

Myanmar, Laos ink agreement on management of friendship bridge **PAGE 3**



Protection and promotion of farmers' rights and interests critical to national economic growth: Vice President **PAGE 3**



Expired individual trade cards (Muse) must be updated before deadline **PAGE 5**

THE WELCOMING WAGON

President U Htin Kyaw and wife host welcoming ceremony for Laotian president

PRESIDENT U Htin Kyaw and his wife Daw Su Su Lwin held a welcoming ceremony yesterday on the lawn of the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw for the president of the Lao People's Democratic Republic Mr. Bounnhang Vorachith and his wife Mrs. Khammeung Vorachith.

After the welcoming ceremony, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi cordially greeted the visiting Laotian president inside the Presidential Palace.

A Myanmar-Laos bilateral meeting followed, attended by the two Presidents, the State Counsellor, Union Ministers U Kyaw Tint Swe, Dr Pe Myint, Thura U Aung Ko, U Thant Sin Maung, Dr Myo Thein Gyi and U Win Khaing, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Tin and visiting Laotian ministers and officials.

During the meeting, both sides discussed cooperation and the promotion of peace and stability in border regions, repairing damage to border posts caused by severe weather conditions and floods, resumption of Yangon-Vientiane and Luang Prabang-Bagan direct flights, reviews of existing agreements between the two countries and matters related to supporting each other in regional and international arena.

Next, the two Presidents witnessed the signing of an agreement on the Myanmar-Laos Friendship Bridge by Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Laotian Foreign Affairs Minister Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith.

President U Htin Kyaw and his wife Daw Su Su Lwin then



President U Htin Kyaw and Laotian President Mr. Bounnhang Vorachith inspect the Guard of Honour in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

hosted a luncheon in honour of the Laotian President and wife.

Afterwards, the visiting Laotian President and party visited the Uppatasanti Pagoda and the white elephant shed.

Mrs. Khammeuang Vorachith, wife of the Laotian President, visited the Gems Museum.

In the evening, the Laotian President and his wife concluded their one-day visit to Myanmar and left from Nay Pyi Taw for Vientiane, Laos.

President U Htin Kyaw paid a State visit to Laos on 6 May, his first foreign trip after taking office in April.

The Laotian President became the third foreign leader who has visited Myanmar since the new government has been in place. The Singaporean Prime Minister Mr. Lee Hsien Loong and Mongolian President Mr. Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj visited in June.

Mr. Bounnhang Vorachith has visited Myanmar twice, in 2003 and 2004, while he served as Laotian Prime Minister. He made a third visit in 2015 as the Vice President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Yesterday was his fourth visit to Myanmar.—Myanmar News Agency

First batch of detained Myanmar citizens in Malaysia set for homecoming on 8 August

MYANMAR'S Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced yesterday that 138 detained Myanmar citizens in Malaysia will return home on 8 August under arrangements of the Kanbawza Brighter Future Myanmar Foundation, which will pay for the

cost of their travel.

According to the ministry, 138 Myanmar citizens who were issued Certificates of Identify will come home on an MAI flight from Kuala Lumpur. Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the

Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population are set to welcome and assist them at Yangon International Airport.

According to sources, there are 2,294 Myanmar citizens detained for various reasons in 11 camps in Malaysia.—Shin Minn

Emergency health care takes place in Naga Self-administered Zone

OFFICIALS pledged yesterday to respond to an unknown infectious disease outbreak at multiple villages in the Naga Self-administered Zone in Sagaing Region.

Disease control and prevention efforts are being carried out by the Ministry of Health, said Director-General Dr Soe Lwin

Nyein of the Public Health Department, adding that the emergency health care system is in operation in the region.

The director-general said the disease has claimed the lives of 18 people in Lahe Township between 6 June to 25 July,

See page 3 >>

Amyotha Hluttaw

Proposal to develop comprehensive plan for floods and water scarcity discussed



U Khin Aung Myint. PHOTO: MNA

THE second Amyotha Hluttaw session entered its ninth day with lawmakers holding discussions on a motion calling for a comprehensive plan for flooding that occurs annually in the delta and coastal regions and for nationwide water shortages during the dry season. Also discussed was restoring rivers for the benefit of river-side resi-



Major Zaw Tun. PHOTO: MNA

dents. In his discussions Defence Services Personnel Hluttaw Representative Major Zaw Tun stressed the need for taking the challenges of funds and technology into account to ensure effective preparedness measures.

Regarding the problem of water scarcity, he called for short-term and long-term water shortage

mitigation plans and measures to ensure an adequate supply of water. The parliamentarian pointed out that it is hard for the government to perform river dredging operations as a preventive measure against floods across the country due to financial constraints, suggesting that these works should be carried out under a BOT system.

Moreover, he emphasised the need to seek expert recommendations prior to conducting dredging works and building water facilities.

During yesterday's Amyotha Hluttaw session U Khin Aung Myint of Mandalay Region Constituency 8 submitted a proposal calling on the Union government to develop a special plan to improve literacy rates among ethnic people, enabling them to have access to tertiary education and to promote ethnic literature.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Pyithu Hluttaw

Pyithu Hluttaw continues with query session, discussions on proposal



Dr Tun Win. PHOTO: MNA

The Pyithu Hluttaw session continued its ninth day with a question-and-answer period and a parliamentary discussion on a flood control proposal yesterday.

Concerning a question about accommodations for internally displaced persons in border areas, the Deputy Minister for Border Affairs Maj-Gen Than Htut said that the Union government recently provided them with K3,083.605 million and relief supplies worth K15,130.511 million. In addition, the ministry presented cash and goods worth K178.136 million, he said.

Since the start of the clashes in June 2011, the Union government has carried out aid programs for the IDPs in cooperation with the Kachin State government, UN agencies and international and local organizations, the deputy minister said.

He added that national reconciliation works are taking place, with the formation of preparatory committees and preparation meetings prior to Union



Maj-Gen Than Htut. PHOTO: MNA

Peace Conference 21st century Panglong that will involve all stakeholders.

Regarding a question about damaged primary school buildings in Leshe Township, the deputy minister said that severe weather conditions in the region caused minor damage to the school buildings, which were soon repaired.

During yesterday's Pyithu Hluttaw session, parliamentarians held discussions on a motion calling for necessary measures against the possible adverse affects of floods on dykes in Ayeyawady Region, expressing their support for the proposal.

In their discussions, lawmakers stressed the need of urgent repairs of dykes that are more than 150 years old.

Next, the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr Tun Win gave a clarification on the proposal, and the Pyithu Hluttaw decided to wait and see whether to put the proposal on the record.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Speakers hold talks with Laotian President



The two speakers meeting the Laotian President. PHOTO: MNA

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint and Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than held talks with Laotian President Mr. Bounnahang Vorachith at a hall of Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the meeting, they discussed matters related to further bilateral relations and cooperation in the two parliaments and Lao PDR's participation in the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly in Myanmar. Also pres-

ent were Deputy Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat, Deputy Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Aye Tha Aung, chairmen and secretaries of parliamentary committees and officials from Hluttaw Offices.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Thaton's roads marred by high death toll

THE death toll from traffic accidents within the Mon State district of Thaton between January and July this year exceeds 120 individuals, according to the district's Office of Traffic Police.

Of the 255 traffic accidents which befell the district during the six-month period, 123 lost their lives and 431 individuals sustained injuries.

A Traffic Police Official called Myo Min Thein says the high numbers of fatalities and injuries in traffic accidents is the result of a combination of vehicle drivers and pedestrians not adhering to road regulations.

"In comparison with last year, the number of traffic acci-

dent fatalities has been augmented by the increase in accidents. It's exacerbated the number of fatalities in the district. If the majority of motorists are to follow road regulations, their is also the needs for the pedestrians to also follow the rules of the road. Both sides suffer in traffic accidents, regardless of who's to blame," said Police Officer Myo Min Thein.

As well as efforts reportedly been made throughout Thaton district in a bid to abate the number of traffic accidents by erecting traffic warning signs, traffic lights, and traffic police directing traffic, educational awareness activities about traffic rules and regulations are also carried out no less than a

hundred times in schools, wards and villages across the district.

"It seems as though traffic accidents are always befalling our district as peoples' obedience to rules of the road is declining with the rise in vehicles on the road. Even if people say that's inevitable, the number of fatalities is still great. Only with people following the rules will instances of traffic accidents be reduced," said U Zaw Pe, a Thaton resident.

According to records of the Thaton district Office of Traffic Police, the whole district saw a total of 343 traffic accidents, in which 570 people sustained injuries and 136 died.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Red Cross opens emergency flood shelters in Hinthada

THE Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) has opened up a series of emergency flood shelters in villages of Ayeyawady Region's Hinthada Township which were hit by floods, according to township branch of the MRCS.

Members of Hinthada's RCS, in cooperation with local NGOs, have been transporting emergency relief and opening flood shelters in monasteries and school buildings of five villages within the township.

"We're uncertain how many people have been affected by the flooding. We've utilized monasteries and schools from nearby villages to open flood shelters, and we're currently collaborating with the local authorities in conducting search and rescue efforts in remaining areas," said U Win Ko Ko, second in command of

Hinthada Township's RCS.

Recently collected data reveals more than 250 victims are seeking refuge at each of the shelters setup in the villages of Shwehintha, Lakechaung, Taunglonsu and Sitkon.

"We've had to abandon our home to come and seek shelter at the monastery. We receive donations of rice from well-wishers, but we can't return home since the flood waters have yet to subside," said Ko Min Lwin of Lakechaung village.

Village authorities — in collaboration with members of the MRCS, the auxiliary fire service and charity associations — are reportedly conducting search and rescue efforts, data collection and emergency health care within the villages in Hinthada Township affected by the recent flooding.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Myanmar, Laos ink agreement on management of friendship bridge

MYANMAR and Laos signed an agreement yesterday for management of the friendship bridge that links the two Southeast Asian countries.

The agreement for the first bridge ever across the Mekong River between the two countries was signed by Union Foreign Affairs Minister Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Laotian Foreign Affairs Minister Mr Saleumxay Kommasith in the presence of President U Htin Kyaw and his counterpart Bounnhang Vorachitch.

The bridge, which links Myanmar's Tachileik in eastern Shan State to Laos' Luang Namtha Province, was inaugurated last year by the then-presidents of both countries. The bridge was opened in May 2015.

The idea of constructing the 691.6 meter-long Myanmar-Laos Friendship Bridge at a cost of 26 million U.S. dollars was first raised during an earlier visit to Myanmar by Lao Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong in July 2011. The project began in February 2013.—GNLM



Union Foreign Affairs Minister Daw Aung San Suu Kyi shakes hands with Laotian counterpart Mr Saleumxay Kommasith after exchanging notes of agreement for management of the friendship bridge. PHOTO: MNA

Protection and promotion of farmers' rights and interests critical to national economic growth: Vice President

THE Leading Committee for Farmers Rights, Protection and Interests Promotion held its first plenary session at the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Speaking at the meeting, Vice President U Henry Van Thio said that measures to protect and promote the rights and interests of farmers should be consistent with the implementation of

government policies.

