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Japan's watercraft for Rakhine water transport

ONE of the Three ships that will be used for sorely needed inland waterway passenger transport in Rakhine State arrived yesterday at the Ngalapway Jetty in Kyaukpyu.

The Kissapanadi 1 is one of three passenger ships donated by Japan to Myanmar. A team of officials from the Rakhine Division of Inland Water Transport are to be given a five-day course on operating the Japanese vessel, after which the ship will be piloted to Sittway. The Kissapanadi has an aluminum body, is 29.90 meters long, has a draught of 1.6 meters, capacity for 145 passengers and can travel up to 20 mph.

The Kissapanadi 1 passenger ship is worth 267.300 million Japanese Yen and was transported from Kobe, Japan on the GRIEJ JE carrier craft.

The Ministry of Transport and Communications, in an effort to develop the air and water transportation sectors in Myanmar, planned eight new projects with Japan, agreeing to donate three passenger ships. On 12 September 2016, officials from the two countries signed the Exchange of Notes for the project. The Kissapanadi 2 is scheduled to arrive in May and the arrival date for the Kissapanadi 3 is still under discussion.—*Myanmar News Agency*

The Kissapanadi 1 passenger ship in the Ngalapway Jetty in Kyaukpyu, Rakhine. The vessel will be used for inland passenger transport. PHOTO: MNA

Vice President U Henry Van Thio.
PHOTO: MNA

Farmland in Singu, Madaya returned to rightful owners

CHAIRMAN of the Central Committee for Re-scrutinizing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands and Leader of the Leading Committee for Farmers Rights, Protection and Interests Promotion Vice President U Henry Van Thio attended a ceremony to present farmland work permit certificates for the relinquished lands to the rightful owners in Singu and Madaya Townships at a hall in Singu, Pyin Oo Lwin District in Mandalay Region yesterday morning.

The Secretary of the Committee for Re-scrutinizing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands for Mandalay Region reported on the progress of work to provide farmland work permit certificates to the rightful owners in Singu and Madaya Townships. The Vice President then presented farmland work permit certificates to U Saw Aung on behalf of the farmers from Nyaungwin Village in Singu Township.

The Vice President and his entourage proceeded to Kanbalu Township to attend a similar ceremony and Chairman of Committee for Re-scrutinizing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands for Sagaing Region Chief Minister Dr Myint Naing explained matters related to the relinquished farmlands. U Henry Van Thio handed over temporary farmland work permit certificates to three farmers. Union Minister Dr Aung Thu, Sagaing Region Chief Minister Dr Myint Naing and Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Ba Myo Thein also presented the same certificates to the farmers.

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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves motion on reducing of expenditure for 130 projects of Ministry of Industry

DR MYAT NYARNA SOE put forward a motion to grant Ks116.52 billion less than the designated value for 130 existing and future projects — Ministry of Industry, works of Industry Cooperation Department, 8 new enterprises of Industrial Supervision & Inspection Department, 22 works from No. 1 Steel Mill (Myingyan), 44 projects (under way) including 13 enterprises from no 2 steel mill (PinPet) and added works, 62 added works, 15 new enterprises, enterprise of purchase and installing machineries, purchase and repair work of furniture and vehicles.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than. PHOTO: MNA

As regards the motion, U Khin Maung Cho, Union Minister for Industry discussed the allotment of Ks590.69 million out of reduced amounts for three factories. He said that the ministry accepted the motion to assess how to carry out after suspending investments in some factories by forming assessment committees. Then the minister submitted to grant the revised allotment.

Secretary of Combining Committee on the Bill replied that the proposal of the Hluttaw to grant Ks590.69 million to purchase and install machinery needed for No. 4 textile mill in Pwintbyu and Heavy Industry (Kyaukse) was approved by the combining committee.

Concerning that motion, U Maung Myint of Minkin Constituency made an objection over the suspension of the PinPet steel mill. In answer to the objection, U Khin Maung Cho replied that there was not any cause to worry about the factory.

Then, th speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw invited the votes of parliamentarians as to the motion submitted by the combining committee of the bill by pressing buttons of the machines, and it was announced that the motion was approved by 335 votes in support, 192 in objection and 8 abstentions.—*Min Wai Hmwe (Myanmar News Agency)*

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to send Bill Amending the Legal Supports Law to President

SECOND Pyidaungsu Hluttaw,15th day of fourth regular meeting was held at the meeting hall of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in Nay Pyi taw yesterday, approving the Bill amending the Legal Supports Law.

At the meeting, Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than, stated that the draft of the Law of Provision of Legal Support was sent to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 14 March 2017. The draft will be sent to the President's office to be issued today after being signed by the President. According to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw By-Law 81, draft was considered approved and recorded and will be duly announced.

Then, U Win Khaing, Union Minister for Construction, explained the principle of the Draft Law of the Union Budget and stated that the length the road under the supervision of Road Department is 7180.20 miles in total including tarred road 4839.2 miles, asphalt road 339.1 miles, gravel road 724.3 miles and concrete road 324.2 miles and earthen road 587.1 miles.

He continued that the Bridge Department has finished maintenance works on 506 over 180 feet-long bridges at the end of March 2017 and targeted to do regular and emergency repairing and maintenance works on under 180 feet-long bridges. The works also include prompt repairing the roads and bridges damaged by natural disasters, relieving the number of toll-gates and more reducing in 2017. Since the Ministry of Construction is liable to absorb the cost of lighting at all the bridges across the country, the cost will be allotted from the Maintenance Fund.

Budget allotment is also made for the installation of electrical balances for checking the extra-weight of the truck. The cost of maintenance of the base-stations across the country, maintenance of admin-supporting cars and boats and the cost of purchasing the research investigation machinery are to be also allotted from Maintenance Fund.

All the maintenance expenses officially allowed by the state budget will be used in line with the financial rules and regulations.—*Min Wai Hmwe (MNA)*

Senior General meets Laukkai orphan, receives Singaporean Senior Minister

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing comforts 2-month-old Ma Saung December Htun in the Tatmadaw Hospital's ENT ward. PHOTO: MNA

DEFENCE SERVICES COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF visited 2-month-old Ma Saung December Htun, who is currently receiving treatment in the Tatmadaw Hospital's Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) ward.yesterday morning. Ma Saung December Htun lost both parents, father U Wai Yan Htun and mother Daw Byar Mee, during the 6 March attacks by MNDAA armed troops in Yawaeshi (BEPS) school in Laukkai.

The Senior General reviewed the medical treatments by doctors on the child and gave instructions for her care.

Later he gave words of encouragements to Ma Saung December Htun's grandparents, gifted cash donations for the child, and warmly met with the child's relatives and officials from the philanthropic group Shwe Pyitaw Sone Mat.

Following the visit to the hospital, the Senior General met with Singapore's Emeritus Senior Minister Mr. Goh Chok Tong at Zeyathiri Beikman (Guesthouse) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

In the meeting, Mr. Goh Chok Tong expressed his attachment to Myanmar and wishes for its development. He also discussed his view on the importance of mutual trust between the Tatmadaw and political parties during the current political situation.

The Senior General discussed the Tatmadaw's efforts in supporting the peaceful democratic transition in the current government's one-year term, the aim to successfully implement a multi-party system, and driving the economic strength of the country for further developments.

Before the meeting with Singapore's Senior Minister, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing—*Myanmar News Agency*

3rd Myanmar-Australia Coordination Meeting held

THE third meeting of officials of the Myanmar-Australia Cooperation for Development was held at the Lake Garden Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

During the meeting, U Tun Tun Naing, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Planning and Finance, delivered a speech.

The Australian Senator and Minister for International Development and the Pacific, the Honourable Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, delivered a talk regarding development assistance for Myanmar. The Permanent Secretory also discussed the Development Assistance Coordination Unit (DACU) of Myanmar.

After that, the Honourable Concetta Fierravanti-Wells spoke about Australia's development assistance to Myanmar. Representatives from respective Ministries of Myanmar and Mr. Phillip Green, the First Assistant Secretary of South-East Asia Mainland and Regional Division, also discussed further cooperation in the education sector, the peace process, humanitarian matters, rural and private development, public administration processes and the role of Australia Volunteers For International Development.

It is reported that representatives from Ministries, the Union Civil Service Board, the Union Election Commission and the office of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and officials from Australian Ambassador to Myanmar also attended the discussion meeting.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Tatmadaw conquers MNDAA stronghold

A Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) base near a road connecting Laukkai and Yanlonkyaing in Shan State has been seized by the Tatmadaw forces.

The MNDAA base located near a hill was seized yesterday at about 1 am, resulting in the deaths of three MNDAA insurgents and the acquisition of two RPGs and eight other weapons. It is reported there were casualties and deaths on the Tatmadaw side as well.

The Tatmadaw forces conducted area clearance operations, resulting in fighting with members of the MNDAA since 6th March. In 57 armed clashes with the MNDAA from 6 to 14 March, the Tatmadaw found 17 bodies of MNDAA members and seized 27 arms.

Conquering the strategic MNDAA base, known as Point-1269, has helped the Tatmadaw to control the Laukkai-Yanlonkyaing route. The Tatmadaw forces continue to conduct area clearance operations to bring stability to the eastern Laukkai area.—*Myanmar News Agency*

President U Htin Kyaw poses for a documentary photo with Singapore's Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong and delegation in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Myanmar President receives Singapore's Emeritus Senior Minister

PRESIDENT U HTIN KYAW yesterday received the delegation led by Singapore's Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they exchanged views on anti-corruption, tax evasion which could potentially have a negative impact on the nation's development, the role of private entrepreneurs for economic development, the correct amount of electricity utilized for business purposes, the development of small and medium-sized enterprises that are essential for the nation's development, efforts to improve the economy via the tourism industry and the bilateral cooperation for trade and investment.

The President was accompanied by Union Ministers, U Thant Sin Maung, U Thein Swe, Dr Myo Thein Gyi, and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Tin. The Singapore delegation was led by Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong, accompanied by Singapore's Ambassador to Myanmar, Mr. Robert Chua. After the meeting, the two parties signed the extension of the Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of Singapore Myanmar Vocational Training Institute. During the event, Dr Aye Myint, Director General of the Department of Technical and Vocational Education and Mr Robert Chua, the Ambassador of Singapore to Myanmar, signed and handed over the MoU in the presence of the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Singapore's Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong.

Singapore's Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong and the delegation will visit Myanmar from 14 March to 16 March. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Farmland in Singu, Madaya returned . . .

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The Vice President said the government has been striving to return confiscated farmlands and other lands to the rightful owners by laying down policies and guidelines and establishing time limit for addressing farmland disputes. He added farmlands were the lifeblood for farmers, saying the government had been trying to return confiscated farmlands to the rightful owners ahead of the cultivation season in a transparent and systematic manner. The Vice President also urged civil servants from region/state governments to efficiently study farmland law, rules and regulations to be able to return confiscated farmlands to the rightful owners in a timely manner, highlighting that farmer's participation is a must in the process.

