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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. III, No. 340, 10th Waning of Taboung 1378 ME | www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com | Wednesday, 22 March 2017

US transport ship makes port call in Myanmar

A port call to Myanmar yesterday by the USNS Fall River marks the first time a Navy ship has visited the Southeast Asian nation since World War II.

The expeditionary fast transport vessel carrying 139 crew members and Capt Standfield L Chien arrived at the Myanmar International Terminal Thilawa (MITT) in the country's former capital Yangon yesterday and it was welcomed by senior navy officers of Myanmar and the US navy attaché to Myanmar.

They will stay in Myanmar for five days before heading to Malaysia.

During the five-day stay, a musician band from the vessel will meet with Myanmar musicians and will hold workshops on art.

The band will stage a performance at the US Centre on 24 March, according to the press release of the US Embassy in Yangon.—*Myanmar News Agency*

The expeditionary fast transport ship USNS Fall River arrives in Myanmar International Terminal Thilawa in Yangon.
PHOTO: ZAW GYI (PANITA)

Anti-money laundering issues discussed

THE Central Committee for Anti Money Laundering held its Meeting No 1/2017 yesterday at the hall of the Ministry of Home Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw, with an opening address by the Committee Chairman Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe.

The Secretary of the Committee, Chief of Myanmar Police Force Police Maj-Gen Zaw Win, discussed the works progress for the decision made in the previous meeting last year.

A member of the Committee, the Director General of the Bureau of Special Investigation, made an explanation for the investigative works under the Anti-Money Laundering Law.

Police Colonel Kyaw Win Thein, the joint secretary of the Committee explained the implementation of Myanmar's anti-money laundering drive and terrorism financing as part of the work procedure of Asia/Pacific Group (APG) on Money Laundering, which includes mutual evaluation in the member countries, the amendment of the anti-money laundering law, the forming of a working committee for mutual evaluation in the member countries in 2017, giving assignments to supervision, reporting fixed assets and making orders for disclosures.

The meeting was attended by 15 committee members and six special invitees. Probes were taken into 93 cases related with money laundry, 56 cases were completed and 15 cases are under investigation in the one-year period of the incumbent government which took office in March, 2016.—*Myanmar News Agency*

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LOCAL Business

Myanmar coffee shows facts improvement

Twenty six of the 72 coffees judged at a recent coffee competition scored 85 or higher, indicating that the quality of Myanmar coffee is quickly improving, according to the Myanmar Coffee Association.

The highest-scoring coffee at the third annual Myanmar Coffee Association Coffee Quality Competition was a brew made from beans that underwent a dry, natural process from Ywangan, submitted by the Mandalay Coffee Group. The entry scored 89.58 points, two points higher than last year's winner and more than five points higher than the winner of the first competition in 2015, according to the MCA.

The winning entries represented a 150 per cent increase in coffees that scored 85 or above over last year's submissions.

The MCA reported that beans known as dry naturals that are grown by manageable-scale farmers represented the majority of the 85+ coffees at the competition, which featured flavors including orange, lemon, strawberry and red currant.

The competition was the result of the USAID-funded Value Chains for Rural Development project, implemented by Winrock International, and organised by the Myanmar Coffee Association and Coffee Quality Institute (CQI).

The competition's judges included head judge Dr. Sunalini Menon of Coffee Lab International (India), and five national judges, known as cuppers, led by Charlie Habegger of Blue Bottle Coffee (United States), using rules from the Specialty Coffee Association.

Top-scoring samples from the competition, along with numerous other coffees from participating communities in Myanmar, will be entered into the upcoming London Coffee Festival in the United Kingdom, held between April 6-9. The coffees will also be cupped in the United States during the SCA Expo in Seattle on April 22 at the Washington State Convention Center.—*GNLM*

Workers sort coffee beans in Shan State's Mya Zedi Village, Ywarngan township. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MYANMAR COFFEE ASSOCIATION

State-owned enterprises to be privatised

SOME state-owned enterprises and workshops will be privatised within three to six months except those factories which play a crucial role for the nation, said U Kyaw Win, Union Minister for Planning and Finance.

"Some factories were suspended and we are considering whether these enterprises can be handed over to the local or foreign private businessmen or they are to be totally shut down," the union minister said.

"We are making efforts for handover of the enterprises between three to six months. If the competent government staff chooses to enter the companies, they will systematically be employed."

The private sector is the main player of economic development while the government role is just the navigator. Some government-run enterprises should be privatised without jeopardising worker's rights, said U Kyaw Win.—*Mon Mon*

KBZ to participate Cathay United Bank's banking class

CATHAY United Bank, one of the largest commercial banks in Taiwan, will conduct a banking training in Taipei from 22 to 24 March.

Ten functionaries from the International Banking Division of Kanbawza Bank Ltd. left from Yangon or Mandalay to attend the workshop. The workshop will cover such subjects as treasury, bonds and remittance.

Mr. Peter Pan, Chief Representative to Myanmar for Cathay United Bank, escorted the functionaries led by KBZ International Banking Department Director-General U Win Lwin who were departing from Yangon International Airport.

Kanbawza Bank Ltd. is one of the top banks in Myanmar aiming for international standards and to provide the best services to its customers while developing human resources.—*Thura Lwin*

Functionaries from KBZ pose for a photo before departure for Taipei.

Number of trucks entering Muse depot decreasing as a result of extortion

THE number of trucks entering the Muse depot is decreasing because of ethnic armed groups near Kutkai Township in Shan State who are extorting money from the truck drivers traveling on Lashio-Muse Road, the main thoroughfare for China and Myanmar border trade, according to the Muse fruit depot.

Despite the fact that the Tatmadaw is clearing those armed groups along the route, the number of trucks entering Muse depot is still decreasing, which has resulted in a higher price for watermelon and muskmelon, said U Sai Khin Maung, the secretary of Muse fruit depot. Many of the trucks turned around and returned to their place of origin after being extorted. As word of the armed extortionists spread among truck driver, the inflow of trucks into Muse dropped, he continued.

Over 800 trucks loaded with watermelon and muskmelon flowed into Muse depot before the outbreak of the conflicts. Currently, about 400 trucks enter the Muse market. The price of watermelon increases from 1,800 to 2,200 Yuan per tonne. The high price is also attributed to the upcoming end season of watermelon and muskmelon, he added.—*Phyo Lwin Aung (AMIA)*

Myanmar Agribusiness Public Corporation preparing to sell its new shares

MYANMAR Agribusiness Public Corporation (MAPCO) is reportedly preparing its new equity shares to sell to the public at the end of April in order to invest in other businesses.

They are currently under discussion with the Securities Exchange Commission of Myanmar (SECM). The selling of new stocks will start after the Thingyan Festival.

The public eyes MAPCO's shares and currently, over 1 million volumes of stocks have been applied to make a purchase. MAPCO gave first priority to existing share holders so that they can buy the new shares of equity which MAPCO is selling. The remaining stocks will be sold to the public, according to MAPCO.

MAPCO is also trying to trade its stock on Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX). There are currently four listed companies_ First Myanmar Investment (FMI), Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings Limited (MTSH), Myanmar Citizens Bank (MCB) and First Private Bank (FPB).

On 21st March, a total of 18,213shares worth Ks112,751,300 were traded on YSX and the share prices are Ks16,500 for FMI, Ks4,100 for MTSH, Ks9,300 for MCB and Ks31,000 for FPB at the closing time.—*Ko Khant*

Sales of jade continues for third day

STARTING at 8 am on Monday, the third day-sale of jade lots and uncut jade in Myanmar currency was held at the Mani Yadanar Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw.

Today, responsible officials opened tender bids in which prices were tendered for lots of jewels the day before, announcing tender winners.

In addition, those wishing to purchase put tender bids for prices for lot No. 1 to lot No. 1500 of jade lots, into tender boxes. Tenders for lot No. 1501 to lot No. 3000 will be sold on March 23 by open tender, with lot No. 3001 to lot N. 4454 on March 22, it is learnt. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Merchants observe jade stones on the third day of the Gems and Jade Emporium in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Pre-Thingyan sales by YGN Fashion Village

A pre-Thingyan fashion sales festival (YGN Fashion Village) will be held ahead of the water festival at People's Square in Yangon on 8 and 9 April. At the event, the trendy clothing, cosmetics and fashion accessories popular in Bangkok, China and South Korea will be on sale, according to the YGN Fashion Village committee.

Over 100 shops will be represented at the event to sell the famous brands. Hair design shops will also be opened for people who wish to celebrate the water festival with a new hairstyle.

"The sales festival will be held for two days from 10 am to 10 pm. There will also be entertainment programmes at the event from 6 pm to 10 pm," said an official from the YGN Fashion Village committee.

The shops will be built with thatched roofs to create the water festival mood.— *200*

Illegally cut lumber, vehicles seized in Mabein Township

Seized illegally cut timbers are loaded the vehicle. PHOTO: MNA

WHILE launching aarea-clearance operation, government troops seized 944.8 tonnes of illegally cut timber, 13 different kinds of vehicles used in the lumber and forestry industry and other related equipment near the village of Tonekwa in Mabein township, in Northern Shan State, it is learnt.

On 18 and 19 March, government troops launched an area clearance operation 6 ½ miles south east of Tonekwa village, seizing 402 tonnes of teak logs, 537 tonnes of teak timber, nearly one tonne of Tamalan wood, one-and-a-half tonnes of Pitauk wood, and 2 ½ tonnes of Pitauk timber. Also confiscated was one crane, two Yamform-type vehicles, one Foton-type, five three-ground vehicles, four Tonepham-type vehicles, four cutting machines, one generator and two round saws.

Similarly, 147 vehicles used in illegal wood cutting industry were seized in Manweingyi area, it is learnt. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Yangon-Dala Bridge to be built next month

A Korea-Myanmar friendship bridge will begin to be constructed at the end of April. Local authorities have already paid on 16 and 17 March compensation to the people who were forced to move to make way for the Yangon-Dala bridge. Local authorities have planned to build a project office after the water festival, according to U Thin Oo, a member of the bridge project executive committee.

The first instalment of the compensation for Dala bridge project amounted to Ks1 billion, which was paid on 17 February, 2016, and Ks39.79 billion were paid for the remaining three houses. Also, compensation amounting to Ks4.21 billion was again paid on 16 and 17 March to those who had to move because their houses were situated on the road on which the bridge will be built.

