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State Counsellor holds talks with DPN

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi welcomed the Delegation for Political Negotiation (DPN) from the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) yesterday in the meeting hall of Nay Pyi Taw's National Reconciliation and Peace Centre main office building.

The State Counsellor delivered an opening speech followed by a talk by Khu Oo Ral, leader of the DPN, clarifying the nine proposals in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

This was followed by those in attendance discussing codes of conduct in political discussions concerning the NCA, and the State Counsellor appraising the topics discussed and giving a closing speech.

Attending the meeting were Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe, Chairman of the Peace Commission Dr. Tin Myo Win, Union Attorney-General U Htun Htun Oo, Deputy Minister U Min Thu, DPN's leader and Karenni National Progressive Party's (KNPP) Secretary Khu Oo Reh, member of the central committee of Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP) U Sai Htoo, members including NMSP executive committee member Dr. Nai Shwe Thein and Nai Aung Ma Nge, U Min Htun from ANC, Ta Nyi Lu from WNO, and members from the Technical Support Group including Nai Banyar Aung, Ku Taw Ral, Ko San Aung, Naw Chaw Su, Khun Naung Min Banyar, Kyar Shel Bo and Sai Aung Thaing.—*Myanmar News Agency*

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, centre, shakes hands with a representative of the Delegation for Political Negotiation. PHOTO: MNA

Central Committee holds meeting to boost SMEs

AT the Central Committee for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises (1/2017) meeting held yesterday morning in the Credentials Hall of the Presidentials Palace, Chairman of the Central Committee President U Htin Kyaw addressed those who attended the meeting.

The President stressed that Small and Medium Enterprises play an important role in the country's economic development and are pioneers in creative entrepreneurships and can better adapt to the changing market demands than larger businesses, and can do this faster.

Because SMEs exist in all sectors of the economy, they have the capacity to extend employment opportunities to suburban areas as well as prevent internal migration and urbanization.

The President likened the SMEs to an economic engine of the country.

"Not only should we encourage development of SMEs, but review and amend necessary policies, laws, bylaws, rules and regulations so that they can better compliment the SMEs," the President said.

In undertaking this reform process, the President said it was important to strengthen the framework at the national, state and regional levels. There are four essential factors to keep in mind when considering developing SMEs: First, reducing the risks fledgling enterprises face; second, the flow of investment

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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw debates survey on traditional cultures and customs of ethnics

2nd Pyidaungsu Hluttaw 4th regular session held its 11th day meeting at 10 am yesterday. At the meeting, Thura U Aung Ko, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture, replied to the discussion made by U Sai Thant Zin of Hsipaw constituency that the wording "To record survey works, for traditional cultures and customs of national ethnics not to be extinct and simultaneously to be explored, maintained and propagated," should be amended in accord with aims and objectives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture.

The Union Minister added, "Original statement submitted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture says that traditional cultures and customs of national ethnics are to be surveyed and recorded collectively. Over the discussion made by Hluttaw representative, I hereby want to say that it has been described in the revised statement as "to record survey works, for traditional cultures and customs of national ethnics not to be extinct and to develop simultaneously." The objective of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture is exploration, maintenance and propagation of the traditional cultures, customs and cultural heritages of national ethnics."

Thura U Aung Ko, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture. PHOTO: MNA

U Maung Maung Win, Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance. PHOTO: MNA

U Thein Swe, Union Minister for Labor, Immigration and Population. PHOTO: MNA

U Hla Kyaw, Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation. PHOTO: MNA

As regards the discussion over policy and principles of the bill on the national planning law, 2017-2018 financial year, U Thein Swe, Union Minister for Labor, Immigration and Population, U Hla Kyaw, Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, U Kyaw Myo, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications, Dr Tun Naing, Deputy Minister for Electric Power and Energy, U Maung Maung Win, Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance and U Tin Htut, Nay Pyi Taw Council member, with explained by U Maung Maung Win, Deputy Minister on behalf of the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Construction.

Afterward, Mahn Win Khaing Than, Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw said, "Over the projects of respective departments and organizations to be reduced, devaluation and rejection of projects are to be decided with the approval of Hluttaw at the same time."

The Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw announced that getting the approval of the Hluttaw over the bill on national planning for 2017-2018 financial year, according to paragraphs & approving the whole bill will be carried out in the 4th regular session of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to be held in the next week.

As regards the bill on protection of personal security and freedom of citizens, findings and conclusion notes of the Combining Committee of the Bill, was read out in the 9th day meeting of 2nd Pyidaungsu Hluttaw 4th regular session held on 24 February 2017, and the amendment will be made based on the conclusion notes of the combining committee of the bill as any parliamentarians did not have their names enrolled to take part in the debate. 12th day meeting of 2nd Pyidaungsu Hluttaw 4th regular session will be held on March 6, it was announced. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Involvement of Tatmadaw in peace sector important

Participants are seen at the press conference. PHOTO: YE KHAUNG NYUNT

A WORKSHOP by a group representing 22 political parties which will take part in discussion on the security sector at the coming Union Peace Conference —21st Century Panglong took place at Orchid Hotel in Yangon from 27 February to 1 March.After the workshop, Secretary of Working Committee of Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) Tar Hla Pe from Ta'aung Palaung National Party, secretary of the working committee Min Zayar Oo of Mon National Party, secretary of UPDJC's political parties Sai Kyaw Nyunt from Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, Representative Daw Khin Sein Myint from Tai Lai (Red Shan) Nationalities Development Party and Sai Htay Aung Chairman of Tai Lai (Red Shan) Nationalities Development Party held a press conference.

"Security sector was the main topic during the three-day discussion. Defence sector was discussed on a prioritised basis as UPDJC decided to discuss it in the coming Union Peace Conference — 21 st Century Panglong All parties agreed the point that armed groups must be under the purview of the civilian government when a federal union emerges," said Sai Kyaw Nyunt. The parties have reached full consensus about deployment of the Tatmadaw and ethnic armed forces and security matters to be tackled in line with the law, Tar Hla Pe said. "We'll discuss union-level security sector, taking suggestions from 22 parties," he added. He continued that the Tatmadaw's involvement in peace sector is important and the peace process will achieve success only when the government, political parties and civil society organisations build the nation together in the future. Five representatives were chosen from 22 political parties to discuss security sector. UPDJC is consisted of five representatives from the government, Hluttaw, Tatmadaw and ethnic armed groups, said Min Zayar Oo.— *Ye Khaung Nyunt*

Maldives to be visited most of the local people during water festival

Maldives, a south Asian island country, will be visited by many local people during the water festival, according to the travel and tourism agencies.

Most of the local people will visit the Maldives because hotels are giving discount for the month of April.

Most of the local visitors have reserved rooms for a four-day, three-night trip, said Ko Zwe Aung from Happy Travel and Tours.

The visitors can enjoy a relaxing spa treatments, diving and speed boat excursions. Trips to the Maldives cost between Ks700,000 and Ks1.2 million per person for four days and three nights.—*200*

Announcement by the Union Election Commission

(Unofficial translation)

All Hluttaw Representative Candidates participating in the by-elections on 1 April 2017 need to submit an account detailing expenditures for the election using form (20) within 30 days of announcement of the Hluttaw Representative's name to their respective Region or State Election Sub-Commission according to Hluttaw Election Bylaw (77).

Hence all Hluttaw Representatives and Electoral Representatives participating in the by-election are to systematically compile a detailed account of expenditures and vouchers/receipts concerning election expenses in keeping with respective Hluttaw Electoral Laws and Bylaws.—*Union Election Commission*

Thura U Shwe Mann receives Forum of Federations delegation and Qatar Special Envoy

Thura U Shwe Mann and the Special Envoy from Qatar Dr. Mutlaq M. Al-Qahtanl. PHOTO: MNA

CHAIRMAN of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission Thura U Shwe Mann received a delegation from Forum of Federations yesterday at 10 am and Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs Special Envoy H.E. DrMutlaq M. Al-Qahtanl at 4:30 pm at the meeting hall of Hluttaw building.

In the meeting with the delegation from Forum of Federations, discussions were made on realization of a federal system and exchanging of experiences.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Message of Greetings sent by President U Htin Kyaw, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, on the occasion of the Peasants' Day Celebrations which falls on 2 March 2017

Dear esteemed peasantry,

Today is a historic and auspicious day which has been designated to honor all the peasants in the country. On this day full of Mingalar and historic significance, I wish to send my message of greetings and good wishes for the health and happiness and blessings for auspiciousness for all the peasantry. In addition I also send good wishes for great success in their farming work.

Although 70 per cent of our country's population live in the rural areas and their main occupation is farming, and although 30 per cent of the GDP is from the agriculture sector, the majority of peasants have enjoyed very little benefits and the status of their socio-economic life is low.

As a result of related effects such as climate change, natural disasters and other dangers, deforestation and weaknesses in soil management, the majority of the peasants have low incomes and this has affected their socio-economic life as well.

That is why for the development of the agriculture sector, we need to formulate sound policies and strive hard to implement them for the advancement of the socio-economic life of the peasantry.

The building of peace and tranquility and socio-economic advancement is considered by our government to be our goal as well as our duty and we have been working in that direction. During the 10 month period of our government, we have been working towards the goal of developing sustainable agriculture and for the increased production of agriculture and livestock products that would be able to compete internationally. Furthermore, we have laid down (11) goals for food security, ensuring nutritional value in food and food safety, for the peasants to be able to enjoy their rights fully, and increasing foreign and local investments in the agriculture sector. Also, in working for the fulfillment of these goals we have adopted policies for increasing the production capacity of the agriculture and livestock sector, and at the same time to increase the income of peasants with small plots, advancement of the socio-economic life of rural people and sustainable development.

Dear esteemed peasantry,

As Myanmar is a country where agriculture is given priority and the economy is based on agriculture, to give protection for peasant's rights and to increase their benefits, a law for the protection of peasant's rights and increasing their benefits had been passed. Furthermore, a leading committee for the protection of peasant's rights and advancement of their benefits had been formed and had been working in accordance with the adopted policies.

Just as we have been working hard to increase agricultural production by farming multiple crops on farmland that had to rely solely on rain water introducing irrigation farming, we have also been collaborating with local and foreign organizations to educate peasants on how to grow crops that grow well in specific regions, crop patterns, and farming methods.

We have been undertaking maintenance and repair of projects for utilizing river water and irrigation dams, demonstration classes on how to use water effectively, systematic development of mechanized farming, production of good quality seeds for effective utilization, implementing projects on a wide scale, production of high quality export produce, prevent contamination, preventing losses due to late harvesting, and providing technical skills and know how. We have been laying down firm foundations for the above practices to be successfully distributed to the peasants.

In addition demonstration model plots are being created for educating peasants; also opportunities are being created for peasants to collaborate with agricultural experts for setting up experimental plots for the cultivation of seed strains, crop varieties, and cultivation methods that grow well in their respective regions. These activities are being carried out at the same time in tandem in a states and regions.

The Union government has already permitted peasants to grow crops that are compatible with their regions. In order to ensure that peasants get more income, efforts are being made to secure firm prices in local and foreign markets not only as primary products but as value added products. We have been giving encouragement in this matter. Also, we have been working systematically for the creation of "Wholesale Markets" to ensure that our produce will get firm prices, more income and stable markets at home and abroad.

Dear esteemed peasantry,

We have been working very hard and making effective and concerted efforts to mobilize peasants with small plots to form themselves into agricultural cooperatives. For latest methods in agriculture and the latest news about the weather, market news and entertainment programs to get into the hands of farmers on a real time basis, the Government and private media companies are broadcasting the news. Now that mobile phones are in the hands of every one, the latest news are being disseminated via these mobile phones.

The world's population has been increasing daily and the current population of 7000 million will become 9000 in the year 2050. That is why we need to produce the required food in greater quantities. For our country also, in preparation for the increase in population in the years ahead, we have been working hard on all fronts with high momentum with the aim of not only securing internal food security but also for export to international markets.

Based on the advantages we have because of our rich land resources and water resources, and good climatic conditions combined with the unified strength of our peasantry, this is an opportune time to work for all round development including the agricultural sector. This is also an opportune time for uplifting the socio-economic life of the peasantry.

