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Dance troupes perform on the opening of the Nay Pyi Taw Mayor's pandal to mark opening of the traditional Thingyan New Year festival in the capital yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Thingyan celebrations kick off

THINGYAN is a Sanskrit word meaning “change”, and perhaps it is inevitable that the annual event to welcome the new year has changed over the years.

As the Myanmar year of 1378 comes to a close and the new year of 1379 is ushered in, one thing that has not changed is the enthusiastic throwing of water, a symbolic ges-

ture that allows the washing away of the previous year's sins and the anticipation of starting a new year with a clean slate.

All over Myanmar, the cel-

ebration for Thingyan, or water festival, has commenced. The opening of water throwing pandals occurred across the country yesterday, from large official stages

with water hoses to small roadside stands equipped only with barrels of water and small plastic bowls with which to deliver the water to passers by. **SEE PAGE 2 >>**



Thingyan celebrations kick off



Vice President U Henry Van Thio sprinkles scented water on a dancer at the opening ceremony of Thingyan Water Festival in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

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Nay Pyi Taw's Thingyan Festival commences with attendance of Vice President U Henry Van Thio

In Nay Pyi Taw, the opening ceremony for the Thingyan pandal attended by Vice President U Henry Van Thio was unveiled by the mayor.

The mayor of Nay Pyi Taw Dr. Myo Aung delivered a new year welcoming speech at the opening ceremony.

Afterwards the Vice President, Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint and Nay Pyi Taw Mayor Dr. Myo Aung cut the ribbon to open the Thingyan Pandal. Then the MRTV Modern music band and various dance troupes from ministries entertained the au-

diences with dance and song.

Also in attendance were Union Ministers, Union Attorney-General, Chairman of Peace Commission, Chairman of Anti-Corruption Commission and other officials.

In Mandalay, the celebration started at 5am, as members of the Mandalay Region government, ministers and members of parliament offered meals to 108 monks at the Mandalay City Mayor Pandal in the south of Mandalay moat.

At the opening ceremony of the Myanmar New Year Traditional Water Festival, Mandalay Region Chief Minister Dr Zaw Myint Maung delivered his New Year welcoming speech, in which he asked for a return to more innocent times.

He said during the occasion of the hottest spring, the water festival is the Myanmar tradition that aims to keep each other cold with love through watering. Other activities entering into the water festival have decayed the people's love and are being influenced by decadent culture, he said.

In Yangon, the Yangon City Pandal was opened by Chief Minister of Yangon Region U Phyo Min Thein, while the Central Pandal in Myawady was opened by the Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw Mahn Win Khaing Than.

The opening ceremonies were held along with dance troupes and music as people enjoyed the splashes of water thrown from the pandals. —Myanmar News Agency



Dancer troupe of the Ministry of Home Affairs performing at the opening ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA



A reveller pours water on an Rakhine ethnic woman to celebrate Thingyan festival in Thuwanna Stadium. PHOTO: NYI ZAW MOE



People enjoying the Thingyan celebrations during the later part of the day in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA



The opening ceremony of Thingyan festival in front of Yangon City Hall. PHOTO: GNLM/PHOE KHWAH



A man prepares mote lone yay paw, a Thingyan charity snack. PHOTO: GNLM/PHOE KHWAH

Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than attends opening of Thingyan festival in Myawady

SPEAKER of the Amyotha Hluttaw Mahn Win Khaing Than attended the opening ceremony of the Myanmar traditional Thingyan central pandal for ME 1378 held near Thaungyin Hall in Myawady, Kayin State yesterday afternoon.

Hluttaw representatives, Myawady District Deputy Commissioner U Htoo Lwin, Tak Province Governor, dance troupes, locals and officials attended the event.

Mahn Win Khaing Than, Myawady District Deputy Commissioner, Chief of the District Police Force, Hluttaw representatives and officials cut the ribbon to open the central pandal.

Afterward, the Myawady Township Myanmar traditional Thingyan organization committee chairman District Deputy Commissioner U Htoo Lwin gave a speech related to the opening of Myanmar traditional Thingyan central pandal.

The Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw and officials, Governor of Tak Province, Thailand and officials then took a commemorative



Thingyan festival is formally opened in Myawady in the presence of Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than and dignitaries . PHOTO: MNA

group photo and participated in the pouring of water, a symbol of the traditional Myanmar Thingyan celebration.

Afterward, a dance troupe

provided entertainment with Thingyan dances.

The festival of Thingyan marks the transit from the old year to the new year.

During the four-day festival, people from all strata of life and from various ethnic groups performed traditional dances and donated charity food to revellers.

Thingyan this year runs from Thursday to Sunday, and culminates with New Year's Day on Monday.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Rakhine dance troupe perform at opening of Thingyan festival in Buthidaung. PHOTO: TIN SOE

Thingyan celebrations make a splash in Maungtaw District

PEOPLE enjoyed the Thingyan new year festival at water throwing pandals in Maungtaw District in northern Rakhine State yesterday, the first day of the four-day festival.

At the opening of central pandal in Buthidaung, authorities, dignitaries and towns elders sprinkled scented water on dance troupes and the festival kicked off in the town.

Following the opening ceremony, the dance troupes entertained the people with traditional dances.

Meanwhile, other pandals in the town were also opened.

Traditional water festival of Rakhine ethnic people and the central pandal in Maungtaw will commence on 17th April. *Yamanya*



Women grind sandalwood at the Rakhine traditional sandalwood grinding ceremony in Buthidaung. PHOTO: TIN SOE



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing pours water on a dancer. PHOTO: MNA

Tatmadaw families celebrate Thingyan

THE ME 1378 Myanmar Thingyan Festival was celebrated by families and members of the office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army, Navy and Air) yesterday in conjunction with the opening ceremony of a pandal on Nay Pyi Taw's golf course.

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla cut the ribbon marking the opening of the pandal. Afterwards dance troupes performed along to the songs of Myu Mhaung Way Kin and attendees joined in the water festival. Guests were served with Shuditta feasts and entertained with performances by

artists from Myawady music band.

Similarly, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Vice-Senior General Soe Win and wife Daw Than Than Nwe attended the opening ceremony of a pandal near Zeyathiri Department Store. Tatmadaw senior officials also toured pandals in front of National Defence College, Nay Pyi Taw transit camp, Military Hospital, and in housing area of office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army).

The dance troupes, artistes and vocalists will entertain the Thingyan revellers with song and dance till 16 April on a grand scale.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Photo shows Mann Shwe Settaw in Minbu during the pagoda's festival. PHOTO: KYAW SEIN WIN

Mann Shwe Settaw Pagoda Festival set to close on 18 April

WITH a record number of pilgrims across the country, Mann Shwe Settaw Pagoda festival was annually opened in Minbu on 5th waxing of Tabodwe and scheduled to conclude on Myanmar New Year Day. But the festival closing date has been changed to the following day of Myanmar New Year Day this year.

According to the agreement of Mann Shwe Settaw Pagoda's Ovadacariya sayadaws, Mann Shwe Settaw Pagoda patrons inclusive of Regional Government ministers and Mann Shwe Settaw Pagoda board of trustees, the closing date was set to change, said a member of the pagoda board of trustees.

"Both monks and lay disciples are usually busy with charitable activities on Myanmar New Year Day. So, we changed the closing date to the following day of Myanmar New Year Day i.e. 18th April," said Chairman of the board of trustees U Myint Thein.

The festival is one of the most significant pagoda festivals in Myanmar and lasts more than two months. Mann Shwe Settaw (the Golden Footprints) pagoda is one of the most venerated pagodas in Myanmar. There are two foot prints namely the Auk Set Taw Ya or the Lower and the Ahtet Settaw Ya, the Upper. —*The Mirror*

ASEAN Culture and Tourism Photo Contest to be held

THE ASEAN Culture and Tourism Photo Contest will be held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of ASEAN by the ASEAN-Korea centre, according to The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

The ASEAN Culture and Tourism photo contest will be organised by the ASEAN-Korea center with the assistance

of the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, TTG Asia and ASEANTA.

"The ASEAN Culture and Tourism photo contest will be held to commemorate 50th anniversary of ASEAN founding day, to reveal the hidden destinations in the ASEAN region through holding of the photo contest and to promote the relationship between ASEAN

countries and Korea", according to a statement. People interested in participating in the contest should upload photos to the website <http://photo.aseankorea.org> no later than 23 April.

The winners will be announced on that website on 18 May, according to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism. —*Min Min*

KfW to provide assistance for rural development

THE German Development Bank (KfW) has agreed to provide financial assistance for implementation of rural development, according to the Rural Development Department.

KfW will fund the construc-

tion of five bridges and two roads in Kalay township, Sagaing region. Three of the bridges will be 200 meters long while two river-crossing bridges will be 350 meters long. The two roads will each be 50 kilometers long.

Construction companies interested in the projects can contact either the director of rural development department (bridges) or the deputy director (procurement & supply) not later than 25 May. —*Min Min*

Aquarium fish selling well in Friday market

AQUARIUM fish are selling well at the Friday market in the Yangon Zoological Garden because it is the summer school holiday, said U Phet Tee, secretary No. 1 of the Myanmar Aquarium Fish Entrepreneurs Association.

The aquarium fish are sold every Friday day from 6 am to 10 pm. The fish sold include Hamilton carp and goldfish. The price

of the fish is between Ks100 and Ks5,000 depending on the size and species. The price of exotic foreign pet fish is between Ks50,000 and Ks100,000.

Fish dealers from Hlaing Thayar, Shwepyitha, Dagon (South), North Okkalapa, South Okkalapa and Mandalay are buying and selling the aquarium fish at the Friday market. The fish are

imported from Thailand and Singapore.

Fish dealers are planning to change the aquarium fish selling day to Sundays instead of Fridays. Currently, the aquarium fish market is a temporary market only. Aquarium fish sell well during the summer holiday as well as in June and July. —*200*

Private schools offering teaching positions

NEARLY 100 teaching positions are being offered monthly by private schools this year. The job opportunities are increasing this year, compared with the same period last year, according to work.com.mm statistics.