The four-lane Dala bridge will be 6,143 feet long, 160 feet high and 525 feet wide. The Dala bridge is expected to cost US$168.174 million, $137.833 million of which will be received from a loan from Korea's Economic Development Cooperation Fund, with $30.341 million from the local fund.

The two governments signed an agreement on 16 November 2015 to build the Dala bridge, which will be built within five years and was slated to be completed in 2020.

The bridge will also feature a fresh water pipeline to distribute water from Yangon to Dala. The bridge will contribute to the development of both Dala and other townships across the Yangon River including Twante, Kawhmu and Kungyangon. — *The Mirror*

Right to collect entrance fee at Inle Lake fetches over Ks 3 billion at auction

THE right to collect entrance and zone fees at Inle Lake from foreigners in the next fiscal year 2017-2018 reportedly fetched over Ks 3 billion at auction.

The right to collect entrance fees was put out to tender on 20th March at the Shan State government office, with 11 businessmen participating in competitive bidding. This was the highest price tendering since last year, an increase of over Ks800million. This right was won with bids of over Ks 1.52 billion in 2015-2016 and over Ks 2.22 billion in 2016-2017. The first winner who bid the highest price at the competitive bidding is needed to be in conformity with the set rules. If he fails to abide by the rules, the authorities will give the chance to the second and third-place winners.

Half of the money from tendering is to be spent on development activities for the Inle Lake area, according to an announcement of the Shan State government.—*Ko Htet*

Scenic view of tourists at Inle Lake. PHOTO: THIHA TUN

Malaysia mulls naval upgrades amid IS threat, South China Sea standoff

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia is gunning for a revamp of its aging naval fleet, as countries in the region prepare to face threats from the influx of Islamic State (IS) militants fleeing Mosul, and from rising tensions in the South China Sea.

Defence spending in the Asia Pacific region is expected to hit $250 billion from 2016-20, IHS Janes Defence Weekly said in December, and Malaysia intends to improve on its capabilities alongside other states in the hotly contested South China Sea, even as its defence budget narrows. Malaysia's navy aims to replace all 50 vessels in its aging fleet as the country cut its total defence budget by 12.7 per cent to 15.1 billion ($3.41 billion) this year. That will be led by the procurement of four littoral mission ships (LMS) built in collaboration with China.

"The LMS are designed for many aspects of maritime security such as dealing with cross-border crime, piracy, anti-terrorism and search and rescue operations," Malaysian navy chief Ahmad Kamarulzaman Ahmad Badaruddin told Reuters in an interview.

"These ships would be very capable of dealing with the threat posed by Daesh and other maritime security concerns," Kamarulzaman said, referring to the Arabic acronym for the IS.

Malaysia is expected to formalise the LMS deal with China at the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA) this week to build four LMS and acquire the technology to construct more of the ships at home. The navy hopes this will enable them to eventually obtain a total of 18 LMS.

Plans to acquire four LMS from China were first announced in November.

Over 500 exhibitors from 36 countries will parade their wares at this year's LIMA, which is held every two years on the northern duty-free island of Langkawi. Kamarulzaman said they are also in the final stages of negotiations with French shipbuilder DCNS to launch a programme to build the larger littoral combat ships (LCS), which he said should be formally announced in August or September this year.

The navy is also looking to acquire three new multi-role support ships (MRSS) and two more submarines to round off the fleet. The naval build-up in the region comes as tensions rise in the South China Sea, where Beijing's creation of artificial islands has alarmed some Asian countries and stoked friction between China's navy and the US air force. China claims most of the South China Sea, through which $5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes every year. The Philippines, Viet Nam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei also have overlapping claims.

Under President Joko Widodo, Indonesia's total defence spending jumped around 26 per cent, and last month Thailand's military government approved a 13.5 billion baht ($389.05 million) submarine deal with China after putting the purchase on hold last year.

Members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), however, need to share intelligence if they want their big-ticket buys to be of any use, said Shahriman Lockman, a senior analyst with the Kuala Lumpur-based Institute of Strategic and International Studies.

Shahriman said asset upgrades like Malaysia's LMS programme are important, but stressed that such high-value procurements would end up sailing blindly without strong intelligence sharing among the 10 ASEAN members, supported by a wide network of surveillance equipment.

"We're talking military patrol aircraft, radars, drones... and in bigger numbers. Quantity is a quality of its own. It doesn't make sense to aspire to top-of-the-range equipment but in small numbers," Shahriman said.

"Equipment that contributes to maritime domain awareness ought to be the priority for all. You can't fight what you can't see." —*Reuters*

China says number of "terror attacks" is down, but threat remains high

BEIJING — The number of violent attacks by "terrorist cells" in China has dropped due to increased security measures, state media reported on Tuesday, however it also cited experts as saying the level of attempted violence remains high.

China says it faces a serious threat from violent extremism, particularly in its western region of Xinjiang, where hundreds of people have been killed in recent years in unrest between mostly Muslim ethnic Uighurs and majority Han Chinese.

Officials say there is a campaign by separatists there who want to set up an independent state called East Turkestan. However, rights groups doubt the existence of a coherent militant group in Xinjiang and say Uighur anger at repressive Chinese policies is more to blame for the unrest.

"Violent attacks involving or orchestrated by terrorist cells" dropped in 2016, the official English-language China Daily newspaper reported, citing data from the Law Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

However, Li Wei, an anti-terrorism expert at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, told the China Daily: "People should realise that more attacks have been foiled at the planning stage. We haven't seen a significant drop in the number of attempted attacks."

The figures were not made available by the academy, the paper said. It said many "terrorist suspects" were born in the 1980s and 1990s, and that many cells were formed among family members.

According to the paper, the academy also said the threat of such attacks "might become more serious since overseas terrorist groups now have stronger influence in China and the connection between domestic and foreign terrorist groups has grown deeper".

Late last month, Uighurs purportedly fighting with the Islamic State militant group in Iraq released a video threatening China and vowing to shed Chinese blood.

Diplomatic sources in Beijing say that violence occurs more regularly in Xinjiang than is reported by authorities.

Thousands of Chinese armed police have staged mass parades and rallies in Xinjiang in recent weeks, in what officials have called a "declaration of war" on militants and separatist forces.

Along with the show of force, authorities have rolled out tough measures, from helicopter patrols to hefty rewards for tips, and mandatory satellite tracking for some vehicles.—*Reuters*

Former East Timor independence fighter on course for presidency

DILI — Former East Timorese independence fighter Francisco "Lu Olo" Guterres was on track on Tuesday to win the presidency in one round, based on early vote counting a day after Asia's youngest nation went to the polls.

Guterres, with nearly 60 per cent of the vote so far, held a solid lead over his seven rivals in the tiny nation's fourth election since independence from Indonesia in 2002. The national secretariat for technical and electoral administration had counted just over 30 per cent of votes by Tuesday morning. A candidate needs more than 50 per cent to win in one round. "I believe there won't be a second round," Guterres, who is backed by one of East Timor's main political parties Fretilin, said after early results were counted.

The election commission is expected to announce the result on 23 March. It will be verified by a court in about a month.

The central concern among East Timor's 1.2 million people has been a failure to spread wealth from oil and gas revenues, with unemployment running at around 60 per cent. Analysts said the challenge for any incoming government would be to wean the predominantly Roman Catholic nation away from reliance on oil money and diversify its sources of income into agriculture and manufacturing. The energy sector accounted for around 60 per cent of GDP in 2014 and more than 90 per cent of government revenue.

"I will push the government to work hard to make up the lag that we have seen in all other sectors of the economy," Guterres said. The former Portuguese colony was invaded by neighbouring Indonesia in 1975. A 24-year, often violent, resistance movement achieved East Timor's independence in 2002 and many of its key figures still feature prominently in the running of the country. Monday's election is the first since UN peacekeepers left the half-island nation in 2012. —*Reuters*

Villages develop countryside tourism in SW China's Sichuan

Photo taken on 21 March, 2017 shows the farmland in Ranyi Township of Qionglai City, southwest China's Sichuan Province. In recent years, villages in Sichuan Province developed the countryside tourism by improving the service and environment. PHOTO: XINHUA

Performances in One-Year Period

Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement moving towards change

Article – Nandar Win (MNA)
Photo – Aye Than (MNA)

"My son became addicted to drug. What shall I do?"

"A ten-year-old girl is tortured in --------- Township."

"Please help us as we are facing water scarcity."

These outcries are requests for help from the people who contact hotline 067 404666, 067 404777, 067 404222 and 067 404999.

The hotlines are set up by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement which are automatically directed to the preselected destination without any additional action by the user. Through these hotlines, social services and disaster response are carried out effectively.

> A Newsletter (a bulletin) has been published since December 2016 to inform the people in a transparent manner about the activities taken by the ministry.

Direct information

To fulfill the needs and tackle the problems of the people, to get the disaster information as quickly as possible and to listen to the voice of the people these hotlines are opened to all round the clock.

Moreover, a research centre is also established to produce evidence-based outcomes for making long- and short-term plans, to implement policies and to initiate laws.

Information sharing

Information Centre for Trafficked Victims is located in the compound of Social Welfare Science in Mayangone Township, Yangon Region to provide information regarding rehabilitation of trafficked persons.

A Newsletter (a bulletin) has been published since December 2016 to inform the people in a transparent manner about the activities taken by the ministry.

Fulfilling needs

Whenever disasters break out, the Union minister himself rushes to the scene to provide assistance and to console the victims. In meeting with people who are the victims of disasters and armed conflicts, their needs are fulfilled as quick as possible and prompt actions are taken to contact other ministries concerned to coordinate the affairs after hearing their voices.

Occasionally, the Union minister and officials meet their staff encouraging them to express their attitudes. On these occasions the Union minister and officials urged the staff to be duty-consciousness staff, explain about the rules and regulations to be followed and ethics to be practiced by the staff. They also inform the staff on peace process initiated by the State.

One of the measures taken by the ministry is inviting honourable persons to hold talks on anti-corruption and serving the interests of the people with the aim of changing the mindset of the staff. The ministry is also making close cooperation with the other ministries of executive branch and Hluttaw representatives of the legislative branch. The tasks of the ministry are strengthened by enlisting the help of civil societies accelerating cooperation with them.

