iran in cyber attacks against banks, New York dam

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration is expected to blame Iranian hackers as soon as Thursday for a coordinated campaign of cyber attacks in 2012 and 2013 on several US banks and a New York dam, sources familiar with the matter have told Reuters.

The Justice Department has prepared an indictment against about a half-dozen Iranians, said the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter. It is one of the highest-profile US indictments against a foreign nation on

hacking charges.

It follows a landmark 2014 case in which a grand jury charged five members of the Chinese military with hacking into American computer networks and engaging in cyber espionage on behalf of a foreign government.

The charges, related to unlawful access to computers and other alleged crimes, were expected to be announced publicly by US officials as soon as Thursday morning at a news conference in Washington, the sources said. The indictment was expected to

directly link the hacking campaign to the Iranian government, one source said. The banks will not be identified in the indictment due to fear of retaliation, the source said.

Though a planned indictment for the breach of back-office computer systems at the Bowman Avenue Dam in Rye Brook, New York, has been reported, it was only part of a hacking campaign that was broader than previously known, as the indictment will show, the sources said. —Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

MH17 investigation team in Malaysia to discuss legal options

KUALA LUMPUR — A joint team investigating the downing of a Malaysia Airlines flight over Ukraine in 2014 is in Malaysia to discuss options with authorities to set up a tribunal to hold those responsible to account, the Malaysian transport minister said yesterday.

Flight MH17 was shot down by a Russian-made surface-to-air missile over eastern Ukraine in July 2014, killing all 298 on board, the Dutch Safety Board said in October.

Malaysia, the Netherlands, Australia, Belgium and Ukraine have been exploring alternative options, including trials in international and national courts, after Russia vetoed a United Nations bid last July to form a tribunal. —Reuters

No stricter airport screening planned in EU security review

BRUSSELS — European Union experts will next week discuss ways of strengthening security in airports after the attacks in Brussels on Tuesday that killed at least 31 people, an EU official said, but they will not put forward stricter EU-wide screening rules.

At least 10 were killed by two bombs at Zaventem airport, the main one in the Brussels area. The attackers accessed the airport without passing security checks, which in Europe usually only take place after check-in.

The European Commission, the EU executive arm, will host a meeting of aviation security experts from the 28 EU states, Transport Commissioner Violeta Bulc said. An EU official said it would take place on 31 March. A meeting of land transport security experts would be held on 11 April. —Reuters

Flight attendant trying to smuggle cocaine from Los Angeles airport arrested

LOS ANGELES — A flight attendant who tried to smuggle almost 70 pounds (31.8 kg) of cocaine from Los Angeles International Airport last week turned herself in to authorities on Wednesday.

Marsha Gay Reynolds, a JetBlue Airways flight attendant and former Jamaican beauty queen, turned herself in to US Drug Enforcement Administration agents in New York on Wednesday, and will make an initial court appearance yesterday. She will face a charge of possession with intent to distribute cocaine.

Reynolds was stopped at random during luggage-screening processes on Friday by a Transportation Security Administration officer at the airport. She kicked off her Gucci high heels and successfully fled. —Xinhua

Colombian government, rebels miss deadline to reach peace deal

HAVANA — Colombian peace negotiators missed Wednesday's deadline for a final accord but talks will continue in Havana to end Latin America's longest war, representatives of the government and the FARC rebels said.

The government of Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos and leftist rebels of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, had set a self-imposed 23 March deadline to reach a comprehensive pact. "In all honesty, we have to inform the public that at the moment there are still important differences with the FARC," Humberto de la Calle, the government's lead negotiator, said at a news conference. —Reuters

Uber sues Ola over fake bookings in India

NEW DELHI — Uber Technologies Inc, the United States multinational online transportation network, is suing its Indian rival Ola allegedly over making fake bookings to damage its business.

Uber alleged Ola of making false bookings through more than 90,000 fake accounts that ultimately ended up cancelled to frustrate its business in India.

According to the accusations levelled by Uber in the court, Ola through fake accounts was summoning drivers affiliated with Uber and then cancelling the bookings.