The vice president quoted the new economic policy stating that special emphasis would be placed on a balanced development of agriculture, livestock and industry to ensure inclusive economic growth, food security and increased export.

He spoke of a financial system that would help stabilise the monetary sector and enable fami-

lies and farmers to enjoy sustainable economic growth.

He pointed out the need to have an insight into the current situation of the agricultural sector, calling for combined efforts to promote agriculture without focusing on paddy growing alone.

He described the rigorous implementation of farmers' rights and interests as an urgent need for the country's economic development. The government has enacted a law to protect the rights of farmers and promote their interests, the vice president said, adding that a leading committee has also been formed to ensure the welfare of farmers.

Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr Aung Thu briefed those present on measures being taken to protect and promote the rights and interests of farmers, with Union Minister U Khin Maung Cho and Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo giving follow-up briefings of their undertakings.—Myanmar News Agency



Vice President U Henry Van Thio addresses meeting of the Leading Committee for Farmers Rights, Protection and Interests Promotion. PHOTO: MNA

Govt ready to supply paddy seedlings to farmers in flooded areas

Thein Ko Lwin

THE Union Government has plans to distribute paddy seedlings to farmers who faced devastation of their paddy plants due to the current flooding, said Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr Tun Win.

"Due to experiences in the past, the government has already arranged to provide the farmers in flood-hit areas with paddy seedlings," said the deputy minister to reporters in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Currently, about 20,000 acres of paddy fields are underwater due to overflow from the Ayeyawady, Chindwin and Ngawun rivers. The government is taking measures to prevent more flooding on the paddy fields, it has been learned.

During last year's floods about 200,000 acres of rain-fed fields were submerged.

Meanwhile the Ministry of Defence announced that it will

provide evacuation and relief works in flood-hit areas with military helicopters and water crafts.

"All local battalions and regiments have been ordered and alerted to make quick responses to disasters in their respective areas," said Union Minister for Defence Lt-Gen Sein Win.

Currently, the Ministry of Defence has sent two floating hospitals and helicopters to participate in evacuation and relief activities.

Rising water on the Ayeyawady, Chindwin, and the Ngawun rivers has caused flooding in Hinthada, Zalun, Kyangin, Myan Aung, Ingapu, Maubin, Pantanaw and Danubyu townships since early August.

The Meteorology and Hydrology Department has alerted people living in low-lying areas to be aware of possible floods and to move to shelters that the government has established.

Emergency health care takes place in Naga Self-administered Zone

>> From page 1

including a one-year-old child and a 94-year-old man. Most of the victims were children aged from 1 to 12.

As soon as the information was received on 20 July, medical staff were sent to immediately perform disease control actions that included diagnostic testing, the

director-general said.

On August 5, a medical team that specializes in infectious disease from the Health Ministry performed disease control and prevention measures and provided health care services to the local people in the region in cooperation with regional medical teams.

A Tatmadaw helicopter car-

rying three specialists will fly to the villages that report disease outbreaks, said the director-general in good weather.

He added that there were 13 deaths in Nannyun Township, 11 of whom were children under the age of five. The others were a 24-year-old person and a 54-year-old person. They died between 28 July and 2 August.

A medical team from Don Hee station hospital has provided health care, while other medical teams that include specialists and a military medical team will arrive soon, the director-general said.

Samples from the patients were sent to the National Health Laboratory in Yangon and a press release will be issued after results

of the tests are obtained, added the director-general.

Sagaing Region Chief Minister Dr Myint Naing said that a medical team from Sagaing Region has arrived Lahe Township, and that the outbreak of the unknown disease in the Naga region has been reported to the emergency management committee.—Shin Min

As sandbanks clog up rivers, flooding augmented in Rakhine State

SANDBANKS, which are blocking the course of rivers and streams in Rakhine State, need to be dredged to prevent flooding, say local residents and engineers.

They point out that low-lying townships within the state are prone to flooding when rivers and streams in mountainous areas flow down into the sea, leaving behind sandbanks, highlighting how the dredging of these sandbanks could help abate the extent of such floods.

"Sandbanks blocking the course of rivers need to be dredged; current flooding has affected townships located 100ft above sea level. Waters rise, not because of tides, but because of rain water in rivers and streams that fail to flow out into the sea," said U Shwe Thein, a marine expert and chief engineer of an international shipping company.

Residents of Rakhine State have reportedly made overtures to local government for assistance to tackle annual flooding which destroys lives, properties and farming.



The sandbanks that slop up the rivers. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

"A company has presented us with a proposal to dredge the sandbanks. We've forwarded the proposal to Union Government but are yet to hear any response," said U Min Aung, Minister of the Rakhine State Development Committee.

Recent floods have affected more than 20,000 local people in both north and south Rakhine State, a region of the Myanmar frequented by natural disasters.

"Rainfall, which washes down off the mountains, causes rivers and creeks to overflow and flood low-lying areas; whole stretches of riverbanks have been swept away. Research on the state's waterways needs to be conducted with the help of experts. We need to dredge rivers and streams that have been silted up with sandbanks," said U Aye Thar Aung, vice chair of Amyotha Hluttaw.

Rakhine State is a coastal region abound with rivers and creeks. It's famous for its rivers of Kaladan, Laymyo, Nat and Mayu. — Myitmakha News Agency

Crime NEWS



Gamblers seen with the motorbike. PHOTO: MYANMAR POLICE FORCE

Police arrested two gamblers in Natogyi

POLICE have arrested two men who were allegedly gambling with dice in a field in Moe Thein Pyin village, Natogyi township, Mandalay region on 3 August.

Police discovered Ks 207,600, 14 motorbikes and ma-

terials related to the playing of the gin game, a gambling game that involves betting. Charges were filed against Nyunt Oo, alias Myint Oo, 38, and Myint Than Win, 50.—*Myanmar Police Force*

Man killed after transformer overheats

A 45-year-old man was found dead inside his tent early on Tuesday morning as firefighters were putting out a blaze that broke out at midnight. The fire was apparently sparked by a short-circuit caused by an overheated step-up transformer from the warehouse security per-

sonnel's hut at Bo Aung Zayar ward, Yay Oo town. The fire quickly went out of control and damaged the hut, a bicycle and a motorbike. The fire was put out by firemen aided by neighbors within 15 minutes, officials said. Charges may be filed, police said.—*Than Htet (Yay Oo)*

Yaba and hand grenades seized

AN anti-narcotics suppression squad comprising policemen from Eindu police station seized Yaba pills and three hand grenades at the corner of Yaytama and Mahawgani roads in Hpa-an town, 9th ward on 3 August.

Acting on a tip, the police stopped and searched a vehicle driven by Khin Zaw with Myo Aung Tun on board and discov-

ered 48,648 Yaba tablets and three 40mm hand grenades.

A connected investigation led police to search the house of Ma Naw Thin Thin Lei on Oo Yin Road, Hpa-an town, 4th ward and discovered 10,000 Yaba tablets and Ks 15 lakh. All of the suspects have been charged under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—*Ko Ye*

Yaba seized from man's pants

A local police squad in Tatkon township seized Yaba pills from the pants pocket of a man on a motorcycle on Yangon-Mandalay road, at Tatkon township, Nay Pyi Taw on 3 August.

Acting on a tip, police stopped Mg Shan Lin Paik, alias Bala, and discovered 339 Yaba tablets worth Ks 1,023,000 and Ks 168,800. Police have filed charges under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—*Tin Soe Lwin (IPRD)*



Police search Mg Shan Lin Paik. PHOTO: TIN SOE LWIN (IPRD)

Vehicle collision kills a car driver

THE driver of a light truck vehicle was killed when he crashed into the back of a passenger bus at Kyaukdaga township, Bago region on 3 August.

The truck driven by Zaw

Min Naing, 34, with a Buddhist monk on board, crashed into the bus driven by Than Htut, 47, with passengers on board. Zaw Min Naing apparently lost control of his vehicle, according to the po-

lice investigation.

Zaw Min Naing suffered numerous injuries and died at the hospital, according to the police investigation.—*Phyo Ko Lin (Nyaung Waing)*



The light truck being seen after the crash. PHOTO: PHYO KO LIN (NYAUNG WAING)

LOCAL Business

Myanmar's waterways to get nationwide upgrade



A worker fishing with a net in a fish farm at Htantabin township, outside Yangon.
PHOTO: REUTERS

ACCORDING to a statement by Dr Htun Win, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, upgrades are to be made to current waterways, as well as the digging or entirely new ponds and rivers, in a bid to develop the country's agriculture and livestock sectors.

The announcement came during the ceremony to celebrate the Myanmar Fisheries Federation's 17th Anniversary on Sunday.

"In our country, which is

known the world over for its delta region and abundance of ponds and lakes, there is a complete dearth of meat and fish. It's a situation whereby the nation's commercial capital relies on fish being delivered in from the heart of the Ayeyarwady Region," said Dr Htun Win.

The present shortage of meat, fish and agricultural products within Myanmar reportedly stems from the systematic confiscation of farmland by consecutive erst-

while governments, rendering agricultural and livestock sectors with just 20 per cent of farmland left upon with which to conduct their activities.

"[Further] ponds will be dug in regions where fishing ponds already exist. The plan to rejuvenate these areas is a good one. But it's a very large-scale initiative, encompassing the entire country," said U Win Kyaing, general secretary of the Myanmar Fisheries Federation.

The issuing of state economic policy will reportedly see the industrial sector connect with the agriculture, meat and fish sectors in which value-added processed products will be exported to international markets in lieu of presently exported unprocessed goods.

Myanmar currently boasts of over 280 storage dams, and 49 diversion dams which can redirect water to supply irrigation systems and reservoirs.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Expired individual trade cards (Muse) must be updated before deadline

AUTHORITIES of the Muse (105-mile) Trade Zone have issued a warning to individuals holding expired individual trade cards, saying they must apply to renew the card before the designated date.

Border authorities have issued 165 IRCs to merchants in Muse, a town in northern Shan State, 36 of which require renewal this month.

"We will no longer renew expired cards after this month," said Daw Ni Ni Maw, head of the 105-mile trade zone. "Only twenty-one expired card holders have made contact with the department."

The term of the ITC is one year. The card grants the holder permission to carry out export and import processes with neighbouring countries for up to K15 million worth of trade per week. The card holder is required to renew it one month ahead of the expiry date. Over the designated

period, the ITC holders shall pay a penalty of K5,000.

Aung Zaw Lin, an ITC holder, who imports auto accessories from China, said that the authorities should allow K30 million worth of trade dealing a week. He claimed he has stopped using the ITC as it is difficult to balance import volume and trade value. He now operates an import business through an export/import company.

Since 2012 authorities have permitted individual trading at 18 border trade camps, with plans to remove some restrictions and regulations for individual traders to promote the country's trade sector.

The import value between 1 April and 8 July this fiscal year at the Muse border trade camp reached over US\$4 billion. Between April and mid-July, over \$300 million worth of goods were imported by individual trade card holders.—*Aung Thant Khaing*

Meliá Yangon Hotel launched

Meliá Yangon, a luxury city hotel with 430 rooms, is officially opened.