Farmland work permit certificates were presented for 1,269.3 acres of the relinquished lands in the area of No (121) Supply and Transport Battalion in Singu Township to 225 rightful farmers and 140.51 acres of farmland in the compound of the leprosy hospital (Yenanttha) in Madaya Township via 23 rightful farmers. Similarly, temporary farmland work permit certificates were handed over for the 3,792.64 acres of the relinquished farmland in Kanbalu District to 228 rightful farmers.

The Vice President and party visited Thaphanseik Dam in Kyun Hla Township and toured the control room, outlets, intake channel and hydropower plant. Director-General U Kyaw Myint Hlaing of the Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department reported facts and figures of the dam, annual rainfall, water distribution for summer paddy and hydropower generation to the Vice President. Thaphanseik Dam was constructed in 1996 and commissioned into service in 2001. The dam can store 279,400 acre-ft of water and is capable of irrigating water to over 750,000 agricultural farmlands.

Afterwards, they went to Kani Township via Monywa to visit Taungpyawtwin and Twinmataung, where they were briefed about the production of natural spirulina by the officials. They also inspected the construction of a retaining wall along the Chindwin River in Monywa.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Vice President U Henry Van Thio extends warm greetings to local farmers. PHOTO:MNA

State Counsellor receives Ambassador of Bhutan

DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, received Mr. Tshewang Chophel Dorji, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar with residence in Bangkok, in Nay Pyi Taw on 15 March 2017 at 11:30 a.m. They exchanged views on the promotion of cooperation in various sectors such as people-to-people contacts, culture and tourism and air connectivity between the two countries. The Ambassador handed over to the State Counsellor, a letter from H.E. Mr. Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of Bhutan, addressed to the State Counsellor.—*Myanmar News Agency*

State Counsellor holds talks with Ambassador of Kingdom of Bhutan. PHOTO: MNA

State Counsellor receives Australian Senator

DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs received Senator Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Minister for International Development & the Pacific at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at 2 pm yesterday.

In the meeting, matters on providing monetary aids amounting to Australian $71. 5 million, the investment between Myanmar and Australia, increased co-operation in the sectors of agriculture, health and education and current co-operations between the two countries were discussed.

And, the Australian senator disclosed that Australia would stand up for the Myanmar's effort towards Rakhine State affairs and peace process. —*Myanmar News Agency*

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi shakes hands with Australian Senator at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. PHOTO: MNA

Philippine President to visit Myanmar

AT the invitation of U Htin Kyaw, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, his excellency Mr. Rodrigo Roa Duterte, President of the Republic of the Philippines, will pay a state visit to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in the near future.—*Myanmar News Agency*

LOCAL Business

Over 22 million euros to be spent on Myanmar aquaculture

A fish jumps over a net as a boy works in a fish farm at Htantapin township in Yangon, on 18 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

A workshop for the Myanmar Sustainable Aquaculture Programme (MYSAP), which is implemented by The Fishery Department and The Deutsche Gesellshaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), was held at Horizon Lake View Resort, Nay Pyi Taw on Tuesday.

A Memorandum of Understanding between Myanmar and Germany on developmental cooperation was agreed upon, according to a speech delivered by Union Minister Dr. Aung Thu.

The GIZ, a German development agency that provides services in the field of international development cooperation. is implementing the activities to attain a better trade system among global countries including the countries in South East Asia, gain a sustainable market and effectuate development in trade, Dr. Aung Thu said.

Business software MYSAP is required to be implemented by the firm's projects with the assistance of technical experts. In a bid to enhance aquaculture in Myanmar, getting the species which are suitable for the ecosystem of the regions and so, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation is cooperating with the international organizations, INGOs and NGOs in technology.

Ms. Delphine Sallard from the European Union and Ms. Petra Schill from the GIZ explained the development programmes which are being jointly conducted by Myanmar and Germany.

A total of 22.25 million euros will be spend on MYSAP, with technical and industrial supplies and the programme includes bilateral cooperation, technical cooperation, funding and agreements for implementation of the programme.

According to this programme, efforts will be exerted to reduce the poverty rate, fulfill the self consumption, improve getting access to nutrition and carry out the sustainable development activities for aquafarming in Sagaing Region, Rakhine State, Shan State and Ayeyawady Region. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Thai-Myanmar border trade value up by nearly US$200million

THE value of trade between Thailand and Myanmar from 1st April to 3rd March during the current Fiscal Year 2016-2017 was found to have increased by nearly US$200million when compared to the same period last FY, according to the statistics of the Commerce Ministry.

Thailand-Myanmar border trade as of 3rd March this FY fetched US$1.20 billion, whereas the trade value of last FY amounted to US$1.00 billion.

Border trade with neighbouring countries as of 3rd March this FY totaled US$6.64 billion, which is up from US$6.44 billion last FY. Meanwhile, the normal trade with the foreign partners fetched US$19.12 billion, with export values of US$6.32 bil and import values of US$12.79 bil, it is learnt.

The country is conducting border trade with neighbouring countries via border trade camps: trading with China through Muse, Lweje, Kanpikete, Chinshwehaw and Kengtung, with Thailand through the Tachilek, Myawady, Kawthoung, Myeik, Htee Khee, Maese and Mawtaung border gates. The cross-border trade camps between Myanmar and Bangladesh are Sittwe and Maungtaw, while the country trades directly with India via the Tamu and Reed border gates.

A total of 5,947 tonnes of fishery products worth US$6.095million were exported to Thailand from 25th to 3rd March and this export volume declined by nearly 400 tonnes against that of last week. About 90 tonnes of various fishery products worth US$125,000 were shipped through the Myawady border trade camp, whereas 2,375 tonnes of various fish, shrimp, crab, squid, sliced fish and dried fish were sent to Thailand via Myeik and 3,482 tonnes of fishery, via Kawthoung, according to the news of Commerce Ministry. – *Ko Htet*

Hungary and Australia to provide technical assistance for Water Taxi service

WATER taxi transportation service will be implemented in cooperation with technical assistance from Hungary and management from Australia, said U Tun Naing Lin, a project manager of Tint Tint Myanmar Company Group.

Water taxi service is being planned to launch in May. Details such as price, location of ferry docks and the number of ferries will be revealed at a press conference which will be held in April, it is learnt. Two jetties for the Hlaingthaya-Pansoedan route and 11 jetties for Dagon Myothit (North) and NyaungTan route along Ngamoeyeik creek have been selected for this water taxi operation. The aim of water taxis is to help ease the delays caused by traffic congestion in Yangon and provide smooth, alternative transportation through waterways.

Yangon Region government invited tenders for water taxi transportation service in November 2016. Out of 40 applicants, only two companies are locally owned. Tender evaluation was conducted on 8th Feb 2017 and Tint Tint Myanmar won the tender due to its better service performance, it is learnt. —*200*

FDI this fiscal year reached US$6.8billion

Foreign direct investments flowing into the country as of the first week of March in the current fiscal year hit over US$6.8 billion, which exceeded the expectation of US$6 billion, according to a press conference held on 14th March at the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

During this fiscal year, FDI is up by over US$800million, compared to that of last year. A total of 30 foreign enterprises and joint ventures were permitted to invest in the country, with investments of over US$600million. Similarly, seven citizen-owned businesses were also given the green light to invest in Myanmar, with investments of over Ks89.24 billion. Over 16,000 job opportunities were created from the permitted enterprises, according to the Myanmar Investment Commission meeting (5/2017).

These 30 permitted enterprises are engaged in industrial manufacturing, telecommunications and transportation, electricity, hotels and tourism. The seven enterprises owned by Myanmar Citizens are Kaung Myat Co., Ltd for manufacturing and marketing of veneer, teak veneer, plywood and sawn timber, Fortune Elevator & Escalator Co., Ltd for production and sale of international standard elevators, Delta Yoma Trading Co., Ltd and Airport Avenue Co., Ltd for hotel services, Resources Group Logistics Co., Ltd for Dry Port service in two separate locations and Golden Flagmast International Co., Ltd for marketing and servicing business of electrolysis purification of antimony ore into purified metal, according to an announcement of DICA.

MIC permits the project proposals only after verifying the sector-specific development, job opportunity, innovation, technical sharing, getting country's revenue, domestic and foreign market conditions, local requirements, environmental impact assessment EIA and social impact assessment SIA, it is learnt.—*Ko Khant*

Trade deficit exceeds estimation, reaching up to over US$4.8billion

PRIOR to the end of this fiscal year, the trade deficit has reached over US$4.8billion, according to statistics released by the Commerce Ministry.

With export values of US$10.45 billion and import values of US$15.303 billion, the external trade with the foreign partners as of 3rd March in the current fiscal year reached US$25.75 billion, which is up by over US$430million from that of last FY. There is a trade deficit of US$4.84 billion when the import excessively exceeded the export in spite of the fact that the government is making efforts to reduce the trade deficit by scrutinising luxury import items except essential ones, stated in the second five-year National Development Plan.

There were trade deficits of US$91.9million in 2012-2013, US$2.55 billion in 2013-2014, US$4.91 billion in 2014-2015 and US$5.4 billion in 2015-2016, according to statistics released by the Central Statistical Organization (CSO). About US$3.1billion was expected to show as trade deficit in this fiscal year, it is learnt from the Planning and Finance Ministry.

Myanmar exports agricultural products, forest products, fishery products, minerals, animal products, manufacturing and others to the foreign countries while the capital goods, the raw industrial materials and personal goods are imported into the country, it is learnt.—*Ko Htet*

Performances in One-Year Period

Vice President U Myint Swe and Union ministers attend opening of the Civil Services Academy. PHOTO: UCSB

UCSB— Source of good civil service-persons who will serve people

Nanda Win, Kyaw Thu Htet

DR Win Thein, chairman of Union Civil Service Board (UCSB), believe that public servicemen must serve people and fulfill public's needs.

Initiation of Cultivating Good Attitudes

Accordingly, the UCSB is starting to cultivate the spirits of civil service-persons with new types of teaching, aiming at upgrading their abilities, fulfilling people's needs promptly and making them take responsibility and accountability, in providing service to people.

UCSB is an organization performing the tasks of selecting, promoting and training government servicemen, and compiling service manuals on rules and disciplines for service persons to abide by, and supporting the government concerning staff affairs.

> Military training was no longer included. It was substituted by language and other subject.