Uber told Delhi high court the practice inflicted huge monetary loss on the company and requests the rival company should be made to pay 7.4 million US dollars to compensate its losses. —Xinhua

EU joins Syria peace talks as sides remain at odds

GENEVA — The EU sent its foreign policy chief to Geneva on Wednesday to breathe new life into Syrian peace talks, as the two sides remained at odds over the country’s political future.

Federica Mogherini spoke to negotiators on both sides, and the head of the government delegation, Bashar Ja’afari, said after his meeting that he believed an impasse in the talks had been broken.

But he was told by the EU and UN that accelerating a political transition in Syria — a major sticking point given fundamental disagreements between the warring parties over the fate of President Bashar al-Assad — was the only way to defeat groups like Islamic State.

Mogherini arrived unexpectedly on what was the penultimate day of the round of negotiations, possibly highlighting EU concerns that the talks risk getting deadlocked.

“She came to support us to engage positively in the talks that would lead to an end to the Syrian crisis,” Ja’afari said after the rare meeting with a senior Western official.

“For the first time, I can tell you that we were able to break the impasse, maybe in the form and a little bit in substance.”

The five-year-old conflict between the government and insurgents has killed more than 250,000 people, allowed Islamic State to take control of some eastern areas and caused the world’s worst refugee crisis.

With a fragile truce in place in Syria, warring sides are more than a week into talks on ending the conflict, but government officials have rejected any discussion on a political transition or the fate of Assad, who

there had been no change in the EU’s position on the “Syrian regime”.

“This in our opinion is the only way create conditions in the country to first find peace and security and secondly defeat Daesh (Islamic State).”

UN special envoy Staffan De Mistura echoed her comments.

“So the ball goes back to those who have been complaining about terrorism and (we’re) saying what about all of you helping us to solve politically the crisis in Syria,” he said.

Mogherini’s visit coincided with high-level meetings in Moscow between Russian and US officials, which de Mistura has said he hopes will give an impetus to the talks, just as they did by engineering a cessation of hostilities that came into effect almost three weeks ago.

Activists and diplomats



Syrian chief negotiator Bashar al-Jaafari (R), centre, Ambassador of the Permanent Representative Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the UN New York, attends a new round of negotiations between the Syrian government and the UN Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria Staffan de Mistura (not pictured), at the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, on 23 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

opposition leaders say must go as part of any such plan.

After the attacks in Brussels claimed by Islamic State, Ja’afari again insisted on Wednesday that fighting terrorism had to come before any discussion of political transition.

“My main message especially in meeting with that (Syrian government) delegation is the need to start a political transition in Damascus,” Mogherini told reporters, stressing that

said de Mistura was finalising a document to present to delegates on Thursday that will synthesise common points of convergence, but is likely to stay clear of the divisive political transition issue.

Ja’afari said he had received a document from de Mistura that his delegation would respond to at the beginning of the next round, though the government could not return before Syrian parliamentary elections on 13 April.

De Mistura said on Tuesday that he aimed to establish if there were any points held in common by the different parties. If successful, he would announce these yesterday.

Randa Kassis, representing a Moscow-backed opposition group, said de Mistura would distribute a document of common points gathered from the various delegates.—Reuters



Iraqi security forces ride in trucks travelling to Mosul to fight militants of Islamic State at an Iraqi army base in Camp Taji in Baghdad, on 21 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

Iraqi army starts offensive in region around Mosul, State TV says

BAGHDAD — Iraq’s armed forces started an offensive against Islamic State yesterday in the region around Mosul with air cover from the US-led coalition, pushing the militants out of several villages, according to a military statement read on state TV.

The offensive is the first phase of an operation that the Iraqi government aims to conclude this year with the capture of Mosul, the largest

city in the north of the country.

“The first phase of the Fatah (Conquest) Operation has been launched at dawn to liberate Nineveh, raising the Iraqi flag in several villages,” said the military statement.

Mosul, home to around 2 million people before it fell to Islamic State during a lightning offensive in 2014, is by far the biggest city ruled by the jihadist group in

either Iraq or Syria.

An Iraqi offensive to recapture it, backed by air strikes and advisers from a US-led coalition, would be the biggest counterattack ever mounted against the group.