The hotel with a contemporary and cutting edge flair and an excellent location opposite the scenic Inya Lake.

Just 10 minutes by car from the beautiful Shwedagon Pagoda, 15 minutes from the city center, 5 minutes from Kaba Aye Pagoda and Myanmar Gems Museum, and 20 minutes from Yangon International Airport. The hotel Meliá Yangon

is strategically connected to office towers and Myanmar Plaza, the most modern and complete shopping center. The hotel includes the Lantern Restaurant, Garbo Bar, outdoor swimming pool and Gym.

It will open YHI Spa on 1,800 meter space, with hydro-massage, Vichy and Jet showers.

The hotel, owned by Viet Nam's Hoang Anh Gia Lai (HAGL) Group, has opened 370 hotels in 43 countries.—*GNLM*



The grand opening ceremony of Hotel Meliá. PHOTO: MELIÁ

Myanmar's external trade value decreased by \$750m this FY

THE total value of Myanmar's external trade over the past four months saw a decrease of more than US\$750 million compared to the same period last FY, according to official figures released by the Ministry of Commerce.

The total external trade value between 1 April and the end of July this FY reached over \$8.071 billion, including over \$3 billion from the export sector and \$4.8 billion from the import sector. The country has a trade deficit of over \$1.5 billion.

During the first four months last FY, the country earned over \$8.823 billion from external trade through sea routes and border trade camps. Myanmar imports industrial raw materials, personal goods, construction equipment, automobiles and capital goods among others mainly from China, Japan, India, Indonesia, Germany, France and Hong Kong.

Efforts are being made to promote the country's export sector by shipping new valued-added products from the manufacturing sector within the next five years according to the second five-year National Development Plan between the 2016-2017 and 2020-2021 FY.

The country exports forest products, agricultural products, natural gas and fishery products mainly to neighbouring countries.

The trade department expects that the trade value of Myanmar with partner countries is likely to reach around US\$31 billion over the 2016-2017 fiscal year.—*GNLM*

Twinnings tea officially launched in Myanmar

STEPHEN Twinnings is currently in Yangon to celebrate Twinnings 310th anniversary and officially launch the Twinnings tea brand in Myanmar.

"Tea is well-loved in Myanmar; so it makes absolute sense for Twinnings to be here. I am delighted to experience Myanmar's unique culture and our shared passion for tea," Mr Twinnings said.

Twinnings is now available in Myanmar, being sold at City Mart supermarkets and other stores in major cities.—*GNLM*

Yangon's suburban property market slumps

THE property market within the suburban outskirts of Yangon (Myanmar's commercial capital) has subsided of late, according to real-estate agents, induced by a fall in property prices.

Ko Aung Thura, a broker of Aung Yadana Real Estate Agency situated in Dagon Myothit (South), says property prices in the city's suburbs depreciated in the wake of transition to a new government following last year's general elections, with expensive house prices during the tenure of the erstwhile government reportedly even beyond the reach of most businessmen.

"The current property market has slowed down because of changes to the political landscape. Previously, a plot of land on either side of a main road sold for between K50-60 million, approaching K70 or 80 million. But now, such a plot may only fetch around a meager K30 million," he said.

A fall in property prices depresses the market as property dealers hold out, waiting for the time when prices will shoot back up again to trade.

U Wai Yan, a property analyst from Dagon Myothit (North),

A construction site seen in Dagon Myothit. PHOTO: NYI ZAW MOE



has expressed the situation of the property market in Dagon Myothit (North) used to be similar to that of its southern cousin, Dagon Myothit (South).

"A plot of 40' x 60' land in North Dagon last year shot over the K100 million price mark. Now, though, and we're faced

with a situation where prices are falling as sales wane. Land prices used to be exorbitantly high during the previous government's term in office, while the market is currently still subdued since the swearing in of a new democratic government," he said.

Yangon's suburban proper-

ty market was difficult to control during the former government's administration, while real estate agents and market analysts speculate that this current four-month long lull in the market, in the wake of a new government, might pick up with the onset of 2017.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Ooredoo Myanmar reports successful quarter

OOREDOO Myanmar released yesterday its business update for the first half of 2016 at a press conference conducted at their head office in Yangon. The company reported that their investment portfolio has grown by US \$2 billion over the first half of the year. The company also now boasts 4,232 on-air towers installed which should surpass 4,500 by the end of 2016, according to the CEO of Ooredoo Myanmar Mr. Rene Meza.

"We are using world-class technology which more efficiently covers the country, providing superior service" Mr. Meza said.

Ooredoo launched the first 4G LTE network in Myanmar in May 2016 and today operates almost 100 branded stores across the country.—*GNLM*

Sesame price likely to fall at harvest time due to low demand from China

LOCAL merchants have estimated that the price of sesame is likely to drop at harvest time this season due to low demand from China.

"There is a quality problem with export items. It creates difficulties with the European market. That is why the sesame price is estimated to decline this season" a sesame merchant said.

U Sai Ba Nyan, vice chairman of the Myanmar Pulses, Beans & Sesame Seeds Merchants Association, said, "Sesame prices have also decreased on the world market. We saw a decrease of US\$300 per tonne of the crop compared to last year be-

cause of fertiliser problems."

Currently, merchants sell a tonne of black sesame for between \$1,300 and \$2,300 and white sesame for around \$1,400.

The lower price of sesame will strongly affect local exporters, said U San Hlaing, a grower from Bago Region who hopes the price will rise again for the coming harvest season in September.

Myanmar normally exports about 100,000 tonnes of sesame to partner countries including China, Japan, South Korea and EU member countries. Seventy per cent of the total volume went to China.—*200*

Myanmar-India joint venture SEZ likely to emerge in Sittwe

IN partnership with Myanmar authorities the Indian government has a plan to establish a special economic zone in Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, according to a press release issued by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs.

Businesspersons from ASEAN member countries will be invited to make investments in the new joint venture project.

Plans are underway to develop the new SEZ on 1,000 acres of land in Ponnagyun Township

which is located 37 miles outside Sittwe Township. The plan aims to join the new SEZ and the currently running Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, which will connect the eastern Indian seaport of Kolkata with Sittwe seaport by sea.

Indian authorities have invested US\$120 million in the implementation of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project and Sittwe Deep Seaport Project.—*200*

Importation of diamonds illegal, says IRD

THE Internal Revenue Department (IRD) has expressed that diamonds are forbidden from being imported into Myanmar, while a special goods tax is levied on jewelry encrusted with diamonds mined within the country.

"A five per cent tax is levied on jewelry made with diamonds. Taxes are then not allowed to be further levied upon selling within a jewelry store. But, one must be able to show proof [that tax has already been paid]," said U Myo Ko, director of the IRD.

Diamond encrusted jewelry sold within gemstones stores in Myanmar reportedly features diamonds illegally imported into the country from Hong Kong and through the Myanmar - India bor-

der town of Tamu. Industry insiders have also made it aware that diamonds from India are usually of a poor quality.

"A great deal of the diamonds used in studded jewelry, which are sold in stores throughout Myanmar, originate in India. The shops doctor the diamonds to hide their actual quality," said a gemstone tradesman who wished to remain anonymous.

According to the Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Association, the absence of government permission to import diamonds and other gemstones from abroad means such gems are entering the country through illegal channels.

In regard to tax policy on

diamonds within Myanmar, as official tax levies on foreign diamonds do not yet exist, it renders such diamonds presently being utilized within the country as having been smuggled in illegally from neighboring countries or overseas.

"All diamonds within Myanmar have been smuggled in. If [the owners or sellers of these diamonds are] ever questioned, they must pretend that they're family heirlooms," added the anonymous gems tradesman.

As well as diamonds, the IRD has made it known that it is illegal to import other such gemstones into Myanmar including gold and emeralds.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Number of hotels increases to 1,300 nationwide

THE number of functioning hotels counted up until the end of July this year has reached 1,361 with 53,355 rooms nationwide, according to official figures released by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

The ministry is confident that this number can satisfy increasing demand for hotel rooms to accommodate the rising number of tourists, it is reported.

To provide better services for both local and foreign visitors the ministry erased some restrictions on the issuing of licenses to investors to establish hotels and other development facilities

across the nation.

There are 342 hotels with over 16,000 rooms in Yangon Region, 179 hotels with nearly 7,300 rooms in Mandalay Region, 63 hotels with around 5,100 rooms in the capital Nay Pyi Taw, 81 hotels with over 2,700 rooms in Bagan and NyaunU, 24 hotels with 1,163 rooms in Ngwehsaung Beach, 23 hotels with 874 rooms in Chaungtha Beach, 120 hotels with about 3,600 rooms in Taunggyi of Shan State.

Licenses have been issued to tour operators, tour guides and related applicants by the ministry. Up until the end of last month, the

ministry granted nearly 2,200 licenses to tour operators, over 930 transport licenses, around 3,950 tour guild licenses and over 2700 local tour guild licenses.

Since 2011 the country has seen a growing influx of tourists year on year. It hosted over 4.6 million foreign visitors last FY, an increase of 52 per cent compared with 2014. The ministry estimates that the number will increase to 5.5 million this FY.

The ministry further estimates that international tourist arrivals in the country are likely to reach 7.5 million by 2019.—*GNLM*



India's main opposition Congress party president Sonia Gandhi and her son and the party's vice-president Rahul Gandhi arrive to address their supporters before what the party calls "Save Democracy" march to parliament in New Delhi, India, on 6 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Sonia Gandhi has shoulder surgery after fall at campaign stop

NEW DELHI — Sonia Gandhi, the leader of India's main opposition party, has undergone shoulder surgery at a New Delhi hospital after suffering a fall on a campaign stop this week, senior Congress party officials said on Friday.

Gandhi, 69, dislocated her left shoulder when she fainted on Tuesday while launching the party's campaign for next year's Uttar Pradesh state election in the holy city of Varanasi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's parliamentary constituency.

Gandhi suffered acute dehydration while travelling in an open vehicle for four hours through large crowds.

"She had dislocated her

shoulder after a fall and is now under observation for 48 hours," said a senior party official, who did not wish to be named as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

The Italian-born politician, who led her party to two successive terms governing the world's largest democracy, has played a slightly reduced public role since being treated abroad for an unknown illness in 2011. Despite persistent speculation, she has yet to hand over the party leadership to Rahul Gandhi, her 46-year-old son and the great grandson of India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru.—Reuters

Indonesia arrests six suspects allegedly planning Singapore attack

JAKARTA — Indonesian authorities arrested six suspected militants on Batam island on Friday who were believed to be linked to the Islamic State group and plotting an attack on nearby Singapore, an Indonesian police spokesman said.

Singapore said it had stepped up security in response.

Indonesian police spokesman Agus Rianto told reporters the suspects had been plotting with a member of the Islamic State militant group in Syria to attack Singapore via Batam, which is about 15 km (10 miles) south of Singapore.

"What we understand so far is that they were planning to attack vital objects, busy areas including

police offices," Rianto said.

The six suspects were suspected to have links to Bahrin Naim, an Indonesian fighting for Islamic State in Syria, police said.