Dear esteemed peasantry,

In conclusion, for the long-term national interest of all Union citizens and including the interest of all the peasantry living in our country, I urge all of you to march towards our ultimate goal in unison while exerting equal efforts and meeting all challenges and obstacles that may lie ahead. With these words I send this Message of Greetings.

(Unofficial Translation)

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi welcomes Mr. Sun Guoxiang, Special Envoy from China in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi cordially greets Dr. Mutlaq M. Al-Qahtani Special Envoy from Qatar in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

State Counsellor receives Special Envoys from Qatar and China

DAW Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, received H.E. Mr. Sun Guoxiang, Special Envoy for Asian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China at the Ministry at 1:30 pm in Nay Pyi Taw and H.E. Dr. Mutlaq M. Al-Qahtani, Special Envoy for the Foreign Minister for Counter-terrorism and Mediation of Conflict Resolution of the State of Qatar at 2:30 pm at the same venue. *—Myanmar News Agency*

Apology and Correction

In a front page story in the 28 February edition of the Global New Light of Myanmar, we incorrectly referred to U Ko Ni as "Thura U Ko Ni" in the story headlined "Anti-violence ceremony at Yangon airport."

The error occurred when the word "Thura" was copied and pasted in front of the name of U Tin Oo in the story during last-minute editing of our pages. The title was inadvertently and incorrectly added to U Ko Ni's name as well.

We, with full responsibility and accountability, apologise for this error.*—Editor*

Consultation meeting for UNDAF held

THE initial Consultation Meeting for United Nations Development Assistance Framework – UNDAF (2018-2022) was held at the Ministry of Planning and Finance in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

U Kyaw Win, Union Minister, pointed out that UNDAF is a strategic results framework that describes the collective vision and response of the UN System to national development priorities and result. So it is covering a medium time frame of 5 years that reflects prioritization of the use of UM resources in support of national development plans and policies.

UNDAF (2018-2022) is the first experience of Myanmar and the last and current cooperation of the UNCT in Myanmar is broadly defined under the four main pillars of the work of the UN, namely peace building, human rights, humanitarian assistance and sustainable development within the funds and programmes mandates of each UN agency. He also pointed out partnership is important not only for the developing the framework but also for the implementing of the activities of each UN agency.*—GNLM*

myME to educate 2,500 out-of-school children

WITH the support of Telenor, the Myanmar Mobile Education Project (myME) hopes to educate roughly 2,500 out-of-school children during this year.

The Norwegian telecom operator and myME recently signed a one-year partnership agreement to extend delivering of non-formal education to children between the ages of 14-16 from Telenor-branded teashops and their communities in Yangon and Mandalay.

The non-formal education programme aims to promote the lives of children working at teashops who cannot go to to school due to financial problems.

Telenor, which launched its telecoms services in Myanmar in September 2014, has supported the project since late 2014. It provides salaries for all myMe staff, a bus to use as a mobile classroom, several vehicles for teacher and student transportation and other school supplies such as computers.

"Providing functional literacy and vocational skills to out-of-school and working children is the most critical and practical contribution that anyone can make, especially during this historic time of transition in Myanmar," said Tim Aye-Hardy, the founder of myME. "That is exactly what we do at myME Project and that was the main reason I returned to my motherland after living abroad for 25 years."

Officials from myME, Telenor shaking hands after signing agreement on 27 February. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

More than 3,000 children from various teashops, road-side restaurants, monastic schools and underprivileged communities from different cities in the country are now receiving non-formal and vocational education under the project.

The myME project was founded by a small group of people in New York City and Myanmar who passionately believe that true reform for Myanmar starts with education.

According to a local survey, 90 per cent of young workers in Yangon are from other regions and states, coming from very poor families.—*GNLM*

Senior General receives Special Envoy of Foreign Ministry of China

DEFENCE services Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received H.E. Mr. Sun Guoxiang, Special Envoy for Asian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China at the Bayintnaung Guest House in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the meeting, they discussed in a friendly and frank manner matters relating to internal peace.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Summer courses aim to promote youth participation in sports activities

THE Department of Sports and Physical Education in Mandalay Region will launch summer sports trainings in the region between 3 March and 2 April, planning to teach the basic techniques of nearly 20 kinds of sports to trainees.

The programme invites young people to attend these sports trainings including traditional martial arts, football, volleyball, track and field, aerobics, taekwondo, wushu and others, with the department intending to introduce cricket, to the trainees this summer.

Enthusiasts may receive a physical examination by sports sub committees before attending the courses.

The courses aim to promote youth involvement in the country's sports activities and turn out talented players in different types of sports by training them through a stage-by-stage approach during the three-month courses.

Plans are underway to choose qualified trainees from the courses to continue to train them for sports contests to be held ahead of International Olympic Day, which falls on 23 June, said an official from the department.—*200*

Crime NEWS

Marijuana seized in Sittway

SITTWAY local police seized 40 kilograms of marijuana in Darpaing village in Sittway, Rakhine State on 28 February.

Acting on a tip-off, police from Sittway Myoma Station and Ward Administration members discovered 40.17 kilograms of marijuana worth Ks40 million in a house owned by Armauk Tusaung, 30, son of Marmauk Tarli, at Darpaing village in Sittway.

Armuak Tusaung with 40 kilograms of illegal marijuana. PHOTO: MNA

"Armi Husaung, who is living at the same village, requested me to keep a marijuana gunny bag as he was asked by his father Swe York, and Aduraman, who is also from the same village as me, to leave a bag in my house," confessed Armauk.

Police have taken action against Armauk Tusaung. Police are still investigating the case to arrest Armi Husaung, Swe York and Aduraman.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Fires break out in Buthidaung and Maungtaw

BUTHIDAUNG and Maungtaw townships saw separate outbreaks of fire on 27th and 28th February, respectively.

The first fire occurred at a house owned by Ma Sofia in Ward 13, Mikyaung Zayy village in Buthidaung Township at about 8pm on Monday, which started from an oil lamp and destroyed the home.

Similarly, another fire broke out in Quarter (2), Laungbhat village, Maungtaw Township, at about 3:30 pm on Tuesday. It was found that the fire started at the kitchen of the house owned by Ma Phartay Mahar Tu, which eventually engulfed the house and destroyed another seven houses. The second fire caused losses of about Ks140,000.

Local residents try to prevent furthur spreading of fire. PHOTO: MNA

The two house owners are being charged under the fire accident law. — *Myanmar News Agency*

Child detainee hospitalized for 2nd time

A child being detained at No 3 Border Police branch is undergoing medical treatment as an in-patient for the second time in Buthidaung Township Hospital.

Yar Seim, 16, suffered from stomach problems and muscle weakness and received medical treatment in Buthidaung Hospital. He also took treatment from 21 February to 26 February because of chest pain and respiratory problems.

Local Police station from Ngakuya Village have taken action against him under section 302/34 of the Penal Code and (Child) Unlawful Association Act 17 (1)/(2) and (Child) Arms Law.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Yar Seim lies on a bed in Buthidaung hospital with officers on sentry. PHOTO: MNA

Yaba seized in Loilem and Lashio

A local anti-narcotics squad from Loilem stopped and searched a vehicle driven by Sai Kyaw Zan Hla with Ma Ei Nwan and U Ti Ya on board at the Tarkaw cooperative inspection gate on Karli-Mongpyin Road on Tuesday and found 30,000 yaba pills in the vehicle.

Another anti-narcotics squad from Lashio searched a motorcycle driven by Sai Laung Hlaing with Ma Yin Wai Nyein aboard on Muse-Mandalay Road near the Oriental toll gate in Lashio on Monday and found 25,500 yaba pills.

Police filed charges against them under the Anti-narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—*Myanmar Police Force*

LOCAL Business

China-Myanmar border trade value slumped by over US$200mil

THE value of border trade through China-Myanmar border trade camps — Muse, Lweje, Kan Pike Tee, Chin Shwe Haw and Keng Tung -- as of 17th Feb in the current fiscal year plunged by US$200.26million when compared to that in the similar period of last year, according to the official figures released by the Ministry of Commerce.

The decline in border trade with China was attributed to a dramatic plunge in Muse trade, which usually has the highest trade value out of the 16 border trade camps. The trade value at Muse border trade camp as of 17th Feb this FY was down by nearly US$490million compared to last year. China-Myanmar border trade from 1st April to 17th Feb fetched US$4.29 billion at Muse border trade camps, US$164.665mil at Lweje, US$503.272mil at Chin Shwe Haw, US$82.602mil at Kan Pike Tee and US$4.275mil at Keng Tung respectively.

Myanmar is currently conducting trade with neighbouring countries through border trade camps, with Thailand via Tachilek, Myawady, Kawthaung, Myeik, Hteekhee, Maw Taung and Maese, with Bangladesh via Sittwe and Maung Taw and with India via Tamu and Reed border gates. The value of border trade through 16 border trade camps as of 17th Feb this FY amounted to US$6.27 billion, which is down by US$8.306mil than that of last year. Agricultural products, livestock, fisheries products, minerals, forest products, finished industrial goods and other products are shipped abroad, whereas capital goods, raw industrial materials and personal goods flow into the country, it is learnt.—*Mon Mon*

Trade value with ITC hit over Ks12billion as of 17th Feb

Trade value with the Individual Trading Card (ITC) reached over Ks12billion as of 17th Feb in the current fiscal year 2016-2017, according to the statistics of the Commerce Ministry.

Export value with the ITC was over Ks1billion, whereas import value with ITC hit over Ks11billion.The total trade values using ITC amounted to over Ks737mil from 21st Nov 2012 to 31st March 2013, over Ks6.65 billion in 2013-2014 FY, over Ks9,372 mil in 2014-2015 FY, over Ks6,450mil in 2015-2016, and over Ks12,876mil as of 17th Feb this FY 2016-2017 so far.

Muse and Myawady border trade camps are found to have the largest trade value using the ITC. The border trade values with ITC as of 17th Feb in this FY were over Ks742mil in Tamu, over Ks6.81 billion in Muse, over Ks6.2 billion in Myawady, Ks625million in Tachilek, over Ks24million in Lweje, over Ks2,025million in Kan Pike Tee, over Ks347million in Kawthaung, over Ks585million in Reed, over Ks887million in Maw Taung and over Ks24million in Keng Tung and nearly Ks30million in Maese, it is learnt.

The Trade Department issued 292 cards from 21st Nov 2012 to 31st March 2013, 261 cards in 2013-2014 FY, 317 cards in 2014-2015 FY, 146 cards in 2015-2016 and 187 cards as of 17th Feb in this FY, according to an announcement released by the aforementioned ministry. A businessman can trade Ks3million a day with an ITC, and then, the Trade Department granted permit to trade up to Ks15million a day, which amounted to a five-day-trade-value.—*Ko Khant*

Jackfruit fetches good price in Pwintbyu Township

JACKFRUIT produced in the villages of Pwintbyu Township fetch a good price, allowing local residents to earn a living wage.

Jackfruit has soft and hard varieties; the prices of the hard variety ranges from Ks5,000 to Ks8,000. The flood in Aug 2015 in Pwintbyu Township damaged the jackfruit trees due to excess moisture in the soil, causing the fruits to fall too early. The trees will yield again in winter 2017, and the unripe and young jackfruit used in curry sells for Ks1,000 to Ks3,000.

The merchants from Minbu, Salin and Magwe come to Pwintbyu to buy them. Jackfruit trees are perennial and so they are planted in the compounds. They start to yield only after six or ten years of cultivation depending on the soil.—*Thura Tun (Pwintbyu)*

Fish are seen at Sanpya Fish Market, Yangon, on 7 January 2017. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

Fisheries export value up by over US$86million

THE export value of fisheries product from 1st April to 17th Feb in the current fiscal year increased by US$86.7million when compared to last year.

The fisheries exports this year as of 17th Feb fetched US$483.994mil, whereas the export value of fisheries last year was US$397.294mil, according to the statistics of the Commerce Ministry.

Fisheries exports attained over US$668mil in 2011-2012, over US$493mil in 2012-2013 and over US$341mil in 2013-2014. The figure was witnessed to decline slightly. And then, the export value was a bit up in 2015-2016 FY with over US$469mil.