Keeping abreast with international standard

During one-year period when the new government took office, performances carried by the UCSB include changing types of teaching at central service universities likewise those used by overseas universities, amending law on servicemen did not comply with current situations any longer, carrying out preparation of amending rules and regulations, selecting service personnel through examinations in which spirit-based question types had been changed and co-operating to compile strategic plan for changing public service-personnel system by linking with international institutions.

7 Faculties

Just in 100-day-period when the incumbent government took office, teaching types applied by central service universities were changed in accord with international universities' standards, to upgrade the capacity of all staff. Out of six subjects taught previously, military training was deleted. English and IT(information & technology) were added to remaining five faculties—management, economy, political science, social science and law, hence it amounted to seven faculties.

Dr Win Thein said, "Military training was no longer included. It was substituted by language and other subject."

Learning to value goodness

It is learnt that UCSB aims for service-men to learn to value criteria of a serviceperson—honesty, integrity, objectivity and impartiality.

Training staff from private enterprises

And, UCSB managed to simultaneously open Civil Service Academies in upper and lower Myanmar on 2nd January 2017, erecting an epoch-making pillar.

"Training workers from private sectors together with civil service personnel can make friendship between them

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Dr Win Thein, Chairman of the Union Civil Service Board (UCSB), delivers a speech at the opening of the Civil Services Academy in Pyin Oo Lwin. PHOTO: UCSB

PERFORMANCES IN ONE-YEAR PERIOD

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strengthen more than ever, make them exchange experiences and ideas, and make fruitful results of carrying out duties and responsibilities transparently between two sectors," said Dr Win Thein.

1st intake of post-graduate diploma in civil service management (PGDCSM) commenced to be opened. The course will be conducted two times a year.

Master Degree Classes

It is learnt that advanced diploma and master degree classes are being arranged to be opened in June 2018.

Dr Win Thein added, "It has been arranged to open Master of Leadership in Civil Service course for high ranking officials of directors and deputy director-general level in 2018 and to confer master degrees to them in 2019.

Another reform of amending law on civil servicemen that did not suit current situations was added to the performances in one-year period of the new government's first tenure. Concerning this, 20 articles in all had been amended and it was signed by the President to be enacted on 9 December.

Dr Win Thein, chairman of Union Civil Service Board. PHOTO: MNA

Advanced diploma and master degree classes are being arranged to be opened in June 2018.

Cancellation of age-limit

According to UCSB, the amendment of law results in access to promotion depending upon qualifications and capacities of staff, and acquisition of more opportunities to perform needs of their families concerning education, health, economy and social affairs, due to cancellation of the prescription that a serviceman of 30 years service-age must reach 55 in applying for pension.

Preparation for amending rules and regulation

Following amendment of rules and regulations, as regards earned leave, a serviceman can save earned leave up to 2 months. Besides, a male serviceman whose wife is not a service person is eligible for having 2-week infant-care-leave.

"In assessing personnel for promotion, it was ordered for all assessors to abide by without any bias. And it has been being arranged to distribute newly-published ethic manual for service personnel to all servicepersons free of charge," said Dr Win Thein.

Changing Selection System

UCSB now selected staff needed for departments and organizations by changing question types instead of civil service question types, by questioning Myanmar, English and general knowledge.

In training for promotion depending upon qualifications and for upgrading ethics of staff, it has been being transformed from Semi-Regimental Training Approach to Education and Competency Training Approach.

Getting Advices

Tasks to be performed are broad, so expertise has been acquired from workshops with EU(GOPA), Hanns Seidel Foundation, UNDP, United Nation International Training and Research (UNITAR).

Workshop on reassessment over regular training and courses conducted by Central Institutions of Civil Service, advisory workshop over establishment of Myanmar Civil Service Academy, workshop on compilation of strategic plan for public service personnel reforms, workshop on leadership capacity development, workshop on drawing up framework of designation of competency of staff and 2nd workshop in groups over reassessment for drawing up strategic plan for reform were held respectively.

Besides, other forums and workshops had been held.

Process to be performed further

In the process to be performed further by the UCSB, after one-year period, there include arrangements to release the strategic plan concerning reforms of civil service system, reassessment of law, rules and regulations of civil service personnel, holding workshop on Public Service Motivation with invited representatives from the (ASEAN Co-operation on Civil Service Matters—ACCSM) and Training of Trainers for teachers from the central Central Institutions of Civil Service Civil Service Universities.

Moreover, conducting short-term courses on leadership and administration for permanent secretary and director-general level high-ranking officials, courses on management for heads of organizations and institutions, opening trainings on management more than ever for officials, providing helps from KOICA for the development of quality of civil service personnel, opening short-term training courses for high-ranking officials, director-generals and permanent secretaries to conduct public policy, public management and public administration, starting from 2017-2018 are to be made.

Civil Services Academy in Pyin Oo Lwin. PHOTO: UCSB

Reliable Service Personnel for the People

On a general analysis of performances carried out during one-year period and the process to be performed further, they are found to be the tasks of producing good service men, becoming able and reliable service personnel, enjoying rights and benefits of staff according to law, developing honesty, responsibility and ethics and cultivating the habits of public-orientated approach.

Those who will serve duties assigned are of great need to provide services as hoped by the people, due to good aims and objectives of UCSB and public-orientated training.

Firm Belief

As a conclusion, Dr Win Thein, chairman of UCSB disclosed his belief that people would be disappointed if public civil service personnel lack willingness to serve the interest of the people.

China's Li urges united, stable EU amid fears of Brexit, rising nationalism

BEIJING — Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on Wednesday expressed confidence in the European Union, calling for a united, prosperous and stable Europe amid widespread concerns about the impact of Brexit and the rise of nationalism.

Speaking at his annual news conference at the end of the annual meeting of China's parliament, Li said that China backed European integration.

"I am optimistic about the prospects of the European Union, and we are optimistic about the development prospects for China-EU relations," he said.

European Council President Donald Tusk in February warned that, in the wake of Brexit and with growing nationalism, the EU faced the biggest challenges in its 60-year history, compounded by an assertive China, an aggressive Russia and worrying declarations from US President Donald Trump.

The Trump administration has stirred concern in Europe due to doubts about NATO and countering Russia in Ukraine, as well as over free trade.

Trump has similarly worried China by criticising the country's trade practices and threatened to impose punitive tariffs on Chinese imports, as part of his pledge to put "America first".

Li said China did not want to see a trade war with the US.

While acknowledging that trade ties between China and the EU have been strained in recent years over steel, Li said that China and the EU had experience at "appropriately resolving" disputes.—*Reuters*

Indonesia registers lower export, trade surplus in February

JAKARTA — Indonesia registered 6.17 per cent lower exports at 12.57 billion US Dollars and trade surplus of 1.32 billion US Dollars throughout February, a senior official at Indonesia's central statistics agency (BPS) said on Wednesday.

Speaking in a press conference held in his office here, Head of BPS Suhariyanto said the export figure in February this year was lower than 13.40 billion US dollars a month earlier, but 11.16 per cent higher than it was in corresponding period last year.

He added that non-oil and gas commodities took up most of Indonesia's export at 11.38 billion US dollars throughout last month.

That figure was 6.21 per cent lower than a month earlier, but 11.55 per cent higher than it was in February last year.

Non-oil and gas export reductions were mostly seen in gems and jewelry products that dropped 105.2 per cent.

"Indonesia's total exports in the first two months this year stood at 25.98 billion US dollars, or 19.20 per cent higher than in the same period last year," Suhariyanto said.

Particularly for non-oil and gas commodities, the total exports in the first two months this year reached 23.51 billion US dollars, or grew 201.11 per cent from it was in the corresponding period last year, he added.

The BPS head said that the largest receiver of Indonesian export was China that took up 1.36 billion US dollars in February, followed by the United States, India and Europe Union countries.

In the first two months this year, most of Indonesia's imported products came from China at 4.87 billion US dollars, followed by Japan and Thailand.—*Xinhua*

Balloon exhibition "Sea of Wonder" held in Singapore

Children play among balloons in the balloon exhibition "Sea of Wonder" at the Marina Square in Singapore on 15 March, 2017. The "Sea of Wonder" balloon exhibiton, to last till 19 March, displayed 10,000 balloons. PHOTO: XINHUA

Korea prosecutors summon Park for questioning 21 March

Park Geun Hye. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

SEOUL — South Korea's state prosecutors on Wednesday summoned ousted president Park Geun Hye to appear for questioning next week over corruption and abuse-of-power charges, according to the prosecutors office.

Park, 65, lost her presidential immunity from potential criminal prosecution after being formally removed from office when the Constitutional Court, in a ruling Friday, upheld parliament's vote last December to impeach her. She is the country's first democratically elected president to be ousted.

Meanwhile, Park's group of attorneys later Wednesday notified the prosecution of her plan to attend the questioning session, a senior prosecutor told reporters.

Separately, the attorneys, in a text message to reporters, also said Park will "faithfully go through the interrogation at the time and date demanded by the prosecution," according to Yonhap News Agency.

They also vowed to "actively cooperate in the upcoming investigative procedures, such as submitting necessary materials, in order to help reveal the truth."

Park was labeled by state prosecutors in November as a co-conspirator in various criminal charges against her confidante Choi Soon Sil in the bribery, influence-peddling and abuse-of-power cases involving both of them.

In February, the special prosecutors' office identified Park as a criminal suspect and marked her as an accomplice in the charges pressed against Choi.

While still in office, Park had refused to be questioned either by the state prosecutors or the special prosecutors' team. Now that she has been permanently ousted, speculation is rife that she could be detained if she refuses to be questioned.

Park's legal representative was quoted by Yonhap News Agency as saying the summons to appear next Tuesday morning has been received and that "we will fully cooperate with the investigation."

The former president stands accused of letting her now-jailed confidante Choi, a private citizen, meddle in state affairs and gain unauthorized access to classified documents, while colluding to extort donations from businesses for two foundations effectively controlled by Choi.

If she submits to questioning, she will become the country's fourth president to be investigated by state prosecutors after leaving office, following Roh Tae Woo, Chun Doo Hwan and the late Roh Moo Hyun.

Upon returning to her private residence on Sunday, Park said through a spokesman, "Though it may take time, the truth will reveal itself without fail."

The statement was largely interpreted as a continuation of her earlier position to deny any wrongdoings and hint at a legal battle against the charges pressed against her.

Should Park refuse to attend the questioning session, prosecutors are considering a plan to compel her to be questioned, such as obtaining a court warrant for an arrest, according to media reports.—*Kyodo News*

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.

Tatmadaw reins in bases of aggression and provocation

Tha Sein

AT a time when freedom and democracy have been in retreat globally, Myanmar's emergence out of a half-century of dictatorship with sweeping reforms has been a welcome move. The country has only completed a portion of its democracy journey and it has a long way to go.