Brigadier General Yahya Rasool, spokesman for the joint operations command, told state TV that both Iraqi and coalition air forces had had a significant role in the offensive.—Reuters

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR			
MINISTRY OF ENERGY			
MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE			
(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)			
(4 / 2016)			
Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in United States Dollars and Myanmar Kyats.			
Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Remark
(1)	IFB-091(15-16)	Skid Mounted Crude Transfer Pump (300GPM x 500PSI) with Engine (1) Set	US\$
(2)	IFB-092(15-16)	Skid Mounted Crude Transfer Pump (200GPM x 150FT HD) with Engine (1) Set	US\$
(3)	IFB-093(15-16)	Spares for NKK Compressor KJB2 with Waukesha L7042 Gas Engine (24) Items	US\$
(4)	IFB-094(15-16)	Spares for NKK Compressor KB2 with Waukesha H2475 Gas Engine (21) Items	US\$
(5)	IFB-095(15-16)	CNG Filling Dispenser (2) Units	US\$
(6)	IFB-096(15-16)	Spares for P9390GL Waukesha Engine / Cooper MH64 Compressor and Ariel JGk4 Compressor (26) Items	US\$
(7)	IFB-097(15-16)	Spares for Ajax DPC600 Compressor (20) Items	US\$
(8)	IFB-098(15-16)	Spares for Waukesha 12VAT 27GL Engine (42) Items	US\$
(9)	IFB-099(15-16)	Spares for Waukesha L 7042 GSI Engine and Ariel JGK4 Compressor (9) Items	US\$
(10)	IFB-100(15-16)	Spares for Waukesha F2895 Engine and Ariel JGE2 Compressor (53) Items	US\$
(11)	IFB-101(15-16)	Spares for FLC504 Derrick Shaker Unit (7) Items	US\$
(12)	IFB-102(15-16)	Coalescing Gas Filters (Horizontal Type) (2) Nos	US\$
(13)	IFB-103(15-16)	Maintenance and Inspection Requirements for Ywama Gas Distribution Station (1) Lot	US\$
(14)	IFB-104(15-16)	Maintenance and Inspection Requirements for PLC (Daw Nyein) (1) Lot	US\$
(15)	DMP/L-018(15-16)	HP Ao Copier / Plotter and Digital Multi Function Colour Copier (A3) for Geological Use (2) Items	KS
(16)	DMP/L-019(15-16)	M.S Plate, M.S Rod & Angle Iron for Craft Boats (6) Nos Repairing Job	KS
(17)	DMP/L-020(15-16)	M.S Plate, M.S Pipe, M.S Rod & Angle Iron for River Craft MTB-5 Repairing Job	KS
(18)	DMP/L-021(15-16)	Air Compressor (4" x 4" Reciprocating with 12-13HP Diesel Engine) (4) Sets	KS
(19)	DMP/L-022(15-16)	Water Transfer Pump with Motor and Water Transfer Pump with Engine (2) Items	KS
Tender Closing Date & Time		-	28-4-2016, 16:30 Hr
Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 21ST March, 2016 at the Finance Department , Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.			
Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise Ph . +95 67 - 411097 / 411206			



US President Barack Obama dances tango during a state dinner hosted by Argentina's President Mauricio Macri at the Centro Cultural Kirchner as part of President Obama's two-day visit to Argentina, in Buenos Aires, on 23 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

Soft shoe diplomacy: Obama dances the tango at Argentine state dinner

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama has made headlines for unexpectedly crooning a song or two in public since coming to the White House. Now he can add dancing the tango to his list of hidden talents.

At the end of a state dinner in Buenos Aires with Argentine President Mauri-

cio Macri on Wednesday, Obama and his wife, Michelle, watched with rapt attention as a male and female pair glided and turned in graceful precision across a small patch of open floor in front of their table.

Willing to give it a try, the president got up and sashayed from one side of the tiny space to the oth-

er with the female dancer, while the US first lady teamed up with her male counterpart for a spell.

Then the leader of the free world appeared to have second thoughts.

Getting back to the other side of the dance floor, Obama stopped to wave at the dinner guests as if to conclude.

But his partner would have none of it, taking his hand back in hers and doing a number of turns before allowing the president to spin her around for a finale that ended with her leg drawn up high against his.