Private schools are offering pre-primary school teacher positions and middle school teacher positions, in addition to mathematics, science, Myanmar language and art teacher positions.

The private schools are also in need of office staff, human resource managers, teaching assistants and teacher who can teach the basic education curriculum subjects.

More applicants have applied for the private school positions this month, a 9.84 per cent increase from last year.

Job opportunities are also being offered in the goods and transportation sector, computer technology sector, telecoms

network technology sector, engineering sector, import and export sector, construction sector, monetary management sector, hotel and guest house sector and the NGO/ INGO sector. Among them, the education sector stands 13th in terms of creation of job opportunities.

According to work.com.mm statistics, nearly 26,000 applicants applied for nearly 1,900 job vacancies in the Yangon region. —*200*

Invitation to printing press vendors

News and Periodicals Enterprise of Ministry of Information, is planning to purchase 4 unit of high performance, long-life 4 Hi Tower color printing press. Local and foreign companies interested to sell the printing press are invited to contact to the following address from 18 April 2017 to 24 April 2017 in order to introduce and explain about their presses.

Contact Address

Deputy Director (Planning)
News and Periodicals Enterprise
Ministry of Information, Minister Office
Office No. 7, Nay Pyi Taw
Phone 067-412123, 412828

Seven dead, one missing in Minbya boat accident

SEVEN people were killed in a boat accident in Minbya in western Rakhine state Thursday.

A wooden motor boat carrying 61 passengers capsized about 4:50am after the boat's propeller became entangled with a fishing net in the Minkyaung River near Taungpok Village, Maylun Village-tract, Minbya Township.

Seven people, most of them children, died. One person remains missing.

The victims are identified as Maung Kyaw Win Naing, Ma Tin Mar Kyi, Ma Thet Lin Thwe, Ma Sanay Ma, Ma Zin Mar Phyto, Ma Phyu Phyu Htwe and Ma Thazin Shwe. Ma Phyu May is missing and feared dead, according to the Fire Services Department.

Nine passengers were taken to the hospital suffering from stomach pain after the accident.

A search for the missing person is being carried out. —*Myanmar News Agency*



Officials inspecting the capsized wooden motor boat in Minkyaung River. PHOTO: MYANMAR FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

LOCAL Business

YSX sees lowest stock trading on 12 April

STOCK trading on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) hit a record low of 2,309 shares on 12th April 2017, according to market data released by YSX.

Currently, there are four companies trading shares on YSX: First Myanmar Investment (FMI), Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings (MTSH), Myanmar Citizens Bank (MCB) and First Private Bank (FPB).

With zero trading of MCB and a descending trading volume of FPB this week, the YSX suffered a sharp decline in trading volume. The trading volumes were 9,534 shares on Monday, 7,013 shares on Tuesday and 2,309 shares on Wednesday.

FMI traded 711 shares while 1,558 shares of MTSH were traded on Wednesday. On that day, only 40 shares of FPB were traded, while MCB hit zero trading. The share prices were Ks16,500 for FMI, Ks4,300 for MTSH, Ks8,700 for MCB and Ks30,000 for FPB. —*Ko Htet*



A sales man anticipates customers as gold price rises at a shop in Yangon.
PHOTO: GNLM/PHOE KHWAH

Domestic gold price hits Ks910,000 per tical with high global price

WITH a high price in the global gold market, the domestic gold price hit its highest level of Ks910,000 per tical on Wednesday, according to the gold and jewellery shop owners.

The global gold price was US\$1,254 per ounce while the domestic gold price was Ks902,000 per tical on Monday.

With an increase of global gold price up to US\$1,278, the domestic gold price hit the all-time record high of Ks910,000 per tical on Wednesday.

The high price of domestic gold causes hesitation on the part of gold buyers, combined with the news of taxation on gold purchases. The market is traditionally cool during the Thingyan Festival, said the owners of the gold shops.—*Mon Mon*

List of restricted investment activities released by MIC

THE list of restricted investment activities was released by Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) with the approval of Union Government on Monday.

According to section 42 of Investment Law, some businesses are allowed only by the Union, foreign investors and some joint ventures between local and foreign partners, while some business need to seek the approval of ministries concerned, even though it is permitted to be conducted by the citizens and foreigners.

Investment activities allowed to be carried out only by the State are manufacturing of products for security and defense being specified by the notification of the Government from time to time, manufacturing and related services of arms and ammunition for the national defense, issuing the national postage stamps; establishment and hiring of post office and post boxes which are only to be performed by the post office operator on behalf

of the State, air traffic services, pilotage services, management of natural forest and forest area except the business relating to reduction of carbon emission, feasibility study and production of radioactive metals such as uranium and thorium, administration of electric power system and inspection of electrical works.

Investment activities carried out by foreign investors include 12 businesses having freshwater fisheries and relevant service and publishing and distribution of periodicals in ethnic languages including Burmese.

Meanwhile, there are 22 enterprises allowed to be operated only in the form of joint ventures with any citizen owned entity or any Myanmar citizen, including some manufacturing businesses and local tour services. Over 100 enterprises are allowed to be run only with the approval of the ministries concerned, according to an announcement by MIC.—*GNLM*

Myawady border trade value up by over US\$200million in last FY

THE values of border trade through Myawady trade camp in the Fiscal Year 2016-2017 was up by over US\$ 202.489million when compared to that in the previous year, according to the statistics of the Commerce Ministry.

Out of 16 border trade camps, the Muse camp usually has the largest trade value. But the Muse camp suffered a steep decline in border trade, down by over US\$200mil while Myawady performed the best with the highest increase of trade value against FY 2015-2016, followed by Chin Shwe Haw and Lweje.

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

The border trade values in FY

2016-2017 amounted to US\$7.44 billion, with US\$5.08 bil at Muse border camp, US\$202.071mil at Lweje, US\$573.301mil at Chin Shwe Haw, US\$106.571mil at Kanpikete, US\$4.488mil at Keng Tung, US\$81.400mil at Tachilek, US\$928.602mil at Myawady, US\$133.920mil at Kawthoung, US\$209.529mil at Myeik, US\$11.886mil at HteeKhee, US\$3.238mil at Maw Taung, US\$0.447mil at Maese, US\$4.649mil at Sittwe, US\$5.943mil at Maungtaung, US\$47.973mil at Tamu and US\$40.219mil at Reed.—*Ko Htet*

Badamyar gas field project to be completed next month

THE Badamyar gas field exploration project will be completed at the end of May in order to maintain the production of the maturing Yadana gas field up to 2021, according to an announcement of the Electric Power and Energy ministry.

To support the Yadana gas field project, the government launched operations in the Badamyar gas exploration field,

which is located in the M-5 and M-6 blocks, in cooperation with Total E&P Myanmar Co., since 2015. The operations include engineering procurement, developing wellhead platforms and the construction of compression platforms.

The Yadana natural gas project is operated by the Total Company with its pipeline to Thailand. According to 2014

statistics, the daily production from Yadana natural gas field totaled 910 million cubic meters, 711million cubic meters of which were exported to Thailand and the remaining for domestic consumption.

As the gas field matures and production declines, about 800 million cubic feet are currently produced a day, it is learnt.—*Ko Htet*

Mandalay Maha Thingyan pavilion opens

THE Myanmar Era 1378 comes to a close, the Myanmar Traditional New Year Water Festival began yesterday all over the city of Mandalay, starting with a grand ceremony at 7:30 am.

The recognition of Thingyan began early in the early morning of eve day at 5 am, as members of Mandalay Region government, ministers and members of parliament offered meals to 108 monks at the Mandalay City Mayor Pavilion in the south of Mandalay Ancient City Hall.

At the opening ceremony of the Myanmar New Year Traditional Water Festival, Mandalay Region Chief Minister Dr Zaw Myint Maung delivered the New Year welcoming speech.

He said during the occasion of the hottest summer, the water festival is the Myanmar tradition that aims to keep each other cold with love through watering.

Other activities entering into the water festival have decayed the people's love and is being influenced by decadent cultures.

He urged people to pour the purity of water with love to each other, which is the essence of the Myanmar traditional water festival.

He requested people to participate in the nation's development and to be living in safety based on the affection resulted from the water festival.

After the speech, a ceremonial ribbon to open the water festival was cut by U Shwun Myaing, the honourable patron of the Mandalay Myoma Music Association, author and journalist Maung Thit Lwin (Luhtu), elderly citizen U Min Maung, recipient of independence Mawgun grade-2, Dr Thidawin, rector of Mandalay University, and Daw Khin Kyi Pyar, rector of National University of Art and Culture as 300 students synchronized the Thingyan dance.

Then, the decorated floats of Antiphonal Chant led by a Myoma-decorated float passed the pavilion. The Kyaukse elephant dance team and Mandalay City Development Committee dance troupe performed and received awards from the Mandalay Region Government.

Travel promotion in the central pavilion and a walk through the Thingyan pavilion in the south of Mandalay Moat were also part of the celebration.—*Tin Maung, Min Htet Aung*



The decorated float Silver Swan, which is popular for Thingyan festival in Mandalay, is seen on the first day of the festival. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG



Troupes perform on the first day of festival in Mandalay. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG



The busy street in Mandalay is decorated with umbrellas. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG



Revellers enjoy the Thingyan festival in Mandalay. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG



People ride on a vehicle as they get sprayed with water during Myanmar's New Year Water Festival in Mandalay on 13 April. PHOTO: REUTERS



Children play with water during Myanmar's New Year Water Festival outside Mandalay, Myanmar, on 13 April 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

China warns against force as North Korea prepares celebration

BEIJING/PYONGYANG — Military force cannot resolve tension over North Korea, China said on Thursday, while an influential Chinese newspaper urged the North to halt its nuclear programme in exchange for Chinese protection.