Erratic weather adversely affected fisheries production and fish resources, and offshore fishing does not look very promising, officials said. To boost export volume, all the stakeholders in the fisheries export supply chain, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation and Myanmar Fishery Federation (MFF) need to exert concerted efforts, officials said.

Those engaged in Myanmar's traditional fish and prawn farming need to switch over to a modern farming method. Adopting modern farming techniques can help to protect the fish from infectious disease, increase the growth rate of fish and prawn and clean the farming lakes, according to MFF.—*Ko Htet*

Brick kiln businesses make small profit

EVEN with the highest production rate, brick makers in Thaton Township, Mon State are making only a small profit when the demand and purchase price remains steady, said those engaged in brick kiln businesses.

The owners of brick kilns working on a manageable scale can afford only small amounts of capital and some owners work with an advanced purchase system. After making the bricks, they are forced to immediately sell all the bricks as they need to pay the wages of labourers. In addition, they have to give the bricks to the advanced purchasers.

"This year, there was a scarcity of wood fuel to bake the bricks, prompting the wood price to rise. We do not receive much demand from other townships. Besides, the erratic weather destroyed the bricks. The owners of the brick kilns are financially not doing well," said U San Khaing, a brick maker from Thaton Township.

A brick sold for Ks45 early this year, whereas the prevailing price of a brick is now around Ks42. The price of the bricks may vary depending on the delivery location, he added.

"There are about 30 labourers per brick kiln. We earn only a small wage of Ks4,000 a day, working outdoors all day in the scorching heat. However, the brick kilns allow us to earn for a living after crop season," said U Htay Hlaing, a kiln labourer.

There are officially about 40 brick kiln businesses in Thaton Township. The brick making season is from December to the end of March. A brick kiln is estimated to produce about 400,000 bricks within a season, according to township brick entrepreneurs. —*Thet Oo (Thaton)*

PHOTO: THET OO (THATON)

Central Committee holds meeting to boost SMEs

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and capital, third, knowledge-sharing and supporting pioneering efforts, and fourth, advertising effectively and forming strong networks so as to gain a foothold in the international supply chain.

The Central Committee in its current state needs to form a Working Committee and assign tasks and responsibilities, and form subsequent agencies, fund management departments and other necessary departments. This proposal for forming a Working Committee was submitted today in accord with SME Law Act 5, Section 7 and after approval, the Working Committee will be tasked with forming of the necessary departments.

The SMEs are as varied as they are myriad and should therefore be systematically supported from all sectors and given more support starting from this meeting.

SME Development Central Committee Joint Chairperson State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi then delivered a speech in which she addressed SMEs as a sector we cannot afford to ignore improving as they make up 99 per cent of our economic force, so there is no need to clarify just how important they are in the development of our nation. Concerning SMEs our government departments have classified human resources, technical and creative support, capital funding, better infrastructure, gaining a foothold in the marketplace, imposing reasonable taxes and regulations and creating suitable business environments as priorities. The State Counsellor expressed her trust and belief that invited skilled professionals and experts will collaborate on how best to implement strategies and policies on developing the SME sector.

"We can liken small and medium enterprises to a bridge linking local and foreign sectors.

President U Htin Kyaw addresses the meeting of Central Committee for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises (1/2017) in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

In establishing SMEs we should bear in mind that our country is a member of the ASEAN community and therefore we need to work within the rules, regulations, and criteria while remaining focused on our country's needs as well," she said. "We must also remember that our country is an agricultural nation as many are not aware that SMEs have relevance to the agricultural sector. There are those who regard business as separate from agriculture and more in line with industrial corporations. But in our country we need to link SMEs to the agricultural sector. How will we improve our SMEs to address the food supply needs of the 21st century? How will we increase and better our SMEs with respect to other countries? I want our professionals and skilled experts to take this in consideration. The needs of our own country are paramount, we cannot stand alone, so we need to work out a way that connects with global SMEs to develop our own enterprises.

The most important aspect is education. The government cannot do everything; we are a system that believes on the market economy and we as the government need to consider how to support our SMEs so that they succeed. The Central Committee's role is to lead the economy, not to monopolize it. We do not impose our policies. I want you to advise us how to effectively support the SME sector to improve the development of our country and connect with the global community both economically and socially.

"We need to be broad-minded. We will never be successful if we hold narrow-minded vision, in the long run, but it may be fruitful in the short term. For SMEs to attain prolonged success, we need not only look into global current affairs but also to influence the global currents. And we need to have ingenuity and proceed to implementation of the idea by using ingenuity. We must search for techniques and know-how countries had never used, because our country lagged much behind other countries in the economic field. So to overcome them, we are required to produce the avant-garde and create new markets. As for the technicians and professional experts, they are urged to give advice and suggestions with bravery and openness. They need to venture to test methods that had never been done before. Here, I did not mean foolish courage. Had we implemented the work with the first-ever new techniques, it would be greatly helpful to the development of our SMEs. Peace, stability and development of the country are closely connected with the economy. On examination of global politics, other countries had to pay great respect of fastest-growing economies. Thus, economically developed countries come to influence over the inferiors. We want our nation to stand tall in the midst of the world's countries. As for the SMEs, we firmly believe that we can not only keep up with other countries but also will be able to try hard to overtake them, by including suitable representatives, experts, technicians, scholars and persons who will ponder the well-being of Myanmar people in the working committee, regardless of our past poor conditions."

Afterward, U Khin Maung Cho, Union Minister for Industry, Secretary of the Central Committee for the Development of SMEs, said, "To narrow the gap among Regions and States, 53 branch offices have been opened in 15 Regions and States including Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory and 38 districts. The aim and objective of the SME is aimed at leading to increasing job opportunities and socio-economic development of all citizens. SME Development Law has been enacted for supporting the process of SME in accord with the law. SME Agency and national-level committees will be formed in accord with the law. There are 50694 SMEs, altogether in Regions, States and Union Territory. To promote the skills of employees in SMEs, annual opening of regular courses and Mobile Vocational Training courses which can reach rural areas, have been arranged."

In addition, U Myint Swe, Vice-President and Vice-Chairman of the central committee of the development of SMEs, Union Ministers, central committee members and scholars suggested that experiences and facts needed to be amended in the prescribed law and in duty assignments.

"There are six sectors to help SMEs improve, in financial aid, electric power supply, reasonable taxes, credit guarantee and others. In forming organizations, duties need to be assigned definitely and to include entrepreneurs, technicians and professional experts. Committees are needed to welcome them to give necessary advice. And it is necessary to systematically share techniques and knowledge for the development of the SMEs," the President said.

Present at the ceremony were the Union Attorney General, the Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar and experts.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Thailand upholds death sentence for Myanmar men, appeal likely

Mark Angeles

A Thai appeals court upheld the death sentence for two Myanmar migrant workers convicted of the murder of two British backpackers on a vacation island in 2014, their lawyer said yesterday.

Zaw Lin (L) and Win Zaw Htun. PHOTO: REUTERS

The bodies of backpackers Hannah Witheridge and David Miller were found on a beach on Koh Tao island in September 2014. Police said Witheridge, 23, had been raped and bludgeoned to death and Miller, 24, had suffered blows to his head.

Thailand sentenced Myanmar migrant workers Zaw Lin and Win Zaw Htun to death after convicting them of the crime on 24 December 2015.

The decision to uphold the death sentence for the two Myanmar men was handed down on 23 February, but the defence lawyer was not informed until yesterday, prompting questions of legal adherence and calls for an appeal.

"The means in which the verdict was read in this case without informing defence lawyers raises questions regarding adequate adherence to the rule of law. The defence legal team will immediately liaise with Zaw Lin and Wai Phyo to prepare the defendant's appeal to the Supreme Court on this ruling. It is a deeply disappointing ruling for the defence team given our confidence in the strength of our arguments regarding the inadequacy of forensics in this case," said Andy Hall, a British rights activist and the international affairs adviser to the defense team.

A team of lawyers filed an appeal in May last year against the verdict. The 198-page appeal said that DNA evidence used in the case was inadmissible and had not been collected, tested, analysed or reported in accordance with internationally accepted standards.

"The appeals court upheld the death sentence for the two defendants," Nakhon Chompuchat, the defence team's head lawyer, told Reuters.

It could not be determined whether Zaw Lin and Win Zaw Htun were informed of the latest decision.

"We have not met Zaw Lin and Win Zaw Htun yet, we don't even know if they understand the decision and if it was translated," Andy Hall said.

The defence has 30 days to make another appeal to the supreme court.

The 2015 verdict followed an investigation and trial that were mired in controversy, including allegations of police incompetence, mishandling of evidence and torture of the suspects.

Thai police drew widespread domestic and international criticism for their handling of the case and the evidence. Protests erupted in Yangon after the verdict, with many people believing the two workers were scapegoats. *(Reuters contributed to this report)*

Two women charged with murder over nerve agent attack on Kim Jong Nam

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysian prosecutors on Wednesday charged two women, an Indonesian and a Vietnamese, with murdering the estranged half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un more than two weeks ago. They said the two women had "common intention" with four others, still at large, to kill him at around 9 am in the departures hall at Kuala Lumpur International Airport's budget airline terminal on 13 February.

No plea was recorded, as the Sepang magistrate's court on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, where the two suspects were brought in to hear the charge, has no jurisdiction over murder cases.

However, the two women, who came out of the court wearing black bullet-proof vests and under the protection of special forces personnel carrying machine guns, denied any wrongdoing. The process at the court only lasted about 10 minutes. When the charge was translated in Vietnamese to Doan Thi Huong, 28, who was wearing a yellow T-shirt and jeans, she told the court in English, "I understand. I am not guilty," according to her lawyer, Selvam Shanmugam. The 25-year-old Indonesian woman, Siti Aisyah, also told her counsel that she is "innocent."

"Her eyes were red," Gooi Soon Heng, her lawyer, said. The two women are suspected of coating their bare hands with a chemical and then wiping them on Kim Jong Nam's face at the time of the attack. The chemical has been identified as the highly toxic VX nerve agent. The nerve agent used for the apparent assassination has been classified as a weapon of mass destruction by the United Nations and banned by the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention.

Under Malaysia's penal code, the duo could face the death penalty if convicted.

"We told her she is not alone. Indonesia is with her. We have five lawyers for her," said Indonesia's deputy envoy to Malaysia, Andreano Erwin, who met Aisyah, who was dressed in a red T-shirt and jeans. "We advised her to take care of herself as it will be a long process, and don't forget to pray." Their next court procedures are scheduled for 13 April. The case will be transferred to a high court and the pair will be tried jointly, according to Malaysian authorities. Investigators believe a number of North Korean men were behind the deadly attack on the 45-year-old half-brother, who had lived in exile for many years.

Vietnamese Doan Thi Huong leaves a Sepang court after she was charged with the murder of North Korea Kim Jong Nam, in Malaysia on 1 March, 2017. PHOTO: RETUERS

Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi was quoted as saying by local media on Tuesday that the country's police have found that the suspects began their "operation" two months before the murder. One North Korean man is in custody, but the police believe that seven more were involved in the poison attack, which led the brother to faint at a clinic in the airport and subsequently die in an ambulance while being transferred to hospital.

The victim, the eldest son of late North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, died within 15 to 20 minutes after VX was applied on his face as the dose was "so high," Malaysia's health minister said at a press conference on Sunday, after announcing that a report on the autopsy conducted on 15 February had been completed.

Of the seven men, the police have said four suspects managed to fly out of the airport shortly after confirming the poison attack by the two women and it is almost certain that they are already back in North Korea.

The police have said the three other men, including a diplomat at the North Korean Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, are still somewhere in Malaysia. The two women both earlier indicated to diplomats who were given consular access that they were duped by the North Korean men. Aisyah told the Indonesian deputy envoy Saturday that she was asked to cooperate in a purported reality TV show for the equivalent of around $90. North Korea has not publicly confirmed that the deceased is Kim Jong Nam. It has repeatedly denounced the Malaysian government for performing an autopsy on one of its citizens, who was found with a diplomatic passport bearing the name Kim Chol, despite its objections. North Korea sent what it called a "high-level delegation" to Malaysia on Tuesday in the hope of securing the early return of the body and the release of the arrested North Korean man, amid increasingly tense relations between the two countries. *—Kyodo News*

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Japan still committed to talks on TPP without US: Abe

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe speaks during a session of the House of Councillors budget committee in Tokyo on 1 March, 2017. Japan remains committed to exploring the feasibility of a Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade pact without the United States, Abe said. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

TOKYO — Japan remains committed to exploring the feasibility of a Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade pact without the United States, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said n Wednesday. "I will discuss with (TPP) countries other than the United States the possibilities we can see in the future," Abe told a parliamentary session ahead of a ministerial meeting on the initiative in Chile on 15 March.