Singapore said it had stepped up its internal and border security.

"This development highlights the seriousness of the terrorism threat to Singapore," a spokesman for Singapore's interior ministry said in a statement.

"The public are advised to remain vigilant."

Indonesian investigators believe that Naim was one of the masterminds behind an attack in January in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta, in which eight people were killed including the four attackers.

"There's a link to

Bahrin Naim because there was communication with Bahrin Naim — but whether they were affiliated with Bahrin Naim's group or not — this is what we're investigating now," Rianto said.

Security officials fear that Naim and other Islamic State leaders were now asking supporters in Indonesia and other countries to launch attacks at home, instead of being drawn to the fight in the Middle East.

"One thing I think is clear is Bahrin Naim has been able to establish a lot of communication with a log of people through his social media network," said Jakarta-based security analyst Sidney Jones.

"This would be a departure for Bahrin Naim

and his supporters if they were really thinking of attacking targets outside Indonesia," she said.

Southeast Asian militants fighting for Islamic State in the Middle East have said they have chosen one of the most wanted men in the Philippines to head a regional faction of the radical group that includes Indonesians and Malaysians, security officials said last month.

Indonesian forces were also on heightened alert following the killing of the country's most-wanted militant last month. Santoso, among the first Indonesians to pledge loyalty to Islamic State, was killed in a gun battle with security forces on the island of Sulawesi.—Reuters

Ousted Thai PM Yingluck defends rice subsidy at criminal trial

BANGKOK — Ousted former Thai prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra defended her management of a rice subsidy scheme, which critics say hemorrhaged billions of dollars, and told a court on Friday it had not distorted global prices.

Yingluck, Thailand's first female prime minister, was removed from office by a court days before the military took power in a May 2014 coup.

The rice scheme, a flagship election policy that helped sweep her to office in a landslide in 2011, was a catalyst for months of crippling street protests in 2014 that led to the military takeover.

"We found that the rice policy could increase people's income and the price of rice for farmers," Yingluck told the Supreme Court north of the capital, Bangkok.

"It did not distort the market," she said. "We saw that the benefits of the scheme outweighed the monetary losses." Yingluck has been charged with criminal negligence over her management of the rice programme, which was one of the populist policies engineered by her brother, former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Thaksin was also toppled in a 2006 coup.



Supporters of ousted former Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra wait for her outside the Supreme Court in Bangkok, Thailand, on 5 August 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Thaksin is central to a conflict that has divided Thais for more than a decade. He lives in exile abroad to avoid a jail term for abuse of power charges he says were politically motivated.

The Shinawatras enjoy support in the mostly poorer north and northeast of Thailand while their opponents, including the royalist-military establishment that accuse the Shinawatras of corruption, mostly hail from Bangkok and the south.

Yingluck is accused of failing to stem losses from the multi-billion dollar subsidy scheme, which

distorted global prices and saw Thailand lose its crown as the world's number one rice exporter to India.

On Monday, the military government said it would also lodge a civil damages case against Yingluck and some of her former ministers.

The rice scheme cost the state 286 billion baht (\$8.20 billion), it said. Yingluck has consistently denied any wrongdoing and has said the case against her is being rushed deliberately.

She told the court that she was in charge of formulating the policy, not

the day-to-day running of the scheme.

Supporters earlier handed her flowers as she arrived at the trial, while others held framed pictures of Yingluck and her brother Thaksin. Yingluck was banned from politics for five years in January 2015 after a military-appointed legislature found her guilty of mismanaging the rice scheme.

The scheme left Thailand with around 18 million tonnes of rice in stockpiles. The military government has sold more than 5 million tonnes in a series of auctions since taking power.—Reuters

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Opinion

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Paradoxes of pedagogical approaches

Kyaw Thura

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, in an educational seminar on pedagogy in Nay Pyi Taw two days ago, attached importance to the use of the learner-centred teaching in brightening the future of the country, alerting all the education practitioners to the need to be imaginative about how to promote the country's education standard.

In the past six years, the Ministry of Education has attempted to introduce the Child-Centred Approach (CCA) in the education setting

across the country, but to be frank, the attempt still remains a failure. The problem seems to arise from a misunderstanding about the interpretation and application of this approach. In fact, this practice of teaching and learning is not a methodology but a philosophy. This does not necessarily mean that learner-centred teaching must focus on a single teaching method.

It is, therefore, absolutely vital for the authorities in the field of education to consider what barriers there are to the

use of this approach in our classrooms. To some confusing extent, the phrases of the learner-centred teaching, the learning-centred teaching and the student-centred learning are in common use in the teaching and learning context. On the whole, these phrases are all variations of one approach.

One critical point to ponder is that traditional teaching approaches still reign supreme in the field of education, making some eager teachers feel reluctant to adopt the learner-centred ap-

proach. Another issue is concerned with large class sizes and inadequate infrastructure with a result that teachers have to emphasise group goals over the needs of individual students. Despite the difficulties, teachers have the responsibility to transform their students into self-driven lifelong learners.

All things considered, the reform in the education system involves the reform in teaching and learning, which in turn should come up with necessary changes in the assessment system across the curriculum.

Access to Justice

Dr. Khine Khine Win

ACCCESS to justice is an inherent rule of law and a fundamental requirement of any democratic society. Justice is a broad notion that is based on the concept of moral rightness that incorporates varying perspectives on fairness, ethics, rationality and law. Keep in mind that access to justice is fundamental human rights. The Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (2008), section 21(a) states "Every citizen shall enjoy the right of equality, the right of liberty and the right of justice". Article 8 of the UDHR where it declares that "Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the Constitution or by law". When a right is violated or damage is caused, access to justice is

of fundamental importance for the injured individual and it is an essential component of the rule of law.

The United Nations General Assembly formally adopted the "Transforming our world: 2030 agenda for sustainable development" by UN member States in September 2015. It is a new compact for people and planet anchored in 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. The Goals and targets stimulated the action over the next fifteen years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet. In January 2016, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted its new 2025 Community Vision. This guiding document acknowledges the complementary relationship between the UN's 2030 Agenda. By adopting this vision, ASEAN became the first regional body to acknowledge its members efforts to implement and

monitor the SDGs. Again, Chair's Statement of "20 Years of ASEM: Partnership for the Future through Connectivity" welcomed again the adoption in 2015 of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development. In this statement leaders agreed to work together towards the timely and full implementation of the goals set in this document at the national, regional and global levels.

SDGs recognize the central role of justice in achieving development, with Goal 16 specifically guaranteeing "equal access to justice for all". In this regard, ASEAN Regional Consultation on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Access to Justice and Legal Aid was held on May 26-27, 2016 in Jakarta, Indonesia. Over 100 participants including government officials and civil society members from ASEAN countries, representatives from ASEAN bodies, academics and international experts on measuring access to justice and legal aid were attended. The meeting provided a platform for regional participants to gather best practices

on providing legal aid for poor and vulnerable people, strengthening access to justice provisions in ASEAN countries, as well as tracking progress and measurement of access to justice. This initiative aimed to develop national commitments to strengthen the rule of law and implement Goal 16 of the SDGs for peace, justice and strong institutions, and concrete actions for future cooperation in the ASEAN region. ASEAN has taken the initiative and demonstrated that regional bodies can provide invaluable support to national efforts to implement and monitor the justice commitments of the SDGs. By seeing aforementioned facts, we can understand that ASEAN member countries are readiness to cooperate together to implement SDGs including Goal 16.

There is no access to justice where people do not have legal awareness or information or knowledge of rights or where there is a weak justice system. For instance to address violations of human rights by the duty bear-

ers, increase knowledge and awareness on human rights issues are needed. Therefore a broad dissemination of information about rights is essential for an access to justice. On the other hand, improve rule of law will improve access to justice. Rule of law is undermined if people cannot exercise to their rights to access to justice. Even rule of law is rightly regarded as being the foundation of any democratic society it is meaningless if there is no access to justice. No doubt, every government has a fundamental responsibility to ensure access to justice is available when there is no other realistic option for people. If they fail their responsibility, there will be no justice. If there is no justice there will be no peace.

Martin Luther King said "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere". Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

References: <http://www.idlo.int/news/events/promoting-access-justice-legal-aid-and-sdgs-asean-region>

Pact's village banking scheme arrives Thaton

PACT Myanmar will support the establishment of self-sustainable village banks in rural areas of Mon State's Thaton Township, a Pact Myanmar facilitated capacity development workshop held in Thaton on 4 August has revealed.

Daw Maw Maw Soe, chief program coordinator for Pact Myanmar, stated during the workshop that the international NGO would provide support to develop the capacity of women in rural areas in the handling monetary and busi-

ness enterprises which would allow for the materialization of village banking from investment through a self-sustainable system of savings.

"The key aspect of this project is for women from villages to lead the founding of village banks from their own savings, which they can then run as a financial enterprise, lending money out to other villagers in the form of credit. It will allow a profit to be made, off the money saved, in the

form of interest received from the borrower. It's a method that allows money lending through collective financial saving. Capacity building trainings will also be given [by Pact Myanmar] to teach women how to then use turnover from the bank to expand their local business enterprises," she explained.

As well as women being able to utilize their savings for the conduction of business enterprises from their inclusion in the village

banking program, it will also open a conduit through which family hardships can be alleviated. More than just an business enterprises, the program will empower women socially, enabling them to take action on female related social issues within their villages, added the Daw Maw Maw Soe.

The systematic selection of the program management committee; reliable methods of handling finances and weekly meetings of bank members, during which bank

teller systems are studied; together with the setting of regulations on methods of saving through savings books and records, will reportedly allow for financial transparency in the process the issuing of credit loans.

The village banking scheme will be rolled out across more than 70 villages in Thaton Township with 90 groups comprising 2,250 members. The scheme is one which has reportedly already been implemented in over 11,000 villages across five regions and three states around Myanmar.—Myitmakha News Agency

National Natural Disaster Management Committee meets

VICE PRESIDENT U Henry Van Thio highlighted the importance of community-based Disaster Management planning for preparedness, prevention, response and recovery operations while addressing a work coordination meeting of the National Natural Disaster Management Committee (NNDMC) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

In his address, the Vice President, chairman of the committee, said those who have a role in disaster management must follow Natural Disaster Management law, rules and regulations that have

been enacted. He called for seeking better ways to mitigate disaster risks in townships and stressed the need for making strides in building a better committee to win the public's trust and reliance.

Disaster response plans must be in place before a disaster occurs in regions and states, he said.

After U Henry Van Thio's address, the committee vice chairmen Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye and other ministers elaborated on ongoing works and future programmes.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Vice President U Henry Van Thio speaking at NNDMC meeting. PHOTO: MNA

Laotian President and wife arrive Nay Pyi Taw

PRESIDENT of the Lao People's Democratic Republic Mr. Bounnhang Vorachith and wife Mrs. Khammeuang Vorachith arrived Nay Pyi Taw at the invitation of President U Htin Kyaw and wife Daw Su Su Lwin yesterday morning.