With a US aircraft carrier group steaming to the area and tension rising, South Korea said it believed the United States would consult it before any pre-emptive strike against the North.

Fears have been growing that the reclusive North could soon conduct its sixth nuclear test or more missile launches in defiance of UN sanctions and stark warnings from the United States that a policy of patience was over.

China, North Korea's sole major ally and benefactor, which nevertheless opposes its weapons programme, has called for talks leading to a peaceful resolution and the denuclearisation of the peninsula.

"Military force cannot resolve the issue," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told reporters in Beijing.

"Amid challenge there is opportunity. Amid tensions we will also find a kind of opportunity to return to talks."

While US President Donald Trump has put North Korea on notice that he would not tolerate any provocation, US officials have said his administration was focusing its strategy on tougher



People practice for the expected parade on the main Kim Il-Sung Square in central Pyongyang, North Korea on 12 April 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

economic sanctions.

Trump has diverted the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier group towards the Korean peninsula, which could take more than a week to arrive, in a show of force aimed at deterring North Korea from conducting another nuclear test or launching more missiles to coincide with important events and anniversaries.

The possibility of US military action gained traction after the US Navy fired 59 Tomahawk

missiles at a Syrian airfield last week in response to a deadly gas attack.

Wang warned that history would hold any instigator to account.

"Whoever provokes the situation, whoever continues to make trouble in this place, they will have to assume historical responsibility," Wang said.

South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se told parliament in Seoul he believed Wash-

ington would consult Seoul if it was considering a pre-emptive strike. The United States has about 28,500 troops in South Korea.

A Washington-based think-tank that monitors North Korea, 38 North, said satellite images on Wednesday showed activity around the North's Punggye-ri nuclear test site on the east coast that indicated it was ready for a new test.

South Korean officials said

there were no new signs to indicate a test was more likely, although they also said the North appeared ready to conduct a test at any time.

An influential state-backed Chinese newspaper said the best option for North Korea and its leader, Kim Jong Un, was to give up its nuclear programme, and China would protect it if it did.

"As soon as North Korea complies with China's declared advice and suspends nuclear activities ... China will actively work to protect the security of a denuclearised North Korean nation and regime," said an editorial in the *Global Times*, which is published by the Communist party's *People's Daily*.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe underscored fears about threats from North Korea, telling parliament in Tokyo that Pyongyang could have the capacity to deliver missiles equipped with sarin nerve gas.

A senior Japanese diplomat said the United States was putting "maximum pressure" on North Korea to resolve issues peacefully while putting responsibility on China to sway its old ally.

"We will watch what action China takes," the diplomat said.

While Japan did not see a high risk of military action, it expected to be consulted by the United States if it decided to attack. North Korea has about 350 missiles that can hit Japan. —Reuters

Japan to introduce English road signs ahead of Tokyo Olympics

TOKYO — Japan will introduce new bilingual traffic signs in July amid an increase in the number of foreign visitors ahead of Tokyo hosting the Olympics and Paralympics in 2020.

The National Police Agency on Thursday unveiled stop and slowdown signs, each with English translations beneath Japanese words. The new versions will gradually replace the roughly 1.7 million stop signs and 1,000 slowdown signs in Japan.

In 2016, the number of foreign visitors to Japan hit a record 24 million. Against this backdrop, the agency decided to change the signs so that foreign travelers can more easily understand them.

The priority for the new signs is likely to be given to areas around airports where many foreign visitors rent cars. Unlike the US and European octagon signs for stop, the Japanese stop sign is an inverted pyramid. The agency decided to maintain the shape as a survey of about 500 foreign drivers showed the current shape is more easily recognizable to foreigners than changing the shape to an octagon.—Kyodo News

China launches 1st high-throughput communications satellite

XICHANG — A Chinese satellite will not only help those at the scene of natural disasters report on emergencies but enable passengers on high-speed trains to watch high-definition videos.

Shijian-13, China's first high-throughput communications satellite, was launched from Xichang Satellite Launch Center in southwest China's Sichuan Province at 7:04 pm Wednesday.

The satellite, with a transfer capacity of 20 Gbps and a designed orbital life of 15 years, was carried into orbit by a Long March-3B carrier rocket, the 246th mission for Long March carrier rockets.

Shijian-13 has a higher message capacity than all of China's previous communications satellites combined and will provide better Internet access in less-developed regions, as well as on planes and high-speed trains.

"The launch is a milestone for China's communications satellite technology," said Tian Yulong, chief engineer of the State Administration of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence.

Shijian-13 is the first Chinese satellite to be powered by electricity, potentially improving efficiency by as much as 10 times compared with those using chemicals as propellant, extending the



A Long March-3B carrier rocket carrying Shijian-13, China's first high-throughput communications satellite, blasts off from the launching pad at the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Xichang, southwest China's Sichuan Province, on 12 April 2017. Shijian-13 has a higher message capacity than all of China's previous communications satellites combined and will provide better Internet access in less-developed regions, as well as on planes and high-speed trains. PHOTO: XINHUA

satellite's life and reducing launch weight, said Zhou Zhicheng, commander-in-chief of Shijian-13.

A large number of domestic components have been used. It also has the first laser communications system installed on a Chinese high orbit satellite with a long lifespan.

The satellite and the rocket were designed by academies af-

iliated with the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp., and the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology respectively.

China plans to launch six communications satellites this year. Shijian-18 will be put into orbit in June to test the DFH-5 satellite platform.

On 24 April 1970, the launch of China's first satellite Dong-

fanghong-1 marked the beginning of the country's space endeavors, which currently feature 16 communication satellites.

By 2025, China will have 22 communication satellites, with five built on brand new designs, according to a medium-long term development plan for civilian space infrastructure released in 2015.—Xinhua

Opinion

Write for us

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

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

Sprinkling of water using sprigs of Thabyey (Eugenia)

Tha Sein

TODAY called a-kya nei is when Thingyan truly arrives as Thagayamin, King of Tavatimsa Deva Loka (realm of devas) makes his descent from his celestial abode to earth. Traditionally, Thingyan involved the sprinkling of scented water in a silver bowl using sprigs of Thabyey (Eugenia), a practice that continues to be prevalent in rural areas. The sprinkling of water was intended to metaphorically wash away one's sins of the previous year. It is the hottest time of the year and a good dousing is welcomed by most and, revelers, young and old, participate in this tradition by splashing water on each other.

On this specific occasion, performing water pouring on Buddha statues and images is considered an iconic ritual for this holiday. It represents purification and the washing away of one's sins and bad luck. It is a time for some boys and girls to enter the religious Order and spend a short time in a monastery immersed in the teachings of the Buddha. The boys become novice monks and the girls become nuns for a fixed period of time. Releasing fish is another time-honored tradition in this day. Paying reverence to ancestors is also an important part of the Thingyan tradition.

The Thingyan celebration is rich with symbolic traditions. Morning begins with merit-making. Visiting local temples and offering food to the Buddhist monks is commonly practiced. As a way to show respect, younger people often visit the elders and pay respects with traditional offering of water in a earthen pot and shampoo. As a festival of unity, people who have moved away usually return home to their loved ones and elders.

While Myanmar retains a more elaborate culture of Thingyan, it is necessary for the revelers to show rich Myanmar traditions and culture during the festival by paying mutual respects, exercising patience and taking care of negative emotions rather than being hostile and quarreling, which tarnish the fine tradition of Thingyan. To avert any bad luck that might fall on oneself, one has to do meritorious deeds to his or her utmost through the performance of giving (Dhana), observance of morality (Sila) and practice of meditation (Bhavana; Samahta and Vipassana) if one is a Buddhist. And only then, will Thingyan have meaning for Myanmar people and be revered by others, for it is more than a mere festive occasion. It is a time for reflection and make plans for the new year.

THE first month of Myanmar calendar year is pronounced as Da Gu La in spoken language, however if we strictly adhere to the literal pronunciation(according to its spelling) it should be pronounced as Tan Khu La as it writes တန်ခူးလ. In many cases in Myanmar Language pronunciation does not follow the general rule "To pronounce as it writes" This is a lovely peculiarity of Myanmar language.

Tan Khu La is the time when Myanmar pick the fruit from toddy palm. Fruit of toddy palm bears the name "Htan" in Myanmar. Pick is represented by Myanmar word "Khu." So, "Htan Khu" may be the origin and corrupted to "Tan Khu" in later time. "La" is "month" in English. According to one source it was noted "Tar Ku" was used in Ava Period bearing the meaning the "change from old to new year"

When we say Da Gu La, every Myanmar people know new year is coming with immediate preceding of water festival (Thingyan in Myanmar language) for three or four days in which all the citizens regardless of race and religion participate and enjoy.

When we say Da Gu La, it invokes every Myanmar to remember distinctive natural features such as flowers, season and Zodiac of the month. Full bloom of Padauk (pterocarpus) and Ngu Shwe War (cassia) flowers signify the month of Da Gu and its festival, Thingyan. Padauk and Thingyan are the twin for Myanmar citizens. Aesthetic writers or poets metaphorically cited the Da Gu La as the most beautiful month of the year with trees crowned with full blossoms enticing the bees and butterflies around and that beauty is embellished with the sweet songs of birdies which are mostly predominated by songs of koel (Eudynamis scolopacea) very commonly composed in Myanmar romantic songs, poems and novels. Da Gu lavished with pleasant natural beauty can make the separated lovers feel more yearning to see

each other. In some literatures the attraction of natural beauties of Da Gu La is described a little bit in exaggeration to be able to make the saintly persons with high spiritual power lose its power and degraded to secular laymen.

Rakhine Traditional Water Festival (Thingyan)

Almost all indigenous ethnic groups celebrate the Thingyan in Da Gu La, but with trace of their own tradition and social mores. Rakhine people also have their own new year water festival (Thingyan) which is the most noteworthy of all traditional festivals of Rakhine. Traditional activities of Rakhine Thingyan are marked by making the paste of scented wood like Thanakha (Limonia acidissima) or Sandal wood, sacred bathing of the images of Buddha, washing hair of old women by young ladies, keeping Sabbath, doing charity deeds, paying homage to the elderly persons and participating in water dousing celebration. In some places some of the above mentioned activities become less pronounced and in some places they have disappeared.