At such a time, the clashes between the Tatmadaw and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army-MNDAA in Laukkai region are still fierce, resulting in deaths on both sides, compounded by a series of property losses. The MNDAA overwhelmed with greed, anger and ignorance wantonly violated Myanmar's sovereign rights, jeopardizing the government's efforts towards restoring peace in the region. Their act is nothing but a threat to our people and it is beyond our understanding that someone might mastermind it.

Placing "Our Three Main National Causes" as its guiding principle, the Tatmadaw continues to launch area clearance operations and it is a just self-defensive right of a sovereign state to keep highly alert as required by the grim situation in which a civil war may break out anytime. This is the reason why the Tatmadaw has addressed the situation in such a way as to ensure the rule of law while at the same time protecting the lives and property of the people.

The government and the people have felt a strong sense of identification with those in distress in the region and provided the latter with necessary aid, focusing on solving the problems they endured. Towards this end, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi strongly urged all the armed ethnic groups to abandon the armed attacks and to join the dialogue in order to march together with the people on the path of peace with unified strong spirit on the basis of quality.

As already clarified, the Tatmadaw will rein in the bases of aggression and provocation with an invincible will and defend the security of the country and its people, as the recent incidents have turned out to be particularly sensitive and dangerous, at a time when the Union government is working hard to lay firm foundations for peace and stability in Myanmar.

Are we prepared to meet the water shortages?

Khin Maung Myint

THE winter had left and the summer is starting to set in. With that transition, news of water shortages, especially in the dry central parts of the country would be streaming into the news media soon. It's an annual phenomenal occurence since our younger days as far as I can remember. This year too would be the same or may be even worse, with the climate change and the global warming expected to be more severe than before. The temperature rises are getting higher year after year since 2014 and experts are forecasting that trend would likely continue. So, are we prepared?

As mentioned in the opening paragraph, people in the dry zones are experiencing droughts and water shortages every year since time immemorial. Some places close to the coastal areas where sea water reaches way up into the rivers and streams during high tides, have to face the similar fates too.

Successive administrations had endeavoured to tackle those problems, but still they haven't been solved satisfactorily. Many reservoirs and dams were being built during the past couple or more decades and still the same problems kept popping up every dry seasons. So, what could be at fault, could it be they are not adequate enough to cope with the increasing requirements or lack of proper water management? These are the basic points, from a layman's point of view, for the authorities to consider.

Though I'm not a professional or an expert in that field, I must say I'm somewhat familiar with such matters as I had served in a district administration at one time during my career and knew how our Irrigation Department operated. With the basic knowledge gained from the past, I was able to widen my knowledge of water resources managements during my frequent visits and long durations of stay at various construction sites for reservoirs and diversion weirs in Thailand, where my son worked.

Based on those meager knowledge acquired, I would like to discuss this water shortage problem. To begin with, it may be necessary for me to describe the scenario that attracted my attention on my first visit in 1997 to the North Eastern region of Thailand known as Isaan. That place is situated on what used to be known, from the world geography lessons during my schooling days in the 1950s, as the Korat Plateau---a dry and arid area. However, to my surprise, what I saw was a total contrast to that description. The whole region was blanketed in lush green vegetations. Large stretches of teak plantations, endless paddy fields, sugar cane fields stretching for miles and miles, large rubber plantations, vast plantations of pineapples, diverse varieties of fruit orchards and vegetable farms lined the highways everywhere we traveled. There was almost no sign of semi-desertlike terrain, as in our dry zone, which too is described as dry and arid.

At first, that situation struck me with awe and confusion, because it was totally different from what I had learned from my geography lessons. However, I later realized the truth. It was due to the well thought out and planned water resources engineering projects. Many diversion weirs and reservoirs were built in the Isaan under the guidance of the late Monarch of Thailand, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej. In fact, many Royaly-initiated irrigation projects were implemented in the Isaan region and all over the country. These projects helped in changing the once dry and arid land into arable and forested areas.

Village water supply system in rural Thailand.

The late Monarch had done many things to eradicate poverty and elevate the living standards of his subjects during his long reign. There were many researches carried out in the palace grounds to find ways and means to support his subjects. Due to those researches many inventions related to sufficiency of water and farming techniques were evolved, some of which were new inventions and were even patented in His Majesty's name.

One of the most noteworthy inventions was the rain-maker. If there should be drought in a certain area where the rains were overdue, the air planes from the rain-making squadron were immediately scrambled to that area to seed the clouds with chemicals to speed up the condensation process. No sooner than those planes left after doing their jobs, the rains would come pouring down to the delights of the farmers and the local folks alike. The Thais affectionately called such rainfall the "King's Rain". I had once witnessed that process carried out in the Isaan region a few years back.

There are also potable water supply arrangements for human consumptions even in the remotest villages. The responsible departments had drilled tube wells wherever feasible. In some places the water from the rivers or streams are pumped up to the water treatment stations where they are properly treated before distribution. High elevated water tanks are visible at almost every village in the rural areas. Thus consumable running water is available at every home in almost all the villages in the country. During my frequent visits and stays in Thailand, I had never seen anyone, anywhere, even in the rural areas fetching water with pots and buckets like in our country. I'm citing the success stories of Thailand as they are proven and good examples that we should copy.

Here, I would like to mention what an Israeli friend of mine once told me in the mid-eighties. He said, he couldn't understand why our country, which is endowed with a variety of natural resources, large areas of very fertile soil and many large fresh water lakes, rivers and streams crisscrossing the length and breath of the country became the Least Developed Country (LDC). He went on to say that as for their country it is in the desert without any place free of sand, which made cultivation almost impossible. Yet, he said, they had managed to grow and produce vegetables in the sand using the minimal amount of water as the fresh water is very scarce there.

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Malindo Air to start Kuala Lumpur-Yangon route

PHOTO: TIN SOE (MYANMA ALINN)

MALAYSIA-based Malindo Air will begin flying from Yangon, the commercial capital of Myanmar, to Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia, at the end of this month.

Malindo Air, a Malaysian budget airline, will fly between the two cities four times per week with plans to operate the new route on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays.

The OD 550 flight will leave Kuala Lumpur for Yangon at 8:30 a.m. local time and arrive in Yangon at 9:50 a.m. The OD 551 flight will leave Yangon for Kuala Lumpur at 10:30 a.m. local time and arrive in Kuala Lumpur at 2.55 p.m.

Malindo Air will operate the new route with Boeing 737-800ER planes that have 12 special seats plus 150 ordinary seats.

Ticket fare for an ordinary seat is Ks123,186 and for the special seat, Ks454,441.

Since 2013, the Malaysian airline has operated domestic flights. The company continues to offer aviation services to commuters through 16 ATK 72-600 planes and 26 Boeing aircrafts in 15 countries. Myanmar is the latest country to be included in the expansion of its services.—*Myint Maung Soe*

4,000 Myanmar workers took jobs in eight foreign countries last month

MORE THAN 4,000 workers accepted overseas jobs in eight different countries last month, the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population reported.

In February alone, a total of 3,614 people out of 4,184 went to neighbouring Thailand, while 240 others were legally sent to Malaysia, followed by 218 individuals to Japan, 35 to Qatar, 42 to South Korea, 18 to Singapore, 16 to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and one to Macao.

Over 16,000 local job seekers also joined suitable jobs throughout the country last month.

The ministry has put forth concerted efforts to create more employment opportunities for domestic job hunters.

They continue to create links between employers and employees through labour offices as well as online services.—*Naing Lin Kyi*

Over 100 victims of disaster in Rakhine State need help

MORE than 100 residents are now suffering from the impact of a natural disaster after almost 30 homes were destroyed by strong wind that struck northern Rakhine State on 12 March.

About 25 houses in Yokechaung Village in MraukU Township, a fuel storage facility and a concrete lamp post near housing for veterans in Minbya Township and three homes in Hmanni Village in Yathedaung Township were damaged or destroyed by high wind.

Humanitarian aid continues to be offered by state authorities, who supported Ks2.7 million to victims on that day, said U Tun Tha Sein, a state Hluttaw representative, who personally handed over Ks500,000 to victims as emergency cash assistance on behalf of the Rakhine State Hluttaw.

"The northern part of the state faced the continuous fall of heavy rains for three days starting from March 10. A powerful wind blew those townships on 12 March two times," said Daw Ma Thaung, one of victims.

In addition, 45 houses in Kyauktaw Township have been damaged during the severe wind of 6 March. However, no lives have been reported lost. Victims need bamboo, wood, household utensils and food, according to the Kyauktaw-based rescue team.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Myanmar to establish 750,000-acre community forest this year

THE FOREST Department plans to develop about 750,000 acres of community-owned forest plantations throughout the country this year, its spokesperson said.

U Bo Ni, director of the department, said that the aims of the establishment of community-managed forest plantations are to reforest and prevent desertification, boost production of forest products for socio-economic development of residents and conserve the natural environment.

The department established more than 340,000 acres of community-owned plantations across the nation last year, mostly in Shan State.

Locals may improve their earnings from the commercial sale of forest products manufactured from the community-managed plantations, said U Ye Khaung, from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The forestry authorities hope to develop up to 2.27 million acres of plantations by 2030 as a part of its 30-year National Forestry Master Plan.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Fire destroys 45 shops in Kyauktaw

A FIRE broke out at an oil pump in Kyauktaw Township at about 6.30 pm yesterday, destroying 45 shops including 41 private refilling shops.

Two fire engines fought the fire, putting it under control about two hours later. The fire started at a oil bowser while it is filling a 52-gallon tanker with the oil, according to an initial investigation.— *Myanmar News Agency*

Burmese language attracts Chinese students

THE Myanmar language course opened at the University of Foreign Languages attracts many international students as the country has good business opportunities in the Southeast Asian Region, said an official from the UFL.

The numbers of overseas students who take a Myanmar language course for the current academic year at the UFL reached about 250.

China tops the list of students studying the Myanmar language with 112 students, followed by South Korea with 73, Japan with 28, Thailand with nine, India with eight, Viet Nam with four, Laos with three, Bangladesh and Italy with two students each, Mexico and the U.S. with one each.

According to the university's data, nearly 400 students are currently attending the Chinese language class, while 440 others have joined the English language course. Over 600 students are studying the Japanese language at the UFL.

The university also allows over 450 students to join the French language programme, 324 for the German course, 352 for the Russian course and 28 for the Italian course.—*200*

Over 160 villages in Mandalay likely to face water shortages next month

MORE THAN 160 villages in 16 townships in Mandalay Region are predicted to face an acute shortage of water in April, according to Mandalay Region Rural Development Department.

According to the department, nearly 150 villages in 15 townships — Natogyi, Kyaukpadaung, TadaU, Singaing, Myittha, Kyaukse, Taungtha, Pyawbwe, Yamethin, NyaungU, Mahlaing, Thazi, Wundwin, Ngazun and Meiktila will — still be facing water scarcity starting from the second week of this month because of high summer temperatures.