Close cooperation with media

The Union minister and heads of the department under the ministry reply questions raised by media to give true stories to the public. The ministry also practices the principle of the right to know and it is closely cooperating with media at home and abroad. Vocational training schools are one of the activities carried out by the ministry. These schools are opened for workable force of men and women who have to take shelter at displaced person camps due to social and armed conflicts. Such courses as sewing, driving and artifacts are opened in Kachin State. Moreover, assistance is provided to those who have intentions to open residence-cum-shop in the camp. Those who want to raise livestock breeding on a manageable scale are also encouraged.

School-age children in the camps are also assisted and for their children's corners are set up there. The ministry urges those living in the camps to utter words of peace in these camps for the sake of eternal peace.

Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye meeting with the staff. PHOTO: MNA

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye meets with Muslim community in Northern Rakhine State. PHOTO: MNA

Working with youths

Arrangements have been made to bring about youth policy which will be initiated by youths themselves. In doing so, youths from the respective regions were organized to emerge a youth force that will serve national interests. The State Counsellor met youth representatives from regions and states on 1 January at the youth and peace conference organized by the ministry.

One of the achievements made by the ministry is drawing the rights of persons with disabilities bye-law which will fulfill the needs of the disabled as much as possible. Another law named the Older Person Law was promulgated on 30 December 2016 and in accord with the law, older persons of 90 and above may enjoy monthly provision of 10,000 kyat from the government's fund starting from 2017-2018 Fiscal Year. Children to enjoy their rights fully and to take severe actions against those who commit loathsome crime of statutory rape, the Child Law 1993 was amended by the Social Welfare Department under the ministry to be able to enact the Child Rights Law.The above-mentioned are efforts of the ministry, and women's rights are no exception. Myanmar enacted Protection and Prevention of Violence against Women Law and education on this matter is being disseminated to people.

Good news for new born up to two

Under the programme of social protection for the public, initial arrangements are being made for pregnant women and new born babies up to the age of two in Chin and Rakhine States and Naga Self Administered-Zone to enjoy monthly provision of 15,000 kyat.In other regions also, education programmes concerning nutritious food, personal hygiene and reproductive health will be conducted for the pregnant women and children under two (1000 days from the birth).

Women's weekly activities programmes aiming at development and participated by all the citizens have been held since 6 March. The Social Welfare Department has established One Stop Women Support Centre to solve the problems faced by women in various forms including domestic violence.

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PERFORMANCES IN ONE-YEAR PERIOD

>> FROM PAGE 5

With might and main

Myanmar's social welfare methods and technologies to be on a par with regional and international standards, the ministry puts its focus on creation of Social Work Institute. It is also striving for emergence of a social community completed with human dignity in which all the citizens can enjoy basic human rights in accordance with the norms of democracy.

The Relief and Resettlement Department

The main duties of the Relief and Resettlement Department are disaster prevention, taking preparedness measures against disasters, carrying out emergency relief works and rehabilitations tasks. These measures are too important for national development and mitigation of loss caused by natural disasters.

In its efforts to provide emergency relief in case of out breaking of disaster, National Natural Disaster Management Committee chaired by the vice-president and 12 work committees led by Union ministers were formed and effective managements could be made in the respective sectors.

New management forms which are more effective in providing emergency relief tasks have been established for the public who face natural disasters. From the funds of National Natural Disaster Management Committee and from the budget of the ministry a total of nearly 10,000 million kyat can be provided to fulfill the immediate needs of people, and for rehabilitation and socio-development of the victims.

Making ready

Having an emergency kit of supplies ready and on hand at the warehouses of the department in regions and states, emergency relief works can be carried out promptly. Moreover plans are underway to double and triple the rate of provisions in 2017-2018 Fiscal Year and to reach relief items into the hands of victims immediately and fully.

Last year, Myanmar suffered water scarcity due to El nino. The ministry did not sit idly while people were suffering from catastrophe. It delivered potable water, sank artesian wells and tube wells, dredged wells and water ponds, established temporary water tanks and provided water purifiers. The endeavours met with success and the ministry won the trust of the people.

The ministry supervised developing of programs for DAN Mobile Application which gives knowledge on disasters and for KOBO Mobile Application used for sending information on disaster situation. It is now trying for these applications to become widely used applications among the people. In addition, 45 single side bands were installed at far-flung areas not to cause communication interruption in time of emergency.

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye presents cash assistance to a patient receiving medical treatment at the hospital. PHOTO: MNA

Earthquake forum

To strengthen preventive measures against earthquake and responsive quality, earthquake forums were held in Yangon and Mandalay regions from 8 to 22 October last year. A workshop on earthquake was also organized in Nay Pyi Taw on 24 January this year.

Coordination meetings and workshops were held in regions and states to seek ways and means to cooperate with civil societies and foundations in times of disasters. The first ever cooperation is being made in programmes of preparedness measures against tempest in Mandalay, Magway and Sagaing Regions.

Together with Indonesia, Myanmar took a leading role in drawing ASEAN Disaster Recovery Reference Guide which aimed at taking preparedness measures and carrying out effective rehabilitation among ASEAN member countries. Arrangements are made to circulate the guide to all member countries.

Response ability

The Relief and Resettlement Department prepared a draft of National Framework for Community Disaster Resilience to create a community with high ability of response. In making the draft, it coordinated with the respective government agencies, representatives from various organizations and Asia Development Bank receiving technical assistance from the Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group.

Emergency Operation Centre was established to inform news about the weather and disaster, to take preventive measures, to report the situation to the decision makers and to do research works.

Disaster management training school, was opened in Hinthada, Ayeyawady Region in 2015 and the school conducted 20 courses on disaster. Now the school is arranging to link with training schools in foreign countries.

Safe haven

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, with utmost efforts and practicing sustainable social protection system that covers all mankind, is actively taking part in nation-building endeavours for Myanmar to become disaster resilient nation.

It is sure that with the active cooperation of the entire people, the ministry's goal is within easy reach as it won trust of the people.

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye presents certificate of honour to Nang Kham Noung co. founder of the KBZ's Brighter Future Myanmar Foundation. PHOTO: MNA

> The main duties of the Relief and Resettlement Department are disaster prevention, taking preparedness measures against disasters, carrying out emergency relief works and rehabilitations tasks.

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye giving words of encouragement to the villagers. PHOTO: MNA

Photo shows vehicles donated by KBZ Brighter Future Myanmar Foundation. PHOTO: MNA

South Korea's Park apologises, promises cooperation in graft probe

SEOUL — Ousted South Korean president Park Geun-hye apologised to the country on Tuesday as she arrived at prosecutors' offices for questioning as a criminal suspect in a corruption scandal that has gripped the country for months.

Park, 65, became South Korea's first democratically elected president to be removed from office when the Constitutional Court this month upheld her impeachment by parliament in December.

She has been accused of colluding with a friend, Choi Soon-sil, to pressure big businesses to donate to two foundations that backed her policy initiatives. Park and Choi have both denied wrongdoing.

"I am sorry to the people. I will faithfully cooperate with questioning," Park said in front of media at the steps of the prosecutors' office building, her first comments directly to the public since she was dismissed.

Park has not been charged but could face more than 10 years in jail if convicted of receiving bribes from bosses of big conglomerates, including Samsung Group chief Jay Y. Lee, in return for favours.

After about five hours of questioning, an official from the prosecutors' office told reporters Park had been forthcoming but he declined to elaborate on what she had been asked, on her responses or on what charges she might face.

Park's fate and the widening corruption investigation have gripped the country at a time of rising tension with North Korea and China.

South Korea's ousted leader Park Geun-hye arrives at a prosecutor's office in Seoul, South Korea, on 21 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Hundreds of Park's flag-waving supporters gathered outside her home in Seoul's upmarket Gangnam district to see her off, and later gathered outside the prosecution office.

Television cameras followed her as she was driven in a black sedan to the office, a few minutes away from her home, escorted by police who cleared the road. Earlier, media saw Park's hairdresser arriving at her home.

Park was dressed in a dark navy coat and trouser suit with grey shoes, and looked sombre as she stood to deliver her brief remarks.

Park, who was accompanied by two of her lawyers, was given tea before her first session of questioning by two prosecutors and an investigation official, prosecutors said in a statement.

One of her lawyers, Yoo Yeong-ha, is known as her "Bulletproof Vest" and has been her legal voice since the beginning of the scandal in October.

Park declined to have her questioning recorded by video camera, prosecutors said.

She later had a lunch break of some seaweed rice rolls and a sandwich, one of her lawyers said.

The questioning is expected to last late into the night and another of her lawyers, Sohn Bum-kyu, told a television channel Park would choose whether it would go beyond midnight.

Prosecutors could detain her but the official from the prosecutors' office, who briefed reporters on the condition he not be identified, said Park would go home after this session.

He declined to say if she would be summoned again or whether a warrant for her arrest would be filed.

Sohn said Park's health was not at its best and she had been getting medical checks between questioning sessions. The prosecution official said his office had not received any medical note regarding her health.

The scandal has undermined support for Park's conservative ruling party. A liberal opposition politician, Moon Jae-in, is leading in opinion polls and is expected to win a snap presidential election on 9 May.

Park's supporters and opponents have held protests in Seoul for months but police have managed to keep them apart and no serious violence has broken out between them.

A spokesman for Moon said uncovering the truth would help heal divisions.

"We want former president Park to tell the truth and ask for forgiveness. All are equal before the law," said the spokesman, Park Kwang-on. "Finding the truth is a first step for the unity of the people."

A top official from Park's party urged prosecutors not to be swayed by public opinion but to find the truth and give Park the cordial treatment a former president deserved.

"Everyone, not only me, is feeling miserable and distressed," the party official, Chung Woo-taik, told a meeting. *—Reuters*

Indian courts award cars, trains to compensate for land as cases drag on

MUMBAI — A farmer in northern India became the owner of an express train last week after a court awarded him the train in a decade-old land acquisition case, highlighting the lengthy and sometimes absurd court battles over land in the country.

Sampuran Singh approached a local court after state-owned Northern Railways in 2012 failed to adequately compensate him for land it acquired in 2007, his lawyer Rakesh Gandhi said.

When the railways failed to pay more compensation as ordered by the court in 2015, Singh appealed to a district court in Punjab state, which awarded him the station master's office and the 20-coach passenger train.

"My client is a poor farmer, and he was paid less than half the compensation ordered," said Gandhi, who handed the court order to the train driver last week with Singh.

"But we let the train go, as we did not want to inconvenience the passengers," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Railway authorities have asked for three weeks to pay the money due to Singh.