Before sacred bathing the Buddha Images, young men and ladies gather at an appropriate place of village or ward and grind the sandal woods on the specially designed stone slabs with smooth surface, Rakhine traditional music troupe comprising Rakhine youngsters are playing the music with Rakhine Thingyan songs and antiphonal chants in loud chorus encouraging and entertaining the ladies at their labor in grinding the sandal wood. People around are also participating in the joyful event. The paste of sandal wood is collected in silver bowls and kept at a monastery or a religious congregation hall. The sandal wood paste is used in the collective sacred bathing of Buddha Images, stupas and shrines next day. Only after the completion of sacred bathing events, people are dousing each other with the spirit of washing the sin and sinister influence out of the

body before the new year comes.

Tha tradition of sacred bathing Buddha images was known to have started since the era of 3rd Danyawaddy. During 3rd Danyawaddy era at BC580 Sandar Thuria took the throne and at BC 554, 12 years after his coronation he came to know that Gottama had attained enlightenment and became Buddha in Myitizima land in the west (now Nepal). He strongly desired to see Buddha and according to the advice of his counsellors he vowed and implored Buddha in his spiritually resolute mind to do him a favour of visiting Danyawaddy. The Buddha complying with the king's request came to Danyawaddy together with 500 Sangha



Rakhine ethnic women throw water on revellers as they celebrate the water festival traditionally. PHOTO: NYI ZAW MOE

Da Gu La and Rakhine Traditional Water Festival

Laywadi Tun Saw Khine

retinues and delivered sermons on Buddhism. Before Buddha and his entourage left for home the king Sandar Thuria had his men cast a Bronze image of Buddha on full moon of Kason La 123 Myanmar Year and finished on 1st waning moon of Kason La. The king named the bronze image Maha Muni. The king had it consecrated by Buddha himself and let the people pour the scented water on the image. Then, people poured the scented water on each other. Thus came the tradition of water pouring festival in Rakhine, and Rakhine people celebrate the water festival only after the sacred bathing of Buddha Images.

There are two ways of celebrat-

ing water festival in Rakhine State, one is going round the village or wards to douse water other people and another way is to douse water from pandals. In the former type young men who are necessarily single go in groups carrying scented water to the houses where the ladies are residing. Then requesting the permission to pour water on the lady he wants to douse from her parents. Then lad and lady exchanged pouring scented water and then they enjoy full-fledged water throwing on each other. The other way is to set up the pandals at an appropriate place in the village or ward and lads and ladies gather at the pandal. and throw water. The significant differ-

ence between Rakhine Thingyan and those of other parts of Myanmar is, in Rakhine Thingyan a wooden long boat with full of water is placed in the pandals. The belles of the village or ward come to the pandal under the guardianship of a medium-aged woman who has to take care of the ladies on behalf of their parents. The number of guardians depend on the size of the pandal. Lads have to take permission from the guardian to pour water on the lady he wants. After getting permission lads can take water from the boat and pour it to lady who is on other side of the boat. It is so amusing to see the pairs on each side of the boat dousing each other smiling

or laughing merrily. Lad used to call the lady he pours "Ma Yee."

Another peculiar type of merry-making in Rakhine Thingyan is that a group of ladies or women bide their time to catch a boy or young man and if they can do it, they paint his face in a humorous design and force him go round the village or ward and ask him to do something like monkey dancing, ogre dancing or prince dancing and collect the money from the onlookers. Then the collected money is donated to a monastery or pagoda or etc. This is creating a fun of Rakhine Thingyan to raise fund for donation. In Rakhine language it is called "Thingyan Chaing Pwe"

When we go to the religious aspect of Rakhine Thingyan, most of the elderly persons usually go to monasteries to keep Sabbath, to listen the sermon of monks and doing meritorious deeds. Some young men also are found to do the same. The pagodas and monasteries are crowded during the water festival. The last day of water festival in Rakhine is marked by washing hair with scented water bearing some kinds of tender leaf or flower astrologically selected to be relevant with the day on which one was born with a view to have virtual effect on one's life.

Tradition says that the last day of Thingyan is called "Atat Nay" that signifies the day the Indra (King of Deva or Nat) ascends to his celestial abode after descending the world of human being on Thingyan "Akya Nay", the first day of Thingyan recording the names of bad individuals and good individuals in his two different books during the three days of Thingyan event. The "Thingyan Bulletin" prepared by experienced astrologers says that the people born on the day that coincide with the day of "Thingyan Atat Nay" are in the realm of ill fate and they have to do meritorious deeds such as keeping Sabbath and donating food to the monasteries and to the neighbours as well to preclude the effect of ill fate. Then he has to donate the water pots to the pagodas or monasteries in the evening and he has to wash his hair with scented water at the time prescribed in the "Thingyan Bulle-

tin" to do away with the ill fate.

Next day to "Thingyan Atat" is the first day of the New Year by Myanmar calendar. Paying homage to elderly people is celebrated extensively through out the Rakhine State on Myanmar New Year Day. Generally people are doing good things on the first day of new year. There is belief if some one spends money for something on the first day of new year the money will flow out from your pocket all the year round.

To be cautious the national culture not to get overwhelmed

Nowadays, Water Festival (Thingyan) are losing more and more of the national character and culture. Rakhine is no exception. Traditional long boat to contain water starts to be replaced by modern water tank. Bowls used to pour or throw water is supplanted by hose and pipes. Traditional attire is also substituted by western-styled modern dress. Those changes are the harbinger of vanishing of the identity of traditional Rakhine Thingyan. People, especially youngsters take the Thingyan as an occasion for excessive drinking, wild dancing, showing of excessive mischievous acts, exchanging abusive and lewd words, seeking sex mate and everything out of control. Everybody accepts merry-making is the trade mark of Thingyan, but not meant for everything that tarnishes or blemishes the good tradition of new year water festival or Thingyan.

Rakhine communities are widespread throughout in Myanmar. They are celebrating their traditional Rakhine Thingyan. It is very important to uphold our own tradition and also to respect the tradition of other indigenous people. We, all the people in Myanmar regardless of race and religion should avoid activities and behaviors that blight the Thingyan of auspicious Myanmar New Year. All the ethnic people should embellish Da Gu La by Thingyan Festivals with national identity tinted with their own traditions and culture. Please be cautious to not make the Thingyan an ugly occasion. *(Translated by Khin Maung Win)*

Our Beloved & Holy Thingyan

Amara (Yupa)

TRADITIONAL Myanmar Thingyan is meant for changing of "Tanananway Gyomin တန်ခူး ဂြိုဟ်မင်း" from one season to another, especially from "Mein ခိန္" to "Meittha မိဿာ." It is regarded to be a Holy Day for Myanmar nationals. သတိရှိ Thingyan means washing hair or change or transition. It is said to be included in 12 auspicious deeds for Myanmar people.

In recognition of leaving spiritual dilemmas in the Old Year and moving forward in the New Year with good will, neo minds and vigorous strength,

offering ablutions to Buddha images, having the old shampooed, finger nails and toe nails cut, keeping Sabbath and washing hair are usually performed.

In the past, we used to throw water on water festival revelers, or rather pat the revelers with tender Thabyay Khet soaked with water. With changing times, ways of throwing water altered so much so that it became over-modernized. At such a time, students, staff and employees want to enjoy themselves and to be free from mental stress as an emotional outlet. Those who had been overseas for study or employment feel homesick for their native lands if they had no access to go home back at the time when their Thingyan festival

arrives.

Some always return to their home land just at this time. Even some tourists set out their so-called water festival tour to Myanmar at such a time on purpose, so as to go sight-seeing for fulfilling their itching desires. In Thailand as well, water festival is held annually but it is less over-crowded compared to that in Myanmar. Though there were sparse visitors in beach resorts of Chinmai & Pattaya at such a time, they are now attracting tourists by copying Myanmar's ways and means of tourist industry in recent years.

We have been celebrating traditional water festivals without discontinuity in our country, having potential

tourist income, provided that we can make influx of globetrotters visit us. Youths tend to drink alcohol on the wrong pretext of feeling too cold due to being drenched with water all day long. And, these days there are ubiquitous bars and beer stations across the town. Previously, there were shops selling alcoholic beverage ethanol that were run by the then governments. Only alcoholics went to those shops, but there was a scarcity of beer and bar stations so people seldom went there. Contrariwise, there has been abundance of these kinds of shops, even on roadsides. Thus, people have an easy access to the places, being easily intoxicated and destroying the image of Myanmar traditional Thingyan.

Although people are not celebrating water festivals out of itching desire to drink, they happen to drink while reveling in Thingyan festivals. Hence, in my opinion I think that authorities

concerned should make necessary arrangements not only for crimes not to increase but also for our traditions not to be harmed. If so, it will be pleasing for us for not needing any longer, to have our heels cut short due to our small slippers. In other words, a stitch in time saves nine. Uses of fire-extinguisher water pipes and pressure hoses can be forbidden through educative talks.

To resume the previous topic, "Thingyan" we should not forget a legend of Hindu-Brahmas. As per the legend, once there was a verbal dispute between the king of gods and a Brahma concerning Veda, "An ancient holy text of Hinduism." Ultimately the dispute reached the climax, leading to the decision of the wise man named "Kawarlamine." The stake has been to have the loser decapitated. The wise man decided in favor of the king of gods, who beheaded the Brahma.

Thenceforth the problem occurred to the king of gods. The head of the Brahma cannot be dropped anywhere, as known by all. Therefore, the king of gods made his four queens hold it in turn. It takes a queen one year to hand over the head to another queen. It has been said that Thingyan falls on the day when the head of the Brahma has been turned to another.