The music stopped, the crowd applauded, and the Obamas had done the tango.—Reuters

Security Council response needed in West Sahara crisis — UN official

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations Security Council must act to ensure Morocco's decision to expel personnel from a UN peacekeeping mission in the disputed territory of Western Sahara does not set a bad precedent for other missions, a UN official said on Wednesday.

The controversy over UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's use of the word "occupation" during a recent visit to the region is Morocco's worst dispute with the UN since 1991, when the UN brokered a ceasefire to end a war over Western Sahara and established a peacekeeping mission, known as MINURSO. The United Nations has shut its military liaison office and withdrawn dozens of international staffers from MINURSO as demanded by Morocco in retaliation for Ban's remarks, which Rabat has described as "unacceptable."

UN officials have said the reduction of staff has severely affected the mission in the Moroccan-annexed Western Sahara region.

So far the 15-country Security Council, which ordered the deployment of

MINURSO decades ago and renews its mandate every year, has said nothing on the Moroccan dispute with the UN despite near daily discussions on the subject.

Ban wants swift council action to back him and MINURSO with a strong statement of support.

"The Secretary-General very much wants the Security Council to act, and not only to preserve MINURSO's operations but also to prevent similar actions in other peacekeeping operations around the world," a UN official familiar with the Western Sahara dossier told reporters on condition of anonymity. The leaders of Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan have demanded the departure of UN peacekeepers from conflict-torn parts of their countries. The UN official said the presence of MINURSO was necessary to prevent a "security vacuum", adding that "there is the potential for escalation" into renewed conflict. Diplomats have blamed the council's silence on Morocco's traditional ally France, along with Spain, Egypt and Senegal. —Reuters

New Cuban migrant bottleneck hits Panama during US détente

PASO CANOAS — A new bottleneck of Cuban migrants bound for the United States has formed this month in Panama, threatening a fresh diplomatic headache in Central America after thousands were flown out of the region earlier this year.

Just as Barack Obama was

making the first visit to Cuba in 88 years by a US president, some 1,500 migrants from the Communist island were bunched on Panama's border with Costa Rica, struggling to reach the United States to start a new life.

The build-up follows the airlift of around 6,000 Cubans from

Costa Rica and Panama, which ended last week.

However, another knot of migrants has grouped in western Panama since Costa Rica stopped issuing Cubans transit visas in December to try and stem the human tide that clogged up its border with Nicaragua last year.

"If I hadn't left Cuba, I would have ended up in prison because I love freedom and having options," said Halena Leiva, 31, who has worked as a cleaning lady in the Panamanian border town of Paso Canoas since she ran out of money on her way north.

During his 48 hour visit this

week, Obama challenged Cuba's government with calls for democracy and new economic reforms.

Cuba has loosened restrictions on private enterprise in recent years, creating a growing middle-class, but most people still earn tiny wages and many of the young wish to work abroad.—Reuters

Notice

Aye Thandar Soe Manager (12/Tha Ga Ka (Naing) 172470) No. (132/1), Yaesin Street, 24-Block, Thingangyun Township was working in our company Tropical Woods Co., Ltd. Since 15th, Nov 2014. Suddenly she went and absent from 11th, Mar 2016, without information, so we have terminated her on (11-3-2016). Therefore, if she sign any documents on behalf of company or deal anything with anybody on behalf of company, our company is not responsible for anything. She is responsible and liable herself.

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

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

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MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S YANG MING LINE

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

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

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Rolling Stones on YouTube invite Cubans to free concert

HAVANA — The Rolling Stones are welcoming Cubans to their free concert on Friday with Mick Jagger speaking Spanish in a video on YouTube, though few are likely to see it, given Cuba's scant Internet penetration.

"We have played in many incredible places but this concert in Havana is going to be a historic event for us," Jagger said in a voice over while the Stones' song, "Jumpin' Jack Flash" plays to snippets of concert video. "We hope it will be for you, too."

Less than one-third of Cubans have access to the Internet, with only 3.4 per cent of homes connected to either the Internet or a local Cuban Intranet, according to UN data.

The Stones added Cuba to the end of a Latin American tour, becoming the first major

international rock stars to play in the island nation.

The outdoor concert at a sports complex was postponed five days because of the 48-hour visit by US President Barack Obama, who departed Cuba on Tuesday.