"The new rules agreed in the TPP would be a model for future trade negotiations," Abe told a session of the House of Councillors Budget Committee.

"I cannot put too much emphasis on" the importance of setting high-standard rules like in the TPP on intellectual property and labor conditions among other areas, Abe said.

Abe said he will explain the importance to countries in the Asia-Pacific region involved in an envisioned Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership trade initiative and a proposed Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific.

Japan is considering sending Senior Vice Foreign Minister Kentaro Sonoura and other officials to the round in Chile, a Japanese government source said. The TPP also involves Australia, Brunei, Canada, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. The United States and Japan agreed to set up a bilateral high-level dialogue framework on trade and other economic issues during the recent talks between Abe and President Donald Trump.

Trump pulled the United States out of the TPP with an executive order in late January, reversing the preceding administration's promotion of the TPP as a central part of its Asia policy. Under current terms, the trade pact requires ratification by nations accounting for 85 percent of the combined gross domestic product of the 12 members, meaning it cannot come into force without the United States.*—Kyodo News*

Traders ban Pepsi, Coca-Cola in India's Tamil Nadu

NEW DELHI — Trade bodies in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu have banned sale of Coca-Cola and Pepsi in a bid to boost local products.

The ban came into force Wednesday with soft drinks from two multinational companies going off the shelf from state's thousands of small shops and retail outlets.

The ban was proposed by the state's top two trade bodies — the Federation of Tamil Nadu Traders Associations (FTNTA) and the Tamil Nadu Traders Associations Forum (TNTAF).

The trade organizations blame soft drinks companies for exploiting too much water resource and thereby affecting farmers who grapple hard to irrigate their farmland.

"These companies exploit lot of water resources and right now there is water shortage in the state which has pushed farmers to wall," Tha Vellaiyan, president of FTNTA, told Xinhua over telephone from Chennai.

"And these companies come up with the products that are hazardous to health that is why we are asking our people to stop selling it."

Reports said over a million shopkeepers are expected to follow the ban order, while big supermarkets and restaurants have sought more time.

In January this year, the local government in Tamil Nadu declared all districts of the state drought-hit following a deficit in the northeast monsoon in 2016.

Traders believe the ban would boost sales of Indian beverages and encourage better sales of fruit juices.

A similar move was attempted in the state in 1998 but that failed miserably. PepsiCo and Coca-Cola enjoy a lion's share in the beverage market in India. So far the two companies have not responded to the ban on their products in Tamil Nadu.*—Xinhua*

Opinion

Write for us

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

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

Taken at face value, everything looks OK

Khin Maung Oo

Every individual likes the best, but only those who try their best with firm resolutions can reach the top. Exceptionally, there are some to whom success does not go, although they have tried and achieved necessary qualifications. Some had not tried hard as much as the said "qualified one", but they have educational attainments to seize top posts as they were certified ones. And, there is also another kind that reached the highest position without sufficient qualifications. In other word, these can be categorized into two kinds—those who reach the top and the ones who do not. They may be pleased with their existences, and some may be displeased. From their own perspectives, they who reach the top will surely think that they own their present positions just as they deserve them. From the layman's point of view, it is not a problem. Who are we are to argue. We need not criticize it. Yet, it is not a small problem, or rather it may become a worse or the worst problem, depending upon at which level it really exists, to the extent of destroying a country.

At the transitional period when we are moving toward a federal democratic state, our leaders will have to think a lot for the country. Undeniably, they have tremendous backlog of evil legacy left by old regimes. Here, I would like to say that our leaders saved our country from the brink of being handed over into the hands of someone else, to coin a phrase. Living under long-standing suppression of former regimes led people to ignorance and fear. Ignorance begets fear, which causes ignorance—it is a vicious circle. Thus, we had to live for years under the reign of the governments we deserved. Our respectable leaders now widened our visions, guiding us to our destination. Many had fallen at the advent of our democratic way, some in the middle and some just at the time of starting to see the dawn of democracy. We are responsible to take duties entrusted to us, on behalf of them. Then, what are our responsibilities? On our way to a federal democratic union, there are many people who would not like to accompany us. They are those who enjoyed the fruits of old regimes' administration. Due to monopolization of political power for years, they seemed to think that authority has been inheritance left to them by their ancestors. Now, many of them can still be seen in our society, especially in governmental departments.

Our Union Government divides respective powers and authorities to Region and State Cabinets. Ministries of the Union similarly divide and assign authorities and duties to respective departments. Our pure-minded and educated youths must learn knowledge and particular things needed to study from these veterans, on one condition that we must give our care for our pure minds not to be infected with dubious ways and malpractices from them. We are well convinced that ruling a country is not like running a boot camp. The government has many tasks to perform, concerning multi-sector affairs of the country. As conscientious citizens, we—ordinary people contribute our labor as much as we can, in the tasks our government is carrying out. And, we need to be aware of bribery and corruption in our surroundings. Especially, at the present time when great villains are resorting to violence and most wicked ways, for fear of losing their assets, we people are required to be alert and to observe these destructive elements in our immediate vicinity.

Last but not least, we would like to warn destructive villains for the last time. Vigilant sharp eyes are watching you and your activities. Perhaps you will think that everything looks OK, if you take your present existence at face value. Unless you abandon your evil deeds, our reply will be, "Goodbye and good riddance!"

Is Hsa Lein, "ဆလိန်" going to disappear from our youths' lips?

Khin Maung Oo

"LACK of carefulness blinds us to a nearby cave, but with cautiousness we can see even particles of dust in the sun's rays," as a Myanmar saying goes. There seems to be an element of hyperbole in such a claim that the pronunciation of 7th letter of Myanmar alphabet is on the verge of extinction, if the present matter goes uncared, by condoning that it is not very important. We all accept that language, literature and traditions of a race or a country are its cultural heritages. All countries usually value and maintain these heritages. The global countries are trying to develop their status to the utmost and vying for getting cutting-edge technology. On the other hand, they never fail to keep their historical and cultural heritage. And they use these heritages for their benefits, especially in tourism industry. In our country, historical and archaeological departments have been trying to maintain, restore and conserve our cultural inheritances. Non-governmental organizations are also helping us in keeping historical heritages.

Our President of the State himself wholeheartedly encouraged to hold Nobel literary festivals and child literary festivals for the development of Myanmar Aesthetic Literature and Child Literature, believing that literature can lift up the status of a country, and the development of a country can be assessed by seeing its literature. We all accept and say that our Myanmar language is deteriorating. Our country abounds with many Myanmar language scholars and learned persons. Once in the past, to be exact some forty years ago, the then Myanmar newspapers including dailies published in English versions included articles and discussions of well-known savants and writers. These actually helped us, students, researchers and interested learners from outside. At the time when our children are learning foreign languages increasingly, responsible officials of the education department should lay more stress on the role of our mother tongue. As known by all, facebook users are using their newly invented words. They may give reasons that they love avant-garde, so they invent these. Socially-unacceptable ideas and habits used to and disappear naturally. But we need to keep our own image. Our nation owes its existence to our ancestors' maintenance of these characteristics, of which the language is an important factor. We should keep our long-lasting own characteristics, shouldn't we?

These days, in seeing and hearing some TV commercials, interviews with celebrities and presentations by some presenters, we felt unhappy. Some words they used were miserably pronounced. In a TV commercial, the actor wrongly articulated "Mo" for "Hmo" in describing a fungus infection. This may be attributed to his improper articulation or otherwise. Other frequently-made errors are "Myaw-lint" for "Hmyaw-lint" which is meant for "hope", and "Hmaw Gun" for "Maw Gun" which is meant for "record of a significant event meant to last. As in above-said Mo and Hmo, there can be many mispronunciation errors noticed in the conversations of today's youths in our proximity, if we would notice. Especially they cannot distinguish "Sa" from "Hsa". You will come to know it well if they are asked to pronounce, "Hsa-lein". Their same answers will be "pvdef - Sa-lein". A few days ago, in a TV channel, a presenter himself has been found to have mispronounced words beginning with "ဆလိန် - Hsa Lein." I wonder why they do typical pronunciations. It is firmly believed that they can be trained to be able to articulate these pronunciations well. In my opinion, this should be taken into consideration as an important matter. Otherwise, our Myanmar Language will come to a ruin before we recognized it. For saying so, we may be regarded to be exaggerating in a pessimistic way. While I am at it, I want to point out some errors they frequently made. In reality, this should be discussed as an esoteric subject by our respected Myanmar savants. I would be much obliged if our scholars would come into our discussions willingly.

In fact, mispronunciation of "စလုံး - Sa-Lone" & "ဆလိန် - Hsa-Lein" can be said to be attributed to the lack of knowledge: difference between aspirated sound and un-aspirated one. Here we need to know the meaning of aspirate. Dictionaries define "aspirate" as the sound / h/ as in house. There is a difference between aspirated sounds and un-aspirated ones. All sounds can be made aspirated and un-aspirated. Aspirated sounds are where we breathe out at the same time. It is the strong burst of air, that accompanies either the release or, or the closure of some obstruents. According to Oxford Dictionary of English, "obstruent" is a phonetic usage which means a fricative or plosive speech sound. And, Un-aspirated sounds are where we do not breathe out at the same time. Aspiration means the action of pronouncing a word with an/h/ sound, as in house, while the word "hour" is pronounced without the initial aspirate. Generally speaking, aspiration means " ဟထိုး - ha-hto" in Myanmar. To feel or see the difference between aspirated and un-aspirated sounds, one can put a hand or a lit candle in front of one's mouth, and say pin [phin] and then bin. One should either a puff of air or see a flicker of the candle flame with phin that one does not get with bin. In most dialects of English, the initial consonant is aspirated in phin and un-aspirated in bin. In our Myanmar language, Ka- က, Sa- စ, Ta- တ, Pa- ပ and La- လ are un-aspirated sounds. Thus aspirated sounds include Kha - ခ, Hsa- ဆ, Hpa- ဖ, Hta – ထ and Hla- လှ.

To be continued

Vice President U Henry Van Thio oversees regional development tasks in Chin State

Vice President U Henry Van Thio comforts a pateint receiving medical treatment at People's Hospital in Paletwa. PHOTO: MNA

VICE President U Henry Van Thio accompanied by Union Ministers U Thant Sin Maung and U Win Khaing, Chin State Chief Minister U Salai Lian Luai, Deputy Ministers Maj-Gen Than Htut, Dr Tun Naing and departmental officials inspected the site chosen for construction of the office for township education officer at No (1) Basic Education High School in Matupi Township, Chin State yesterday.

The Vice President and party looked into upgrading of the basic education high school (Branch), patient ward and Laboratory at People's Hospital in Hsamee Town and provided the patients receiving medical treatment at people's hospital there with cash assistance. In meeting with local people in the meeting hall of the Township General Administration Department, the Vice President pledged to provide necessary assistance for regional development tasks and heard reports on improving the telecommunications system, constructing the inter-township road, availability of electricity and upgrading of schools and hospitals presented by officials concerned.

Then, the Vice President and entourage went to 50-bedded People's Hospital in Paletwa Township where he looked round the patient ward, medical store and Laboratory and provided cash assistance to the patients. U Henry Van Thio attended the meeting with local residents in the hall of Township General Administration Department and presented K 10 million contributed by the Ministry of Border Affairs through an official from the township management committee. Union Minister U Thant Sin Maung handed over 50 solar panels provided by Ministry of Border Affairs and Deputy Minister Maj-Gen Than Htut, 250 blankets to the officials.