"သတိရှိ Horoscopic Statement" is said to be important for Myanmar people for the year ahead. The old used to say that the king of gods would climb down the human abode with which kinds of weapons in his hand, with great interest. They used to believe that the country's destiny depends upon "the Horoscope," whereas children used to have been more interested in the "Ouija Boards" made of gold, silver, bronze and dog's skin, that the king of gods would bring about with him.

Whenever Thingyan festival is

drawing near, children tend to live in peace, without disturbances to their parents, for fear of having their names written in the Ouija board made of dog skin. There seems to be an element of hyperbole in such a claim that people are relieved of worries and anxiety in this month.

During the period, people usually perform meritorious deeds—releasing live fish into lakes, ponds and rivers, washing and shampooing the aged people, cutting toenails and finger nails, offering scented thanakha cream, giving food stuffed with spicy things for fun, besmirching other's face with soot, for young people with water bowls in their hands to ask for permission to throw water on girls.

Oh! Our Myanmar traditional Thingyan which is like our hearts has been, is and will be an unforgettable festival for sure. *(Translated by Khin Maung Oo)*

World Bank maintains 2017 East Asia growth view, sees cenbank policy risks

WASHINGTON — The World Bank kept its 2017 economic growth forecast for developing East Asia and the Pacific unchanged, but added the region is vulnerable to any sharp slowdown in global trade or tightening in financial conditions. The Washington-based lender expects the developing East Asia and Pacific (EAP) region, which includes China, to grow 6.2 per cent in 2017, slowing from 6.4 per cent growth last year. It sees growth slowing further to 6.1 per cent in 2018, compared with its previous forecast in October of 6.0 per cent growth.

“Growth in developing East Asia and Pacific is expected to remain resilient, as continued buoyancy in domestic demand, including public and increasingly private investment, is supported by strengthening external demand,” the World Bank said in its latest East Asia and Pacific Economic Update report on Thursday.

“Nevertheless, global and regional vulnerabilities mean that the positive prospects for growth and poverty reduction in the region in this base case are subject to significant risks.”

The World Bank kept

its 2017 and 2018 growth forecasts for China unchanged at 6.5 per cent and 6.3 per cent, respectively.

It said countries in the region may need to adjust their accommodative monetary policies as upward pressure on consumer prices could intensify on the back of a pick-up in producer prices and projected recovery in commodity prices. The monetary easing cycle in Indonesia likely needs to be placed on hold, and in the Philippines, policies must be ready to adjust to rising inflationary pressures, the World Bank said.

Additionally, any

sharp slowdown in global trade or in China could pose risks to the region’s growth outlook.

“Significant slowdowns in world trade, whether stemming from mounting global protectionist pressures or from unanticipated weakness in global activity, could adversely affect most of the region,” it said.

The World Bank added that the region’s resilience could be tested if global financial conditions tighten faster than expected at a time when the United States is normalising its monetary policy. —Reuters



An advertisement poster promoting China’s renminbi (RMB) or yuan, US dollar and Euro exchange services is seen outside at foreign exchange store in Hong Kong, China in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

As Trump seeks defence-spending boost, watchdogs cite faulty Pentagon accounting

WASHINGTON — President Donald J. Trump is planning to increase US defence spending by \$54 billion next year. But a series of recent reports by the Defence Department Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office say that Pentagon accounting systems will struggle to track how the money is spent. The reports found that the Pentagon remains unable to accurately track its \$591 billion annual budget and experiences billions of dollars in accounting gaps and errors each year despite two decades of reform efforts. Taken together, the reports show that many of

the endemic accounting problems exposed in a 2013 Reuters investigative series remain in place.

“These deficiencies not only affect (the Department of Defence’s) ability to have auditable financial statements,” a 9 February Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found, “they also affect its ability to make sound decisions on missions and operations.”

A spokesman for the White House’s Office of Management Budget (OMB) said he was confident that Defence Secretary James Mattis would properly spend the additional funds.

“The need to replenish our military and bolster American security is unquestioned and an important priority of this president,” OMB Communications Director John Czwartacki said in a statement. “We believe Secretary Mattis will deploy all of his resources in the most effective and efficient way possible.”

Critics of wasteful Pentagon spending say increasing the Defence Department budget is unwise when the department is unable to account for what it already has. “It’s ludicrous,” said Mandy Smithberger, director of the Straus Military Reform Project in Washing-

ton. “Reform isn’t going to happen as long as the spigot is turned on.”

The Pentagon’s continued accounting problems are drawing particular scrutiny now because the Defense Department faces a congressionally mandated legal deadline of 30 September 2017, to become ready for its first audit ever. Unlike every other US government department, the Pentagon has never undergone an audit because its financial records are in such disarray. A spokesman for the Defence Department comptroller’s office said he is confident it will meet the deadline. —Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

At least 47,000 evacuees remain 1 year after Kumamoto quakes

TOKYO — Tens of thousands of people are still living in temporary housing and shelters a year after powerful earthquakes struck Kumamoto Prefecture and neighboring areas in southwestern Japan, local officials said Thursday.

According to a Kumamoto prefectural government estimate, 47,725 people had yet to return to their homes as of the end of March, marking an increase of about 4,300 from figures released late last year, as more people wanted to live in privately owned rental housing that is partly subsidized by the government. —Kyodo News

WHO says 2 billion people drinking contaminated water

GENEVA — Almost 2 billion people drink water contaminated with faeces, which is estimated to cause more than 500,000 diarrhoeal deaths each year, WHO said on Thursday.

Dr Maria Neira, director of Department of Public Health, Environment and Social Determinants of Health in WHO, said in a statement that contaminated water not only puts people at risk of contracting cholera, dysentery, typhoid and polio, but is a major cause of several neglected tropical diseases, including intestinal worms, schistosomiasis and trachoma as well. —Xinhua

Infectious diseases kill 1,589 in China in March

BEIJING — A total of 1,589 people died as a result of infectious diseases on the Chinese mainland in March, official data have shown.

According to the National Health and Family Planning Commission, there were 544,132 cases of infectious diseases reported on the mainland last month.

More than 325,791 cases were classified as Class B infectious diseases under China’s Law on the Prevention and Treatment of Infectious Diseases, resulting in 1,579 deaths. Viral hepatitis, tuberculosis, syphilis, gonorrhoea as well as bacterial and amoebic dysentery accounted for 95 per cent of these cases. —Xinhua

Cargo plane crashes into mountain in Indonesia's Papua Province

JAKARTA — Indonesia’s national search and rescue office said on Thursday that a cargo plane going missing on Wednesday had crashed into a mountain in Papua Province. A signal from the cargo plane had been detected and the crashed plane was located in the deep forest in remote Oksibil, spokesman of the national search and rescue office named only Marsudi told Xinhua by phone.

“The plane collided with a mountain in the deep forest area in Oksibil,” he said. Rescuers flying there could not reach the area partly due to the poor weather condition, said Marsudi. The spokesman confirmed that only a pilot was aboard the cargo plane. The cargo plane was en route from Wajo to Sentani when the crash occurred, the spokesman said. —Xinhua

11 militants killed, 15 motorcycles destroyed by Afghan air force

SARI PUL, (Afghanistan) — Eleven militants were killed after Afghan air force struck their position in the country’s northern province of Sari Pul, a military source said on Thursday.

“The Afghan army’s helicopter gunships launched airstrikes against a Taliban hideout in Sayyad district on Wednesday. And 10 militants were also wounded following the raid,” a press officer of army’s Corps 209 Shaheen based in the region told Xinhua. The targeted militants’ hideout and 15 motorcycles were also destroyed by the attack in the province, 350 km north of Kabul, the source added. Sari Pul province, as well as neighboring Faryab and Jawzjan provinces, has been the scene of heavy clashes between security forces and militants over the past couple of years as the militants have been trying to challenge government forces in the once peaceful region. —Xinhua

Russia vetoes UN resolution on alleged Syria chemical attack

NEW YORK — Russia on Wednesday vetoed a Western-led UN Security Council resolution that condemns the alleged use of chemical weapons by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime and urges the Syrian government to co-operate with international inquiries into the deadly attack.

The resolution was drafted by Britain, France and the United States after the US military carried out a missile strike in Syria last week in the wake of the chemical weapons attack believed to have killed more than 80 people including 30 children.

With the US and Russian foreign ministers also failing to meet half way on the issue in their talks in Moscow on the same day, relations between the two countries are expected to deteriorate further.

Russian Deputy UN Ambassador Vladimir Safronkov criticized the UN Security Council resolution for labeling the Syrian government as the culprit in the chemical weapons attack earlier this month, calling for an impartial investigation.

In addition, Safronkov lambasted the missile strike by the administration of US President Donald Trump, saying it violates international norms. Nikki Haley, US ambassador to the United Nations, berated Russia for siding with the Syrian regime, even as many other nations were united



Russian Deputy UN Ambassador Vladimir Safronkov vetoes a Western-led UN Security Council resolution that condemns the alleged use of chemical weapons by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime at the UN headquarters in New York on 12 April 2017. Russia criticized the resolution for labeling the Syrian government as the culprit in the chemical weapons attack. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

in condemning the Syrian government. The draft resolution garnered 10 votes in favour, but was opposed by Russia and Bolivia. China, Kazakhstan and Ethiopia abstained. It was the eighth time during Syria's civil war that Russia has used its veto power to shield the Assad government.

In Moscow on Wednesday, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said mounting evidence that the Assad regime has engaged in war crimes could reach the threshold needed to bring a case against the Syrian president.

"As time goes by, and more and more evidence continues to

be gathered, it is possible that the threshold necessary to charge individuals, including Bashar al-Assad may be achieved," Tillerson said at a joint news conference with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov after their meeting in Moscow.

Tillerson said the United States has "very firm and high con-

fidence in our conclusions" that an April 4 chemical attack that killed dozens of Syrian civilians "was planned and carried out by the regime forces at the direction of Bashar al-Assad."