The band have brought in 61 shipping containers with an estimated 500 tonnes of equipment, such as a stage, speakers, lights and video screens, the production manager, Dale Skjerseth, told reporters on Sunday.

A crew of 140 Stones employees and at least 80 Cubans have set up on grounds including a football field and adjoining baseball fields with room for hundreds of thousands of spectators who are invited to arrive for free on a first-come, first-serve basis. —Reuters

Reese Witherspoon celebrates 40th birthday with Nicole Kidman

LONDON — Actress Reese Witherspoon went for an intimate dinner with friends including Nicole Kidman for her 40th birthday.

The "Legally Blonde" star enjoyed a celebratory meal with the Hollywood actress and other friends and at one point during the lavish meal she was presented with a cake packed with candles, reported Female First.

Witherspoon shared a photo of her receiving her birthday treat on her Instagram account, accompanied with the caption: "This is 40 ... I am one lucky gal (sic)"

The dinner date followed a star-studded party that Witherspoon hosted to mark the milestone date on Saturday, 19 March.

Taylor Swift performed at the bash at the Warwick in Hollywood and later on in the night Witherspoon herself sang "Sweet Home Alabama" accompanied by Kidman's husband Keith Urban on guitar. —PTI

Reese Witherspoon .PHOTO: REUTERS

Brandy Clark announces release date of her new album

LOS ANGELES — Country singer Brandy Clark will release her new album titled, "Big Day in a Small Town," on 10 June.

This will be "Hold My Hand" songstress' second full-length album, following 2013's debut "12 Stories," reported Entertainment Weekly.

This will be her first album with major label Warner Bros. Records.

Clark released the upcoming album's first single "Girl Next Door" in January.

The 11-track album will also feature a duet with Kacey Musgraves called "Daughter". —PTI

Rare Beatles demo disc raises more than 110,000 USD at auction sale

LONDON — A rare, one-off demonstration record that launched the career of the British pop band, The Beatles, fetched 110,180 US dollars at an auction Tuesday after attracting world wide interest.

Bidders from China, Europe and North America tried to outbid each other with phone and in-line bids for the star lot at the Omega Auction house in Warrington, Northern England.

The auctioneers had placed a reserve of 10,000 pounds (14,207 US dollars) on the record found in a house near Liverpool after being locked away, wrapped in paper, for more than 50 years.

But a collector from the North West of England became the new owner with a final bid of 77,550 pounds.

The demo disc, with a hand-written label, features Hel-

lo Little Girl and Till There Was You and was cut in 1962 on a 78 rpm acetate disc in the personal recording department of HMV music store in London's Oxford Street.

Since then, it has remained forgotten at the home of Les Maguire, a musician from rival Liverpool band of the 1960s, Gerry and the Pacemakers.

Maguire said the record, with a label handwritten by the Beatles' manager Brian Epstein, could be seen as the record "that sparked The Beatles' success."

The record, labeled as being the work of Paul McCartney, John Lennon and The Beatles, was made at the HMV store and then handed to George Martin, the future Beatles producer, to help win a recording contract with the EMI record label. Martin died just a few weeks ago, leading to tributes from the two

surging Beatles, McCartney and drummer Ringo Starr.

Maguire, now 74, was given the disc by Epstein in 1963 after it had been returned to him by Martin. He described the record as a "one off".

After re-discovering the rare record in his attic, he gave it to his granddaughter who plans to put the proceeds from its sale towards buying a house.

"It's no good to me so I've given it to my granddaughter, who is hoping to buy a house after passing her accountancy exams. I hope it goes for a good price," said Maguire ahead of the sale. Leading Beatles historian Mark Lewisohn said of the disc: "Its uniqueness is enhanced by Brian Epstein's handwriting on the labels, and the recognition of what it led to, making it one of the rarest and most collectable of all Beatles records."

Ian Shirley, record collector and rare record price guide editor, said, "This is one of those Holy Grail items. This acetate is a unique item that, in many respects, helped Brian Epstein to start the ball rolling to musical world domination. It will fascinate Beatles collectors worldwide and no doubt attract bids from those with deep pockets."