The visiting Laotian President and party were welcomed at Nay Pyi Taw International Airport by Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint and wife Daw Khine Nwe Oo, Union

Minister for Transport and Communications U Thant Sin Maung and wife Dr Khin Than Aye, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Tin and officials.—*Myanmar News Agency*



The Laotian president and wife inspecting the Guard of Honours. PHOTO: MNA

POEM:

The Sunny Morning Struck the Bell

The sunny Morning struck the bell,
the rings of bronze resonance rippling in the air
wafted from a pagoda somewhere,
and the merit someone was sharing
came to my heart, unaware.
Sadu, Sadu, Sadu, I said to myself, elated,
muddled feelings surging within abated.

The grey Evening tolled the knell,
the heavy rings of bronze resonance in the ponderous air
up from a church somewhere,
flowing down, fading out, ebbing like the tide.
From my heart dropped a heavy sigh:
What things have I done
in this short journey
before I die?

Htin Lin Zaw



The Laotian president and wife visits the elephant shed housing white elephants during their visit to Nay Pyi Taw. Photo: MNA

Govt budget falls short of connecting Minbya to national grid

RAKHINE State's Minbya Township will no longer be graced by the presence of twenty-four hour electricity as union government has reportedly not budgeted the K40 million required to make it a reality, according to staff of the Yoma Company - the body responsible for extending the electricity network.

The company has made it known that two and four miles of cable, in Mrauk-U and Minbya Townships respectively, remain

to be extended to secure a round-the-clock electricity supply, but completion of these activities has been hindered by an absence of a required government budget.

"The extension of electricity cables from Mrauk-U to Minbya is about 96 per cent complete; there's just four per cent left to go - a total of six miles of cable. The rainy season has inhibited us from continuing our activities for the time being, but it's the absence of funds which will render the project per-

manently unfinished," said U Sit Kyaw Myint, managing director of the Yoma Company.

Begun in 2014, work was undertaken with government funding to connect Mrauk-U and Minbya with a 20 mile-long 66KV electric cable, together with construction of sub-stations within the town of Minbya itself, in order to supply twenty-four hour electricity by connecting it up to the national grid. Furthermore, a total of five 200 KVA generators, together

with miles of 11 KV and 400 KVA cables, were built within Minbya by companies hired out by the union government for which expenses have reportedly amounted to over K107 million.

"Companies have been implementing [electricity access expansion] after signing contracts with union government.

They [the government] have already allocated a budget for the activities. Companies are waiting to see if more funds will be

issued," said U Hla Htun, head of the Minbya Township Department of Electricity.

The department has voiced that nearly 300 households presently come and pay their electricity meter bills at their offices.

The residents of Minbya only receive a meager four hours of electricity a day, from between 6:30 - 10pm, provided through one 500 KVA and two 200 KVA generators.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Bangladesh team in Manila says close to recovering only fraction of heist money

MANILA — A Bangladesh central bank team visiting Manila to recover \$81 million stolen from its account in New York said it was close to getting back \$15 million of the loot frozen by the Philippines, but first has to prove ownership of the cash to its hosts.

Unknown cyber criminals tried to steal nearly \$1 billion from Bangladesh Bank's account at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York in February, and succeeded in transferring \$81 million to four accounts at Manila's Rizal Commercial Banking Corp (RCB.PS), which was then laundered through the city's casinos, according to investigators.

Only about \$18 million, including around \$2.7 million frozen by the Philippines' casino regulator, has been accounted for.

The Philippines' Department of Justice (DoJ) has asked the Bangladesh Bank delegation to file a legal document staking its claim to \$15 million of that, but the casino money will have to be pursued separately, said two sources close to the visiting team.

"We are in the final stages of recovering the \$15 million, but for the rest we hope a (Philippines) senate hearing on the issue resumes so that we can get to know more details about the case," said John Gomes, Bangladesh's ambassador to the Philippines, who is helping the bank representatives on a four-day visit to Manila ending Friday.

The last Philippines Senate hearing into the heist ended in May as a new government came



A security guard stands guard outside a branch of Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation (RCBC) in Paranaque city, Metro Manila, Philippines, on 2 August 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

to power under President Rodrigo Duterte. No date has been announced for a resumption.

Bangladeshi officials say the money was able to disappear into the casino industry in the Philippines because of systemic failures at RCBC, not just individual error by some of its officers.

RCBC's then president Lorenzo Tan told a Senate hearing in March that the incident was "some judgment error from the people on the ground".

The Bangladeshi delegation consists of Debaprosad Debnath and Abdul Rab from Bangladesh Bank's financial intelligence

unit, and Bangladesh Bank lawyer Ajmalul Hossain. They have already met the DoJ and officials from the anti-money-laundering council in Manila, and will be seeing central bank officials on Friday.

The team has prepared an affidavit citing a letter by the New York Fed to the Philippines' central bank, in which the Fed said the money was stolen from Bangladesh Bank's account.

The affidavit will be given to the DoJ to file with a court, the sources said.

Gomes told Reuters late on Thursday he hoped the \$15

million would be returned in a month. He will hold a press conference on the issue later on Friday.

Ricardo J. Paras III, chief state counsel of the DoJ, told Reuters that it has already drafted court documents to begin recovery of the \$15 million, but it was important for Bangladesh to prove it is their money.

The Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR), a government body that regulates casinos in the country, has promised to cooperate with Bangladesh Bank to help it recover the \$2.7 million it has frozen, Gomes said.—Reuters

Thai election in 2017 regardless of referendum vote, says junta chief

BANGKOK — A general election will take place in 2017, Thailand's junta chief said on Friday, no matter what the outcome of Sunday's national referendum on a new constitution that will decide the country's future.

Two years after the military seized power in a May 2014 coup, Thais will vote whether to accept a military-backed constitution that critics, including major political parties, say would weaken the role of elected officials and extend the military's influence for years to come.

If the constitution is approved, the military junta can claim legitimacy and plan the election. A "no" vote could delay a return to democracy as the junta produces a new draft.

Speaking to reporters at a military base in Nakhon Nayok province, 115 km (71 miles) northeast of Bangkok, Prayuth urged Thais to vote and reiterated an election will be held in 2017.

"Over the next two days the future of the country will be decided," said Prayuth. "We need to hold a general election in 2017 because that is a promise we made."

The referendum, say experts, will also be the first major test of the junta's popularity.

Critics argue the constitution, to replace one torn up by the military after the coup, will entrench military rule.—Reuters

Beef sets, lavish free meals off limits in South Korea graft crackdown

SEOUL — Lavish free meals, rounds of golf and expensive gifts of beef and ginseng will soon be off-limits for civil servants, teachers and journalists in South Korea under a law aimed at clamping down on graft that has long been pervasive in professional life.

The anti-corruption law that takes effect next month imposes spending limits on entertainment and gifts, curbing a tradition of hospitality that many restaurants, retailers and farmers worry will deal a blow to business.

"It's making it illegal for those who have the money and are willing to pay more. This is nonsense," Yoo Byoung-hee, 45, a cattle breeder in Jecheon, south of Seoul, told Reuters by telephone.

Yoo was among farmers who protested against the law last month in front of parliament.

Boxed sets of beef, especially the prized domestic hanwoo variety, can cost hundreds of dollars and are a staple of gift-giving during



A man displays cuts of beef at a BBQ restaurant in Hongseong, South Korea, in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

the Chuseok holiday next month, as well as during Lunar New Year.

Less-expensive gift sets feature items ranging from apples and Spam to shampoo.

The anti-corruption law had been debated since 2011 and has been welcomed as a tool to clean up professional life in a country that ranks 37th out of 168 on

Transparency International's corruption perceptions index.

But many worry about its impact on a sputtering economy.

The law could wipe out 11.6 trillion won (\$10.43 billion) in revenue for sectors including food, golf, consumer and retail goods, the Korea Economic Research Institute said in June.

Some groups, including the agricultural ministry, have called for an easing of the rules, which limit the value of gifts to people in the targeted categories to 50,000 won (\$45) and meals to 30,000 won (\$27).

Gifts, meals and entertainment that are paid for in a personal capacity are not covered by the law. It does not apply to members of parliament or much of the private sector.

President Park Geun-hye said on Tuesday it was important to mitigate the negative impact of the law while maintaining its core purpose.

"Once the law is implemented and transparency and fairness in our society are improved, the effectiveness of our economy will increase and South Korea's potential growth may be improved," she told a cabinet meeting.

According to a survey by the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission last year, 59.2 per cent of South Koreans believed the country was corrupt.

Graft scandals are common.

Last year, former Prime Minister Lee Wan-koo was convicted after receiving 30 million won (\$27,000) in a shopping bag during a parliamentary election in 2013, according to prosecutors. He is appealing.

Since the Constitutional Court ruled in favour of the law last month, many restaurants and retailers have been scrambling to adjust, tweaking meal offerings and downsizing gift sets.

Dave Yoon, head of Hae-woori, the country's biggest seafood restaurant chain, said it would introduce a 30,000 won multi-course meal once the law takes effect.

"Revenue is probably going to go down but we made this decision because we feel like we have no other choice," he said. "We've had so many customers come to us worrying about the law because many of our clients come to Hae-woori for business. You have to do what you can to keep customers coming."—Reuters



Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and her daughter Gabriella pose for a photo in London, Britain, in February 2016.
PHOTO: REUTERS

Britain says concerned about prisoners in Iran including aid worker

LONDON — Britain said it was concerned about its nationals imprisoned in Iran including a British-Iranian aid worker who has been detained since early April and accused by Revolutionary Guards of trying to overthrow Iran's government.

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who was arrested as she tried to leave Iran after a visit with her two-year-old daughter, appeared in the Revolutionary Court on Monday.

"We continue to raise our strong concerns about British prisoners in Iran, including Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe, at the highest levels in both London and Tehran," a spokeswoman for Britain's Foreign Office said.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe, 37, works for the Thomson Reuters Foundation, a London-based charity that is independent of Thomson Reuters and operates independently of Reuters News.

The Foreign Office spokes-

woman said former Prime Minister David Cameron had repeatedly raised the case with his Iranian counterpart.

"We are deeply concerned by recent reports that Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe has been charged but has not been allowed to see a lawyer," the spokeswoman said.

"We remain ready to facilitate Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's daughter's return to the UK if requested."—Reuters

Obama warns Trump not to spread details of security briefings

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama confirmed on Thursday that Donald Trump will get national security briefings ahead of the November election, but he warned the Republican candidate, whom he has called "unfit" for office, that information from the meetings must be kept secret.

Obama, a Democrat who endorsed his former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in the 2016 White House race, has made clear his dismay over Trump, a New York businessman who has proposed temporarily banning Muslims from entering the United States and building a wall on the US border with Mexico.

On Tuesday Obama questioned why leading Republicans have not withdrawn their support for their presidential nominee. On Thursday he dismissed as ridiculous Trump's claims that the election may be rigged.

"Of course the elections will not be rigged. What does that mean?" Obama said with exasperation. "If Mr. Trump is up 10 or 15

points on Election Day and ends up losing, then maybe he can raise some questions. That doesn't seem to be the case at the moment."