But Lavrov, whose country backs the Assad regime, opposed Tillerson's view, saying, "We would very much like to get some increased evidence, not just words."

"So far we have not seen any facts," Lavrov said, speaking through an interpreter. "I don't want to accuse anybody here or protect anyone, we insist on an objective investigation of what happened on the 4th of April."

In an apparent reference to heightened tensions between Washington and Moscow over Thursday's US air strike against a Syrian air base, Tillerson said there is "a low level of trust between our two countries," but stressed the need to stabilize the relationship.

The United States has no plans to impose additional sanctions on Russia, he said. Lavrov said the two ministers agreed to appoint special envoys from the US State Department and the Russian Foreign Ministry to conduct "pragmatic conversation about the irritants, so to speak" as part of efforts to improve overall relations.

Tillerson had separate talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin.—Kyodo News

Iran's ex-president Ahmadinejad to run for presidency in May

TEHRAN — Iran's former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad registered on Wednesday to run in the presidential election in May, in a surprise step contrary to the will of the country's Supreme Leader Seyed Ali Khamenei.

"Our gun is our pen," Ahmadinejad told reporters while showing the pen he used to register his candidacy, according to the Islamic Republic News Agency.

Khamenei, who has the last word on crucial political matters in Iran, publicly disapproved of Ahmadinejad's candidacy last September, saying it could polarize the country's political atmosphere.

"I advised him to not run for election," Khamenei said.

Acting on the leader's wish, Ahmadinejad said at the time in a letter, published by his office, "You advised me it is not expedient to run, and I announced my obedience. I hereby inform you, regarding the supreme leader's considerations, I have no plan for next year's elections."

In a press conference on 5 April, Ahmadinejad, who served as president for eight years from 2005, reiterated his position not to run in the election, instead throwing his support behind Hamid Bagaei, his former vice president and one of his close aides, who had been arrested and detained on cor-



Iran's former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (R) and his former vice president Hamid Bagaei attend a press conference in Tehran on 5 April 2017. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

ruption allegations.

After registering his name as a candidate, Ahmadinejad told reporters he took this step to help Bagaei in his candidacy. The two men registered together.

Iran's hard-line Guardian Council will now either approve or reject the candidates, but given that it is led by the country's supreme leader, it is unlikely to approve the candidacies of Ahmadinejad or his allies.

Earlier this month, Ahmadinejad had threatened to use his "own specific ways" to ensure that he and his favored candidate could run in the presidential race.

The majority of Iran's conservatives are set to support Ebrahim Raisi, a former general prosecutor who has already formally announced his candidacy. He is expected to register soon.

Iran's current and moderate-leaning President Hassan Rouhani, meanwhile, is also regarded as a key candidate. While two of his cabinet members have confirmed his candidacy, Rouhani himself has not yet done so.

Wednesday marked the second day of registration and so far 197 people, including eight women, have submitted their names as candidates.—Kyodo News

Cholera spreading in Somalia, 50,000 cases foreseen — WHO

GENEVA — More than 25,000 people in famine-threatened Somalia have been struck by cholera or acute watery diarrhoea and the deadly epidemic should double by this summer, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Friday.

The United Nations is already racing to avoid a repeat of famine in the drought-hit Horn of African nation where more than 250,000 people died of starvation in 2011.

Cholera, which is endemic in Somalia, is an acute diarrhoeal disease that can kill within hours if left untreated. Malnourished children under five years are especially vulnerable.

Already 25,424 infected people have been identified since the start of the year, WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic said by email, adding: "These numbers are projected to increase to 50,000 by summer."

The case fatality rate for the disease, spread by contaminated food or water, is already 2.1 per cent in Somalia, twice the emergency threshold, he said. At least 524 deaths have been recorded.

Cholera can be successfully treated with oral rehydration solution. Severe cases will need rapid treatment with intra-

venous fluids and antibiotics, according to the WHO.

Death rates among Somalis infected with cholera now reach 14.1 per cent in Middle Juba and 5.1 per cent in Bakool, UN spokesman Jens Laerke told a news briefing.

"We still have 2.9 million people in level 3 and 4, level 4 being the step just before we declare a famine," Laerke said, referring to the UN classification. "So almost 3 million in those critical and crisis emergency levels."

The centre of cholera outbreak is Baidoa, David Akopyan, UN Development Programme (UNDP) deputy country director for Somalia, told the briefing by telephone from the capital Mogadishu.

Thirteen of Somalia's 18 regions are affected, he said.

Some 500,000 Somalis have been internally displaced, many in search of water, as well as some 3 million pastoralists who have lost 70 per cent of their livestock due to drought, he said.

Akopyan, asked about famine, replied: "We are not exactly there, the fear is that in two months if things are not scaled up we will get there ... Hopefully famine will be prevented."—Reuters

'I just can't choose': French abstainers, undecideds alarm presidential hopefuls

PARIS — Pensioner Jeanine Delaplane, care-worker Cecile Lungeri, and millions like them are giving French presidential candidates and pollsters nightmares.

Less than two weeks before the first round of the election, they still do not know who to vote for, and may not show up at the polling station at all.

Opinion polls show around a third of France's 45.7 million voters might abstain, an unprecedented number in a country with a long tradition of high turnouts. Even among those who intend to vote, about one third have yet to make up their mind on how to cast their ballot.

Reasons range from disgust over scandals involving established politicians to dislike among many voters of all the candidates' personalities or platforms. Added to this is simple confusion: what once looked like a straightforward two-horse race between conservative Francois Fillon and far-right leader Marine Le Pen has

produced many surprises.

With voters' intentions so fluid, four candidates are now in with a fighting chance of coming first and second in the 23 April first round, thereby qualifying for the runoff on 7 May. By contrast, support for the candidate of the ruling Socialists has collapsed.

All this has cast extra doubt over a campaign whose unpredictability is unnerving financial markets.

Delaplane, 81, is among those agonising over how to vote. "I just can't choose. I've never seen a campaign like this," she said as she waited to catch a glimpse of Fillon at a rally in the town of Provins, a conservative stronghold east of Paris.

She is hesitating between backing Fillon or far-right National Front leader Marine Le Pen.

However, the mainstream conservative is tainted by scandal — he is under formal investigation on suspicion of financial impropriety, although he denies doing anything ille-



A man looks at campaign posters of the 11th candidates who run in the 2017 French presidential election in Saint Andre de La Roche, near Nice, France, on 10 April 2017.

PHOTO: REUTERS

gal — and has slid to third. On the other hand, many voters regard Le Pen as an extremist, along with the far-left's Jean-Luc Melenchon.

A fourth contender, the centrist and new favourite Emmanuel Macron, has never held elected office, was unknown to most of the electorate until nearly three years ago when he became economy minister, and runs a party that is just a year old.

For dental technician-turned-painter Herve Gass, the entire field is unappealing. "I'm in a com-

plete bind," he said at his studio in an historic part of Provins. "I've been put off politics like never before."

Gass, 63, previously voted conservative but said he had gone off Fillon due to the scandal, while he regarded Le Pen as too radical and 39-year-old Macron as too young and untested. As a result, Gass said he might abstain or enter a blank vote.

The past six months have seen veteran politicians from the two mainstream parties that have governed France for decades kicked out of the race

one after the other, losing party primaries or throwing in the towel because of abysmal ratings.

Instead, Le Pen and Macron are forecast to contest the run-off, with the ex-banker seen winning easily. Still, the first round is no forgone conclusion; Fillon is making a tentative comeback and Melenchon is emerging as the latest sensation thanks in part to his strong TV debating skills.

In percentage terms, support for Macron and Le Pen is in the low twenties and falling, while Melenchon and Fillon are in the high teens and rising; daily polls put as little as 6 percentage points between all four.

Across France, voters of all political stripes have been telling Reuters they're not sure what to make of it all.

"I don't even know if I will vote at all this time," said Lungeri, the 38-year-old carer from Nice who was traditionally a mainstream right voter. "They're all corrupt."

The level of undecided voters has been falling but remains high. While about 80 per cent of voters turned out for both rounds of the 2012 presidential elections, predictions for this time remain low, creating a headache for pollsters.

"There is uncertainty for all the candidates," said Francois Miquet-Marty of Viavoice. "If voting intentions remain that close, abstention will play a key role."

Macron, who launched his campaign only in November, has the extra handicap of lacking the support of a well-established party.

Polls consistently show Le Pen as having the most decided supporters, with over 80 per cent being sure of their choice, but recent surveys have seen the level of certainty of the Macron vote rise, in one case to over 70 per cent.

Miquet-Marty said Le Pen could yet be vulnerable as she relies heavily on support among young and working class voters, two groups where abstention is forecast to be high.—Reuters

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV X PRESS YAMUNA VOY. NO (010)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV X PRESS YAMUNA VOY. NO (010) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14.4.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S X-PRESS FEEDERS PTE LTD
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV PINYA STAR VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PINYA STAR VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14.4.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S CONTINENTAL SHIPPING
LINE PTE LTD
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV EVER ALLY VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV EVER ALLY VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14.4.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.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 EVERGREEN SHIPPING
LINES
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV SAN GIORGIO VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SAN GIORGIO VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14.4.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT (S'PORE)
PTE LTD
Phone No: 2301185



Police officers outside the stadium before the match, Borussia Dortmund v AS Monaco, UEFA Champions League Quarter Final First Leg, at Signal Iduna Park, Dortmund, Germany, on 12 April 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Islamist arrested over soccer bus attack was IS member in Iraq — German prosecutor

BERLIN — German prosecutors have issued an arrest warrant against an 26-year-old Iraqi man who was detained in connection with an attack on a bus carrying players of a top soccer team, saying on Thursday they believe he was a member of Islamic State.

The Federal Prosecutor's Office added in a statement there was no evidence that the man, identified as Abdul Beset A. and who arrived in Germany via Turkey at the start of 2016, had taken part in carrying out the attack in the city of Dortmund.