Auction director Karen Fairweather told Xinhua: "The record has been on display at the Beatles Story Museum in a Liverpool and the purchaser may leave it on display there for a while. We had people from the museum here at today's sale."

"Altogether we had more than 200 lots of Beatles memorabilia and many went for more than 10 times the estimated prices. It shows the international interest there is in the Beatles," she added. —Xinhua



Oscar-winning actor Leonardo DiCaprio signs autographs for fans during the Japan premiere of his movie "The Revenant" in Tokyo, Japan, on 23 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

Dicaprio brings 'The Revenant' to Japan

TOKYO — Excited Leonardo DiCaprio fans, some of them dressed as bears, greeted the actor as he made his first trip to Tokyo in two years to promote the Japanese opening of "The Revenant." The movie about a fur trapper seeking revenge who is left for dead after being mauled by a bear brought DiCaprio his first ever Oscar at the Academy Awards ceremony in February, as well as

a best director Oscar for Mexico's Alejandro Inarritu.

DiCaprio said it was an honor to receive the Oscar but stressed that awards are not the reason he does movies.

"It's certainly gratifying and it feels fantastic, but you hope to remain with your initial ideals and dreams of what you want to be as an actor, and all I can hope for is that I'll continue to keep

trying to make the best movies I possibly can," the actor said at a press conference. He later told the audience at "The Revenant" premiere at Roppongi Hills in Tokyo on Wednesday that he was "privileged to be a part of cinema history that I think is very groundbreaking and it was a huge honor for all of us the night of the Oscars to be awarded the way we were." —Reuters

‘Sistine Chapel of the Middle Ages’ reopens to public in Rome



Frescoes are seen inside the sixth-century Santa Maria Antiqua church in Rome, Italy, on 17 March.
PHOTO: REUTERS

ROME — A sixth-century church boasting a rare collection of early Christian art is reopening to the public in Rome after a restoration that took more than 30 years.

Nestling at the foot of the hill where Rome’s emperors once lived, Santa Maria Antiqua was buried under rubble by an earthquake in 847 and only uncovered in 1900.

The interior’s frescoes of saints and martyrs, queens, popes and emperors have now been restored at a cost of about 2.7 million euros (\$3 million), funded by the Italian state and the World Monuments Fund.

“This church is the Sistine Chapel of the early Middle Ages,” said art historian Maria Andaloro, who is curating an exhibition that uses digital projections on the Church’s walls.

“It collected the very best of figurative culture of the Christian world between Rome and Byzantium.”

Among the treasures is a depiction of the Virgin Mary with child, one of the oldest known Christian icons in the world, which was moved to another church in Rome after the earthquake but has now been returned to Santa Maria Antiqua. Standing under the reinstated icon, Andaloro said that the church was unique in escaping alteration during the Baroque period or the Counter-Reformation, during which other Roman churches were updated.

It has remained intact, untouched, even if heavily damaged by the passage of time, Andaloro said, though some alterations were made even during the relatively short time the church was in use.

Among the exhibits is a projection on the wall showing how a depiction of the angel Gabriel telling Mary she had been chosen to be the mother of Christ was painted on top of a pre-Christian Byzantine queen wearing a crown and a pearl-covered gown.—Reuters

Chinese tourists helping keep tiny Australian town alive

MELBOURNE — A growing number of Chinese tourists are helping to save a dying Australian town, after a little-known tourist attraction was featured on a number of Chinese travel blogs.

The residents of Sea Lake, a town of just 600 people in the Australian state of Victoria, barely see travellers stop at their gas station while driving by, but a sudden influx of Chinese tourists is helping keep the town’s economy alive.

The tourists come to see Lake Tyrrell, a shallow, salt crusted and often dry lake which is situated just out of town, as it provides a stunning back drop for photographers looking to shoot the Milky Way.

Local teacher Rachel Pearce said the stunning nightscape — combined with the eerie appearance of the stars being reflected onto the salt lake — gives off the impression that you are walking amongst the stars. “The night skies here are reputedly some of the best in the southern hemisphere, anywhere in the world really,” she told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).

The town is so isolated that no light pollution ruins the spectacular views, and as it is situated in a barren, dry part of the country, there are rarely any clouds to spoil the night sky.