As land is sought for industrial and development projects in India, more such acquisitions are being contested in court, largely over compensation.

With a confusing web of land laws, matters related to land and property make up about two-thirds of all civil cases in the country.

The award of a train is one of several odd rulings by Indian courts in land cases in recent years, using the seizure of state property to enforce judgements that might otherwise be ignored.

As cases drag on for years, courts are responding creatively, said Namita Wahi, who heads the land rights initiative at the Delhi-based Centre for Policy Research.

Awarding property or ordering the auction of property to recover dues from someone who fails to pay up — a legal process called "attachment" — is standard procedure, Wahi said.

"These cases are making the news because the properties are trains and cars.

The courts may be fed up with the intransigence of the officials, and probably know they would be embarrassed by all the attention."

In 2015, a court near Delhi ordered a car belonging to the state urban development authority be attached after they failed to compensate the petitioner whose land they acquired in 1990.

A court in the southern state of Karnataka awarded an express train as compensation in a 2006 land acquisition case.

Railways officials in the northern state of Himachal Pradesh handed over cash to two farmers after they stopped the train they had been awarded as compensation in 2015. *—Reuters*

Thai soldier charged with murder in controversial killing of ethnic youth activist

BANGKOK — A Thai soldier was charged on Tuesday with murdering a youth activist from an ethnic minority in an anti-drugs operation, police said, a case that has sparked concern among rights groups which have called for an independent investigation.

Human Rights Watch said army officers had used anti-drug operations in the past as a cover for attacks on activists who exposed official wrongdoing or defended minority rights.

Chaiyaphum Pa-sae, a 17-year-old advocate for the rights of ethnic Lahu and other vulnerable ethnic minorities in northern Thailand, was shot on Friday.

The soldier turned himself in to police on Tuesday and was charged with murder, said Police Colonel Chonlathep Maichai, of Chiang Dao district police station in the ancient walled city of Chiang Mai. "We'll give justice to both sides," Chonlathep told Reuters.

An army incident report said soldiers found 2,800 methamphetamine pills in a car in which Chaiyaphum and his friend were driving. The two were taken into custody, but Chaiyaphum ran away and was about to throw a grenade at the officers, prompting the soldier to shoot, it said. Army spokesman Colonel Winthai Suvaree told reporters the soldier shot in self-defence.

"We'll prove whether Chaiyaphum's killing, committed by the authorities, was justified by law," defence lawyer Sumitchai Hattasan told Reuters. The Thai army has previously been criticized by rights groups for enforced disappearances of human rights defenders. Amnesty International called on the government to "immediately order an independent, impartial and effective investigation into the killing" in a statement on Tuesday. Human Rights Watch also called for a thorough investigation. "Ethnic minorities in Thailand will never have full equality so long as those acting on their behalf face grave risks every day and killings such as this are not investigated properly," said Asia director Brad Adams. *—Reuters*

Opinion

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Soft powers that influence young minds

Khin Maung Oo

"THE pen is mightier than the sword," as the saying goes. Once in the past, a pen might have been the only weapon. Yet, nowadays, with the advancing technologies, we now have similarly effective mass media. Among them, radio, TV and movies can be said to influence most people from all walks of life because of their availability, accessibility, affordability and ease of use. Also, websites such as Facebook are the quickest means to spread information worldwide without a second's delay. Especially, today's TVs are broadcasting Pay TV channels and free TV channels, all the time. Thus, some people become couch potatoes while enjoying educative, informative and entertainment programs provided by TVs, before they realize it. Workers, salaried people and students spend their leisure hours, especially at night. Undeniably, we have many advantages from these media. Firstly, we can have recreation. And, they give us much knowledge. We come to know about the wonders of the world and many things that are worth knowing. By watching Korean movies, especially our youths come to know the Korean language, as if by osmosis, over a period of time.

Our youths are very astute. They are quick at learning. Local film stars imitate hair styles, fashion and dressing styles of foreign actors and actresses. The good-looking appearance of these stars made our Myanmar younger minds copy their styles and dialogues, regardless of likes or dislikes towards their acting. Thus, film stars, including those playing supporting roles become the apples of their eyes of our public. In fact, these stars, movie producers and movie directors should value their popularity. They all have effective powers in building the nation. They were dutiful in political movements throughout Myanmar history. Apparently enough, they took active part in the previous 2015 general elections to be supportive in the formation of a clean government with good governance. To put it simply, they became less active in political movements after the 2015 general elections. I would not like our film stars to think that their duty has come to an end. Not only for this incumbent government but also future governments which will come after 2020, they should take responsibilities, and stand up for the interests of the people.

What we urgently need at the present is to gain nationwide peace. Without peace, we cannot build up a modern and developed Federal Democratic Union. Now, our national brethren living in some parts of the country are being displaced by armed conflicts, running for their lives. We also still need to have protection of the rule of law, so as to be able to live without any worries. I want to urge our able writers and directors to encourage actors and actresses, who have won the love and admiration of the public to perform in their well-produced stories to help the peace process currently being implemented by the Union Peace Commission. Likewise our State Counsellor and statesmen, we, the whole populace, acknowledge the value and influence of all actors and actresses and directors in the beloved movie world. As for them who have soft powers that influence the people, I hope they will make the right responses to our needs, in recognition of our Cetana.

Modernisation fuels new lending in Myanmar's banking sector

Oxford Business Group

FOREIGN banks may be granted greater access to Myanmar's domestic financial market as a way of servicing local demand for trade financing.

At the end of February the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) announced it was considering expanding the range of services that foreign lenders in the country can offer by allowing them to provide trade-only accounts to importers and exporters, which local banks are unable to do so.

Of the 24 domestic banks, nine are involved in trade financing; however, the level of credit they can extend is often inadequate to meet demand due to a lack of capital.

International banks are currently restricted to providing financial services to foreign corporations and domestic lenders; however, giving them a mandate to support Myanmar traders could help facilitate higher levels of trade and therefore tax revenue.

The CBM is committed to opening up Myanmar's financial sector further through a "staggered process", U Win Thaw, director general of its foreign exchange management department, told media last month, while giving local lenders the chance to develop and keep pace with reforms.

Opening doors

Last year the government granted new licences to four overseas banks: Vietnam's Bank for Investment and Development, E Sun Commercial Bank of Taiwan, Korea's Shinhan Bank and State Bank of India. This took the total number of foreign lenders authorised to operate in Myanmar to 13.

The entrance of these foreign institutions increased the number of banks in the marketplace by one-third and added around MMK1.6trn ($1.2bn) in combined regulatory capital to the system, tripling the previous total.

PHOTO: NYI ZAW MOE

> The CBM is committed to opening up Myanmar's financial sector further through a "staggered process".

U Kyaw Kyaw Maung, governor of the CBM, spoke of the possibility of opening up the sector further, as foreign lenders have helped advance modernisation efforts.

"The entry of foreign banks provides an unprecedented opportunity to develop a modern banking sector through the introduction of new financial products and risk management techniques," he told OBG last year. "Lending by foreign banks could become an important source of funding for the private sector."

According to Daniel Tan, general manager of the Yangon branch of Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation, it is important for the banking sector to broaden the range of financial services it offers, especially with regard to lending, as currently most companies looking to borrow from local banks need to provide collateral.

"Unlike in other countries, unsecured lending is difficult, as is lending against most forms of moveable property such as stock or receivables," he told OBG. "This greatly limits the amount of money that Myanmar companies can borrow."

Balancing act

However, as Myanmar's banking sector expands to meet the increased demand from local businesses, lenders could be exposed to higher levels of risk.

In its latest review of the country's economy, conducted in February, the IMF warned that accelerating levels of credit growth, which reached 32.3% in FY 2015/16, could leave the banking sector vulnerable.

Forecasting private credit to rise by 27.7% in FY 2016/17 and by 23.6% in 2017/18, the fund supports a cautious approach to fiscal policy to cope with these rapid increases.

The World Bank also sounded a note of caution about bank lending in its "Myanmar Economic Monitor, December 2016" report, emphasising a high concentration of credit across a narrow band of sectors. According to the bank's calculations, over the past three years, the wholesale and retail trade has soaked up 43% of all credit extended. Over the same period, lending to the agriculture, manufacturing and construction sectors accounted for 30% of the total.

The World Bank also observed a sharp rise in non-performing loans (NPLs) on the books of domestic banks. Using CBM data, the report said NPLs had more than doubled over 2016 to represent 3.6% of total loans. It added that the actual ratio might be higher still, as the current criteria for assessment are outdated and inconsistent with best practices in more developed nations.

Rising to challenges

In the face of these headwinds, the government has stepped up efforts to continue bringing domestic institutions in line with international standards of transparency and corporate governance.

Earlier this month, for example, the state started an audit of Myanmar's four state-owned banks – the first in decades. One of the primary aims of the endeavour, which is being undertaken in partnership with the World Bank, is to identify options for the restructuring of the sector as part of the drive towards modernisation.

In another move forward, an 18-member body known as the Private Sector Development Committee was formed in October 2016 with a remit to guide and coordinate policies to improve transparency and regulation in the financial sector.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives chinese ambassador to Myanmar

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with Chinese Ambassador Mr Hong Liang in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

SENIOR General Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, received Mr Hong Liang, Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar, at Zeyar Thiri Beikman in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

In the meeting, the Senior-General recounted the history of Laukkai Area, during which armed groups commenced to launch military operations in the north-eastern region in 2015, 2016 and 2017, with the armed groups' actions of launching military operations after refusing to accept the invitation of the Government of the Union and Tatmadaw for the political dialogue of the peace process. Also recounted were the many sacrifices and loss of life of the Tatmadaw, sufferings encountered by local people due to armed conflicts.

Matters relating to making the armed groups cease military operations, for the peace and stability between the two countries, were also discussed.

The ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Myanmar clarified situations harming the peace and stability of the border areas between the two countries due to the affairs in Myanmar-China border area and situations for the cooperation for the peace process in Myanmar. Actual events on the ground concerning the series of events in Laukkai and matters to be co-operated for the peace and stability of the border area were discussed.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Fire losses over the past decade in Magway totalled Ks 1.4 billion

FIRE-related losses between 2007 and 2016 in Magway Region reached over Ks1.4 billion, according to official figures issued by the Magway Region Fire Services Department.

Over the past decade, the number of fire accidents in Magway, one of the largest regions in Myanmar, reached 995, killing 139 people and injuring 185 individuals. In addition, the fire damaged properties of residents was worth Ks1.443 billion in total.