The man will appear

before a judge who will decide whether to approve the arrest warrant issued by prosecutors, which will allow the man to be held for longer than 24 hours.

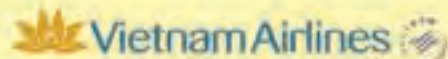
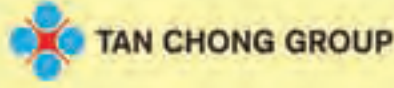
"The investigations have so far resulted in no proof that the suspect had taken part in the attack," the federal prosecutor said in a statement.

It added that the man was a member of the "foreign terrorist organisation" Islamic State in Iraq where he led a commando unit of 10 members that was involved in kidnappings, smuggling, extortion and killings.—Reuters

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successful and healthy New Year.



India's biggest film franchise 'Baahubali 2' hot on Hollywood's heels

HYDERABAD, (India) — Dozens of animators work into the night in India's southern city of Hyderabad, fuelled by caffeine and huddled over computer screens in a darkened studio to put the finishing touches on India's biggest and most ambitious film.

The makers of "Baahubali 2" hope its top-notch visual effects will wean Indian audiences from Hollywood blockbusters, enticing them with the magical kingdoms, rampaging armies and towering palaces of a homegrown fantasy epic.

"If art was easy, everybody would do it," said Pete Draper, co-founder of Makuta VFX, which is stitching the film's live-action scenes together with computer-generated imagery.

"Every single shot has its own challenges. Working hours right now are crazy. We are finishing daily at 4 a.m."

Agencies that closely track the box office say "Baahubali 2" is the most highly awaited Indian film of the decade. But the competition for Spider-Man and other movie franchises from overseas isn't coming from Bollywood.

When it opened in cinemas in 2015, dubbed versions of "Baahubali: The Beginning", made in the Telugu language widely spoken in India's southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, resonated with audiences nationwide.

It used computer-generated imagery to depict ancient kingdoms and bloody wars in a quintessentially Indian battle of good versus evil.

Film-maker S.S. Rajamouli aims to do even better when the next instalment is released on 28 April.

Inspired by Hollywood epics such as "Ben Hur" and "The Ten Commandments" when growing up, Rajamouli wanted to create a tentpole franchise that delivered a memorable movie experience.

But younger audiences were looking to Hollywood franchises



People walk past a poster of an Indian movie 'Baahubali: The Beginning' outside a movie theater in New Delhi, India, on 12 April 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

such as "The Fast and the Furious", and the superheroes of the Marvel and DC Comics universe for the big-screen thrills Indian cinema was unable to provide.

"They have heavy budgets, they have huge star casts and huge studios backing them," Rajamouli, 43, said in an interview in Hyderabad, his home city.

"But if we make 10 per cent of it in an Indian context, with our stories, our heroes and heroines ... we can easily compete."

Visual effects head Draper was at the sprawling movie set every day of filming to make sure location shots and actors' movements synchronised with CGI-enhanced rendering on screen.

By day, the half-built palace, an arena, the torso of a statue and a stone temple flanked by blue screens don't look sufficiently formidable, so the team of nearly

80 animators has been given the task of fleshing out the heft and detail.

To keep down production costs on a budget of \$67 million, work on the CGI-heavy movie was distributed among 35 studios across continents.

"We didn't have any studio backing us. Raising capital was a challenge," said Prasad Devineni, one of the producers.

If all goes well, a record-breaking run for "Baahubali 2" would be a wake-up call for Bollywood, where cinema attendance has halved from a decade ago.

In 2016, Indian box-office collections fell to 99 billion rupees (\$1.5 billion), down from 101 billion a year earlier.

Bollywood, reliant on a tried-and-tested formula of romances and masala thrillers, has failed to develop its own big-tick-

et franchises, piggy-backing instead on "Baahubali", with top producer Karan Johar marketing the movie in Hindi this month.

With a spinoff TV series, an animated offering for Amazon videostreaming, a comic book and a possible third film in the works, "Baahubali" could lure back Indian audiences.

"It has shown us the way - how to market, build euphoria around it," said Rajkumar Akella, India managing director at global box-office tracker comScore.

The makers always envisaged the film as a franchise, with many narratives branching off its storyline, to hook the maximum number of viewers later. "Our audiences might be watching English films, or Hollywood films, and getting used to them, but the blood doesn't change, the DNA doesn't change," said Rajamouli.—Reuters

German cinematographer Ballhaus, Hollywood veteran, dead at 81

BERLIN — German cinematographer Michael Ballhaus, who counted "Goodfellas", "Gangs of New York" and "The Departed" among the blockbuster movies he filmed, died overnight at his home in Berlin, his publisher said on Wednesday. He was 81.

In a career that spanned over four decades, Ballhaus worked with Hollywood directors including Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese and Robert Redford. He was nominated three times for the Academy Award for Best Cinematography, though he never won.

Ballhaus started out as a cameraman with German broadcaster Suedwestfunk and then worked in the 1960s with German film directors including Rainer Werner Fassbinder before moving to the United States.

Last year, Ballhaus was awarded the Honorary Golden Bear award at the Berlinale film festival for his life's work.

In 2014, he published an autobiography, "Images in My Head", which begins: "These are the memories of a man who has lived and worked with his eyes."

"Michael Ballhaus was far more than a cameraman," his publisher, Thomas Rathnow, said in a statement. "He was an artist who created unforgettable pictures in numerous films and in collaboration with the best directors of our time."

"And he was a gentleman, a man with style and a sense of irony," Rathnow added. "We will miss him very much."

Ballhaus, who died after a short illness, was predeceased by his first wife. He is survived by his second wife, Sherry Hormann, an American film director, and two sons.—Reuters

Jude Law to play troubled young Dumbledore in next 'Fantastic Beasts'

LOS ANGELES — British actor Jude Law has been cast to play a young version of Hogwarts' venerable headmaster Albus Dumbledore, a key character in the second film of J.K. Rowling's "Fantastic Beasts" movie spinoff, Warner Bros. said on Wednesday.

Law, 44, best known for his role as Dr. John Watson in the "Sherlock Holmes" action movies, will play Dumbledore decades before he became the beloved headmaster of Hogwarts, the school where Harry Potter and his friends learned to become wizards and fight dark forces in society.

Rowling, who created Dumbledore for her best-selling "Harry Potter" books, has said she thinks of him as a gay man who fell in love, when he was younger, with Gellert Grindelwald, who later turned out to be evil and violent.

She told reporters in New York last year that the second "Fantastic Beasts" movie would show Dumbledore "as a younger man and quite a troubled man — he wasn't always the sage. ... We'll see him at that formative period of his life."

Johnny Depp will play Grindelwald in the second movie, for which Rowling has written the

screenplay, Warner Bros. said in a statement. Filming will start this summer.

The five-movie spinoff is set some 70 years before Harry Potter goes to Hogwarts and features some new and some familiar Potter characters. The story centers around Newt Scamander, a "magizoologist" with a suitcase full of strange creatures.

Several British actors were considered for the role of young Dumbledore, including Christian Bale, Benedict Cumberbatch and Jared Harris, according to Hollywood publication Variety.—Reuters



Actor Jude Law attends the photocall for the movie 'The Young Pope' at the 73rd Venice Film Festival in Venice, Italy in 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Wall Street's 'Charging Bull' artist challenges 'Fearless Girl' sculpture

NEW YORK — The sculptor of Wall Street's "Charging Bull" statue is seeing red over New York City's decision to keep in place the "Fearless Girl" sculpture that now stares it down, saying the adjacent art has changed the meaning of his work and violated his legal rights.

The city's ruling to let the bronze depiction of a defiant girl remain until February 2018 just feet from the bull's flaring nostrils should be reviewed, said a lawyer for sculptor Arturo Di Modica.

"How did the process happen and should permits be revoked?" the attorney, Norman Siegel, said in an interview on Wednesday, adding that his client ought to have been consulted.

"He should have been asked, never was," Siegel said. "There are copyright and trademark infringement issues."

Di Modica told a news conference he envisioned his statue as a positive symbol, but that the addition of the courageous girl turned his bull into a villain.



A statue of a girl facing the Wall St. Bull is seen, as part of a campaign by US fund manager State Street to push companies to put women on their boards, in the financial district in New York, US, on 7 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

"It's really bad," Di Modica said, sounding distraught and adding that the bull was loved by people "all over the world."

The 50-inch (127-cm) girl stands fists on hips on a cobble stone plaza, eye-balling the 11-foot (3.4-meter) bull that has occupied the space in Man-

hattan's financial district for nearly three decades.

Siegel said they want the girl sculpture moved and for Di Modica to be awarded damages for the violation of his legal, statutory rights.

Mayor Bill de Blasio tweeted in response: "Men who don't like women tak-

ing up space are exactly why we need the Fearless Girl."

Initially installed to mark International Women's Day on 8 March, the girl statue was meant to be removed on 2 April. But the city extended its stay amid ebullient interest on social media, generous

press attention and at least two petitions.

State Street Global Advisors, a subsidiary of State Street Corp (STT.N), said it financed the installation by artist Kristen Visbal to highlight the need for more women on corporate boards. Twenty-five per cent of the largest 3,000 US companies have no female directors, State Street noted at the time.

Siegel said the intent was less high-minded, adding, "They did it for commercial purposes."

A plaque originally placed at the girl's feet read: "Know the power of women in leadership. SHE makes a difference." It refers to an exchange-traded fund dubbed "SHE," which invests in companies with women in top executive posts.

"They have since taken the plaque away," Siegel said. "Which acknowledges perhaps it never should have been there in the first place."

Siegel said he has filed Freedom of Information requests about the permitting process with various city

offices. He said he hopes to avoid going to court and would rather negotiate.

The 7,100-pound (3,200 kg) bull itself originally appeared as guerrilla art, installed unofficially in front of the New York Stock Exchange by Di Modica in 1989 and intended to convey the fighting spirit of the United States and of New York.