The State Minister for Development Affairs and officials concerned reported on the site chosen for the Paletwa-Meeza-Shinletwa Road that will start from the western bank of the Kaladan River . Afterwards, the Vice President proceeded to Paletwa Jetty which is included in the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project where he was presented reports on implementation of the project by the officials from Myanma Port Authority under the Ministry of Transport and Communications and a supplementary report by Union Minister U Thant Sin Maung.

He also inspected the warehouse, jetty and the site chosen for construction of the Kaladan River-Crossing Bridge (Paletwa). Being located on the western bank of the Kaladan River, construction of a river-crossing bridge is required for convenience of the local residents who cannot directly come to Paletwa by motorcar. The Ministry of Construction will build the Kaladan River-Crossing Bridge in coordination with the Chin State government commencing 2017-2018 fiscal year. The Kaladan River-Crossing Bridge is expected to cost K 10.5 billion and construction of the bridge will begin in 2017-2018 financial years by spending K 1 billion from the Union Budget and K 2.5 billion from the Chin State Government fund and the project is slated for completion within three years.

During the meetings with local people in Chin State, the Vice President highlighted that job opportunities will be created for the locals with the implementation of the Kaladan River-Crossing Bridge Project and the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project by the government. Upon completion of the projects, the socio-economic status of the local people will improve and they will have a chance to export their products to other areas, he added. He said that the locals need to make necessary preparations to produce agricultural goods compatible with the climate of the region on a commercial scale.

The Vice President pointed out that stability and peace play a pivotal role in carrying out development tasks, saying that the peace process was being implemented by holding the 21st Century Panglong Peace Conference under the leadership of State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to ensure stability and peace in the country. He urged the locals to participate in regional development tasks and cordially greeted them.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Mandalay Hospital needs blood donors for water festival

MANDALAY General Hospital needs many blood donors in preparation for the 2017 water festival, said National Blood Donation Bank Pathology Department specialist Dr. Khin Mya Mon.

The general hospital uses over 50,000 units of blood per year. We are collecting blood starting in March because most of the people are travelling during the water festival. The most important thing is saving the life of the patients. So, I want to people to donate the blood, she added.

The National Blood Donation Bank accepts blood donations every day from 8am to 4pm. The Blood Bank accepts blood donations from 7am to 1pm after the Myanmar New Year.

"The Mandalay blood bank is the largest in upper Myanmar. The hospital is handling surgeries such as kidney transplants and heart operations. The hospital will be conducting liver transplants very soon. So, we need more blood for the patients. Our hospital treatment system is developed, so we have more patients, said Dr. Khin Mya Mon.

Healthy persons between 18 and 55 are encouraged to donate the blood for the long water festival holidays. There are about 150 to 200 blood donors per day for the general hospital. Currently, the hospital covers 70 per cent of the supply blood for the hospital.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Dr Aye Zan appointed Mon State Gov Chief Minister

In accordance with the provisions stated in article 261 (c), article 264 (c) of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and section 82 (a) of Union Government Law and Section 56 (a) of Region or State Government Law, Dr Aye Zan of Mon State Hluttaw representative from Kyaikhto constituency 2 has been appointed as Mon State Government Chief Minister.

Sd/ Htin Kyaw
President
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Confirmation of heads of service organizations

The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has confirmed the following persons as heads of service organizations shown against each on the expiry of one-year probationary period.

Name	Appointment
(1) Daw Nu Nu Yin	Director-General Administration Department Union Attorney-General's Office
(2) Daw Khin Cho Ohn	Director-General Prosecution Department Union Attorney-General's Office
(3) Daw Myint Myint Kyi	Director-General Governor's Office Central Bank of Myanmar
(4) Daw May Marlar Maung Gyi	Director-General Monetary Policy Affairs and Financial Institutions Regulation Department Central Bank of Myanmar
(5) Daw Thida Myo Aung	Director-General Financial Institution Supervision Department Central Bank of Myanmar
(6) U Win Thaw	Director-General Foreign Exchange Management Department Central Bank of Myanmar

YCDC to distribute water from 13 places during water cutoff

YANGON City Development Committee (YCDC) will distribute water from 13 places while the water supply is cut off for six days in the Yangon Region, according to the Engineering Department under YCDC.

Irrigation and Water Utilisation Management Department announced that water supply will be cutoff or minimised from March 1 to 6 while repair work proceeds on the drain that supplies much of the city's water.

"We have planned to distribute water with YCDC cars during the water cutoff. The water vehicles will be available in 13 places," said U Myo Thein, Deputy Head of the Engineering Department.

The YCDC will distribute the water from the following places: Thakayta (Than Thu Mar road)(Kyauk Dine); Yankin (Yan Shin road); Mayangon(Gandamar road); Thingangyun (Lay Daungkan road); South Okkalapa (Thuka Mingalar road); Shwe Pokkan (corner Aung Myitta and Bagan road); North Dagon (Township Development committee office); South Dagon (Zayar Myine road); East Dagon (Minye Kyawswar road); Dagon Seikkan (Yuzana garden city); Ahlon (Thakin Mya Park) and Dagon township.

City dwellers who have trouble accessing water distribution from the 13 sites should call: 095188428 Eastern Head, 097300058 Western Head, 095054565 Southern Head and 095081229 Northern Head.

The repairs that will result in water shortages will affect Mingalardon, Dagon Myothit (North) (South) (East) and (Seikkan), Shwe Pyitha, Thakayta, Dawbon, Mayangon, Mingalar Taungnyount, South Okkalapa, Thingangyun, Yankin, Bahan, Ahlon, Sangyoung and downtown Yangon.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Trump's Interior Dept pick expected to win Senate confirmation

US President Donald Trump addresses Joint Session of Congress in Washington, US on 28 February, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's pick to head the Interior Department is expected to be confirmed easily by the US Senate on Wednesday morning as the White House seeks to increase fossil fuel production from federal lands.

US Representative Ryan Zinke said in his confirmation hearing last month he would consider an expansion of energy drilling and mining on federal lands but would ensure that sensitive areas were protected.

The former Navy SEAL commander is an avid angler who is popular with many outdoor enthusiasts, including Trump's son Donald Jr.

However, many environmentalists are concerned about his zeal for exploiting coal and other fossil fuels. As a one-term Congressman, Zinke worked to boost mining, including supporting an effort to end a coal leasing moratorium on federal lands, where 40 per cent of US coal is mined, mostly in Wyoming and Montana, his home state.

If the Senate confirms Zinke, he will head an agency that employs more than 70,000 people across the country and oversees more than 20 per cent of federal land, including national parks such as Yellowstone and Yosemite.

Zinke needs only a majority of votes in the 100-member chamber and is expected to get most, if not all, of his fellow Republicans, who lead the chamber, and some votes from Democrats. In January, six Democrats joined 16 Republicans to pass Zinke's nomination out of the Senate energy panel. The White House is expected to issue an executive order soon reversing former President Barack Obama's temporary moratorium on coal leasing on US lands, which is part of a wider review of the programme.

Many Democrats oppose Zinke's support of fossil fuels.

"I'm not sure he will be able to stand up to the president and protect the public interest ... required to manage our public lands for the benefit of all Americans — not just the oil, gas and mining companies and their commercial interests," said Senator Maria Cantwell, the top Democrat on the Senate environment committee.

Cantwell, from Washington State, where many voters are cautious about opening coal export terminals, will vote against Zinke. The Senate is also expected to easily confirm Trump's pick to head the Department of Energy, Rick Perry, a former governor of Texas, this week. —*Reuters*

France's Fillon stays in presidential race despite deepening legal probe

PARIS — Conservative French presidential candidate Francois Fillon vowed to stay in the presidential race on Wednesday despite a magistrate's intention to place him under formal investigation for alleged misuse of public funds.

His statement at his campaign headquarters came after a morning of speculation that he was about to withdraw following his decision to postpone a campaign visit to the Paris farm show.

It came as opinion polls continued to show he would lose the election. The polls show independent centrist Emmanuel Macron consolidating his status as favourite, and put far-right National Front leader Marine Le Pen also among the leading candidates.

Fillon's campaign has been dogged since late January by an official investigation into alleged misuse of taxpayers' money involving hundreds of thousands of euros paid to his wife and family. He had been favourite to win until the affair began.

He has denied wrongdoing along with the allegations by a satirical newspaper that his wife did little work for her salary as a parliamentary assistant and in other roles.

On Wednesday, he revealed that investigating magistrates appointed last week to the case planned to put him under formal investigation, and had summoned him to appear before them on 15 March.

He denounced the process as a "political assassination," but said he would cooperate with it and appear before the judges as requested.

"I won't give in, I won't surrender, I won't pull out, I'll fight to the end," Fillon said.—*Reuters*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kremlin says patiently waiting for US policy action on Russia

MOSCOW— The Kremlin is patiently waiting for US policy action on Russia so that it can understand what the future holds for US-Russia relations, Dmitry Peskov, spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday.

"We have heard different statements from President (Donald) Trump," Peskov told a conference call with reporters.

"We are full of patience and are waiting for some kind of actions to follow these statements that will allow us to understand ... the perspectives for bilateral relations."—*Reuters*

Wife of French presidential candidate Fillon held for questioning — report

PARIS — Penelope Fillon, the wife of presidential candidate Francois Fillon, was being held for questioning in connection with allegations she did little work for payments she received as his assistant, news web site Mediapart reported on Wednesday.

The report was released by Mediapart reporter Michel Delean on Twitter.

Her lawyer could not immediately be reached for comment.—*Reuters*

North Korea says claim its citizen killed in Malaysia by VX agent 'absurd'

SEOUL — North Korea said on Wednesday the claim that VX nerve agent was used to kill one of its citizens in Malaysia was "absurd" and lacked scientific basis, calling it an assertion made by the United States and South Korea to tarnish the North's image.

Last week, Malaysian police said VX nerve agent, a chemical classified by the United Nations as a weapon of mass destruction, was used to kill Kim Jong Nam, estranged half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, on 13 February.

South Korean and US officials have said they believe North Korean agents killed Kim Jong Nam.—*Reuters*

Norway did not violate mass killer Breivik's human rights-court

OSLO — Norway has not violated the human rights of mass killer Anders Behring Breivik despite his charges of abuse since he was jailed for massacring 77 people in 2011, an appeals court ruled on Wednesday.

The Borgarting appeals court overturned a 2016 verdict by a lower Oslo court that Breivik's near-isolation in a three-room cell amounted to "inhuman and degrading treatment" under the European Convention on Human Rights.—*Reuters*

Italy gives partial pardon to ex-CIA officer, making jail unlikely

ROME — The Italian president said on Tuesday he had given a partial pardon to former CIA officer Sabrina de Sousa, who has been convicted in absentia in Italy for the kidnapping of an Egyptian cleric there. President Sergio Mattarella's decision to reduce de Sousa's conviction to three years from four means that she can now apply for alternative sanctions to prison.

De Sousa, a dual US-Portuguese citizen who denies involvement in the abduction, was detained by Portuguese police last week. Her lawyer said she had already been freed from prison as a result of Mattarella's move and would no longer be extradited.—*Reuters*

US signals that reviewing role in top UN rights body

GENEVA — The US Trump administration is reviewing its participation in the top United Nations human rights body, with an eye to reform and a balanced agenda that ends the forum's "obsession with Israel", a senior US official said on Wednesday.

"In order for this Council to have any credibility, let alone success, it must move away from its unbalanced and unproductive positions," Erin Barclay, US deputy assistant secretary of state, told the UN Human Rights Council. "As we consider our future engagements, my government will be considering the Council's actions with an eye toward reform to more fully achieve the Council's mission to protect and promote human rights."—*Reuters*

Russia, China block UN sanctions on Syria over gas attacks

UNITED NATIONS — Russia on Tuesday cast its seventh veto to protect the Syrian government from United Nations Security Council action, blocking a bid by Western powers to impose sanctions over accusations of chemical weapons attacks during the six-year Syrian conflict.

China backed Russia and cast its sixth veto on Syria. Russia had said the vote on the resolution, drafted by France, Britain and the United States, would harm UN-led peace talks between the warring Syrian parties in Geneva, which began last week.

Nine council members voted in favour, Bolivia voted against, while Egypt, Ethiopia and Kazakhstan abstained. A resolution needs nine votes in favour and no vetoes by the United States, France, Russia, Britain or China to be adopted.