The majority of fires were caused by negligence. Some electrical fires occurred because of problems in wiring. The 995 cases also included 49 forest fires and a case of fire by lightning. A hundred cases are related to arson.

More than 1,000 farm animals were also killed by the blazes that occurred over the past ten years.

The highest number of fire accidents occurred in 2015, with 195 cases. The region saw only 40 cases in 2009.

The large monetary loss from fires occurred in 2007, totalling Ks384 million, according to the statistics of the department. Last year's fires destroyed about Ks280 million worth of properties.

Authorities continue to urge people to abide by the rules and suggestions given by the department to reduce accidental fires and to buy fire insurance policy to cover their dwellings and other properties from loss by fire.

Most of fires occurred in March and April, the hottest months of the year, a member of the region fire services department noted.—*Myanma Alinn*

Fundraisers seek donors through music

A FUNDRASING musical entrainment programme performed by popular vocalists will take place later this month in Yangon, according to an organiser.

To purchase essential machines for people suffering from eye diseases and a dialysis machine for those with kidney disease, a local charity named Arriyamaggin will organise a music show with the support of several vocalists, comedians and artists.

The new event is scheduled to be held on the Myanmar Armed Forces Day, which falls on 27 March at Mhyawsin Island of Kandawgyi Garden in Yangon from 5.30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Sithu Lwin, Min Mawgon, Pho Ka, Saw Pho Khwa, Shin Phone, Chan Chan, Eaint Chit, Sandi Myint Lwin, Tun Yati, Chaw Nge and other vocalists and artists will perform during the event with the bOxygen Music Band.

Tickets will be sold at Ks3,000. Tickets are available at City Mart supermarkets and Gamonepwint shopping malls.

For more information, dial 095182700, 09975777797 and 09975777787 of the charity and contact arriyamagginhealthcare@gmail.com.—*Shwe Khine*

Free medical care aims to reduce treatment gap

FREE healthcare services will be offered by a local philanthropic organisation in remote villages in Kyaukpyu Township in Rakhine State for the purpose of decreasing the treatment gap.

Plans are underway to open clinics in over 30 villages including Padetaung, Kulaba, Pyaingsekay, Kyattain and Saingchone this year, with plans to provide general medical cares to needy rural people who have a lack of health-related knowledge.

There are many villages without health staff and healthcare facilities in the country's far-flung areas. Some rural residents died when they suffered from early-stage of diseases because of the lack of access to medical professionals.

This is a major reason why Ba Nu Aung Healthcare Foundation has been established to fill the need of locals, said U Ba Nu Aung, the founder of the association.

The new foundation was founded with senior health staff, including retired nurses and midwives, on 19 March. They are now waiting for approval from respective authorities.

Expanding the number of healthcare centres in over 50 villages by 2018 is one of the goals set by the foundation.

Daw Ma Nu Tha, a resident from Pyaingsekaw Village, said the lack of modern health care for poor villagers means that these people mostly receive only traditional treatment using herbs and plants.

A lack of transportation and the cost of medicine are major barriers to receiving quality healthcare, she added.

Currently, there is one rural health branch with one staff member in two or three village-tracts in Kyaukpyu Township under the government plan.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Malaria outbreaks in Taninthayi decreased by half over five years

OUTBREAKS of Malaria in Taninthayi Region decreased by half over the past five years thanks to the region's malaria control programme, said Dr Kyaw Zeya.

Roughly 25,000 residents were infected with malaria in 2010. The number significantly declined to over 10,000 in 2015. A new survey of malaria for the years 2016 and 2017 is being conducted by the data collectors under the programme.

The malaria cases are mostly found in Kyunsu, Bokepyin and Myeik townships as well as some rural areas in Dawei Township.

Malaria is a mosquito-borne infectious disease affecting human and animals. It is most commonly transmitted by an infected female Anopheles mosquito. Most malaria transmission occurs in forested foothill zones below an altitude of 1,000 meters. High risk groups are residents near or in forests, plantation workers and migrants.

The Ministry of Health and Sports continues to distribute malaria drugs free of charge to all rural healthcare centres across the country so that drugs are within the reach of patients.

Taninthayi Region ranked seventh on the list of areas with reported outbreaks of malaria. Elimination tasks against the deadly disease have been aggressively conducted in the region.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

A girl gets tested to ensure a malaria bug at malaria clinic. PHOTO: REUTERS

FBI head denies Trump wiretap claim, confirms Russia election probe

WASHINGTON — The head of the FBI publicly challenged US President Donald Trump on Monday, denying the Republican's claim that former president Barack Obama wiretapped his 2016 election campaign and confirming his agency had launched a criminal investigation into any collusion between Trump's campaign and Russia. FBI Director James Comey told a congressional hearing he had seen no evidence to support a claim by Trump that Obama had wiretapped his campaign headquarters in Manhattan's Trump Tower. The president created a controversy in early March when he tweeted without giving evidence that Obama had wiretapped the campaign as the businessman took on Democrat Hillary Clinton in the presidential race. "With respect to the president's tweets about alleged wiretapping directed at him by the prior administration, I have no information that supports those tweets," Comey told the House of Representatives Intelligence Committee hearing. The committee is investigating accusations that Russia tried to influence the election mostly by hacking Democratic operatives' emails and releasing embarrassing information. Russia denies the allegations.

Comey confirmed the FBI has been investigating since last July possible Russian government efforts to interfere in the election, including any links between Trump's campaign and Moscow. He said that while the Russian government wanted to hurt Clinton's campaign and help Trump's, intelligence agencies made no judgment on whether the efforts influenced the outcome.

Comey gave no details of the classified investigation and said the fact that it exists does not mean charges will be filed.

US intelligence agencies have concluded that Russia tried to help Trump by hacking leading Democrats. Comey said Moscow had long been opposed to Trump's election rival, former secretary of state Clinton. "I think that was a fairly easy judgment for the (intelligence) community," he said. "Putin hated Secretary Clinton so much that the flip side of that coin was he had a clear preference for the person running against the person he hated so much."

Asked about Comey, White House spokesman Sean Spicer read a series of quotes from officials - some from the Obama administration - who have said they have seen no signs of collusion between Trump's campaign and Russia.

FBI Director James Comey testifies before the House Intelligence Committee hearing into alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 US election, on Capitol Hill in Washington, US on 20 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

In a tweet before the hearing, Trump wrote: "The Democrats made up and pushed the Russian story as an excuse for running a terrible campaign." Spicer said he was not aware of any White House official being under investigation by the FBI. Trump has frequently urged better relations with Russia, which has been at odds with the United States in recent years over Moscow's role in Ukraine and the Syrian civil war.

Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the intelligence committee, detailed activities by Trump advisers or associates with ties to Russia, including former election campaign manager Paul Manafort and Michael Flynn, who was forced out as Trump's national security adviser after talking to the Russian ambassador and then misrepresenting the conversation to Vice President Mike Pence.

"Is it possible that all of these events and reports are completely unrelated and nothing more than an entirely unhappy coincidence? Yes, it is possible," Schiff said. "But it is also possible, maybe more than possible, that they are not coincidental, not disconnected and not unrelated."

Trump's 4 March tweet about wiretapping, which was made without supporting evidence, pulled attention away from the claims of Russian interference in the election. He made the claim two days after Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who had met with Russia's US ambassador last fall, said he would remove himself from any investigation of Russian interference in the election. Trump and his advisers have contended in recent weeks that his claims of wiretapping were intended to mean surveillance of the Trump campaign in general but the White House has not provided evidence of surveillance of any kind.

Last week, Trump's spokesman cited a media report that Britain's GCHQ spy agency was behind the surveillance, prompting ridicule in Britain. The head of the US National Security Agency, Admiral Mike Rogers, told Monday's hearing that the allegation had strained relations with London. "I think it clearly frustrates a key ally of ours," Rogers said. Comey warned that Russia would attempt to influence the next US presidential election in 2020 and perhaps the congressional elections next year. "They'll be back in 2020. They may be back in 2018," he said. The hearing was a rare open congressional intelligence committee hearing and it revealed a stark partisan divide in focus. Majority Republicans concentrated their questions on leaks of classified information — a concern that Trump frequently mentions — and media reports on issues such as contacts between former Trump national security adviser Michael Flynn and Russian officials.—*Reuters*

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Printed and published at the Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the Global New Light of Myanmar Daily under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.

UK PM May says McGuinness played defining role in N Ireland's path to peace

LONDON — British Prime Minister Theresa May paid tribute on Tuesday to Martin McGuinness, the late former Irish Republican Army commander and deputy first minister of Northern Ireland, saying he had played a pivotal role in the province's path to peace. "While I can never condone the path he took in the earlier part of his life, Martin McGuinness ultimately played a defining role in leading the Republican movement away from violence," May said in a statement.

"In doing so, he made an essential and historic contribution to the extraordinary journey of Northern Ireland from conflict to peace." McGuinness, whose journey from street fighter to peacemaker began in the 1970s during Northern Ireland's "Troubles", died aged 66 after a short illness, his party Sinn Fein said. —*Reuters*

Man arrested at White House gate claimed Trump telepathy link

WASHINGTON — A Virginia man charged with making a bomb threat at a White House gate claimed to be communicating with President Donald Trump telepathically and said the bomb he had claimed to have was actually an asteroid, according to court documents filed on Monday.

Sean Keoughan, 29, of Roanoke, was arrested late on Saturday after he drove up to a White House checkpoint in a stolen Impala rental car. He got out and told Secret Service officers that he had a bomb, an Secret Service affidavit said.

"There's a bomb in the trunk. This is a test," he said before putting his hands in the air and being handcuffed.

Keoughan said he had a bag in the trunk containing an asteroid. He said that Trump had told him to tell officers that it held a bomb, the court filing said.

Keoughan said he was in touch with Trump telepathically through a process that let him communicate with high-level officials, the Secret Service and Delta Force, an elite Army unit, the affidavit said.

Keoughan said he had received psychiatric care and had used "every drug." He told officers he had twice attempted suicide, once through a heroin overdose, the court document said.

Keoughan made an initial appearance on Monday in US District Court on a charge of threatening and conveying false information about the use of an explosive. If convicted, he faces up to 10 years in prison.

Keoughan is being represented by a federal defender.