The attraction’s growing cult status has resulted in the town’s motel rooms being full almost every night, and while local farmers are suffering in a two-year drought, the tourism is keeping the town’s ailing agricultural-based economy afloat.

Tourist Joseph Lee, along with 10 other stargazers, made the trip from Sydney, as he wanted to see a different side of Australia.

“I wish to bring them to some of the places with not too many tourists in there,” Lee told the

ABC. “We’ll go to the not-so-popular places to give my friends some new idea of what Australia looks like.” Alice Lee, from China’s Hong Kong, said it was hard to find scenery like that in Sea Lake anywhere else in the world.

“I see the beauty of the scenes and the different changes in the skies, the clouds and over the sun,” Lee said. “That’s why we want to come.”

Despite the popularity of the town and its attraction, locals are still confused as to why their little town deserves so much attention. In recent years the population of Sea Lake has fallen from around 1,200 a decade ago, to 600 today.

“We’re still unsure why Lake Tyrrell is such a big, big tourist attraction,” one local said.

“It’s quite a shock.” Sea Lake is located around 350 kilometres north-west of Melbourne. —Xinhua

Holi festival celebrated in Myanmar to mark beginning of spring



YANGON — A girl paints her face with colourful powder in the celebration of Holi festival in Yangon, Myanmar, on 23 March 2016. The Holi festival, also known as the festival of colours, is celebrated to mark the beginning of spring. PHOTO: XINHUA

mitv

Myanmar International

(25-3-2016 07:00am ~ 26-3-2016 7:00am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03 Am News

07:26 Am Discovering Tribes: Pre-Kayaw (Their Life and Customs) (Part- I)

07:55 Am Hip-Hop and Design

08:03 Am News

08:26 Am Myanmar HR Conference 2015 (Part- VI)

08:47 Am A Tourist Destination of Shan State

09:03 Am News

09:26 Am Safari World

09:37 Am Sons of the lake

10:03 Am News

10:26 Am Simple Living With High Spirit

10:38 Am Myanmar’s Export: Mango

10:48 Am Shop Shop Shop - Bogyoke Market

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm) - Thursday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

(03:00 Pm ~ 07:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

Prime Time

07:03 Pm News

07:27 Pm A Day In Bagan

07:47 Pm A Star for Great Achievement

08:03 Pm News

08:26 Pm Bogalay Tint Aung: A Man of Versatility (Part- 1)

08:52 Pm Myanmar Masterclass: Still Life (Glass)

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm)- Today Repeat(09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am) - Thursday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) -Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

(For Detailed Schedule – www.myanmaritv.com/schedule)

MRTV

Entertainment Channel

(25-3-2016, Friday)

6:00 pm

• Weather Report

• Music Programme

6:30 pm

• Pyi Thu Ni Ti

6:40 pm

• Music Programme

7:00 pm

• International Drama Series

7:40 pm

• International Drama Series

8:30 pm

• Cartoon Programme “BEN 10 ALIEN FORCE (Part-19)”

9:00 pm

• Music Programme

9:10 pm

• English Premier League Review (Part-3)

9:30 pm

• International Movie Songs

9:50 pm

• Life In NightArt In Life (Ep-2)

10:20 pm

• Myanmar Video

From 25-3-2016 (Friday) 6:00 Pm

To 26-3-2016(Saturday) 6:00 Pm

This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.

McHale edges Doi, sets up Miami showdown with Serena

MIAMI — American Christina McHale beat Japan's Misaki Doi 6-2, 4-6, 7-5 at the Miami Open on Wednesday to set up a second-round showdown with defending champion and world number one Serena Williams.

The victory, which took a little over two hours, improved McHale to 5-0 all-time versus Doi and gives the world number 56 a chance to register what would be the biggest win of her career in terms of the ranking and stature of

her opponent.

McHale, who has beaten a handful of top players and grand slam winners in her career, will be an overwhelming underdog against Williams, who has a record eight Miami titles, including

the last three. The two were supposed to meet last year in Rome but Williams withdrew ahead of their match and gave McHale a walkover into the quarter-finals.