Russian President Vladimir Putin described the draft resolution on Tuesday as "totally inappropriate."

"For my friends in Russia, this resolution is very appropriate," US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley told the council after the vote.

"It is a sad day on the Security Council when members start making excuses for other member states killing their own people. The world is definitely a more dangerous place," she said.

The vote was one of the first confrontations at the United Nations between Russia and the United States since US President Donald Trump took office in January, pledging to build closer ties with Moscow.

Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Vladimir Safronkov raises his arm to vote against a United Nations Security Council resolution to ban the supply of helicopters to the Syrian government and to blacklist Syrian military commanders over accusations of toxic gas attacks at UN headquarters in New York City, US, on 28 February 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Russia's Deputy UN Ambassador Vladimir Safronkov described the statements made against Moscow in the Security Council as "outrageous" and declared that "God will judge you."

"Today's clash or confrontation is not a result of our negative vote. It is a result of the fact that you decided on provocation while you knew well ahead of time our position," said Safronkov.

Western powers put forward the resolution in response to the results of an investigation by the UN and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The international inquiry found Syrian government forces were responsible for three chlorine gas attacks and that Islamic State militants had used mustard gas. British UN Ambassador Matthew Rycroft told the council before the vote: "This is about taking a stand when children are poisoned. It's that simple. It's about taking a stand when civilians are maimed and murdered with toxic weapons."

Chlorine's use as a weapon is banned under the Chemical Weapons Convention, which Syria joined in 2013. If inhaled, chlorine gas turns to hydrochloric acid in the lungs and can kill by burning lungs and drowning victims in body fluids.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government has denied its forces have used chemical weapons. Russia has questioned the results of the UN/OPCW inquiry and long said there was not enough proof for the Security Council to take any action.

French UN Ambassador Francois Delattre said the failure by the council to act would "send a message of impunity."

China's UN Ambassador Liu Jieyi said it was too early to act because the international investigation was still ongoing.

"We oppose the use of chemical weapons," he said.

The draft resolution would have banned the sale or supply of helicopters to the Syrian government because the UN/OPCW inquiry found Syrian government forces had used helicopters to drop barrel bombs containing chlorine gas.

It also proposed targeted sanctions — a travel ban and asset freeze — on 11 Syrian military commanders and officials, as well as on 10 government and related entities.—*Reuters*

Iraqi army controls main roads out of Mosul, trapping Islamic State

MOSUL — US-backed Iraqi army units on Wednesday took control of the last major road out of western Mosul that had been in Islamic State's hands, a general and residents there said, trapping the militants in a dwindling area within the city. The army's 9th Armoured Division was within a kilometre of Mosul's "Syria Gate", the northwestern entrance of the city, a general from the unit told Reuters by telephone.

"We effectively control the road, it is in our sight," he said. Mosul residents said they had not been able to travel on the highway that begins at the "Syria Gate" since Tuesday. The road links Mosul to Tal Afar, another Islamic State stronghold 60 km (40 miles) to the west, and then to the Syrian border. Iraqi forces captured the eastern side of Mosul in January after 100 days of fighting and launched their attack on the districts that lie west of the Tigris river on 19 February. If they defeat Islamic State in Mosul, that would crush the Iraq wing of the caliphate declared by the group's leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in 2014. The US commander in Iraq has said he believes US-backed forces will recapture both Mosul and Raqqa, Islamic State's Syria stronghold in neighbouring Syria, within six months.—*Reuters*

An Iraqi special forces soldier fires his rifle at Islamic State fighters' positions during a battle in Mosul, Iraq, on 28 February 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Taliban claim multiple attacks in Afghan capital Kabul

KABUL — Afghan Taliban militants said they attacked police, military and intelligence targets in Kabul on Wednesday and security officials confirmed ongoing attacks in at least two areas of the city, but there was no official word on casualties.

A resounding explosion was heard across the city followed immediately by gunfire between security forces and an unknown number of attackers in the west of Kabul.

The fighting was concentrated near a district police headquarters located not far from a military training school, according to one police official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to talk to the media.

A security official said one attacker was barricaded inside the police building.

A separate attack appeared to have targeted an office of Afghanistan's intelligence agency on the eastern outskirts of Kabul. However a senior army official said that attack appeared to have been quickly suppressed.

"Two terrorists entered a building. One blew himself up and the second was shot by Afghan security forces," said Abdul Nasir Ziaee, commander of 111th corps based in the east of the city.

Smoke rises from the site of a blast and gunfire between Taliban and Afghan forces in PD 6 in Kabul, Afghanistan, on 1 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

The Taliban, who sometimes exaggerate the impact of their operations, said the attacks had caused heavy casualties but there was no immediate comment from police and no official word on casualties.

Last month, a suicide bomber killed at least 20 people outside the Supreme Court in Kabul. Militant group Islamic State claimed responsibility for that attack.

The attacks come shortly ahead of the period when the Taliban, seeking to reimpose Islamic law after their 2001 ouster, announce their spring offensive and underline warnings from Afghan officials that they face a very difficult campaign season.

Government forces have struggled to control the Taliban insurgency since the NATO-led coalition ended its combat mission in 2014. According to US estimates, they now control less than 60 per cent of the country although they have managed to hold on to all of the main provincial centres.—*Reuters*

Four pro-democracy HK lawmakers fight disqualification trial

HONG KONG — The trial of four pro-democracy lawmakers being sued for staging pro-independence demonstrations during the inauguration of Hong Kong's chief executive in October began Wednesday, with the four fighting what they call a coup aimed at dismembering the pro-democracy camp in the legislature.

Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying and Secretary for Justice Rimsky Yuen have sued the four after successfully disqualifying in a similar lawsuit two other lawmakers-elect for failing to pledge allegiance to Hong Kong as part of China.

One of the four, veteran radical Leung Kwok-hung, said before entering the court "(this) shouldn't have happened in any democratic society. You can take us down, but you can't take down democracy."

"We have beaten Goliath before, we will do it again," another, surveyor Edward Yiu said.

The others being sued are lecturer Lau Siu-lai and student leader Nathan Law.

At the 12 October swearing-in ceremony, Leung held a yellow umbrella — the symbol of the 2014 pro-democracy protests — and tore up a copy of a Chinese government document while chanting for democracy and self-determination for Hong Kong after taking his oath.

Meanwhile, Yiu added a phrase about safeguarding justice in Hong Kong and fighting for democracy in his oath.

Four pro-democracy lawmakers — (from L) surveyor Edward Yiu, veteran radical Leung Kwok-hung, student group leader Nathan Law and lecturer Lau Siu-lai — being sued for staging pro-independence demonstrations during the inauguration of Hong Kong's chief executive in October appear outside Hong Kong's High Court on 1 March, 2017, to fight what they say is a coup aimed at dismembering the pro-democracy camp in the legislature. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Law used varied intonation when pronouncing China in Cantonese when taking the oath, while Lau slow-read hers in a chopped up manner.

Leung and Law were inaugurated, while Yiu and Lau were allowed to retake the oath subsequently, but the government still launched a lawsuit against them.

In November, the Court of Appeal upheld an earlier ruling by the High Court against Sixtus Leung and Yau Wai-ching of localist group Youngspiration, which promotes self-determination for Hong Kong, that they be disqualified for declining and neglecting to take the oath by protesting against China during the swearing-in ceremony.

The November ruling came after China's parliament made an interpretation of the Basic Law, the mini-constitution in effect since the former British colony was returned to China in 1997. The interpretation effectively bars anti-China advocates from holding public office in the territory.

The pair appealed to the Court of Final Appeal and a trial date is pending.

The pro-democracy camp grabbed 30 of the 70 seats in September's legislative election. A one-third key minority, or 24 votes, is needed to reject legislation, the camp claimed.—*Kyodo News*

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MANDALAY REGION GOVERNMENT
MANDALAY CITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MANDALAY URBAN SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Invitation for Prequalification

Date: March ,2017
SPECIFIC PROCUREMENT NOTICE
Invitation of Prequalification No: MYWW/4.0/01
Contract No: MYWW/4.0
Contract Title: Nankad Lake Waste Water Treatment Plant and associated facilities.

1. Mandalay City Development Committee has received financing from the Asia Development Bank towards the cost of Mandalay Urban Services Improvement Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds towards payments under the contract for Nankad Lake Waste Water Treatment Plant and associated facilities.
2. Mandalay City Development Committee now invites applicants to submit sealed prequalification documents for Design, Build and Operate (DBO) of Nankad Lake Waste Water Treatment Plant and associated facilities to be constructed in calendar year 2018, 2019 and 2020 with an Operation of Maintenance Period of 3 years.
3. Bidding will be conducted through the International Competitive Bidding (ICB) procedures as specified in the ADB's Guidelines for procurement of goods and works; the bidding documents shall be addressed only to the prequalified eligible firms following the evaluation result of the prequalification.
4. Interested firms may obtain the prequalification documents (PQD) from Project Manager, Project Management Office (MUSIP), Mandalay City Development Committee, wsdd@mandalaycity.info and acquire the prequalification documents during office hours 10:00 to 16:00 hours at the address given below.
5. A complete set of prequalification documents (PQD) in English may also be downloaded at:https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/coso/mya3316-PQ-%20MYWW-4.0_Nankad%20.pdf
6. Application for prequalification must be delivered to the address below on or before local time 16:00, 28th April, 2017. Electronic application of prequalification will not be permitted. Late application will be rejected.
7. A site visit (Nankad Lake and Ket Kyaw Pumping Station) and prequalification meeting will be held tentatively from 09h00 until 12h00 on 13th March, 2017, at 26thstreet between 71st and 72nd street, Mandalay City Development Committee. A data room shall be opened on the same day and location from 12h00 until 16h00
8. The address referred to above para 4 and 5 are:

Attention : Project Manager
Project Management Office (MUSIP)
26th street between 71st and 72nd street
Mandalay City Development Committee
The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Telephone : +95 261631
E mail : wsdd@mandalaycity.info

US, China discuss 'mutually beneficial' economic relationship

WASHINGTON — US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Chinese State Councilor Yang Jiechi on Tuesday discussed improving and maintaining a "mutually beneficial economic relationship" between the United States and China, the State Department said.

Tillerson and Yang, China's top diplomat, affirmed the importance of "regular high-level engagement" between the two countries during their meeting in Washington, and discussed North Korea's nuclear programme, the State Department said in a statement. China's state news agency, Xinhua, quoted Yang as saying China was willing to work with Washington "to enhance exchanges on all levels from top down" and to broaden communication and coordination on regional and global issues, while respecting "each other's core interests and major concerns."

"This will help promote sustained, steady and healthy development of the China-US relations, which will benefit the peoples of not only both nations but also the whole world," Xinhua quoted Yang as saying.

The meeting was the latest exchange aimed at resetting relations between the world's two largest economies following a rocky start after the election of Donald Trump as US president.

On Monday, Yang, who outranks China's foreign minister, met at the White House with Trump, who has attacked China on issues from trade, to the South China Sea and North Korea.

They discussed shared security interests and a possible meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, according to a senior US administration official.

The State Department said Yang invited Tillerson to visit Beijing, and that Tillerson expressed interest in doing so.

Yang's visit to the United States follows a phone call between him and Tillerson last week, during which they affirmed the importance of a constructive US-China relationship.

Yang's visit follows months of strong rhetoric from Trump, who has accused China of unfair trade policies, criticized its island-building in the strategic South China Sea, and accused it of doing too little to constrain its neighbour, North Korea.

In December, Trump incensed Beijing by saying the United States did not have to stick to the "one China" policy, under which Washington acknowledges the Chinese position that there is only one China, of which Taiwan is a part. He later agreed in a phone call with Xi to honour the policy.

In an interview with Reuters last week, Trump urged China to do more to rein in North Korea's nuclear and missile programmes. China later dismissed Trump's remarks, saying the crux of the matter was a dispute between Washington and Pyongyang.—*Reuters*

US general wants Russia to open up major exercise to observers

VILNIUS — The US Army's top European commander on Wednesday called on Russia to open its major military exercise later this year to observers to assuage the anxieties of its neighbours.