The department already granted Ks2 million budgets his month for the water-stressed villages to solve the problem, its director U Min Han said.

In April 2015, the department and non-governmental organisations distributed a total of 461,128 gallons of water to 121 water-stressed villages in 15 townships.

The department urges its subordinate bodies to inspect water situations in villages to supply water in time.

Water scarcity is among the main problems to be faced by many societies mainly in central dry regions, especially in the hot season.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Are we prepared to meet the water shortages?

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Since then, I contemplated quite often on what he had told me and had wondered when our authorities would come up with some viable plans to make our country prosperous again. The top most item in my wish list of things I would like the authorities to address is the water shortage problem, especially in the dry zone. As I used to be from those regions, I knew full well the plights of the locals where availability of clean water is concerned. It's common knowledge that clean water is essential for the health and survival of humans and animals alike. So, easy access to clean drinking water is of utmost necessity.

During the dry spells, even those living in a large city like Yangon, let aside those in the rural areas, would be faced with water shortages. People pushing water carts or carrying buckets of water could be seen even in the downtown areas and crowded residential areas in the Yangon municipality area. As for those in the suburban and rural areas, their woes are unthinkable.

These water shortages had been going on for decades and no significant improvements are seen. It would be needless to say that water is essential for human and animal consumptions and for agricultural purposes. Thus it's high time that priority should be given to overcome the water shortages urgently to alleviate the woes of the people. Also new cultivation methods for certain cash crops using minimal amount of water should be researched and introduced in places where fresh water is scarce. I'm sure this last piece of suggestion would enhance the productivity and increase the incomes of the rural populations and at the same time save water, which would certainly benefit both the people and the country.

NEWS IN BRIEF

UK has not assessed economic impact of leaving EU without deal — minister

LONDON — The government has not carried out an assessment of what effect leaving the European Union without an exit deal would have on the British economy, Brexit minister David Davis said on Wednesday.

Speaking at a parliamentary committee hearing, Davis said the last available analysis dated back to the 2016 referendum campaign.

"It (the government) made an estimate during the ... referendum campaign but I think one of the issues that's arisen is that those forecasts don't appear to have been very robust," said Davis, who became a minister in July after the referendum result. —*Reuters*

Scottish independence referendum in 2018/19 would not be legal — UK minister

LONDON — Britain's Scotland minister David Mundell has said it would be impossible to have a legal and decisive referendum on Scottish independence in the timeframe demanded by Scotland's nationalist First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

She has said a referendum should be held in late 2018 or early 2019, when the terms of Britain's exit from the European Union become clear. Britain as a whole voted to leave the EU but Scotland voted to remain in the bloc. "It would be impossible for people in the timescale suggested by Nicola Sturgeon to make a reasoned view and, therefore, have a legal, fair and decisive referendum," Mundell told Scotland's Herald newspaper.—*Reuters*

South Korea to hold presidential election 9 May

SEOUL — South Korea will hold a presidential election on 9 May to replace Park Geun Hye, who was ousted from office over a corruption and abuse-of-power scandal, South Korea's Interior Minister Hong Yun Sik said on Wednesday.

Hong made the announcement after the Cabinet meeting approved the date for the election. Park, 65, became the first democratically elected South Korean president to be removed from office, after the Constitutional Court on Friday upheld parliament's vote last December to impeach her. She has denied all charges against her. According to law, an election must be held within 60 days after a president is removed from office.—*Kyodo News*

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Acting Chief Editor - Aye Min Soe
dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
Expatriate Consultant Editor
Mark Angeles
markrangeles@gmail .com
Senior Translators
Khin Maung Oo
editor2@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
Copy Writer Min Zaw
International News Editor
Ye Htut Tin
editor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
Local News Editors
Tun Tun Naing (Editor)
intlnews@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
Nwe Nwe Tun (Sub-editor)
Translators
Khaing Thanda Lwin,
reporter1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
Hay Mar Tin Win,
translator@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
Ei Myat Mon
Chief Reporter
Tun Aung Kyaw,
reporter2@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
Computer Team
Tun Zaw (Chief of Computer Team), Thein Ngwe,
Zaw Zaw Aung, Ye Naing Soe, Nyi Zaw Moe,
Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win, Sanda Hnin, Zu Zin Hnin
Circulation
San Lwin (+95) (01) 8604532, Hotline - 09 974424114
Advertising inquiry
01 8604530, Hotline - 09 974424848
marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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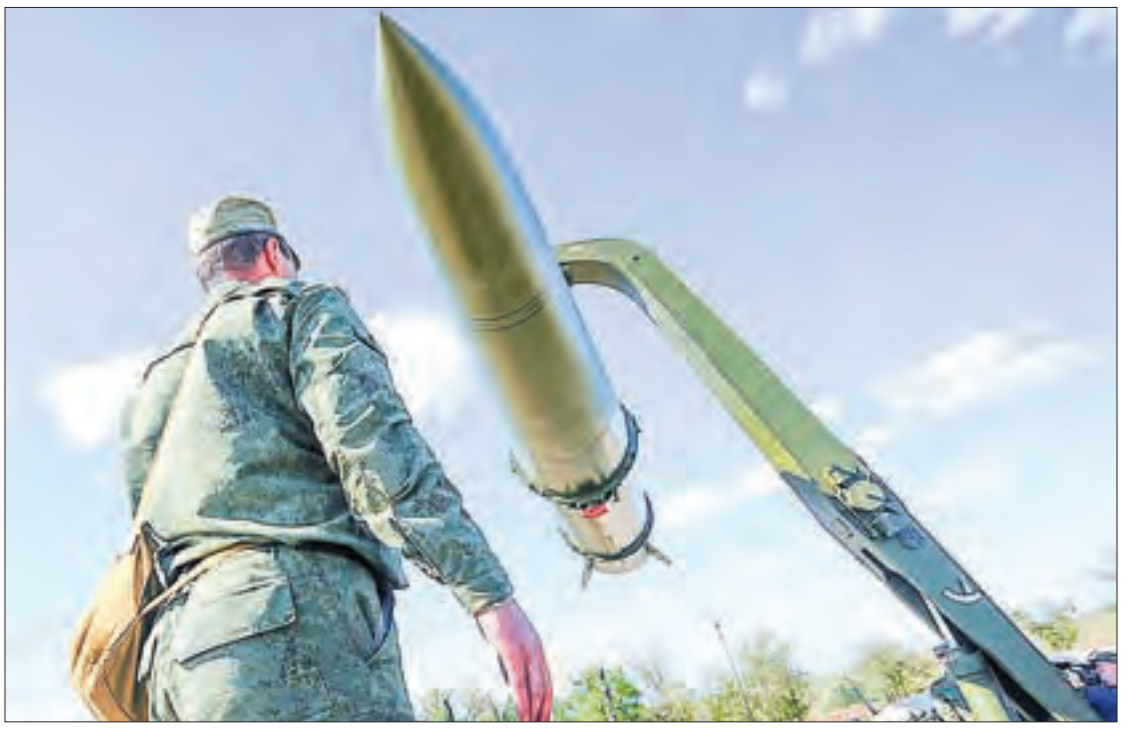

Russia's Aerospace Force plans to carry out 15 launches of carrier rockets in 2017. PHOTO: TASS

Russia's Aerospace Force to practice detecting ballistic missiles with ICBM launches

MOSCOW — Russia's Space Troops making part of the country's Aerospace Force will practice detecting ballistic missiles during launches conducted by the Strategic Missile Force, Aerospace Force Commander-in-Chief Colonel-General Viktor Bondarev said in an interview with Krasnaya Zvezda newspaper on Wednesday.

"The Space Troops will team up with other branches and services of the Russian Armed Forces to practice detecting ballistic missiles, using the forces and resources of the (Special Designation) Aerospace Army during the demonstrative launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles by the Strategic Missile Force," the commander said.

Over 100 staff drills have been planned to train the space forces' governance bodies of various level. As many as 40 tactical drills with subordinate military units will be held under the direction of the commanders of space troops' formations, the general said.

Russia's Aerospace Force plans to carry out 15 launches of carrier rockets in 2017, the general said.

"For the purpose of building up the orbital grouping of satellites, 15 launches of space carrier rockets have been planned to deliver more than 20 satellites into orbit," Bondarev said.

Also, highly compatible early missile warning radar stations will assume combat duty, the general said. Russia's Aerospace Force will also hold live tests with the launch of an anti-missile, the commander said.

"Live tests have been scheduled in anti-ballistic missile defense units with the launch of an anti-missile, as well as over ten joint drills for ABM system crews to prepare counter-missiles for combat use, and also measures to detect and track the launches of domestic carrier rockets and to monitor space vehicles," the commander said, without specifying the anti-missile.—*TASS*

German Social Democrats steady just behind Merkel's conservatives-poll

BERLIN — Germany's centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) remained steady at 32 per cent support over the past week, one percentage point behind Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative Christian Democrats, according to a poll published on Wednesday.

The two parties, now partners in Merkel's 'grand coalition', have been running neck-and-neck in the polls since the SPD nominated former European Parliament president Martin Schulz as its candidate for chancellor in the 24 September federal election.

The anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) gained one percentage point to 9 per cent, while the pro-environment Greens party dropped one percentage point to 7 per cent, according to the Forsa poll of 2,505 voters carried out from 6-10 March.

The Left party remained unchanged at 7 per cent, while the pro-business Free Democratic Party (FDP) was steady at 6 per cent, according to the poll, which was conducted for Germany's Stern magazine and broadcaster RTL. In a direct matchup, Merkel gained one percentage point to 39 per cent support, compared to 36 per cent for Schulz, the poll said.

Both Merkel, who is seeking a fourth term, and Schulz are hoping to end the current coalition and form a new government with smaller allies.

The Forsa poll had a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points.—*Reuters*

Serbia meets EU standards, says Merkel, praises reforms

BERLIN — German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Tuesday praised Serbian PM Aleksandar Vucic for the reforms he has carried out in his country and for ensuring economic improvement, and added that Serbia met EU standards, as indicated by the opening of new chapters in its EU accession talks.

Serbia and Germany are countries that have friendly ties - 400,000 Serbs live in Germany, which is among Serbia's main trade partners, with a trade volume of slightly below 4 bln euros and investments of 1.3 bln euros, she said.