Trump is trailing Clinton in polls.

Despite his disdain, Obama said Trump would get the top secret briefings on world crises and security threats to which he, Clinton and their respective vice presidential running mates are entitled.

Some Republicans have said Clinton should be denied access to such briefings because of her handling of classified material on a private email server while she was secretary of state.

Obama on Thursday, speaking to reporters at the Pentagon, made clear that both candidates would be treated equally.

"We are going to go by the law, which is that, in both tradition and the law, that if somebody is the nominee ... they need to get a security briefing so that if they were to win, they are not starting from scratch in terms of being prepared," Obama said.

"What I will say is that they have been told these are classified briefings," he added, in response to a question about whether he was concerned about Trump obtaining the classified information. "And if they want to be president, they got to start acting like president, and that means being able to receive these briefings and not spread them around."

Trump has placed blame on Clinton and Obama for the rise of Islamic State, also known as ISIS.

"The Obama-Clinton foreign policy gave rise to ISIS, made Iran flush with cash, and is now admitting vast numbers of refugees and migrants into the United States from some of the most volatile regions in the world," Trump senior policy adviser Stephen Miller said in a statement.

"But none of this is surprising from an Administration that allowed its Secretary of State to threaten the country with a private email server, delete her records, and lie about it to us all," Miller said.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Support for Germany's Merkel plunges after attacks

BERLIN — Popular support for Chancellor Angela Merkel has plunged according to a poll conducted after attacks in Germany, with almost two-thirds of Germans unhappy with her refugee policy.

The survey for public broadcaster ARD showed support for Merkel down 12 points from her July rating to 47 per cent. This marked her second-lowest score since she was re-elected in 2013. In April last year, before the migrant crisis erupted she enjoyed backing of 75 per cent.

Merkel's open-door refugee policy has come under attack from critics after five attacks in Germany since 18 July have left 15 people dead, including four assailants, and dozens injured.

Two of the attackers had links to Islamist militancy, officials say.—Reuters

Italy airport reopens after cargo plane slides onto local road

MILAN — A northern Italian airport reopened on Friday hours after being temporarily shut down when a cargo plane exited the runway after landing and slid onto a local road, Italy's civil aviation authority ENAC said. The two-person crew of the aircraft was unharmed and there were no injuries on the ground, ENAC said in a statement.

The DHL 737-400 aircraft that flew in from France's Charles de Gaulle airport slid through the airport's fences after landing at Bergamo's Orio al Serio airport north-east of Milan.—Reuters

Black Lives Matter protesters block road to London's Heathrow Airport

LONDON — Protesters from the British arm of the Black Lives Matter movement blocked the main road to London's Heathrow Airport on Friday, causing traffic congestion at the busiest airport in Europe.

Police made several arrests and one lane was now open, they said in a statement, after earlier media reports of protesters lying down across the five-lane slip road leading to the airport from a major motorway connecting London to western England.

One news photograph showed a Black Lives Matter banner spread across the road, referring to the name of the movement which started in the United States as a reaction to fatal shootings of black people by white US police officers.—Reuters

EU says Spain's support for TV broadcasters unlawful

BRUSSELS — The European Commission on Friday said a Spanish plan to support private television broadcasters is in breach of state aid rules.

No recovery will be required as no state aid has yet been disbursed, the Commission added.

"This measure provided a selective advantage to terrestrial broadcasters and platform operators over other available technologies," Margrethe Vestager, the commissioner in charge of competition policy, said in a statement.

The Spanish scheme was part of the country's switch from analogue to digital broadcasting. The private broadcasters subsequently financed the switch without state aid.—Reuters

Singapore forms new independent bureau to investigate air, marine accidents

SINGAPORE — Singapore has formed a new bureau to conduct investigations into air and marine accidents and incidents since August, according to a statement from the Ministry of Transport (MoT) on Friday.

The new Transport Safety Investigation Bureau (TSIB) was restructured from the Air Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB). It will be independent of and separate from any judicial or regulatory proceedings, and make recommendations to enhance the safety of air and sea transport, MoT added.

"Indeed, the sole objective of TSIB's investigations is the prevention of further accidents and incidents; they are not for the purposes of apportioning blame or liability. Countries such as Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom and United States have similar set-ups," the ministry explained.—Xinhua

Brazil Senate committee clears way for Rousseff's removal



Suspended Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff attends a news conference with foreign media in Brasilia, Brazil, on 14 June, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

BRASILIA — A Senate impeachment committee voted on Thursday to put suspended Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff on trial in the full chamber for breaking budget laws, opening the way for her to be removed from office.

The 21-member committee voted 14-5 to try Rousseff for allegedly doctoring government accounts to allow more public spending in the run-up to her 2014 re-election.

Her impeachment would mark the end of 13 years of rule by the left-of-centre Workers Party. Along with a string of corruption scandals, it has already set off Brazil's worst political crisis in decades as the country prepares to host the Olympic Games in the midst of a severe recession.

The political uncertainty has kept most foreign leaders away from the Games, which open on Friday in Rio de Janeiro.

The Senate will vote next Tuesday whether to accept the charges against Rousseff and begin her trial that should reach a verdict at the end of the month.

"The committee vote confirms not only that Rousseff knowingly broke fiscal laws, but also that she was a dishonest ad-

ministrator," committee member, Senator Ricardo Ferran, told reporters.

Surveys by Brazilian media indicate that more than two-thirds of the senators favour removing the leftist leader, which would confirm interim President Michel Temer in her place for the remainder of her term through 2018.

Rousseff has denied she broke budget laws and maintains she is the victim of a right-wing conspiracy to overthrow her government that advanced the interests of Brazil's poor. Her office declined to comment on the committee vote.

Rousseff is accused of altering official budget figures and using funds from state-run banks to cover up the real state of Brazil's faltering economy as she ran for re-election.

Her trial in the Senate would be presided over by Chief Justice Ricardo Lewandowski, whose office said proceedings could start on 26 August and last about a week.

Brazil's stock market and currency have strengthened since Rousseff was suspended by the Senate on 12 May as investors bet on her removal and the confirmation of Temer, who has outlined policies favouring private business.—Reuters

Security heightened as Pope visits namesake's church in central Italy

ASSISI (Italy) — Pope Francis visited the birthplace of the Franciscan order in central Italy on Thursday amid some of the tightest security ever seen on a papal trip, in the wake of a string of militant attacks across Europe.

The pope's brief afternoon trip to Assisi, in central Italy, took place a day after Italian police announced they had increased security around the Vatican and religious sites in Rome.

It was not immediately clear if the heightened security in Rome and Assisi was prompted by last week's murder of a Catholic priest in a French church. A Vatican spokesman said he was not aware of any specific threats against the pope.

Police put a three-ringed security perimeter around the basilica of St. Mary of the Angels in the lower quarter of Assisi, requiring most people to walk the last few blocks in scorching heat.

They placed large concrete barricades at the entrances of the perimeter, apparently to thwart any attacks similar to the one

in Nice, France, last month when a 31-year-old Tunisian drove his truck into a crowd, killing 84 people.

Thousands of people, including journalists, were checked two or three times as they approached the basilica the pope visited and those allowed to enter had to show photo identification matching names on tickets.

Pope Francis, 79, who said at the start of his trip to

Poland last week that it was wrong to equate Islam with violence, met the Imam of the nearby city of Perugia, inside the basilica.

The pope who took his name in homage to the saint most associated with peace and protection of the environment, prayed in a small church that St. Francis repaired with his own hands in the early 13th century.

The pope's trip took place on the 800th anniversary of the so-called "Pardon of Assisi", a ritual St. Francis founded urging people to seek pardon for their offences to others.

St. Francis founded his order of monks in the small stone church which is now inside a huge basilica built around it in the 17th century.

He was born the son of a prosperous cloth merchant but renounced his wealth to help the poor.—Reuters



Pope Francis speaks outside Saint Mary of Angels Basilica in the pilgrimage town of Assisi, central Italy, on 4 August 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Vietnamese PM urges prompt actions to deal with consequences of floods

HANOI — Vietnamese Prime Minister on Friday urged relevant agencies to have prompt actions to deal with consequences of complicated flood situation caused by Typhoon Nida in northern Viet Nam.

So far, one more person was killed by flood, increasing the number of flood victims in Viet Nam

to four, Viet Nams state-run news agency cited Lao Cai Steering Committee on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control as saying.

Among the four deaths, one person was in Sa Pa town in Lao Cai province and three others were in Lao Cai's Bat Xat district.

Meanwhile, seven others remain missing, including six people in Bat Xat and one person in Sa Pa.

Lao Cai authorities have been requested to deploy forces to search for the missing, arrange shelters for those whose houses were washed away by floods as well as supply

necessities for local residents.

Other localities have been asked to have plans to evacuate their residents from areas with high possibilities of flash floods and landslides, according to a document by the Prime Minister.

From Tuesday to Thursday, due to impacts of Typhoon Nida, as many as 15 houses were totally collapsed while 311 others were partially damaged in Viet Nams northern and central areas. Over 160 hectares of crops were damaged, according to Central Steering Committee on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control on Friday.

Typhoon Nida made landfall at the Dapeng Peninsula in the city of Shenzhen, southern China's Guangdong province on Tuesday. Tornado and heavy rain triggered by Typhoon Nida killed two people in Viet Nam's Lao Cai earlier on Tuesday.—Xinhua



Photo taken on 5 August 2016 shows the collapsed houses in Lao Cai province, northern Viet Nam. Floods triggered by heavy rain due to Typhoon Nida have left three dead while seven others remain missing in northern Viet Nam, according to Central Steering Committee on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control said on Friday. PHOTO: XINHUA

Office for Rent

Location	: Bid No. 17, 4th Floor, Myanmar ICT Park, Hlaing University Campus, Hlaing Township, Yangon.
Available Area	: 1068 Sqft (1) Room 711 Sqft (1) Room
Condition	: Provided Modern Office Furnitures Ready to use equipped with utility services (Internet, Electricity, Water etc....)
For more information, Please Contact Phone No.	: 01-2305124 ~ 30 Ext (111)

Black Lives Matter activist sues Baton Rouge police over arrest

BATON ROUGE — A prominent activist in the Black Lives Matter movement, DeRay McKesson, on Thursday sued the chief of the Baton Rouge police department and other officials over the arrests of nearly 200 demonstrators during peaceful protests about police killings.

In the federal civil rights lawsuit, which seeks class action status, McKesson and fellow protesters Kira Marrero and Gloria La Riva complained that police were unnecessarily aggressive in arresting them on 9 July.

The lawsuit covers arrests in the Louisiana capital between 6 July and 11 July.

The East Baton Rouge Parish Attorney's Office said they had no immediate comment on the lawsuit.

The activists were protesting the 5 July shooting of a black man, Alton Sterling, outside a convenience store, one of a string

of high-profile police killings of black people by white officers over the past two years that were caught on video and reopened debate about race and discrimination in the United States.

McKesson, known for his activism on social media and who ran in the 2016 Democratic Party primary for mayor of his hometown of Baltimore, Maryland, said in the lawsuit that demonstrators sought to have all arrest records expunged as well as unspecified damages.