After police seized the sculpture, public outcry led the city's parks department to reinstall it days later nearby at its current location.

Kate Harding, assistant director of Cornell University Women's Resource Center, said the bull's "hypermasculine, aggressive image" belongs to a different era of New York.

She said images of "Fearless Girl" did not go viral online because people wanted to promote an investment company, "but because she represents a refreshing, inclusive, 21st-century vision of core American values like courage and righteous defiance."—Reuters

Earthquake-hit farmers in Italy rest hopes on fields of lentils

CASTELLUCCIO, (Italy) — Over seven months after a devastating earthquake hit the central parts of Italy, farmers from the Umbria region are hoping that their fields of lentils can help revive local agriculture and tourism.

Escorted by the military through unstable tunnels along the road, around 20 tractors reached the plains at the foot of the Sibillini mountains for the first time since October, to ready the land for sowing the lentil seeds. The lentils grown near the village of Castelluccio are one of the many typical regional products, including saffron and cured

hams, whose production and sale have been hit by multiple earthquakes last year which killed nearly 300 people and destroyed thousands of homes and businesses.

Italy's main farming association Coldiretti has estimated at 2.3 billion euros (\$2.4 billion) the cost of the direct and indirect damage done to rural areas, barns, machinery, mills, storehouses and infrastructure and the destruction of animals and crops.

"Returning to Castelluccio ... is a rebirth for everyone, it is truly a symbolic moment. We need to go up to start the work anew, to start the new crops and to

give our youth the possibility to start a new life," said Gianni Coccia, president of the Cooperative of Castelluccio Lentils.

Much of Castelluccio was destroyed by especially powerful quakes in August and October, which lowered the land in the area by up to 70 cm (28 inches) and ripped up many access roads.

The territory around the quake epicenter is mainly used for agriculture and animal rearing, with over 25,000 small companies, the majority of which are family-run, and almost 300,000 hectares (740,000 acres) of crops.

Known across the

country and abroad, the tiny lentils are a symbol of the area and are grown over 500 hectares on an upland area 1,400 meters (4,560 ft) above sea level.

Seeds this year will be planted a month later than usual but locals trust it will be done in time for the fields to burst into the bright colors of the so-called "Fiorita" — stunning blossoms created by rows of poppies, gentians and narcissus that sprout in June next to the lentil plants.

The natural show of reds, yellow and blues usually attract hundreds of thousands of visitors and is a key date in the local tourism calendar.—Reuters

Paris awards Velib bicycle hiring scheme to new operator

PARIS — Paris has awarded the operation of its pioneering Velib bicycle hire scheme to French-Spanish consortium Smoovengo, officials said on Wednesday.

A Paris city official said Smoovengo would provide lighter and stronger bicycles — a third of which will be electric — to Paris and surrounding municipalities under a 600 million euro contract that will run from 2018 to 2032.

Velib's 20,000 heavy grey bikes and 1,800 docking stations, which have inspired bike-sharing

schemes in cities worldwide, will be replaced in a few weeks this winter.

The Smoovengo consortium is led by Montpellier-based privately held firm Smoove, which operates city bike rental schemes in several French cities, and a string of international cities including Helsinki, Moscow, Chicago, Vancouver, Bangkok and Marrakech.

French outdoor advertising firm JCDecaux, which has operated the scheme for the past decade, has said it will appeal the tender award.—Reuters



A man rides a Velib self-service public bicycle operated by French outdoor advertising firm JCDecaux under an elevated metro line near the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France, on 12 April, 2017 as Paris has awarded the operation of its pioneering Velib bicycle hire scheme to French-Spanish consortium Smoovengo, officials said. PHOTO: REUTERS

mitv Myanmar International Programme Schedule

(14-4-2017 07:00am ~ 15-4-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Myanmar's Traditions and Culture "A stir about of Rainbows"
07:51	Am	Philatelic Pleasure
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Traditional Rakhine Thingyan Festival
08:44	Am	Thingyan Songs & Dances
09:03	Am	News
09:25	"	Mon Traditional Wedding
09:35	Am	Myanmar Social & Charitable Association (Ep-2) (Jivitadana Hospital)
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Simple Living With High Spirit
10:39	Am	A Visit To Ye

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	Welcome To Naga Land
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	The Stories Of The Great Souls (Daw Saw Mone Nyin-A Living Literary Legend Of Myanmar)
08:54	Pm	Chaung Tha Souvenir Business

Remark:

07:00 Am to 11:30 Am	- Live: Mandalay Thingyan Festival
03:00 Pm to 06:00 Pm	- Live: Mandalay Thingyan Festival
07:00 Pm to 11:30 Pm	- Live: Mandalay Thingyan Festival

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

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



Chelsea's Eden Hazard has his penalty saved before scoring their second goal from the rebound during Premier League at Stamford Bridge, on 5 April 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Two Chelsea players make six-man shortlist for PFA award

LONDON — Premier League-leading Chelsea's success on the pitch has been recognised by the Professional Footballer's Association (PFA) with Eden Hazard and N'Golo Kante making the shortlist for the organisation's Players' Player of the Year award.

The six-player list named on Thursday also includes Tottenham Hotspur striker Harry Kane, Manchester United's leading scorer Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Everton striker Romelu Lukaku and Arsenal talisman Alexis Sanchez.

Chelsea's title charge has been led by Belgian winger Hazard, who has scored 14 goals, and defensive midfielder Kante, who is named for the second year in a row, the Frenchman having helped Leicester City win the Premier League last season.

With Arsenal looking unlikely to end their 13-year wait for the title, Sanchez has single-handedly kept the

North London club in the hunt for a top-four finish with 18 goals this campaign.

Everton's Lukaku leads the race for the golden boot with 23 goals, followed by Kane on 19 goals.

Ibrahimovic, 35, has bagged 17 league goals in his first season in England, having joined United from Paris St Germain at the start of the campaign.

Spurs midfielder Dele Alli is in contention to retain his Young Player of the Year award, joined on that list by team mate Kane, Lukaku, Manchester City winger Leroy Sane, Sunderland goalkeeper Jordan Pickford and Burnley defender Michael Keane.

Alli, 21, joined from second-tier side Milton Keynes Dons in 2015 and his 16 goals and five assists have been crucial to second-placed Spurs' title hopes this season. The award winner will be announced on 23 April.—Reuters

Centurion Ronaldo reaches another milestone

MADRID — Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo may be on course for his worst domestic goal haul since 2010 but with two strikes against Bayern Munich in the Champions League quarter-final first leg on Wednesday he became the first player to score 100 goals in UEFA competitions.

Zinedine Zidane's side drew with neighbours Atletico Madrid in La Liga on Saturday and looked likely to fall short again after being outplayed by Bayern in the first half before Ronaldo came to the rescue to seal a 2-1 win.

When Arturo Vidal headed the hosts into a 25th-minute lead, Bayern appeared on course for a 17th consecutive European home victory, but the game turned following Vidal's missed penalty and Ronaldo equalised with a fine volley early in the second period.

Javi Martinez's sending-off just after the hour mark handed Real the initiative, and the 32-year-old Ronaldo clinched Real's victory when he beat Manuel Neuer after being picked out by Marco Asensio in the 77th minute.

While the Portugal forward has demonstrated an ability to win matches single-handedly throughout his career, his latest survival act came in an unfamiliar context having struggled to hit the lofty heights he sets himself in La Liga this season.



Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo in action during UEFA Champions League Quarter Final First Leg at Allianz Arena, Munich, Germany on 12 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

"Cristiano was unhappy because he couldn't score a third, that's how ambitious he is," Zidane told reporters.

Despite an admirable 19 goals in 24 league appearances, Ronaldo looks unlikely to match the tallies he has managed in his last six seasons (40, 46, 34, 31, 48, 35). And he had previously gone 613 minutes of European football without finding the net - his longest drought for eight years.

Yet he delivered an outstanding second-half performance to reach 100 European goals, with 98 in the Champions League and two coming in Madrid's 2-0 UEFA Super Cup victory over Sevilla in 2014.

Of Ronaldo's haul in Europe's top competition, he has managed 82 for Real, with the other 16 coming for Manchester United, and his double took him four goals ahead of Lionel Messi (94) in the race to become the first player to score 100 Champions League goals.

Real still have to fend off a likely Bayern fightback on Tuesday, but they remain on course to become the first team to retain the Champions League.

At this rate, you would not bet against Ronaldo reaching his century in the competition before the end of this campaign.—Reuters



Atletico Madrid's Antoine Griezmann scores their first goal from the penalty spot during UEFA Champions League Quarter Final First Leg at Vicente Calderon Stadium, Madrid, Spain, on 12 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

Atletico's Griezmann demonstrates class against Foxes

MADRID — Atletico Madrid's Antoine Griezmann demonstrated his importance to the Spanish club when his lightning pace forced a penalty that gave his side a crucial 1-0 victory over Leicester City in their Champions League quarter-final first leg on Wednesday.

Griezmann, who finished third in the Ballon d'Or voting last year, has carried Atletico at times this season and it was his break that set up the penalty that he then converted past Kasper Schmeichel.

It was his 24th goal of the season, five of which have come in the Champions League, the competi-

tion Atletico are desperate to win having finished as runners-up twice in three years.

"He's a fabulous player," Atletico coach Diego Simeone said of the French international. "He's a complete player, you don't even know his position anymore, he's all over the pitch."

"He's everywhere. He can work in midfield, assist like a second striker and score like a striker."

"He's still growing, of course, but he's having a great end to the season and is taking responsibility in accordance with his status in the team."

The 26-year-old, who is frequently linked with a move away from the Vicente Calderon, caused problems all over the pitch, with the Leicester defence working at full capacity to prevent him doing any more damage.

Leicester manager Craig Shakespeare said he had to tinker with his team's set-up to shackle the dangerous forward, who Simeone has given the licence to roam.

"We made changes at half-time to control Griezmann more as he was getting too much space between the lines," he said.—Reuters