Vucic: We will maintain peace in W Balkans with German help

Serbia has invested much in maintaining peace and stability in the region, Serbian PM Aleksandar Vucic noted Tuesday at a press conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The situation in some Western Balkan countries is turbulent, Vucic said, expressing the confidence that peace and stability could be preserved with assistance from the EU and Germany. —*Tanjug*

PERFORMANCES IN ONE-YEAR PERIOD

Ministry of Industry extensively engaged in national and industrial development

Maung Swe

Worker controls the pharmaceutical machines. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY

THE successive governments had made relentless efforts for industrial development and so did the new government. In line with the national policy, the new government initiated research and innovation with aim of manufacturing quality products and items in conformity of market demand, ensuring sales promotion, public-private partnership in the state-own factories and mills, development of SMEs, nurturing skilled workers, a safe use of farm equipment and machinery.

As regards industrial development, Union Minister for Industry U Khin Maung Cho said that the greatest challenges of our ministry is the implementation of No. 1 Steel Mill (Myingyan) and No. 2 Steel Mill (Pinpet) that drew attention of many people, adding that the major project being implemented by the Ministry of Defence was handed over to our ministry in October 2012. As the project calls for huge investment we found it rather difficult to be successfully implemented in time with the annual budgets. Anyhow, we are trying our utmost to complete the project in time.

Invitation of local and foreign investments

As part of industrial development, state-owned factories and mills went into partnership private sector, inviting local and foreign investments in order to secure technology and capital from investors. In the process, priority is being given to private industrial development.

Altogether 59 factories out of 118 under the supervision of the Ministry of Industry are now running in public-private partnership.

Moreover, steps have been taken to invite an expression of interest for private sector to enter partnership with 17 factories. As part of the activities, Cement Plant (Kyaukse) has gone into partnership with Myanmar Conch Cement Co Ltd on a mutually beneficial basis.

As a result, the factory now produces 5000 tons of quality cement meeting the international standard daily and is delivering the products right to worksites at reasonable prices.

Various kinds of glass

Glass factory (Kyaukse) has gone into partnership with the Myanmar International Glass Co Ltd and is manufacturing a variety of glasses that are used in construction activities.

The upgrade factory is now producing quality glass with Myanmar floral designs to be used in making furniture and glass tables. In addition, the ministry is in coordination with relevant individuals for manufacturing buses based on Korean technology for public transport.

Quality maintenance

In order to increase standardization in products, pharmaceutical factories of the Ministry of Industry has introduced Good Storage Practice (GSP) in accordance with the norms and standards of the WHO, and manufacturing of products through Good Manufacturing Process (GMP), controlling its quality. The finished products are stored in line with the set standards and are being directly distributed according to the need of the Ministry of Health.

In the healthcare sector, bogus drugs with trademark of BPI and expired drugs in the market were examined in September 2016 and action was taken against those got involved. The Ministry of Health in cooperation with the Ministry of Home Affairs have been able to expose 44 kinds of bogus drugs and 98 kinds of expired drugs and took action against those involved in the cases.

12 kinds of new drugs

With a view to producing quality medicines the Ministry of Industry is test-producing 12 kinds of new medicines in the time of the new government. The success in the test-producing of anti-venom from the sheep's serum has led to distribution of the drugs to the market with the permission of the FDA. There are four kinds of drugs in the process of applying for the FDA's permit with seven kinds of drugs undergoing the stability test. Morphine sulfate syrup and morphine sulfate tablets for cancer patients are not undergoing the stability test, and measures are being taken for producing of Tenofovir (300 mg) for HIV and Hepatitis B patients.

44 kinds of bogus drugs and 98 kinds of expired drugs were exposed and took action against those involved in the cases.

Durable anti-venom

In order to ensure the extended production of drugs to meet the market demand, the Ministry of Industry has been manufacturing more medicines that are being sold at the ministry's shops and stores. A new anti-venom production centre was opened at the Pharmaceutical Factory (Insein) on 20-5-2016. The durable anti-venoms with five-year expired date were distributed to rural areas where there was electricity.

The small volume production plant and cephalporin Injection plant were opened at the Pharmaceutical Factory (Insein) on 18-2-2017 to be able to produce 20 million ampoules of injection in ten categories.

The ministry also upgraded looms so as to produce quality fabric that is in high demand. As most of the looms have been upgraded with new eye-catching designs, progress was made in the production of quality garments.

Innovation and invention

With 50 innovated looms, production line was extended to be able to fabric for shirts. Meanwhile, the test-production of 1/40 thread that is in high demand was successful, and it has been distributed to the market since the month of September, 2016.

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The building of Pharmaceutical Factory in Insein Township. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY

Factory workers test the quality of medicines. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY

PERFORMANCES IN ONE-YEAR PERIOD

Facotry workers arrange the medicines at Pharmaceutical Factory in Insein. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY

Engines produced by the Heavy Industries. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY

The Yarn Steaming machine. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY

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Apart from that, hospital equipment and operation items were made out of steel to be in line with medical grade and are being delivered to state-owned hospitals whereas hospital beds embedded with locker and medicine cupboards are being produced as a pilot scheme. And steel pipes, steel items for household use, plastic containers and plastic pallet are being produced and distributed.

In the agricultural sector, the ministry has innovated farm equipment according to the need of farmers, and changes have been made in hydraulic system and clutch of Zwe tractors along with powered tillers, harvesters and small rice mills in order to attract customers.

K 280.411 million

Agricultural equipment worth K 280.411 million were sold to the farmers from different corners of the country on 2-year hire purchase through delivery system, salerooms and sale representatives in time of the new government. The products manufactured by the Ministry of Industry were displayed at the international technology and industry shows held in Myanmar. The industry has been sewing and producing new uniforms and school uniforms for the nurses and teachers under the Ministry of Health and Sports and Ministry of Education.

When it comes to development of small- and medium-sized enterprises, the ministry is serving as a responsible ministry for the development of the small- and medium-scale enterprises.

The ministry has drawn up Small and Medium Enterprises Development Policy in December 2015, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Law in April 2015 and Small and Medium Enterprises Development Rule in October 2016. The Central Committee for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises was formed with the President as the Chairman and the State Counsellor as the Joint Chairperson in June 2016.

Five-year period loans

In an attempt to develop small- and medium-sized enterprises in Myanmar, the ministry provided 456 entrepreneurs with the loans from the government fund and 189 businessmen with two step loans from Japan. The ministry have been able to provide the entrepreneurs with five-year period loans through the government's special loan and two step loan from Japan as loan repayment period is one year under the Central Bank of Myanmar Law.

As part of effort to introduce Credit Guarantee Insurance (CGI) in Myanmar, the ministry disbursed loans to 12 businesspersons through the CGI in cooperation with CB Bank, Myanma Insurance and Department of Small and Medium Enterprises Development and granted 648 entrepreneurs for ensuring loans. Kanbawza Bank and Small and Medium Industrial Development Bank (SMIDB) are holding discussions with CB Bank to introduce CGI system in Myanmar. Kasikorn Bank from Thailand is seeking ways to cooperate with Myanmar banks for development of small and medium enterprises.

Market Promotion

The ministry has been conducting human resource development courses on SMEs such as technology and market promotion in collaboration with local and international organizations. "The ministry is promoting SMEs to keep abreast of international enterprises.

At the same time, the ministry is planning to control chemical hazards and to expand energy production sector for environmental conservation in joining with respective organizations, he said. Six industrial training centers under the Ministry of Industry have been producing the skilled labors as the driving force for industrial development in Myanmar. Vocational training courses were given to the trainees in cooperation with the foreign experts.

As arrangements are being made to recognize as Testing Centers by National Skill Standards Authority (NSSA), No (1) Industrial Training Center (Hsinde), No (2) Industrial Training Center (Mandalay), and No (4) Industrial Training Center (Pakokku) and No (4) Industrial Training Center (Pakokku) have been designated as Testing Centers of the NSSA.

Technology transfer

Change of curriculums and technology transfer are being carried out as the ministry is upgrading No (1) Industrial Training Center (Hsinde) to a model industrial training one with the assistance of GIZ and KfW from Germany. With a view to improving socioeconomic status of rural people and creating job opportunities for them, mobile industrial training courses were conducted in rural areas. Similar courses were conducted in industrial zones to uplift the proficiency of the workers.

An inspection committee was formed to utilize agricultural equipment, vehicles and machineries by the people in a safe and systematic manner. In an effort to use farming equipment and machineries which are sine qua non in transforming from conventional farming to mechanized one by the people, the Directorate of Industrial Supervision and Inspection was formed with the permission of the President Office.

Safety measures

The abovementioned committee checked installation and systematic use of machines and issued the Certificate of Approval to the tractors and vehicles. The ministry engaged in innovations to manufacture marketable products and formed marketing groups to encourage private sector development during one-year period of the new government. The ministry also put emphasis on development of small and medium-sized enterprises and conducting industrial training courses.

Innovation

The Ministry of Industry awarded the civil servants who made utmost efforts for the ministry with deserved promotions and certificates of honour, encouraging their innovation and cooperation. The ministry also settled a long-running dispute over pay and contracts between the employer and employees from Paleik Textile Factory in Mandalay Region in collaboration with line governmental organizations in a peaceful manner.

The Ministry of Industry is making all-out-efforts for development of the industrial sector in accord with economic policy of the country.

Technicians assemble a tractor. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY

> Agricultural equipment worth K 280.411 million were sold to the farmers from different corners of the country on 2-year hire purchase through delivery system, salerooms and sale representatives in time of the new government.

Tractors produced by the Ministry of Industry. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY

A worker assembles the vehicle. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY

Pirates demand ransom for tanker seized off Somalia — EU Naval Force

NAIROBI — Armed pirates off the coast of Somalia who hijacked an oil tanker with eight Sri Lankan crew on board are demanding a ransom for the release of the vessel, the EU Naval Force said.

The pirates seized the Comoros-flagged Aris 13 tanker on Monday, the first such hijacking in the region since 2012.

"The EU Naval Force ... has received positive confirmation from the master of ... Aris 13, that his ship and crew are currently being held captive by a number of suspected armed pirates in an anchorage off the north coast of Puntland, close to Alula," the force said in a statement late on Tuesday.

Puntland is a semi-autonomous northern region of Somalia. Alula is a port town there where pirates have taken the tanker.

EU Navfor said as soon as it received an alert on the ship's seizure, it sent patrol aircraft from its Djibouti base to try to make radio contact with the ship, and only late on Tuesday did its headquarters in London reach the vessel's master by phone.

"The master confirmed that armed men were on board his ship and they were demanding a ransom for the ship's release. The EU Naval Force has now passed the information regarding the incident to the ship's owners," EU Navfor said.

The 1,800 deadweight tonne Aris 13 is owned by Panama company Armi Shipping and managed by Aurora Ship Management in the United Arab Emirates, according to the Equasis shipping data website, managed by the French transport ministry.