The allegations in the lawsuit include 16 violations of law by Baton Rouge police, excessive use of force, conspiracy to deprive protesters of their civil rights, negligence and arrests without probable cause.

The 23-page complaint said charges of simple obstruction of a highway against nearly 200 protesters who were arrested were ultimately dropped by the local



Policemen walk on the sidelines as protesters hold a sign which states "Black Lives Matter," during a march against police brutality in Manhattan, New York, US, on 9 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

prosecutors office, though they still had to pay administrative and court fees.

"Throughout the protests, the Defendants responded in a militarised and aggressive manner," the complaint said. "All class members now have criminal

arrest records, which in this digital age could adversely affect their future employment, education, reputations, and professional licensing."

A day after Sterling's death, another black man, Philando Castile, was shot to death by a policeman

during a traffic stop near St. Paul, Minnesota. The back-to-back killings brought out protesters nationwide but after a rally in Dallas, Texas, a gunman shot dead five police officers in an ambush. Days later, three Baton Rouge police officers were also killed

in an ambush. Authorities said the shootings of officers by black gunmen were apparently in anger over the deaths of black people at the hands of police, but they were not connected to the peaceful protest movement.—Reuters

World Bank approves new safeguards criticised by some NGOs



World Bank President Jim Yong Kim (L) attends the 1+6 Roundtable at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, China, on 22 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

WASHINGTON — The World Bank approved new rules on Thursday that aim to expand protections for people and the environment in projects financed by the bank while making it easier for borrowers to comply with its standards.

But the first major update to the World Bank's safeguard policies in nearly 20 years has drawn fire from some non-profit groups for creating "loopholes" with more vague language and more reliance on borrower country laws and standards.

"The bank has effectively dismantled thirty years of environmental and social

protections for the world's most impoverished and vulnerable peoples," said Stephanie Fried, executive director of the Ulu Foundation, a non-profit group focussed on forest preservation. World Bank President Jim Yong Kim defended the changes as a compromise that strengthens many protections while eliminating "onerous" requirements in countries whose environmental, labour and human rights standards match those of the World Bank.

The new standards, which are due to be fully implemented by 2018, will also bring the World Bank's

safeguards more in line with those of other multilateral development banks.

Kim told reporters on a conference call that one key example of the changes will be increased protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities. The bank pulled out of a \$90 million loan to Uganda's health system in 2014 after the government passed a law that imposed life sentences for certain homosexual activities and made it a crime not to report violations.

Kim said the World Bank had committed increased funding to work with its 189 member countries to

lift their own environmental and human rights safeguards to match those of the Washington-based development lender.

The new standards come at a time when the World Bank is facing new competition from the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which announced its first loans of about \$509 million in June. Kim said the World Bank could create safeguards so onerous that borrowers might be unable to comply with them, or it could allow unacceptable outcomes for poor and indigenous communities.—Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV YOSSA BHUM VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV YOSSA BHUM VOY NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 6.8.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.I.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S REGIONAL CONTAINER
LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV BC SANFRANCISCO VOY. NO (035W)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV BC SANFRANCISCO VOY NO (035W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 6.8.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S ORIENT OVERSEA
CONTAINER LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV TOKYO SPIRIT VOY. NO (1603)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV TOKYO SPIRIT VOY NO (1603) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 6.8.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of SHWEME BOY and arriving on 10.8.2016 of M.I.T.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S BEN LINE AGENCIES
(S'PORE) PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301928

Refugee crowned 'wine queen', as German tradition evolves



Syrian refugee Ninorta Bahno receives the crown during the crowning ceremony for the new Trier wine queen in Trier, Germany, on 3 August, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

TRIER, (Germany) — A Syrian refugee has been crowned "wine queen" in Germany, winning a traditional annual honour that used to go to local young women from wine-growing families.

Winemakers in the Mosel region selected the 26-year-old Ninorta Bahno to counter growing resentment in Germany against refugees after some 1 million arrived last year.

Many wine-producing regions in Germany pick a wine queen each year, a practice that dates back to the early 20th century when they would wear folksy dirndl dresses and embody the traditional image of German womanhood.

Taking to the podium at a wine festival in Trier in a sleeveless peach-color dress and her long black hair topped by a tiara, Bahno, who fled the Syrian war three years ago with her sister, cut a very different figure. Addressing wine fans in the western Germany city, she thanked them "for taking me in" and said she hoped her coronation would enhearten other refugees who are finding it hard to adjust to life in Germany.

"I know that as a refugee it is very difficult at first to integrate in a new country. First you have to understand the laws and traditions here, and then you have to practice them," she said.

"Therefore I want to be an 'ambassador' so that I can put this into practice and integrate here in Germany, and for the other refugees."

As wine queen, Bahno, who is training for a job at an employment office, will help publicize wine from four Mosel vineyards.

As a Christian, rather than a Muslim like the majority of Syrians, she has not had to overcome a taboo on drinking alcohol, an activity most Germans see as important to their culture.

"You have to have a bit of courage to ask one of the refugees. I wanted to send a message by doing that," Peter Terg, chairman of the Trier-Olewig wine-growers association, said.

"Lots of people say 'we cannot manage it'. I say we, Germany, can manage it and she has managed to become an excellent wine ambassador."—Reuters

Comic actress Lily Tomlin to get Screen Actors Guild lifetime award

NEW YORK — Lily Tomlin, one of America's most enduring comic actresses, will receive a lifetime achievement award in January from the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), the group announced on Thursday.

Tomlin, 76, who rose to fame in 1969 through television's "Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In" weekly show, went on to headline movies like "Nashville," and Broadway shows that have brought multiple Emmy and Tony awards.

SAG President Gabrielle Carteris in a statement called her "an extraordinary actress, as equally adept at narrative drama as in comedy roles. But it is through her many original characters that Lily's creative genius fully shines."

Tomlin, who also has two of America's highest artistic awards



Actress Lily Tomlin
PHOTO: REUTERS

with a Kennedy Center Honor and Mark Twain Humor Prize, is currently co-starring in the Netflix comedy series "Grace and Frankie" with Jane Fonda.

Tomlin will receive her lifetime achievement honour at the SAG annual awards ceremony in Los Angeles on 29 January. Previous recipients include Mary Tyler Moore, Carol Burnett, Clint Eastwood and Elizabeth Taylor.—Reuters

Nathan Fillion to guest star on 'Modern Family'

LOS ANGELES — Actors Martin Short and Nathan Fillion will make a guest appearance in the eighth season of "Modern Family".

The casting was revealed by executive producer Steve Levitan at the Television Critics Association summer press tour, reported Deadline.

Fillion, whose ABC procedural "Castle" was canceled in May after eight seasons, will play Rainer Shine, a local weatherman who becomes entangled with the Dunphy family. Short will guest star in episode two of the upcoming season as promotional maven Merv Schechter.—PTI

Clint Eastwood — Trump says 'dumb things' but people should 'get over it'

LOS ANGELES — Clint Eastwood, the 86-year-old four-time Oscar winner, excoriated the current generation of Americans as weak and overly sensitive while backing Donald Trump even though the Republican presidential hopeful has "said a lot of dumb things."

Eastwood, a prominent celebrity supporter of the Republican Party who appeared at its 2012 US presidential nominating convention, offered a harsh assessment of Americans in an interview with Esquire magazine published on Wednesday.

"He's onto something because secretly everybody's getting tired of political correctness, kissing up," the acclaimed actor and director said of Trump. "That's the kiss-ass generation we're in right now. We're really in a pussy generation. Everybody's walking on eggshells."

"We see people accusing people of being racist and all kinds of stuff. When I grew up, those things weren't called racist," Eastwood added.

Given the choice between Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton and Trump in the 8 November election, the celebrated star of "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" said, "That's a tough one, isn't it? I'd have to go for Trump ... you know, 'cause she's declared that she's gonna follow in Obama's footsteps."

In one of the most unusual speeches at a major US party convention, Eastwood four years ago addressed an empty chair used to

symbolically represent President Barack Obama on stage at the Republican convention in Tampa, Florida, in a rambling denunciation of Obama.

Asked by Esquire what troubled him most, Eastwood referred to his chair speech.

"What troubles me ... I guess when I did that silly thing at the Republican convention, talking to the chair," Eastwood said.

In the interview, Eastwood made reference to the uproar in May that followed Trump's comments accusing the judge overseeing a fraud lawsuit involving Trump University real-estate seminars of being biased against him because of Trump's pledge to build a wall along the US-Mexican border to block illegal immigrants. US District Judge Gonzalo Curiel is an American of Mexican descent.

Eastwood told Esquire that Trump was portrayed as "a racist now because he's talked about this judge."

"And yeah, it's a dumb thing to say. I mean, to predicate your opinion on the fact that the guy was born to Mexican parents or something," Eastwood said. "He's said a lot of dumb things. So have all of them. Both sides. But everybody - the press and everybody's going, 'Oh, well, that's racist,' and they're making a big hoodoo out of it. Just fucking get over it. It's a sad time in history."

There were more than 100 tweets per minute about Eastwood on Twitter by Thursday afternoon. More than half of the tweets mentioning the Hollywood star were of negative sentiment, according to social media analytics firm Zoomph.—Reuters



Actor Clint Eastwood. PHOTO: REUTERS

Rio's informal foods a key part of the 'Carioca' life

RIO DE JANEIRO — If the most popular foods of Rio de Janeiro have one thing in common, it is their informality.

While you can find fine restaurants in Rio, what sets the city apart and brings its residents, known as “Cariocas,” together is the unpretentious food they eat in crowded bars and on busy street corners after a day at the beach.

They are foods best served with lots of friends, non-stop conversation, glass after glass of cold, draft beer known as “chopp”, and if you are lucky, local music.

No sun-drenched Saturday in Rio is complete without lunching on a plate of dried meats and sausages stewed with black beans and served with rice, shredded collard greens, slices of orange and farofa - manioc flour mixed with eggs or banana.

This meal, that many trace back to the food given slaves on sugar and coffee plantations, can be found throughout the city, but many consider Bar do Mineiro (Rua Paschoal Carlos Magno, 99 - Santa Teresa) to be among the best.

Located in the bohemian Santa Teresa neighborhood on a

hill overlooking Rio's downtown, they serve a wide variety of cachacas, a clear sugar-cane liquor that forms the basis of the caipirinha, Brazil's fruity national drink.

Brazilian barbecue has gone global and you can find expensive versions in Asia, Europe and North America.

But if you want to eat at a more humble version that takes you back to a less ostentatious age where the all-you-can-eat “Rodizio” grill began, try Churrascaria Palace (Rua Rodolfo Dantas, 16 — Copacabana) a half block from Copacabana beach and across the street from the Copacabana Palace, the city's most storied hotel.

The waiters will keep the food coming until you say “stop!” Popular cuts include picanha (top sirloin cap), alcatra (sirloin) and fraldinha (flank steak), while the long-grilled beef ribs are a house specialty, served with panache. But if you aren't in the mood for a meat overdose, you might try one of the many non-rodizio churrascarias in the city. One of the most popular is the always full Brazeiro da Gávea (Praça Santos Dumont, 116 - Gávea).