William Rawlinson, 58, of Silver Spring, Maryland, was also arrested on Saturday for crossing a White House security barrier. He faces a misdemeanor illegal entry charge.

In the first major security breach since Trump became president in January, 26-year-old Jonathan Tran, of Milpitas, California, was arrested for climbing over White House barriers on 10 March. He wandered the grounds for 16 minutes before he was found, the Secret Service has said.—*Reuters*

PERFORMANCES IN ONE-YEAR PERIOD

Nay Pyi Taw to become a capital of international level

Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman unveils the cancer ward at Zabuthiri Hospital. PHOTO: MNA

Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman sprinkles scented water on the ferry. PHOTO: MNA

Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman visits a nursery in Lewe Township. PHOTO: MNA

July Moe

DOTTED with Uppatasanti Pagoda, Bodh Gaya, magnificent Hluttaw buildings, famous Water Fountains, Zoological Gardens, National Landmark and other interesting sites, Nay Pyi Taw is in the process of enjoying rapid development.

Being an administrative capital, Nay Pyi Taw is under the direct control of the President and is made up of two districts—Dekkhina district and Uttara district. Dekkina District is formed with Pyinmana township, Lewe township, Zabuthiri township and Dekkinathiri township whereas Uttara district is formed with Tatkon township, Zeyathiri township, Pobbathiri township and Uttarathiri township. The Nay Pyi Taw Council Area is constituted with 58 wards and 187 village-tracts covering 795 villages. There are 248,853 households with a total population of 1063,216.

Emergence of word networks

In order to meet a city of international level, Nay Pyi Taw has been facilitated with a network of roads so that it can be accessible easily by road transport without harming environmental conservation. Keeping the city clean and pleasant, serious attention is given to creating a better environment in which economic, social, health and education sectors are improving all the more.

Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council Dr Myo Aung in an interview said that his department is trying its utmost for development of education, Health, transport, agriculture and infrastructure sectors including water supply and electrification focusing on seven major sectors. In the time of the new government, K 41,630 million was spent on 1,431 projects.

Upgrading of schools and hospitals

In the time of the new government, basic education schools were upgraded with the appointment of new teachers in order for students to pursue education with peace of mind. In that regard, altogether 36 school buildings were reconstructed and 73 schools upgraded, thereby enabling students from different regions to be within reach of education.

In the health sector, 1000-bed Nay Pyi Taw General Hospital and the Retired Service Personnel's Hospital are serving not only local people but people from different regions, districts and townships to ensure that all people enjoy better health care services. Like Yangon General Hospital, Mandalay General Hospital, the Nay Pyi Taw General Hospital is fully equipped with modern medical equipment and operation facilities.

Modern cancer ward

A modern cancer ward complete with two linear accelerator and one brachy therapy at Zabuthiri Hospital was opened with the aim of ensuring cancer patients receive medical treatment at reasonable prices. Senior members of Sangha aged over 70 years were given free medical treatment while room charges have been reduced for patients with a long stay at the hospital. Also intensive care units accommodating patients with a long stay had seen the reduction of room charges, and patients with over a week stay could enjoy 20 per cent discount of services.

Apart from that, physicians and medical specialists made a field trip right down to villages and provided medical treatment. For better health care services, altogether 83 heath supervisors were given training and assigned in different health facilities and continued efforts are being made to appoint 70 more staff, added Dr Myo Aung.

Extended health infrastructures

To bring about more health care services, orthopaedic hospital, OG hospital, dental hospital and ENT hospital were opened in the one year period of the new government.

Meanwhile, 0.76 furlong concrete road, 16 miles and 6.72 furlongs gravel road, 14 miles and 1.11 furlongs earth road and were constructed and the upgrading and extension of four road sections of Yangon-Mandalay Highway were conducted. And upgrading of concrete bridges, wooden bridges and others was carried out.

The already constructed 32 dams, lakes and embankments benefited 68500 acres of monsoon paddy and 15000 acres of summer paddy, and 54 acres of land was reclaimed to transform the traditional farming into a mechanized one.

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Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman, council members and Hluttaw representatives meet with residents . PHOTO: MNA

A modern cancer ward complete with two linear accelerator and one brachy therapy at Zabuthiri Hospital was opened with the aim of ensuring cancer patients receive medical treatment at reasonable prices. Senior members of Sangha aged over 70 years were given free medical treatment.

Staff from Nay Pyi Taw's Agriculture Department volunteer in paddy field in Dekkhinathiri Township. PHOTO: MNA

PERFORMANCES IN ONE-YEAR PERIOD

Talk about traffic rule is given to Nay Pyi Taw dwellers. PHOTO: MNA

Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman, Hluttaw representatives and other officials meet with city elders and residents in Dekkhinathiri Township. PHOTO:MNA

Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman and entourage inspect flood-hit Letpanaine Village in Tatkon Township. PHOTO: MNA

Students display their finished personal hygiene products after attending a workshop in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Dekkhinathiri Township Administrator U Nyi Nyi and officials inspect the damaged Shwekethin-Kwyethe bridge. PHOTO: MNA

>> FROM PAGE 11

In the water supply sector, two 22500-foot long, 12-inch wide pipes were built at Yanaungmyin Dam in order to supply 2.5 million gallons more out of reserve water.

Furthermore, a 29700-foot long, 16-inch wide pipe was constructed in Pobbathiri township and a 9100-foot long, 6-inch wide pipe and a 33580-foot long, 4-inch wide were built in Zabuthiri township.

With a view to ensuring better power supply to local people, old and obsolete transformers were replaced with new ones and new power lines were constructed for rural electrification alongside the replacing of old overhead wires with new ones.

Water supply sector

Arrangements are being made to supply adequate drinking water to the locals in all seasons. In the water supply sector, 28 deep wells, six narrow wells, two manual wells, three earthen water tanks and 10 steam water fetching systems were implemented during one-year period of the new government.

Farmland work permit certificates for the 57.36 acres of land plot were issued to the 21 applicants in accord with the Farmland Law.

Relinquished land

Farmland work permit certificate (Form-7) for 206.17 acres of land relinquished by the ministries were issued to the 80 farmers. Rehabilitation tasks were undertaken in the disaster-hit villages in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area from 1 April 2016 to 30 January 2017. The public service offices consisting of 10 governmental departments were opened and 33,256 times of service have been given to the people.

The Nay Pyi Taw Development Affairs Committee auctioned 217 licenses through competitive bidding system in a transparent manner, fetching Ks 32,210.098 million during one-year period.

Upgrade of markets

Nyaungbin compound in Aharathukha Market was paved with concrete slabs for convenience of the sellers and buyers with the use of Ks 201.642 million.

Vegetable, meat and fish stalls inside Thabyaygon Market are being upgraded using Ks 620.147 million contributed by the People's Republic of China and Ks 360.567 million from Nay Pyi Taw Development Affairs Committee.

> Rehabilitation tasks were undertaken in the disaster-hit villages in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area from 1 April 2016 to 30 January 2017. The public service offices consisting of 10 governmental departments were opened and 33,256 times of service have been given to the people.

"Nay Pyi Taw Development Affairs Committee carried out upgrade of the markets and regional development tasks. We will promote socioeconomic status of the vendors who reside in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area. The stalls were built on the concrete payment for the vendors by spending the Nay Pyi Taw Development Affairs Committee's fund," said Dr Myo Aung, Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council.

Over 800 vendors

Aharathukha Market was paved with concrete slabs for convenience of the 800 vendors. Similarly, a plot was paved with concrete slabs for the 250 vendors in Tatkon Market. Only 100 kyats of sale tax is collected from the vendors daily. The Chinese government constructed a high-quality block inside Thabyaygon Market in Nay Pyi Taw as a commemorative gift, Dr Myo Aung added.

The Nay Pyi Taw Development Affairs Committee paved a 1700-ft long and 24-ft Wide Street that links No (7) block to Nay Pyi Taw ring road with concrete, built two culverts and installed the power lines.

The 49,045 sq-ft wide and 8-inch thick drainage was decorated with concrete slabs in Tatkon that benefits both sellers and buyers.

To ensure security and rule of law, security checks are conducted at the checkpoints by the combined forces comprising law enforcement members from Nay Pyi Taw Police Force, police battalions and No (1) office of the security command. In an attempt to take actions against law breakers, talks about crime reduction were given to the people.

24-hour security services

With a view to protecting the public in accord with the law and gathering crime and security news in real time, the Myanmar Police Force is providing 24-hour security services to the people.

The Myanmar Police Force also provides security measures for the international meetings, state-level ceremonies and parliamentary sessions with the supervision of the officials concerned.

The 294 small businesses have been permitted to register under the Small and Medium Enterprise Law.

Regional development tasks including short- and long-term plans such as construction of roads and bridges are being implemented in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area. The Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council disclosed that necessary steps will be taken to ensure fundamental rights of the citizens in line with the law by laying down sector-wise plans during the remaining period of the government, upholding the public interest in the fore.

Large-scale drills of Airborne, Aerospace Forces and Black Sea Fleet begin in Crimea

OPUK RANGE/Crimea — Drills involving three large units of Russia's Airborne Forces, Aerospace Forces and the Black Sea Fleet began in Crimea's Opuk firing range on Monday, Airborne Force Commander Colonel-General Andrei Serdyukov said.

"For the first time in the Russian army's history the Airborne Forces' three large units were simultaneously alerted as part of the drills and partly redeployed to Crimea with weapons and equipment," said Serdyukov, who is in charge of the manoeuvres.

More than 2,500 paratroopers and some 600 pieces of equipment are involved in the drills.

Servicemen from Novorossiysk, Kamyshinsk and Ulan Ude units, as well as the fourth army of the Aerospace Forces and Air Defence Forces of the Southern military district take part in the exercises.

Msta-S self-propelled 152 mm howitzer. PHOTO: TASS

During the drills, the troops will train to conduct operations "as part of a group of rapid reaction forces" against terrorists and regular forces of a simulated enemy, Serdyukov said.

The exercises are held in the new format in Crimea due to the "increased terrorist threat and also a broad range of use of the Airborne Forces as rapid reaction forces to solve crises in various regions of the world," he said.

The servicemen will be tasked to take under control crucial facilities, practice amphibious landing and airdrops, and also firing during the offensive and defensive operations.—*TASS*

Dacic: Stability key word for elections

Serbian Deputy PM and FM Ivica Dacic . PHOTO: TANJUG

BRUSSELS — Stability is the key word not only for the upcoming presidential elections, but for the future of Serbia and the entire region, Serbian Deputy PM and FM Ivica Dacic has told Brussels' New Europe weekly.