In their prime in 2011, Somali pirates launched 237 attacks off Somalia's coast, data from the International Maritime Bureau showed, and held hundreds of hostages. That year, aid group Oceans Beyond Piracy estimated the global cost of piracy at about $7 billion. The shipping industry bore roughly 80 per cent of those costs, the group's analysis showed.

However attacks fell off sharply after ship owners tightened security and vessels stayed farther away from the Somali coast. —*Reuters*

Russian Navy's commander to discuss cooperation with Indian military leadership

NEW DELHI — The commander of Russia's Navy, Admiral Vladimir Korolyov will discuss joint exercises and wider bilateral cooperation with India's military leadership during his forthcoming visit to that country.

"We will discuss military cooperation guidelines with the Indian side, including joint naval exercises, staff talks and steps to expand the legal and regulatory basis of military cooperation," Korolyov said. "There will be a meeting with representatives of India's top military officials."

The official part of the visit began on Wednesday with the laying of a wreath at the Eternal Flame near the Unknown Soldier monument at the India Gate Arch in New Delhi commemorating India's soldiers who died in wars and armed conflicts.

In front of the Central Secretariat building, which houses the Defence Ministry, Admiral Korolyov was welcomed by a guard of honour.

Indian missile destroyer taking part in India-Russia joint naval exercises. PHOTO: TASS

During the visit the Russian delegation will visit Mumbai, where Korolyov will hold talks with the Western Command of India's Nay.

Also, he will be taken to an Indian naval ship and a ship-building yard in Mumbai. Korolyov's visit to India will end on 18 March.—*TASS*

Mosul battle reaching final stages — Abadi

BAGHDAD — Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said the government offensive to recapture the city of Mosul from Islamic State militants was in its final stages.

Speaking at a news conference on Tuesday night, he warned the insurgents that they must surrender or be killed.

Since launching the offensive on October, government forces have driven IS from eastern Mosul and are now making advances in the western sector.

The city on the Tigris river is the last urban stronghold in Iraq of the militants, who declared a caliphate in parts of Iraq and Syria after they captured it in 2014.

"The battle now is in the final stages. Daesh become day after day surrounded inside a tight area and they are in their final days," Abadi said, using an Arab acronym for Islamic State.

He also pledged to treat the families of IS fighters fairly.

"Let me be very clear, we will preserve families of Daesh who are civilians but we will punish the terrorists and bring them to justice if they surrender," he said.

"They are cornered and if they will not surrender they will definitely get killed."

Abadi said he would visit Washington next week and meet US President Donald Trump to discuss the war. The United States is providing air and artillery support in the offensive.—*Reuters*

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Louis Theroux, writer and star of documentary ''My Scientology Movie,'' poses for a portrait in Los Angeles, California, US on 7 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Theroux's re-enactments in Scientology documentary prompt criticism

LOS ANGELES — When British documentary filmmaker Louis Theroux was unable to gain access to the Church of Scientology for a new film, he opted for what he thought would be the next best thing -- to reenact scenes based on the memories of a former member.

"My Scientology Movie," in US theaters now, employs dramatizations and re-enactments of church practices in an attempt to give viewers an inside look at an organization that has so far kept filmmakers at arm's length.

Theroux hired actors to stage scenes that he said were scripted by former senior Scientology member Marty Rathbun — who has written books and appeared in documentaries after leaving the religion — and his recollections of the church and its leader, David Miscavige.

But even before the film's debut, the accuracy of those staged depictions of Miscavige losing his temper and hitting church members was called into question by Rathbun himself.

"The 're-creation' was in fact a creation," Rathbun wrote on his blog in September.

"Even though they worked with me for a year on that scene, I was not able to submit a script for an actual past occurrence to 're-create' that could pass Theroux's standards for lurid and shocking theater."

Theroux told Reuters he was perplexed by Rathbun's critique of the film, adding that the former Scientologist had "quite liked" the production when he first saw it.

"I don't know for a fact, but it wouldn't be a huge leap of imagination to feel that he's just worn down by the years of, you know, being harassed by Scientologists," he said.

Neither Scientology representatives nor Rathbun responded to requests for comment on the film.

Scientology, founded in 1954 by science-fiction writer L Ron Hubbard, describes its practices as a religion based on the belief that humans are immortal beings whose experiences extend beyond one lifetime. Tom Cruise and John Travolta are among its cadre of celebrity followers.

Critics of the church regard Scientology as a cult that exploits its own followers and harasses those who seek to quit the faith. The church has previously denied such allegations.

Many aspects of the secretive religion have been brought to light in a number of other documentaries and books by ex-Scientologists, including Alex Gibney's 2015 film "Going Clear," adapted from a book of the same title.

Actress Leah Remini became the most high-profile celebrity to leave the church in 2013, documenting her experience in a television series.—*Reuters*

Paul McCartney should wait to get back Beatles songs, Sony/ATV says

NEW YORK — Paul McCartney, who has waited decades to reclaim ownership of hundreds of the Beatles' songs, should wait a little longer rather than continue his US lawsuit against Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, the defendant said.

In a filing on Monday with the US District Court in Manhattan, a lawyer for Sony/ATV said the publisher has never challenged the validity of McCartney's notices to terminate its copyrights in the songs, starting in October 2018.

As a result, McCartney's 18 January lawsuit "impermissibly seeks an advisory opinion on a hypothetical claim" and should be dismissed for the time being, the lawyer, Donald Zakarin, wrote.

Lawyers for McCartney had no immediate comment on Tuesday.

The rock legend, 74, was outbid by Michael Jackson in 1985 for the rights to songs credited to McCartney and John Lennon such as "I Want to Hold Your Hand," "Yesterday" and "Hey Jude."

These rights were rolled a decade later into Sony/ATV, a joint venture with Sony Corp (6758.T). Jackson's estate sold its stake in that venture to Sony for $750 million last year.

McCartney sued 1-1/2 months after a British court rejected similar claims against Sony/ATV's Gloucester Place Music unit by Duran Duran, saying the pop group's contracts were governed by English law and barred members from reclaiming their songs.

Zakarin said McCartney's claims are also governed by English law, and that he should wait for Duran Duran to finish its appeal rather than engage in "forum shopping" in the United States.

"A dismissal without prejudice now would spare this court the need to issue a decision that may be unnecessary pending the outcome of Gloucester while assuring that, if and when a claim is ever ripe, UK law will have been settled," Zakarin wrote.

Revisions to US copyright law in 1976 let authors reclaim song rights after certain periods of time elapsed.

McCartney wants the court to declare he would not breach any contract by exercising termination rights. His case could affect other artists who signed contracts outside the United States.—*Reuters*

Paul McCartney celebrates after performing with Ringo Starr (not pictured) during the 2015 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in Cleveland, US in Ohio on 18 April, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Costume jewelry worn by Hollywood's Golden Age stars up for auction

LOS ANGELES — From the coral necklace worn by Vivien Leigh in "Gone With The Wind" to Marilyn Monroe's gold and pearl drop earrings from "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes," the glittering adornments made for Hollywood's stars will go up for auction this year.

About 700 pieces of ornate costume jewelry made by Hollywood costume jeweler Eugene Joseff will be exhibited in Ireland's Newbridge Silverware Museum of Style Icons from March until May before going under the hammer in November at Julien's Auctions in Los Angeles.

"Buying a piece of this isn't like buying a diamond necklace from Cartier, you're actually owning a piece of Hollywood memorabilia," said Isabel Yeo, Julien's Auctions' jewelry specialist.

The auction house has not yet set estimates for the jewelry. Costume jewelry pieces do not tend to contain precious stones and metals.

Joseff made custom pieces of jewelry for major film studios during the 1930s and 1940s, the early years of Hollywood's Golden Age of cinema, lending the items so that he retained the majority of his collection. The jeweler died in a plane crash in the late 1940s and the pieces of his collection have not been offered for auction until now.

Yeo said Joseff developed a special method of jewelry-making that involved plating metals to give it a softer glare under studio lighting, a secret formula that has been kept within his family.

Highlights from the auction include Clark Gable's gold engraved cigar case from 1939's "Gone With The Wind" and a costume pearl and blue stone necklace worn by Bette Davis in 1955's "The Virgin Queen." —*Reuters*

Ben Affleck says he has completed treatment for alcohol addiction

LOS ANGELES — Actor Ben Affleck said on Tuesday that he had completed treatment for alcohol addiction, saying he wanted to "be the best father I can be."

Affleck, 44, said on his Facebook page that his treatment was the "first of many steps" toward his recovery and specifically thanked his "co-parent," wife Jennifer Garner, whom he separated from in 2015.

"I have completed treatment for alcohol addiction; something I've dealt with in the past and will continue to confront," the "Batman" actor wrote.

"I want my kids to know there is no shame in getting help when you need it, and to be a source of strength for anyone out there who needs help but is afraid to take the first step," he added.

Hollywood A-list couple Affleck and Garner, who have three children together, announced plans to divorce in July 2015 after 10 years of marriage.

Affleck, who has won two Oscars for his writing and producing work, will next be seen reprising the titular superhero role in "The Batman" movie. —*Reuters*

Vienna again ranked world's nicest city, and Baghdad worst

A traditional Fiaker horse carriage passes imperial Schoenbrunn palace in Vienna, Austria on 14 June, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

VIENNA — Vienna, Austria's grand capital on the Danube river, has topped consulting firm Mercer's list of cities offering the highest quality of life for the eighth year in a row, while Baghdad is again considered the worst place to live.

The survey of 231 cities helps companies and organizations determine compensation and hardship allowances for international staff. It uses dozens of criteria such as political stability, health care, education, crime, recreation and transport. Global centres London, Paris, Tokyo and New York City did not even make the top 30, lagging behind most big German, Scandinavian, Canadian, New Zealand and Australian cities.

Singapore was the highest ranked Asian city, at 25 while 29th-placed San Francisco was the United States' highest entry. Top of the list in Africa was South Africa's Durban at 87. Vienna's 1.8 million inhabitants benefit from the city's cafe culture and museums, theaters and operas. Rents and public transport costs in the city, whose architecture is marked by its past as the center of the Habsburg empire, are cheap compared with other western capitals.

Switzerland's Zurich, New Zealand's Auckland, Germany's Munich and Canada's Vancouver followed Vienna in the top five of most pleasant cities to live in.

Baghdad was again ranked lowest in the world. Waves of sectarian violence have swept through the Iraqi capital since the US-led invasion in 2003.

Six years into Syria's bloody war, Damascus was ranked seventh from bottom, with Bangui in the Central African Republic, Yemeni capital Sanaa, Haiti's Port-au-Prince, Sudan's Khartoum and Chad's N'Djamena filling out the end of the list. —*Reuters*

Robot takes to stage in British 'Spillikin' play

LONDON — When Judy Norman walks on stage for the play "Spillikin", she performs beside a somewhat different cast member — a humanoid robot.