The house favourite is its



A worker prepares pao de queijo (cheese bread) at the Cultivar cafe and store in Santa Teresa neighbourhood in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 28 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

grilled linguça, or sausages, brought around on demand. Its the perfect way to open an evening of drinking along the bustling streets and restaurants of one of Rio's most popular nighttime neighborhoods, Baixo Gávea.

Of the myriad carioca street foods, one of the most popular is the pastel, a large deep-fried dumpling filled with cheese, meat, chicken, shrimp and other delights. They are easiest to find at the weekly farmers markets where locals buy produce.

With a glass of fresh-squeezed sugar-cane juice (caldo de cana) or a coconut water (agua de coco), a pastel is the perfect thing to hold

off hunger as you lug your vegetables home from the street market to cook lunch or after a walk on the beach.

Podrões are the “filthy” street sandwich stands, many of which ring the edges of the busiest night life districts. Not all of them are dirty. They serve up cheap hamburgers, hotdogs and other sandwiches on a griddle with all the trimmings, just the thing you need after a night of partying.

One of the best famous is Sanduicheria Rio Joana (Corner of Rua Otacilio Negrão de Lima and Rua Gonzaga Bastos - Vila Isabel). Churrascaria de Rua, or street grill: Sometimes called “cat

grills” (churrascaria de gato) because of an urban legend that said they roasted cats, they remain a local favorite offering your basic beef, chicken and sometimes vegetables on a stick roasted over coals. Among the most loved can be found in Tijuca at the corners of Rua Uruguai and Rua Barao de Mesquita near the Uruguai Metro stop. In addition to meat they usually offer sausages, and sometimes a tasty roasted rubbery cheese known as queijo coalho. Don't forget to roll your meat in some toasted manioc flour to keep the fat from dripping on your shirt and to add a nice extra Brazilian taste. —Reuters



A store assistant holds copies of the book of the play of Harry Potter and the Cursed Child parts One and Two at a bookstore in London, Britain, on 31 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

New Harry Potter book breaks Australian sales record

SYDNEY — The latest installment of the hugely popular Harry Potter series has become Australia's fastest selling book of the decade, local media reported on Friday.

More than 170,000 people have rushed to grab a copy of the two-part series book titled: “Harry Potter and the Cursed Child” in the first three days of its release, said publishing house Hachette

Australia.

The book which was released on 31 July by author J.K Rowling, director John Tiffany and playwright Jack Thorne has become Australia's fastest-selling script book since the release of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows in 2007.

The unprecedented response to the play script has left retailers scrambling to order thousands

of copies more to satisfy Hogwarts-hungry readers.

Booktopia's head of marketing John Purcell said the online-only business sold out of the title despite placing four bulk orders, totaling more than 8,000 copies.

To date, author JK Rowling has sold 450 million copies of her Harry Potter seven-book series worldwide.—Xinhua

Entertainment Channel

(6-8-2016, Saturday)

<p>06 : 00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weather Report • Music Programme <p>06 : 15 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cartoon Programme “Laputa Castle in the sky” (Part-2) <p>07 : 00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cassette Recordings <p>08 : 20 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRTV Entertainment Music <p>08 : 40 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sai Htee Hseng Or An Exceptional Music Star From Shan Plateaus (EP- 1) 	<p>09 : 05 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Movie Songs <p>09 : 20 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To The Land of Countless Temples - Bagan Trip (EP-1) <p>09 : 45 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music Programme <p>10 : 00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kyauk Se Elephant Dance <p>10 : 20 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myanmar Movie <p>Midnight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close Down.
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From 6-8-2016 (Saturday) 6:00 pm
To 7-8-2016 (Sunday) 6:00 pm

Myanmar International

(6-8-2016 07:00am ~ 7-8-2016 07:00am) MST

Today Fresh		
07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Great Shwedagon-The Exhibition Hall of The Great Chronicle of Buddha
07:53	Am	Tea
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Waso Charity Feast
08:45	Am	Ywar Thit's Monhinkhar
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Discovering Tribes “Rawang” Their Life and Customs (Part-1)
09:52	Am	Porcelain and Glass
10:03	Am	News
10:27	Am	Next Generation “Nyan Lin Htet (Football Player)”

10:37	Am	Moe Hnyin Than Buddh, The Unique Pagoda In Monywa
10:51	Am	Myanmar Railways City Circular Train

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm) - Friday 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
07:26	Pm	Yathe Taung Township In A Nut-Shell
07:50	Pm	Today Myanmar
08:03	Pm	News
08:27	Pm	The Stories Of The Great Souls (U Pyae Son)

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am) - Friday 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)

Sports tribunal opens Rio's doors to more Russian dopers

RIO DE JANEIRO — A global sporting tribunal opened the door wider to Russian participation at the Rio Olympic Games on Thursday, ruling that an Olympic ban on two Russian rowers and a swimmer with histories of doping was unenforceable.

The decision, on the eve of the opening ceremony, could invite a dozen more appeals against the ban from Russian competitors, according to the tribunal's chief, and underlines Russian arguments that the ban lacks legal justification.

"We can do an appeal in 24 hours, so anything is possible," Matthieu Reeb, secretary-general of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), told Reuters when asked if there was enough time for other athletes to have their ban overturned.

"It's a first step," he said, referring to the Thursday's rulings. "There's now potentially a way to get through."

In response to evidence of state-sponsored doping in Russia, the IOC last month directed sports federations to allow Russian athletes to compete only if they met certain criteria, including a clean doping past. Dozens of athletes were later excluded.

One of the athletes who could take advantage of the new ruling is whistleblower Yulia Stepanova who, together with her husband, ignited the Russian doping scandal by revealing the extent of the state-backed doping programme.

Stepanova had been cleared to compete by the world athletics federation, which

praised her courage in the affair, but the IOC refused to allow her to run in Rio due to her own doping past.

Russian officials in Rio could not be immediately reached for comment, but earlier the head of Russia's Olympic committee told reporters in the host city that the ban was discriminatory.

Alexander Zhukov said it was unfair Russian sports stars such as double Olympic champion pole vaulter Yelena Isinbayeva would now watch the Games from home while past doping offenders, including top U.S. runner Justin Gatlin, took to the field.

On Thursday, CAS ruled in favor of an appeal against the ban by four-times breaststroke world champion Yulia

Efimova as well as rowers Anastasia Karabelshikova and Ivan Podshivalov.

Efimova had been disqualified from competing by swimming governing body FINA between October 2013 and February 2015 after testing positive for traces of the

anabolic steroid DHEA.

CAS say the Olympic ban was unenforceable, saying an athlete cannot be sanctioned twice for a doping offense. FINA will now have to decide on her eligibility.

Karabelshikova and Podshivalov also argued that they should be allowed to compete given they had already served their doping suspensions. CAS sent their case back to the International Rowing Federation to decide on their eligibility "without delay".

Sport has been struggling for years to reconcile calls for a harder line on drug cheats against demands for natural justice.

The IOC had tried to ban cheats from the Games in 2011 with its own 'Osaka rule' — a suspension from the next Olympics for anyone with a six-month doping ban or longer — but that was also thrown out by CAS at the time.

A similar rule by the British Olympic Association to ban the nation's drugs cheats from Olympic participation for life was also rejected by CAS ahead of the 2012 London Games, allowing sprinter Dwain Chambers to race.

Several Olympic teams have competitors, who have been sanctioned for anti-doping rule violations in the past, in their ranks, including Gatlin and team mate LaShawn Merritt. —Reuters



Liverpool will keep players to build title-challenging squad — Klopp

LONDON — Liverpool are determined to end the trend of selling their best players during the close season in order to build a squad capable of consistently challenging for major honours, manager Juergen Klopp said.

Liverpool have sold a host of high-profile players, including strikers Luis Suarez and Fernando Torres, midfielders Javier Mascherano and Xabi Alonso, and winger Raheem Sterling to rival clubs in England and other European countries in recent years.

The Merseyside club have already had to fight off advances from French champions Paris St Germain to keep influential midfielder Philippe Coutinho, according to British media reports.

When asked if it was possible to stop key players leaving the Premier League club, Klopp told the Liverpool Echo: "Yes, I think we can do this. It's one of the targets for the coming years."

"There hasn't been a successful team in world football who change their squad every year. You need to need your key players. That's a very important thing."

"You have to create a situation where you are successful. A situation where everyone feels in a good way and we are strong enough and patient enough to keep them together. We say that same squad and consistency creates success." —Reuters

Brazil held goalless in exciting opener

RIO DE JANEIRO — Brazil failed to make a winning start despite home advantage, a multi-million dollar strike force and a man advantage as they were held 0-0 by South Africa in their opening soccer match at the Rio Olympics on Thursday.

Brazil, who have never won the Olympic gold, started with a highly rated front three of Neymar, new Manchester City signing Gabriel Jesus, and 19-year-old Gabriel Barbosa, the Santos striker expected to head to Europe in this transfer window.

But the little-known South Africans matched them until they had Mothobi Mvala sent off just before the hour. Brazil pinned their opponents down after that but just could not score.

"That's football," Barbosa said in a TV interview after some fans in the 69,000 crowd had booed the team as they left the

field. "Sometimes the ball doesn't go in the net."

Barcelona striker Neymar had two of Brazil's best chances, forcing keeper Itumeleng Khune to make diving saves to thwart two rasping drives from outside the box.

Jesus smacked the ball off the post from two yards out when it looked easier to score, while Barbosa should have done better when he scuffed a shot with only the keeper to beat.

But a big crowd in the National Stadium in Brasilia went home unhappy after the second game of the day ended goalless.

That result was not the only surprise as their great rivals Argentina lost 2-0 to Portugal. It was the South Americans' first Olympics reverse in 13 games. Argentina were unbeaten in winning gold during their last two appearances in 2004 and 2008.



Abubaker Mobara of South Africa and Neymar of Brazil fight for the ball during their 2016 Rio Olympics Men's First Round at Mané Garrincha Stadium, Brasilia, Brazil, on 4 August 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Holders Mexico drew 2-2 with Germany in Salvador, with all four goals coming in the second half.

Later in the day, South Korea

put eight goals past debutants Fiji. Ryu Seungwoo got a hat trick in the demolition in Salvador, with seven of the eight goals coming in the second half.

The goals also came in the second half at the same venue earlier in the evening, when Mexico drew 2-2 with Germany.

In Thursday's final match, Nigeria beat Japan 5-4 with Oghenekaro Etebo grabbing four goals. Earlier on Thursday, Iraq and Denmark kicked the tournament off with a 0-0 draw at a mostly empty National Stadium.

The first goals in the competition came soon after in Rio, where Honduras beat Algeria 3-2 in an enthralling match.

The opening ceremony for the Rio Games takes place on Friday but the men's soccer tournament began 24 hours earlier, a day after the women's soccer teams began their quest for gold. Twelve women's teams are in Brazil, along with 16 men's sides.

The competition is being played in Rio and six other cities. —Reuters