"Every progress made in economic, social and political reforms, every fresh step towards EU integration has to do with this word. ...If there is stability, if it is ensured and achieved – all the work goals ahead of us will be attainable," he said.—*Tanjug*

French junior minister Pompili backs Macron for president

PARIS — French junior minister and ecology party lawmaker Barbara Pompili gave her backing to Emmanuel Macron's presidential campaign on Tuesday, the first member of the Socialist government to do so.

"I've decided to back the programme and thus the candidacy of Emmanuel Macron," she said in a Twitter message. She noted among other things Macron's pro-Europe stand and her desire to keep far-right leader Marine Le Pen out of power.

Her backing came just hours after centrist and ex-economy minister Macron solidified his status as frontrunner in the election in a televised debate during which he clashed on immigration and Europe with his main rival, Le Pen. —*Reuters*

Indonesia police say Interpol issues red notices for 3 Sinopec execs

JAKARTA — Indonesian police said on Tuesday Interpol has issued red notices, the closest to an international arrest warrant, for three Chinese executives suspected of fraud linked to an $850 million Sinopec oil storage terminal development in Indonesia.

"The three red notices have been published for those wanted people," National Police spokesman Boy Rafli Amar said.

He said Indonesian authorities filed the request for Interpol assistance on Feb. 21 and identified the Sinopec executives named in the red notices as Zhang Jun, Feng Zhigang, and Ye Zhijun.

A Sinopec spokesman declined to comment.—*Reuters*

Israel to declare air defence shield fully operational — officer

JERUSALEM — Israel's multi-tier air defence missile system will be fully operational early next month with the deployment of the David's Sling interceptor, a senior Israeli air force officer said on Monday.

David's Sling, designed to shoot down rockets fired from 100 to 200 kilometres away, will be the final piece of a shield that already includes short-range Iron Dome and long-range Arrow-2 and Arrow-3 missiles.

"In the next two weeks we will declare operational the David's Sling and at that time we will have completed our multi-tier (defence capability)," said the officer who could not be identified under military rules.

An inactive version of Israel's air defense system, David's Sling, jointly developed with the United States, is seen at Hatzor air base near Tel Aviv February 25, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

"I'm sure that together with the Iron Dome and the Arrow-2 and Arrow-3 it will enhance our ability to deal with threats," he added.

Israel used Iron Dome extensively to intercept rockets fired by Palestinian militants in the 2014 Gaza war, and the Arrow missiles were developed with an Iranian missile threat in mind.

David's Sling, developed and manufactured jointly by Israel's state-owned Rafael Advanced Defence Systems Ltd and the US Raytheon Co, would likely be used to intercept projectiles fired by the Iranian-backed Lebanese guerrilla group Hezbollah, which last fought a war with Israel in 2006.

The Israeli military said it used an Arrow-2 on Friday to destroy an anti-aircraft missile fired from Syria after Israeli aircraft carried out strikes there. —*Reuters*

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV KOTA HASIL VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV KOTA HASIL VOY. NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 22.3.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T/A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV SINAR BANDA VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SINAR BANDA VOY. NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 22.3.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINE

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV OEL MALAYSIA VOY. NO (1704)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV OEL MALAYSIA VOY. NO (1704) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 22.3.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of B.S.W where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S BLPL SHIPPING LINE

Phone No: 2301185

Ed Sheeran's 'Divide' tops US Billboard charts for second week

British singer Ed Sheeran performs during the 'Golden Camera' ('Die Goldene Kamera') award ceremony of German TV magazine 'Hoer Zu' in Hamburg on 4 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON—British singer Ed Sheeran reigned atop the weekly US Billboard album and digital song charts on Monday, as his latest album garnered strong sales for a second consecutive week.

Sheeran's "Divide" generated another 180,000 units from album and song sales and streaming consumption last week, according to figures from Nielsen SoundScan. The album has topped charts around the world, including Sheeran's native Britain.

The Billboard 200 album chart tallies units from album sales, song sales (10 songs equal one album) and streaming activity (1,500 streams equal one album).

"Shape of You," the first single from "Divide," sold another 104,000 units to hold onto the top spot of the weekly Digital Songs chart, which measures online single sales.

The only new album to crack the top 10 of the Billboard 200 chart this week was the soundtrack to Disney's blockbuster live-action film "Beauty and the Beast" at No 3.

The album features cast renditions of both classic and new songs featured in the musical film, as well as versions sung by Celine Dion, Ariana Grande and Josh Groban. The film opened to a record-breaking $170 million at the North American box office this weekend.—*Reuters*

Actor Ben Stiller joins social media drive to raise $2 mln for Somalia

LONDON — Hollywood actor Ben Stiller has teamed up with social media stars to raise $2 million for people facing starvation in Somalia amid a devastating drought.

The Zoolander actor is now trying to recruit other celebrities including Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton, Beauty and the Beast actress Emma Watson and model Carla Delevingne to support the Love Army for Somalia initiative which has already raised over $1.8 million since Friday.

An initial flight will take off next Monday with 60 tonnes of food for Somalia where more than 6 million people — about half the population — need help.

The United Nations is warning that Somalia risks slipping back into famine as worsening drought leaves millions without food, water or healthcare in a country crippled by decades of war.

The campaign began when Stiller's friend, Vine and Snapchat personality Jerome Jarre, recorded a message on Twitter in which he pleaded with Turkish Airlines — that flies directly to Somalia — to fill one of its flights with food.

Stiller then recorded his own Twitter message urging the airline to take up the challenge.

"It's kind of a crazy idea," Stiller said in the video. "But I think it could work ... and it could create a snowball effect to get people to take action."

The group, which is raising money through fundraising platform GoFundMe, said Turkish Airlines had quickly come on board with a full cargo plane and the offer of shipping further deliveries to Somalia on its commercial aircraft.

Others kickstarting the movement include American football quarterback Colin Kaepernick and YouTube phenomenon Casey Neistat.

"This is the story of what can happen when the power of social media is leveraged for something good," Neistat said in a YouTube video.

The group had originally planned to raise $1 million, but doubled the figure after hitting their target within 24 hours.

Love Army for Somalia said rice, cooking oil, nutritional biscuits, flour, sugar and porridge would be distributed by the American Refugee Committee, a charity already working in Somalia. The funds will also be used to pay for water trucks.

Stiller said in a follow-up video he wanted each person who had donated to nominate three others to join the movement, and said his own nominations were Lewis, Watson and Delevingne.

Famine last struck pockets of Somalia in 2011, killing 260,000 people. It was caused by drought, conflict and a ban on food aid in territory held by al Shabaab. —*Reuters*

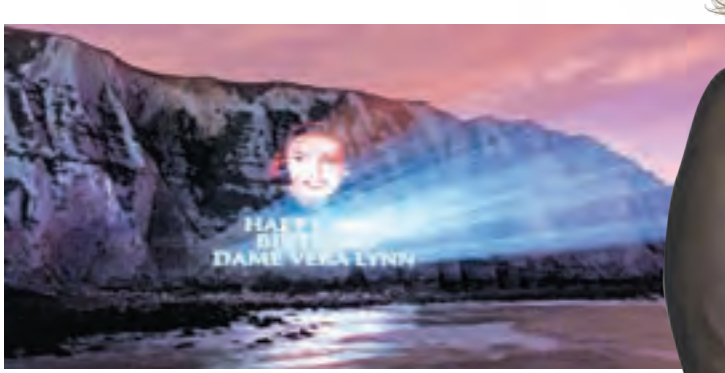
Singer Vera Lynn, voice of hope in wartime Britain, turns 100

LONDON — Vera Lynn, who entertained British troops during World War Two with songs that captured a longing for home and peace, was honoured on her 100th birthday on Monday with her image projected onto the iconic White Cliffs of Dover.

Known as the Forces' Sweetheart, Lynn struck a chord with soldiers fighting overseas and with the public back in Britain with "We'll Meet Again" and other songs that gave voice to many Britons' hopes and fears about the conflict with Nazi Germany.

To mark her birthday, a giant image of her as a young woman was projected in the early hours of Monday from the Dover sea wall onto the White Cliffs, which are a national symbol and the subject of one of her most famous songs.

"I feel so blessed to have reached this milestone and I can't think of a more meaningful way to mark the occasion," Lynn said in a statement issued by Decca, her record company.



A projection wishing singer and war time sweetheart Vera Lynn a happy birthday is projected on to the cliffs at Dover, Britain on 17 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Three days before her birthday, she released "Vera Lynn 100", a new album which includes old favourites set to new orchestral accompaniments.

One of them is the wartime hit "(There'll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs of Dover", which looks forward to a future of peace "when the world is free".

It has often been pointed out that bluebirds are not native to Britain, but some have interpreted the lyrics as an allusion to Royal Air Force fighter pilots in their blue uniforms.

With one of her previous albums, a "best of" compilation released in 2009, Lynn became the oldest living artist to have an album reach the number one spot in UK charts. The new album's chart position will be known on Friday.—*Reuters*

Singer Adele. PHOTO: REUTERS

Adele scolds security guard during the show

LONDON — Grammy-winning singer Adele stopped in middle of her concert to tell off a security guard who had been asking fans to sit down.

After finishing her song "Water Under The Bridge," Adele, 28, called out the security guard and asked him to stop telling the audience at Melbourne's Etihad Stadium to stop dancing, reported Contactmusic.

"Excuse me sir? I know you work here but can you stop telling people to sit down? This is a music show. If people can't see then they can stand up.

"If you're moaning about people dancing, what have you come to a show for? If I see one more person be told to sit down, I swear to God... Right, let's go, excuse my language," she said.—*PTI*

Restoration work completed on site of Jesus's tomb in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM — A team of scientists and restorers has completed work on the site of the tomb of Jesus in Jerusalem's Old City, and it will be re-opened to the public on Wednesday.

The group has worked for the past nine months at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and focused on the small structure above the burial place, known as the Edicule.

According to Christian belief, Jesus's body was buried at what became the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The restorers have also repaired other parts of the church, the project's supervisor said.

The structure needed reinforcement and conservation, including installation of an underground drainage network for rainwater and sewage, Antonia Moropoulou, a professor at the National Technical University of Athens, said on Monday. Moropoulou directed the work at the site.