Featuring a "robothespian", the play brings love and technology together for a story about a robot maker who builds a robot to keep his wife company after he dies. Cornwall-based Pipeline Theatre, which has worked with robotics company Engineered Arts for the project, is touring across England.

"We have pre-programmed every single thing the robot says and every single thing the robot does, all the moves," writer and director Jon Welch said. "So the robot will always say the same thing and move in the same way depending on what cue is being triggered at what particular time."

The robot is connected to the theater's control room, where a laptop transmits cues for its performance. "(There is) a big pressure on the actor...to always have the right lines, always stand in the right place so that the robot is looking at the right direction at that particular moment," Welch said.

On stage, Norman talks to the robot and even kisses it. In return, the robot replies, displays facial expressions and moves its hands.

"Working with a robot is something of course I have never done before so it's a completely different experience," she said. "When he looks at me, this going to sound weird, but he is very affectionate and I like him, I really like him." "Spillikin" runs in London until 19 March and continues its tour until April.—*Reuters*

Palestinian children look at models of dinosaurs, which were donated by Henry Lowe to Bethlehem-Bath Links, during the opening of a dinosaur exhibition arranged by a Bath charity in the West Bank city of Bethlehem on 14 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

mitv Myanmar International

Programme Schedule

(16-3-2017 07:00am ~ 17-3-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:27	Am	Ancient Shwe-San-Taw Pagoda
07:41	Am	Yatana Theinga City and Shwe Bon Yatanamingalar Palace
08:03	Am	News
08:25	Am	Between the Beaches: Chaung Tha Vs Ngwe Saung
08:35	Am	Halin, A Treasure Trove Of The Ancient Pyu City
09:03	Am	News
09:25	Am	Myanmar's Traditions and Culture Myanmar's Secret Beautifier
09:50	Am	Amazing: Sayargyi Nyein Chan Aung
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	A Real Dream Of Accidental Gift
10:52	Am	Independent Filmmaker

(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	A Journey for Healthy Future (The 36th Geumsan Insam Festival) Day-2
07:46	Pm	A Way of Life: Karate-do
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Myanmar Delicate Artistic Handy Creations- The Making Procedure Of Goldsmith
08:43	Pm	Myanmar Traditional Thatched Roofs: IN-LEAF

(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)

Want good sea views? Stay in a luxury lifeguard tower

TEL AVIV — The mayor of Tel Aviv rushed to help the German travel blogger lift her luggage away from the incoming tide as she made her way into the city's newest beachfront digs — a wooden lifeguard tower refurbished as a pop-up luxury suite.

As part of an effort to market Israel as a winter tourist destination for Europeans, the city of Tel Aviv and Israel's tourism ministry have teamed up with a local hotel chain to temporarily transform the tower into a two-storey suite, with hot tub, room service and very unobstructed ocean views.

"There is a phenomenon of hotel rooms in unexpected or unusually inaccessible places," said Eytan Schwartz, head of Tel Aviv Global and Tourism, a department of the city administration.

Only 15 couples, winners of an online competition, will get to stay in the tower, whose stilts are buffeted by the waves.

Boutique hotels have in recent years perched guests in tree houses, construction cranes and salt flats, but Tel Aviv's is believed to be the first to occupy a lifeguard hut.

Israel's tourism industry welcomes around four million visitors a year. The tourism ministry is investing $25 million in a campaign to encourage them to go to both Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, as complementary destinations.

"Today tourism looks for cities," Amir Halevi, director-general of the ministry, told Reuters.

"We sell Israel through Tel Aviv." With its beach, warm weather, wealth of restaurants and buzzing nightlife, Tel Aviv has become a popular destination among Europeans, even for long weekends on budget airlines.

In the first two months of 2017, tourist visits rose 20 per cent from the same period last year, according to Halevi. The one-night stay in the beachfront suite is free for winners of a contest run through hotels.com. Contenders took pictures of themselves in beach gear, holding signs with the hashtag #TakeMe2TelAviv.

Fifteen winners from Europe will stay in the suite before it is taken down in two weeks. Plans are in the works for a similar pop-up hotel in Jerusalem's Old City, Halevi said.—*Reuters*

People help decorate a lifeguard tower as it is renovated into a luxury hotel suite, as part of an international online competition, at Frishman Beach in Tel Aviv, Israel on 13 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

4th Waning of Taboung 1378 ME | Thursday, 16 March 2017

Leicester into quarter-finals after victory over Sevilla

Leicester City's Christian Fuchs in action with Sevilla's Vitolo during the UEFA Champions League Round of 16 Second Leg between Leicester City and Sevilla at King Power Stadium in Leicester, England on 14 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

LEICESTER — Back from the depths of despair Leicester City once again scaled improbable heights with a tumultuous 2-0 victory over Spanish club Sevilla to reach the quarter-finals of the Champions League on Tuesday.

Skipper Wes Morgan's 28th minute effort and Marc Albrighton's precise shot after the break saw Craig Shakespeare's team overturn the 2-1 defeat they suffered in former manager Claudio Ranieri's final match in charge.

Sevilla missed a penalty and had Samir Nasri sent off as their hopes of a first ever quarter-final in the Champions League evaporated inside a rocking King Power Stadium.

Leicester, who are battling relegation in the Premier League, have now won all three games since Ranieri was sacked and replaced by Shakespeare.

Sevilla, who had not conceded an away goal in this season's competition, piled forward in the closing minutes but Champions League debutants Leicester held firm on a tumultuous night.

It looked ominous for Leicester in the early exchanges as Sevilla sought an away goal that would have put them in complete control of the tie.

Leicester keeper Schmeichel was forced into a great save to keep out Nasri's stinging shot after the former Manchester City player turned neatly in the box. Sevilla struggled to find their passing rhythm though as Leicester worked tirelessly to press their opponents.

A well-organised Leicester looked increasingly dangerous from set pieces and it was from a Riyad Mahrez free kick that they took the lead with skipper Morgan bundling the ball into the Sevilla net with his thigh.

Ahead on away goals the situation played perfectly into Leicester's hands as they sat deep and broke quickly with Jamie Vardy always a threat on the counter-attack.

Sevilla began the second half with more purpose and came within a coat of paint of equalising in the 54th minute when Sergio Escudero's dipping effort from 30 metres beat Schmeichel but struck the underside of the crossbar. It proved a pivotal moment as less than a minute later the ball dropped kindly for Marc Albrighton just inside the penalty area and he was allowed time and space to dispatch a left-foot shot past Sevilla keeper Sergio Rico. Just when Sevilla were beginning to pin Leicester back in their own area Nasri needlessly got himself sent off after squaring up to Vardy with both players bumping foreheads.

Nasri received a second yellow card while Vardy, an irritation all night to Sevilla, was cautioned.

Sevilla were handed a lifeline almost immediately though when Schmeichel clattered into Vitolo and the referee awarded a penalty.

N'Zonzi was handed the task of putting Sevilla back into the tie but his weak kick was saved by Schmeichel. —*Reuters*

AFC set June date for North Korea and Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR — The Asian Cup qualifier between Malaysia and North Korea, which was postponed last week due to strained relations between the two countries, has been rescheduled to 8 June, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said on Wednesday.

AFC Secretary General Dato' Windsor John told a media conference in Kuala Lumpur that the North had been given until 14 April to propose a neutral venue for the match and said there had been no suggestion it would be cancelled.

Malaysia's Football Association (FAM) had asked for the 28 March game to be moved away from Pyongyang under pressure from its government following the recent breakdown in relations.

The two countries have become embroiled in a growing row after Malaysia accused North Korea of assassinating Kim Jong Nam, the estranged half-brother of Pyongyang ruler Kim Jong Un, at Kuala Lumpur International Airport on 13 February. "The match is now confirmed to be played on 8 June," Windsor John said. "We have also told them (North Korea) to come back with a neutral venue, in the event the diplomatic situation is not solved." Formerly friendly relations between the two countries soured in the wake of an investigation into last month's murder. Angered by the Malaysian police identifying North Korean suspects and wanting to question others, North Korea slapped a travel ban on Malaysians leaving its borders, prompting tit-for-tat action by Malaysia. "In terms of organisation of the match we have no issue. But when you have a travel ban, then that becomes an issue," he added. "We cannot override government laws, because the government has a responsibility to protect the citizens. So we need to respect that rule." The two nations were due to open the final phase of qualifying for the 2019 Asian Cup finals with their Group B encounter at Kim Il Sung Stadium at the end of this month.

"North Korea have not given any indication that they do not want to play the match," Windsor John added. "At the moment they are just looking to find a neutral venue in case things do not return to normal."—*Reuters*

Atletico's Gameiro out of Leverkusen game, Torres returns

MADRID — Atletico Madrid must see out their Champions League last 16 tie against Bayer Leverkusen without Kevin Gameiro, their standout player from the 4-2 win in the first leg, although they welcome back fellow striker Fernando Torres from a head injury.

Frenchman Gameiro scored and had an assist in the impressive victory in Germany but stomach pains meant he was left out of the squad for Wednesday's second leg, where Atletico are aiming to reach the quarter-finals for a fourth year in a row.

Torres, who also got on the scoresheet in Leverkusen, returns to the squad for the first time since suffering head trauma against Deportivo La Coruna on 2 March, although captain Gabi and defender Filipe Luis are suspended. Leverkusen are in a process of transition after Roger Schmidt was sacked on 5 March following an embarrassing 6-2 thrashing at Borussia Dortmund and his successor Tayfun Korkut said the odds were stacked against his side progressing.

"We know we're not favourites to go through but we'll try to come back against a great Atletico side who have a lot of experience at this level. I have confidence in my players," Korkut told a news conference.—*Reuters*

Manchester United's Marcos Rojo and teammates remonstrate with referee Michael Oliver after Ander Herrera was shown a red card during the FA Cup quarter-final between Manchester United and Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on 13 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Manchester United charged after FA Cup loss to Chelsea

LONDON — Manchester United have been charged with failing to control their players during Monday's 1-0 FA Cup quarter-final defeat at Chelsea, the FA said.

The charge relates to an incident in the 35th minute of the match at Stamford Bridge. United have until 1800 GMT on Friday to respond to the charge.

Referee Michael Oliver was surrounded by several United players after Ander Herrera sent off for a second yellow card after two ill-judged tackles on Chelsea forward Eden Hazard.

United manager Jose Mourinho, returning to the club where he won seven major trophies, and Chelsea's Italian coach Antonio Conte also had to be separated after an angry exchange shortly after the sending off.—*Reuters*

Editorial Section — (+95) (01)8604529, Fax — (01) 8604305
gnlmdaily@gmail.com
www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
www.facebook.com/globalnewlightofmyanmar
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