Russia has unveiled plans to stage its Zapad 2017 exercise near its western borders this autumn but has not said how many troops will take part.

Lithuanian president Dalia Grybauskaite said the Baltic countries were concerned about the exercise and called on NATO for additional security measures.

"For me, Zapad represents an opportunity for the Russians to demonstrate that they are committed to security and stability in Europe also through transparency, by inviting media, by inviting observers, more than the minimums required by Vienna, to demonstrate, to show what's going on, to be transparent," US lieutenant general Ben Hodges told reporters in Vilnius.

"That would be the first and most important thing," he added. "I think that would lower some anxiety".

The Cold War-era treaty known as the Vienna document sets out rules for large-scale exercises and other military activity.

The US forces' response to Russia's military exercise "will depend on what our leadership says is the appropriate posture", Hodges said.

He added that the US was also looking at ways to address Russia's use of unmanned drones, such as those deployed in Eastern Ukraine and Syria.

The Baltic states, annexed by the Soviet Union in the 1940s but now part of NATO and the European Union, have felt vulnerable since Moscow's annexation of Crimea and its participation in military conflicts in Eastern Ukraine.

The US has deployed an armoured brigade and an aviation brigade to Europe this year, originally ordered by former US president Barack Obama as part of NATO efforts to deter Russia from further meddling in Eastern Europe.

As part of the deterrence effort, NATO nations are sending four battle groups into the Baltic States and Poland, some of them deployed in the Suwalki gap between Belarus and Russia, the sole land connection between the Baltics and the rest of NATO.—*Reuters*

Japan to seek stronger US alliance under Trump: spokesman

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga gives a press briefing in Tokyo on 1 March, 2017. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

TOKYO — Japan will coordinate closely with the United States to build a robust bilateral alliance, the top government spokesman said on Wednesday, after US President Donald Trump renewed his vow to "make America great again" in his first address to Congress.

"As uncertainties grow in the world, further strengthening the Japan-US alliance with the stronger United States will greatly contribute to peace and stability of not only Japan and the United States but of the Asia-Pacific region and the world," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said at a press conference.

In his first address to Congress since taking office, Trump said on Tuesday he will boost the US economy through tax reforms and infrastructure investment, rebuild the US military through increases in defence spending and curb illegal immigration.

Although Trump did not explicitly name Japan, he also urged US partners in Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific to "take a direct and meaningful role in both strategic and military operations, and pay their fair share of the cost" in the policy speech.

While Trump's remarks could be interpreted that Japan will be urged to pay more for the US military presence in the country, as Trump said in his presidential campaign, Suga dismissed such concerns, referring to US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis' comments made during his visit to Japan in early February.

"Defence Secretary Mattis has made clear that Japan is different from other countries which host the US (military)," Suga said. "I think that stays the same."

Mattis said Japan's cost-sharing burden for hosting US forces is "a model" for other nations to follow in the press conference after his talks with Defence Minister Tomomi Inada in Tokyo.

Trump said during his presidential campaign that Japan, South Korea and other US allies should pay a larger proportion of the costs of US troops deployed in the countries, or else defend themselves.—*Kyodo News*

Colombia's FARC rebels to begin surrendering weapons

BOGOTA — Colombia's Marxist FARC rebels on Wednesday will begin surrendering their weapons to the United Nations now that almost 7,000 of them have reached designated demobilization zones around the country, the government and insurgent group said.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) signed a peace agreement with the government late last year to put an end to Latin America's longest-running armed conflict, which killed more than 220,000 people and displaced millions.

"It's the start of the process of disarmament, which involves the registration of weapons, the destruction of unstable weapons and the storage of side arms," Colombia's High Commissioner for Peace Sergio Jaramillo told reporters on Tuesday.

The rebels are expected to have turned in all their arms by June, President Juan Manuel Santos has said. Some members of the FARC and the United Nations had raised the possibility of delaying the disarmament process while logistical problems are resolved.

Over the past few weeks, FARC rebels crisscrossed Colombia on foot and by boat from their jungle and mountain camps to 26 zones monitored by UN personnel.

"Despite obvious delays in the logistical adaptation of the zones ... we will carry out ... the registration of weapons in all the camps," FARC leader Ivan Marquez told a news conference.

Under the terms of the peace accord, the FARC, which began as a peasant uprising 52 years ago, is to form a political movement in the South American nation.

The accord has been heavily criticized by many, and was initially rejected in a referendum, as being too lenient on the rebels who will be spared jail time.—*Reuters*

Bright lava lights up Sicilian sky as Mount Etna erupts

ROME — Bright lava lit up the night sky on the Italian island of Sicily on Monday as Mount Etna erupted for the first time this year.

The volcano, one of the most active in the world, has been largely dormant for the last two years, but it sprung to life with bright orange lava spewing out high over the Mediterranean Island, eventually easing off by Tuesday morning.

Catania airport, situated within 50 km (31 miles) of the volcano, remained open, but authorities were tracking the movements of the ash cloud.

Etna, at 3,330 metres (10,926 feet), is the highest volcano in mainland Europe and can burst into action several times a year. The last major eruption was in 1992. —*Reuters*

Kyoko Hayashi, atomic bomb survivor writer, dies at 86

TOKYO — Kyoko Hayashi, who chronicled with her novels the city of Nagasaki, where the United States dropped a second atomic bomb in World War II, died on 19 February, her family said. She was 86.

Born in Nagasaki, Hayashi spent her childhood in Shanghai before returning to her home city in 1945 prior to being exposed to the nuclear attack on 9 August that year at the age of 14 around 1.4 kilometres away from ground zero.

The native of the southwestern Japan city, whose real name was Kyoko Miyazaki, was awarded the prestigious Akutagawa Prize for "Matsuri no ba" (The Site of Rituals) in 1975. The story depicted in simple writing style her own experience as an atomic bomb survivor, when she wandered around the epicenter after the atomic bomb devastated the city.

Hayashi continued to express anger at nuclear weapons, reflecting fears over internal exposure to radiation.

"From Trinity to Trinity" was released based on her trip in 1999 to the Trinity Site in the state of New Mexico in the United States, where the first atomic bomb experiment was conducted on 16 July, 1945.

The cause of her death was not immediately known.—*Kyodo News*

Kyoko Hayashi.
PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV BBC ALBERTA VOY. NO (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV BBC ALBERTA VOY. NO (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 3.3.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of AIPT-2 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 PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV DA FU VOY. NO (162)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV DA FU VOY. NO (162) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 2.3.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT-1 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 COSCO SHIPPING CO LTD
Phone No: 2301928

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV X PRESS YAMUNA VOY. NO (007)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV X PRESS YAMUNA VOY. NO (007) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 2.3.2017 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 X-PRESS FEEDERS PTE LTD
Phone No: 2301185

Tweeting accountant blamed for Oscar best picture blunder

LOS ANGELES — An accountant for the Academy Awards botched the meticulous procedure for announcing the Oscar for best picture when he handed victory to "La La Land" before declaring "Moonlight" the real winner, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) said on Monday.

Accountant Brian Cullinan, who media reports said had been tweeting backstage shortly before, gave presenters Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway the wrong envelope for the movie industry's top award on Sunday, the accounting firm said in a statement.

In a gaffe that stunned the Dolby Theatre crowd in Hollywood and a television audience worldwide, "Cullinan mistakenly handed the back-up envelope for Actress in a Leading Role instead of the envelope for Best Picture" to Beatty and Dunaway, PwC said.

"Once the error occurred, protocols for correcting it were not followed through quickly enough by Mr Cullinan or his partner."

The Wall Street Journal and celebrity website TMZ.com reported that Cullinan had posted a backstage photo of actress Emma Stone on social network Twitter minutes before the mix-up.

The photo, from Cullinan's Twitter account, was later deleted but was still viewable on Monday on a cached archive of the page. Cullinan could not immediately be reached for comment.

The mistake was not rectified until the "La La Land" cast and producers were on stage giving their acceptance speeches. It was left to the musical's producer, Jordan Horowitz, to put things right.

"Guys, guys, I'm sorry. No. There's a mistake," Horowitz said. "'Moonlight,' you guys won best picture. This is not a joke."

It took three hours for PricewaterhouseCoopers, which has been overseeing Academy Awards balloting for 83 years, initially to confirm that Beatty and Dunaway received the wrong category envelope.

PwC said it took full responsibility and apologized to the casts and crews of "La La Land" and "Moonlight."

"We sincerely apologize to Warren Beatty, Faye Dunaway, (host) Jimmy Kimmel, (broadcaster) ABC, and the Academy, none of whom was at fault for last night's errors," it said in its statement.—*Reuters*

Emma Stone poses with her Oscar for Best Actress for her role in "La La Land". PHOTO: REUTERS

U2 is sued for allegedly stealing song for 'Achtung Baby'

LONDON — A British songwriter and guitarist has sued U2, claiming the band stole one of his works for a song on its blockbuster 1991 album "Achtung Baby."

In a complaint filed on Monday night in the US District Court in Manhattan, Paul Rose sought at least $5 million in damages from U2 lead singer Bono and bandmates The Edge, Adam Clayton and Larry Mullen Jr, as well as Island Records.

Rose, who said he has a dozen of his own albums, said the Irish band lifted "signature elements" of his copyrighted song "Nae Slappin" for its hit song "The Fly."

He said this occurred at a time U2, then arguably the world's most popular rock band, was seeking a "stark departure" from its trademark sound.

Rose said he gave a demo tape of "Nae Slappin" to Island in 1989, the same year the label signed U2, and that "The Fly" incorporated its guitar solo and other elements, including distortion and "industrial-style" percussion.—*Reuters*

Privacy for me is not an abstract idea: Emma Watson

LOS ANGELES — Emma Watson has said she does not like taking selfies with fans as privacy means a lot to her.

The 26-year-old actress, who stars as Belle in the upcoming "Beauty and the Beast," said she found the courage to say no to selfies recently, reported Vanity Fair.

PHOTO: REUTERS

"For me, it's the difference between being able to have a life and not. If someone takes a photograph of me and posts it, within two seconds they've created a marker of exactly where I am within ten meters.

"They can see what I'm wearing and who I'm with. I just can't give that tracking data... Privacy for me is not an abstract idea," Watson said.

The "Harry Potter" star added sometimes she will be up for an autograph or even a chat with the admirers, instead of a photograph.

"I will sit here and answer every single Harry Potter fandom question you have but I just can't do a picture," she added.

The actress, however, finds it difficult to disappoint her young fans. Watson said, "When am I a celebrity sighting versus when am I going to make someone's freakin' week? Children I don't say no to, for example.—*PTI*

Judge lets Cosby have jurors from other Pennsylvania county

NORRISTOWN (Pa) — A judge granted a request by Bill Cosby's defense lawyers on Monday to have jurors picked from a different Pennsylvania county in his upcoming sexual assault trial.

The comedian's lawyers had argued that his case had drawn too much publicity to allow for a fair criminal trial in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

"The press has told the American public that he is guilty of this crime and 50 others, that he is a serial rapist, a sociopath and sexual predator," Brian McMonagle, one of Cosby's lawyers, said at Monday's hearing. He complained that the press coverage had been so intense that he doubted if Cosby could receive a fair trial anywhere in the country.

Montgomery County Judge Steven O'Neill ruled that jurors would be picked from a different county, known as a change in venire, but denied the defense's alternative request that the whole trial be moved to a different county. He ruled that the jurors be sequestered once the trial begins on 5 June, isolating them from the general public.

Cosby, 79, is facing charges he sexually assaulted Andrea Constand, a former assistant basketball coach at his alma mater, Temple University, in 2004.

Comedian Bill Cosby arrives for a pre-trial hearing at the Montgomery County courthouse in Norristown, Pennsylvania, US, on 27 February, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

The case is the only criminal prosecution resulting from accusations against the entertainer by more than four dozen women, though the deluge of allegations has shattered his once family-friendly reputation.

Cosby has denied any wrongdoing and has said his encounter with Constand, like the others, was consensual.

In its argument, the defense noted that Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin Steele, who is leading the prosecution, campaigned in 2015 by criticizing a predecessor for failing to pursue the Cosby case. The resulting news coverage has made selecting an impartial jury from the county impossible, they said.