The Greek Orthodox, Armenian and Roman Catholic denominations share custody of the church, where tensions often run high over control of its various sectors. Disputes between the dominations have held up restoration work for more than 200 years.

Worshippers light candles as the newly restored Edicule, the ancient structure housing the tomb, which according to Christian belief is where Jesus's body was anointed and buried, is seen in the background at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem's Old City, on 20 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Work only began last year after the church was deemed unsafe by Israeli authorities, who have controlled East Jerusalem since its capture in the 1967 Middle East war.

Each denomination has contributed $3.3 million for the project and Jordan's King Abdullah also made a personal donation, media reports said.

Moropoulou said extensive work had been carried out on the masonry of the tomb, and titanium bolts were inserted into the stone slabs, including the one covering Jesus's tomb. *—Reuters*

Banksy hotel without a view opens to guests in Bethlehem

BETHLEHEM (West Bank) — Guests began arriving at the Walled Off Hotel in Bethlehem on Monday, the quirky guesthouse created by British street artist Banksy that stands a few feet away from Israel's towering security barrier in the occupied West Bank.

The three-storey hotel, its low-lit bar and restaurant decorated like a British colonial clubhouse but with ironic works by the artist covering the walls, was unveiled two weeks ago but has only now opened to overnight stays.

There are 10 rooms, ranging from a budget barracks-style accommodation for backpackers to a presidential suite that can sleep six. None of the rooms has a view — all of them look out on Israel's five-metre, graffiti-covered concrete wall.

The Bristol-based artist, who has become a global phenomenon over the past decade but whose real identity is a closely guarded secret, has described the guesthouse as having "the worst views of any hotel in the world".

That has not deterred guests. "I came because I heard Banksy opened a new hotel and I was curious," said one visitor arriving from Melbourne, Australia. "I wanted to check it out and check out the West Bank, too.

"The hotel with the worst views, that's quite interesting. It's unique."

Manager Wissam Salsa, who kept the project secret for more than a year as building work was completed and local staff were trained, said the hotel was fully booked until June.

"We are expecting 18 guests to arrive this afternoon from different parts of the world, from the United Kingdom, the United States, Switzerland, Sweden, Australia and Finland," he said.

Men sit in the Walled Off hotel which was decorated by street artist Banksy after it was opened for guests to do check-in in the West Bank city of Bethlehem, on 20 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

The mayor of Bethlehem said that while the town where Jesus was born already attracted a large number of tourists to sites like the Church of the Nativity, the Walled Off added an extra dimension.

"(It's) a very significant addition to the entity of Bethlehem as a touristic city," said Mayor Vera Baboun.

"Having Banksy putting all his paintings in the hotel, it has significant political messages," she said. Bedroom partitions and hallways are embellished with the Banksy's stencil graffiti work. One reveals an Israeli soldier and masked Palestinian youth having a pillow fight, and a statue of a chimpanzee bellboy stands on the entrance, garments falling out of the suitcase he holds. *—Reuters*

mitv Myanmar International

Programme Schedule

(22-3-2017 07:00am ~ 23-3-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:27	Am	Myanmar Charitable Labour Association
07:39	Am	Buddha Image Built Of Bamboo Strip
07:52	Am	Delicacies From Magwe
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Super Myanmar Traditional Stick Form (EP-2)
08:42	Am	Grow Back For Posterity "The Dawn of Development"
08:53	Am	Kyaikhteeyoe: Bamboo Guns
09:03	Am	News
09:27	Am	Hive Hunter
09:46	Am	A Historic Town: 9 Pagodas
10:03	Am	News
10:25	Am	Shwe Maw Daw: The Glory Of Bago City
10:51	Am	Mt. Naw Bu Baw

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:27	Pm	Travelogue: A Tour in Korea (Ep-1)
07:44	Pm	Famous pagodas of Sagaing
07:52	Pm	Paper Art Creator
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Myanmar Delicate Artistic Handy Creations-Lacquareware Making
08:51	Pm	Entrepreneur: Soe Nyi Nyi

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm) -Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am)- Tuesday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) -Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

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

MRTV

Programme Schedule (22-3-2017, Wednesday)

6:00 Am
♦ Paritta by Hilly Region Missionary Sayadaw
7:00 Am
♦ Breakfast News
7:30 Am
♦ Money Talk Myanmar
8:35 Am
♦ Government's One- Year Performance
9:15 Am
♦ Solution for Agriculture
9:25 Am
♦ Pyi Thu Ni Ti
10:30 Am
♦ Documentary
11:00 Am
♦ Teleplay
11:35 Am
♦ MRTV Education Programme
12:30 Pm
♦ TV Drama Series
1:00 Pm
♦ Myanmar Traditional Performing Arts Competition
2:40 Pm
♦ Sunday Talks
5:10 Pm
♦ Documentary
5:35 Pm
♦ MRTV Travelogue
6:15 Pm
♦ Football Magazine
6:35 Pm
♦ Real Story Real Movies
7:15 Pm
♦ TV Drama Series
8:00 Pm
News/International News/ Weather Report
8:35 Pm
♦ Political Parties Compaisn Speeches
9:00 Pm
♦ Goverment's One-Year Performance
9:35 Pm
♦ TV Drama Series
♦ Musician's Talks

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Wednesday, 22 March 2017

Man City charged with misconduct in Liverpool game

LONDON — Manchester City were charged with misconduct by the FA on Monday for the way their players reacted to a 50th minute penalty that saw Liverpool take the lead in Sunday's 1-1 Premier League draw at the Etihad stadium. Referee Michael Oliver was surrounded by City players after he awarded Liverpool a spot kick following a Gael Clichy foul on Roberto Firmino.

Former City player James Milner scored from the spot after Clichy, who had raised his boot on Firmino, and David Silva were booked. Some City players continued to remonstrate afterwards. The hosts equalised 18 minutes later through Sergio Aguero.

"It is alleged that in or around the 50th minute of the fixture, the club failed to ensure its players conducted themselves in an orderly fashion," the governing body said in a statement. City, who have until 1800 local time on Thursday to respond to the charge, are third in table, a point ahead of Liverpool, who have played a game more, but 12 adrift of leaders Chelsea. —*Reuters*

PHOTO: REUTERS

Neuer withdraws from Germany squad with calf injury

MUNICH- — Goalkeeper Manuel Neuer has pulled out of Germany's national soccer squad for their upcoming friendly against England and World Cup qualifier against Azerbaijan because of a calf injury.

Uncapped Paris St Germain keeper Kevin Trapp has been called up to replace Neuer, who will stay with his club Bayern Munich for treatment, the German football association said on Monday.

Neuer, 30, has kept 13 clean sheets in 25 games for Bayern this season and played in the German champions' 1-0 win over Borussia Moenchengladbach on Sunday.

Trapp has made 11 appearances at the under-21 level for Germany and kept 10 clean sheets in his last 16 games for PSG. Germany play England in Dortmund on Wednesday before travelling to Baku to face Azerbaijan four days later.—*Reuters*

Staying in Premier League is key to Defoe's England hopes

LONDON — Jermain Defoe has indicated he will leave struggling Sunderland if they are relegated because he needs to stay in the Premier League to keep alive his hopes of going to next year's World Cup finals with England.

The 34-year-old striker, back in the England squad for the first time since November 2013, said ahead of Wednesday's friendly against Germany in Dortmund that he had to be realistic.

"To get into any squad, it's based on merit and you've got to be playing at the top level. It's as simple as that. When I went to Toronto, I missed out on a World Cup," Defoe told reporters.

"The boys I'm competing against are playing in the Premier League and playing in Europe and probably that's why I missed out on the last World Cup. You probably need to be playing in the Premier League."

Sunderland are bottom of the table, seven points from safety, and even Defoe's enduring goal-scoring magic looks unlikely to save them this time.

England's Jermain Defoe. PHOTO: REUTERS

The striker's 14 league goals make him the second highest English scorer in the top flight this season after Tottenham Hotspur's Harry Kane.

He was not included in Roy Hodgson's England squad for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil after joining Major League Soccer side Toronto in February of that year.

Despite joining Sunderland in January 2015 and scoring 15 goals to keep them up, he was also overlooked by Hodgson for Euro 2016.

Defoe, who has 55 caps and played for England in the 2010 World Cup finals, said he had never entirely given up hope of a recall despite occasional doubts.

"It didn't really stop me from getting my head down and working hard and just hoping one day I'll get an opportunity to represent my country again," he added.

"I was getting a lot of stick from the lads at the training ground because I've still got the England flag on my boots. They'd say things like 'JD, why have you got the England flag on your boots still?'".

With more than a year to go before the World Cup in Russia, Defoe believes he still has a chance.

"You just want it more and more. For me, I think if I do get an opportunity to go to another major tournament, it will be a dream."—*Reuters*

Arsenal trip key in Champs League race, says City's Sagna

LONDON — Manchester City can go a long way to securing a Champions League spot for next season with a win at Arsenal when the Premier League resumes after the international break, defender Bacary Sagna has said.

Sagna, who moved to City in 2014 after spending seven seasons with the London club, said leaders Chelsea were almost out of sight in the title race so it was imperative to focus on securing a top-four spot.

Man City are third in the league, 12 points behind Chelsea, and they could extend their lead over sixth-placed Arsenal to 10 points with a win at the Emirates on 2 April.

"We need to go to Arsenal and win the game because we want to be part of the Champions League again next season," Sagna told reporters.

"It's going to be difficult to catch Chelsea — it's maybe too far now — but we have to go and give a good performance, stick together and keep working hard.

Arsenal have lost four of their last six games in all competitions, including a 10-2 aggregate defeat to Bayern Munich in the Champions League last 16, but Sagna expected them to regroup and come back stronger after the international break.

"Of course they (Arsenal) are disappointed because of the results, anyone would be with what's happened on the pitch," the 34-year-old French international added.

"But they have quality players, players who can react, players who are part of the Champions League every season. They can beat anyone. They remain good players.

"They will come back fresh, they'll have two weeks to think about their national teams and to reflect on the way they want to end the season, so they are going to be strong."

Man City also play Arsenal in the FA Cup semi-finals on 23 April.—*Reuters*

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Editorial Section — (+95) (01)8604529, Fax — (01) 8604305
gnlmdaily@gmail.com www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
Advertisement & Circulation — (+95) (01) 8604532
www.facebook.com/globalnewlightofmyanmar

"Printed and published at the Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the Global New Light of Myanmar Daily under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629."