In other first-round action, Frenchwoman Alize Cornet beat

Galina Voskoboeva of Kazakhstan to set up a match with third-seeded Pole Agnieszka Radwanska, while Germany's Julia Goerges beat Japan's Nao Hibino and will next play Australian Samantha Stosur.—Reuters



Christina McHale hits a backhand against Misaki Doi during day two of the Miami Open at Crandon Park Tennis Centre. PHOTO: REUTERS

Misaki Doi hits a backhand against Christina McHale during day two of the Miami Open at Crandon Park Tennis Centre. PHOTO: REUTERS

O'Neill would accept Euro 2016 games behind closed doors

LONDON — Ireland manager Martin O'Neill would have no objections to Euro 2016 games being played behind closed doors in France if security chiefs decide it is the only alternative.

UEFA have reaffirmed their commitment to security for the June-July tournament following Tuesday's bombings in Brussels that killed at least 31 people, saying it would continue to monitor the level of risk for the event.

However, former Leicester City and Aston Villa manager O'Neill admitted that he would

agree to games behind closed doors for safety reasons.

"There's talk about matches being played behind closed doors but the safety of people is of paramount importance and anything that is agreed upon, we will fall in line," O'Neill told British media.

"If that is an alternative and it's the only alternative, then if we are going to have the competition, we may have to comply with it."

O'Neill also said that it could get difficult for fans to interact with their teams given the

security measures.

"If security is tightened, as it probably will be, then maybe the players might have to stay closer to the hotel (when they are not playing)," the 64-year-old added.

"I don't think we want to turn away supporters but at the same time, I think people will realise that security might be very, very tight."

Ireland open their Group E campaign against Sweden at the Stade de France in Paris on 13 June, followed by games against Belgium and Italy.—Reuters

Martino welcomes Messi return, mulls forward choice

BUENOS AIRES — Argentina coach Gerardo Martino welcomed Lionel Messi's return to the team and said he was mulling over which of his top two centre-forwards to pick for Thursday's World Cup qualifier away to Chile.

Captain Messi was injured for Argentina's first four qualifiers last year for the 2018 finals in Russia and the team suffered in his absence.

They took just five points from those games to sit outside the qualifying berths in sixth place in the South American group.

"Messi's presence is calming, motivating and always necessary," Martino told a news conference on Wednesday before leaving with his squad for Santiago.

He faces a difficult decision in who to pick out of Sergio Aguero and Gonzalo Higuain, both in fine club form, to lead the attack in the neighbours' first meeting since Chile beat Argentina on penalties in last year's Copa America final.

Napoli's Higuain and Manchester City's Aguero played together in a four-man attack that included Messi and Angel Di Maria in several of the 2014 World Cup qualifiers.

Yet Martino, who took over after the tournament in Brazil,

has always favoured one or the other.

"We have two of the world's five best centre-forwards so, given how we play, I'm going to be unfair to one," Martino said. "Whoever plays will feel good, whoever doesn't will feel bad."

Martino also called up Paulo Dybala, who is a fast emerging talent, but the Juventus striker had to withdraw through injury from the Chile match and next Tuesday's qualifier at home to Bolivia.

Argentina are seven points behind leaders Ecuador, who upset Martino's side 2-0 in their opening qualifier in Buenos Aires in October, four behind Uruguay and two behind Brazil, Paraguay and Chile.

"Today the table shows we're out of the World Cup so our responsibility is to win both matches to get into the group that would qualify," Martino said.

Chile's new coach Juan Antonio Pizzi said they will not play for a draw.

"No footballer or member of Argentina's coaching staff is going to settle for a draw, neither will we," Pizzi told reporters in Santiago.

"I'm aware we're going to face one of the best national teams in the world but I'm confident. We will fight to win the match."—Reuters

Man City's Sterling ruled out for up to eight weeks

LONDON — Manchester City forward Raheem Sterling could be out of action for up to eight weeks due to a groin injury, the BBC reported on Wednesday.

The 21-year-old, signed from Liverpool for a British record 49 million pounds last year, was hurt during the Manchester derby defeat by United on Sunday.

He will miss City's Champions League quarter-final against Paris St Germain and will need to prove his fitness to play for England in the European Championship starting in June.—Reuters



Manchester City's Raheem Sterling receives treatment before going off injured on 20 March. PHOTO: REUTERS