Prosecutors had opposed moving the trial but consented to a change in venue. Prosecutor M Stewart Ryan acknowledged that news coverage has been extensive, but said he was not interested in "what is going on the court of public opinion."—*Reuters*

Sistine Chapel gets full digital treatment for future restorations

VATICAN CITY — The last time the entire Sistine Chapel was photographed for posterity, digital photography was in its infancy and words like pixels were bandied about mostly by computer nerds and NASA scientists.

Now, after decades of technological advances in art photography, digital darkrooms and printing techniques, a five-year project that will aid future restorations has left the Vatican Museums with 270,000 digital frames that show frescoes by Michelangelo and other masters in fresh, stunning detail.

"In the future, this will allow us to know the state of every centimetre of the chapel as it is today, in 2017," said Antonio Paolucci, former head of the museums and a world-renowned expert on the Sistine.

Michelangelo's ceiling frescoes include one of the most famous scenes in art — the arm of a gentle, bearded God reaching out to give life to Adam.

The Renaissance master finished the ceiling in 1512 and painted the massive "Last Judgement" panel behind the altar between 1535 and 1541.

The last time all Sistine frescoes were photographed was between 1980 and 1994, during a landmark restoration project that cleaned them for the first time in centuries.

The new photos were taken for inclusion in a new three-volume, 870-page set that is limited to 1,999 copies and marketed to libraries and collectors.

The set, which costs about 12,000 euros ($12,700), was a joint production of the Vatican Museums and Italy's Scripta Maneant high-end art publishers.

Post production computer techniques included "stitching" of frames that

Two 1:1 scale photographic books depicting Sistine Chapel are seen during a news conference in the Sistine Chapel, the Vatican on 24 February 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

photographers took while working out of sight for 65 nights from 7 pm to 2 am, when the chapel where popes are elected is closed.

The project was known to only to a few people until it was unveiled in the chapel on Friday night.

The set includes the entire chapel, including the mosaic floor and 15th century frescoes by artists who have long languished in Michelangelo's giant shadow.

More than 220 pages are printed in 1:1 scale, including 'The Creation of Adam' and Jesus' face from the Last Judgement.

Each volume weighs about 9 kg (20 pounds) and fold-out pages measure 60 by 130 cm (24 by 51 inches).

The old photos taken during the last restoration were done with film.

"We used special post-production software to get the depth, intensity, warmth and nuance of colours to an accuracy of 99.9 per cent," said Giorgio Armaroli, head of Scripta Maneant.

"Future restorers will use these as their standards," he said, adding that each page was printed six times.

Brush strokes are clearly visible as are the "borders" delineating sections, known as "giornate," or days. Since frescoes are painted on wet plaster, artists prepare just enough for what they can complete in each session.

The photographers used a 10-metre-high (33 feet) portable scaffold and special telescopic lens. The results are now stored in a Vatican server holding 30 terabytes of information. —*Reuters*

With a roll of the dice and shouts of 'yalla', Jews and Arabs face off

JERUSALEM — In the early evening on a backstreet in downtown Jerusalem, Arabs and Jews are milling around, preparing for battle. But this isn't a new round of Middle East violence, it's a showdown over shesh besh, the local name for backgammon.

The gathering is the latest in a series of events organized by Double Yerushalmi, a group trying to build closer ties between Arabs and Jews through cultural activities like singing, dancing and the increasingly popular shesh besh championship.

To the strains of Arabic Dabke music — not usually heard in the western, mainly Jewish side of Jerusalem — around 50 players turned up on Monday, sitting hunched over the backgammon tables, shaking dice and clicking the counters like pros.

A woman dances as Arab and Jewish players compete in a backgammon championship organised by Double Yerushalmi, a group trying to build closer ties between Arabs and Jews through cultural activities, in Jerusalem, on 27 February, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Cigarette smoke hung heavy in the air, beers and energy drinks were consumed and shouts of "yalla" and "kadima" — Arabic and Hebrew for "come on" - rang out. Tables were bashed.

"You want to win, but it's friendly too," said Karem Joubran, a 27-year-old from Shuafat camp, a Palestinian refugee neighbourhood in north Jerusalem, who had to cross checkpoints to get to the event. "It's good, it brings people together."

Joubran said he usually speaks Hebrew to his Jewish opponents, but sometimes comes across a Jewish player who speaks decent Arabic and they chat and joke. They tend to avoid politics or the intricacies of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — their common ground is backgammon. Zaki Djemal, an Israeli of Syrian Jewish descent, is one of the organizers of the gathering, which has met six times in recent months — half in Arab neighborhoods, half in Jewish ones — and has seen its popularity grow steadily.

"The city is segregated in many ways, so we wanted to create some crossover between neighborhoods," he said. "Politics is not at the center of this, but it's around."—*Reuters*

mitv Myanmar International
Programme Schedule

(2-3-2017 07:00am ~ 3-3-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Moe Hnyin Than Buddhe, The Unique Pagoda In Monywa
07:41	Am	A Worth Studying Site For Ancient Myanmar Heritages
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Continuation In Rural Tradition
08:57	Am	Dances of Myanmar: Tai Khun or Gon Traditional Dance
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Myanma Pottery
09:51	Am	Thin Byu Mat
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Aesthetic Chinlone
10:52	Am	Yangon Markets: Nyaung Pin Lay Market

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm)- Wednesday 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	Cruising To Precious Islands (Part-2)
07:48	Pm	Betel Nut Farmer
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Myanmar Sculpture-work of Art
08:41	Pm	Gardener: Rose Plantation
08:47	Pm	Chef Life "Oliver E Soe Thet"

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

Net-A-Porter founder Massenet joins rival Farfetch

LONDON — Natalie Massenet, founder of online fashion retailer Net-A-Porter, has joined the rival Farfetch Group as non-executive co-chair, Farfetch said in a statement on Tuesday.

Massenet, who founded Net-A-Porter in 2000, resigned as executive chairman of the company in September 2015 ahead of the completion of its merger with Italian group Yoox to form Yoox Net-A-Porter Group.

Analysts said at the time the resignation of Massenet, a highly regarded figure in the fashion world and chairman of the British Fashion Council, was a blow for the new group. Massenet will work alongside London-based Farfetch's chief executive, founder and executive co-chairman Jose Neves.

"She will have a particular focus on growing the global brand and strengthening its partnerships with the fashion industry," the statement said.—*Reuters*

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Murray against wild cards for drug cheats

DUBAI — World number one Andy Murray is against giving wild cards to players returning from doping bans but the 29-year-old understands why tournament organisers make an exception for "big names".

Maria Sharapova has been given wild-card slots for tournaments in Stuttgart, Madrid and Rome despite falling down the rankings as she serves a 15-month doping ban for testing positive for meldonium at the 2016 Australian Open.

With Sharapova's ban ending in April, Wimbledon organisers are grappling with the potential dilemma of whether to hand the 2004 champion a place in this year's competition in July.

"I think you should really have to work your way back. However, the majority of tournaments are going to do what they think is best for their event," Murray told the Times newspaper.

"If they think having big names there is going to sell more seats, then they're going to do that. She (Sharapova) has an opportunity to try to improve her ranking up until that point and potentially not need a wild card."

"But then if she doesn't, that becomes Wimbledon's decision and how they want to play that," added the Briton.

"I'm sure they'll think long and hard about it and how they feel people will view it and then make the right decision for them."—*Reuters*

PHOTO: REUTERS

Liverpool post 19.8 mln pounds loss despite record revenue

LONDON — Liverpool reported a 19.8 million pounds ($24.51 million) pre-tax loss for the year ended 31 May, 2016, mainly due to investment in players, despite overall revenue rising to a record 301.8 million pounds.

The English Premier League club's financial results reveal a significant drop on the 60 million pounds pre-tax profit posted the previous year, which was mainly due to the sale of their Uruguay striker Luis Suarez to Barcelona.

The cost of sacking manager Brendan Rodgers in October 2015, the appointment of Juergen Klopp and his backroom staff and the recruitment of 12 new players contributed to the loss.

Strikers Roberto Firmino and Danny Ings, midfielder Marko Grujic and defenders Nathaniel Clyne and Joe Gomez were among the players added to the squad during the year.

Despite failing to qualify for the Champions League, Liverpool's overall revenue rose by 3.9 million pounds, largely due to the Merseyside club reaching the Europa League and League Cup finals last season.

Liverpool wre the only club in the top 10 of the Deloitte Football Money League not playing in the Champions League last season.

"The increase in the underlying revenue adds further strength to the club's financial position," Liverpool's chief operating officer, Andy Hughes, said in a statement on the club website. (www.liverpoolfc.com)

Media revenue rose by one million pounds to 123.6 million and match-day income by 3.4 million pounds to 62.4 million, while commercial revenue fell 700,000 pounds to 115.7 million.

Commercial revenue was affected by building a new main stand at Anfield, restricting access to the stadium on non-match days.

"All three main revenue streams continue to show strength and commercial revenues held firm irrespective of the impact of the main stand at Anfield," Hughes added. —*Reuters*

Guardiola says Man City owner wants him to stay for 'long' time

LONDON — Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has said the club's owner, Arab billionaire Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, wants him to stay in charge of the club beyond his current three-year contract.

Guardiola, who took over at City before the start of the season, won two Champions League, three La Liga and two King's Cup titles as Barcelona coach. Two domestic doubles followed at Bayern Munich.

The Spaniard met Sheikh Mansour for the first time during City's recent warm-weather training break in Abu Dhabi.

"He would like that I stay here for a long, long, long, long time. But of course it depends on the results," Guardiola told British media.

"If not, they would say: What happened? What can we do? What do we need to improve? That's the process. To finish the process, they are going to help us.

"We didn't speak about targets. They will be happy if we win. I know we have to win but I've handled that in the past and I will in the present."

City are third in the Premier League, 11 points behind leaders Chelsea, who have played one game more, and face second-tier Huddersfield Town in an FA Cup fifth-round replay on Wednesday. Guardiola's men also hold a 5-3 advantage from their Champions League last-16, first-leg tie against French side Monaco, who they face in the return leg in France on 15 March.

The manager said he would wait until the season is over before taking a call on the future of several of his players, including goalkeeper Joe Hart.

Hart, who is England's first-choice keeper, has joined Italian side Torino on loan, with Guardiola signing Claudio Bravo from Barcelona as a replacement. Guardiola has rotated between Bravo and Willy Caballero this season.

"I'm so happy with Willy and Claudio," Guardiola added. "We are going to talk about (Hart's future) at the end of the season." "I trust a lot in both and we'll decide — not just the goalkeepers, the midfielders, wingers, strikers, full-backs — we are going to decide at the end of the season."

Caballero is out of contract in June along with midfielders Jesus Navas and Yaya Toure. So are defenders Gael Clichy, Pablo Zabaleta and Bacary Sagna. —*Reuters*

Shakespeare favourite to replace Ranieri at Leicester

LONDON — Craig Shakespeare is the bookmakers' favourite to succeed Claudio Ranieri as manager of Leicester City after taking charge of Monday's impressive 3-1 victory over Liverpool.

Assistant coach since 2011, Shakespeare is now 5-4 favourite ahead of Dutchman Guus Hiddink, former England manager Roy Hodgson and Nigel Pearson, the man who was succeeded by Ranieri.

"It appears that the shortlist for Leicester manager is down to four with Craig Shakespeare leading the way following Leicester's victory over Liverpool," a spokesman for bookmakers William Hill said on Tuesday.

As job interviews go, Shakespeare could hardly have done better on Monday as champion Leicester produced their best display of the season in the Premier League. Jamie Vardy scored twice and Danny Drinkwater once as Leicester ended a run of five successive defeats to move out of the relegation zone. "I have said before that, do I think I'm capable of it? Yes. Does it faze me? No," Shakespeare said.

"But I think it is the powers-that-be, the owners, who decide and do their job, it is their diligence to look. I am sure they will do that."—*Reuters*

Britain Football Soccer - Leicester City v Liverpool - Premier League - King Power Stadium - 27/2/17 Leicester City caretaker manager Craig Shakespeare with Danny Simpson before the match Action Images via Reuters / Jason Cairnduff

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