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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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State Counsellor calls for betterment of Union Peace Conference

WITH the second meeting of the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong less than a month away, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi reiterated the importance of improving the outcome of the meeting by remembering the successes of the past.

She made the remarks during her address to the Meeting of the Central Committee for Convening Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong held at the meeting hall of the Presidential Palace yesterday

morning.

“Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong 2nd meeting will be held on May 24. The central committee had already seen the advantages and disadvantages based on the experiences encountered in convening the first meeting. It is necessary for us to try hard for making improvements at the present. I want to urge the Central Committee and Working Committees to make an effort for the success of the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong”, the State Counsellor

said yesterday.

Afterwards, Union Ministers and Deputy Ministers, and Chairmen of the Working Committees updated the Central Committee on the status of invitations, welcoming procedures, accommodations, transportation, communications, assembly hall logistics, catering programmes, ceremony preparations, security, news and information, health and finance — all to be performed by Working Committees.

Present at the ceremony were members of the Central Commit-

tee for Convening Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong, Union Ministers Lt-General Kyaw Swe, and U Thant Sin Maung, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman Dr. Myo Aung, Chairmen of the Working Committees, Union Ministers—Lt-General Ye Aung, Dr. Pe Myint, Dr. Myint Htwe, U Ohn Maung, Deputy Ministers U Min Thu, Maj-Gen Aung Soe, Maj-Gen Than Htut, U Khin Maung Tin, U Kyaw Myo, U Khin Maung Win and responsible officials.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA



Myanmar's farmers need assistance to shift from traditional to mechanised farming as the country moves toward contract farming. FILE PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

Vice President stresses need to protect farmers rights

VICE President U Henry Van Thio has called for stepping up efforts for protecting the rights of farmers and for promoting their interests as the country moves toward contract farming.

At the meeting of the Steering Committee for Farmers Rights, Protection and Promoting of Interests held in the meeting room of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, he also stressed the need to invite investors for implementing contract farming in the country.

“It is necessary to invite private entrepreneurs for the seed production and quality crop production, and internal and external banks need to be linked in order to acquire the necessary investments,” said the Vice President.

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သဒ္ဓါထက်သန် မြန်မာအားမန် ကမ္ဘောဇဘဏ်

Vice President U Henry Van Thio and wife attend ceremony of the Netherlands National Day

Vice President U Henry Van Thio and wife Dr. Shwe Hlwan attended the Netherlands National Day ceremony marking the birthday of King Willem Alexander and the ceremony to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Myanmar—the Netherlands held at Lake Garden Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday evening.

First of all, the ceremony of the Netherlands National Day marking the birthday of King Willem Alexander was opened by playing the national anthems of Myanmar and the Netherlands after which the Netherlands Ambassador to Myanmar gave a welcoming speech.

Then, the Vice President said, “It is a remarkable milestone in the history of Myanmar-Netherlands relationship that diplomatic relations between the two countries had been established since 1947, just prior to the attainment of My-

anmar’s Independence. Netherlands is an old friend of Myanmar as well as a friendly country of importance for the development of Myanmar. Cooperation between the two countries has developed remarkably in recent years. We were greatly pleased that the Netherlands had been providing a considerable amount of development assistance in many sectors including culture, tourism industry and management of water resources in Myanmar. As regards the co-operation in multi-dimensional water resources management, Myanmar and Netherlands signed the MoU in 2013. As the chairman of National Water Resource Committee (NWRC), we warmly welcome that partner countries, NGOs and INGOs and interested individuals would be providing assistance by cooperating with us in implementing the aims and objectives for sustainable development. I firmly believe that

cooperative efforts and relations between the two countries would develop and friendship would also strengthen more than ever. On such a pleasant occasion of the Netherlands National Day and 70th anniversary of the establishment of Myanmar—Netherlands diplomatic relations, I am very happy and proud of Mr Wouter Jurgens, Netherlands Ambassador to Myanmar. I pray for the development and prosperity of the Netherlands and its people.”

Afterwards, the Vice President attended the dinner given in his honour together H.E. Mr Wouter Jurgens and those present at the ceremony.

Present at the ceremony were Union Minister U Thant Sin Maung and wife, Union Minister Dr. Myo Thein Gyi, National Security Advisor U Thaung Tun, Hluttaw representatives and invited guests. —Myanmar News Agency



U Henry Van Thio is welcomed by Mr Wouter Jurgens, Netherlands Ambassador to Myanmar. PHOTO: MNA

Action being taken against bus drivers violating rules

Ko Moe

Daw Nilar Kyaw, the minister for electricity, industry and transport of the Yangon Region Cabinet, said strict action will be taken against YBS Bus Lines that fail to abide by traffic laws.

The minister’s remarks were made during a 24 April session of the Yangon Hluttaw, where the topic of the YBS was the main focus and the issue of transparency in YBS matters was discussed.

“It has been arranged that bus lines which fail to accurately follow traffic disciplines will be replaced with another new bus line. We cannot accept the satirical wording depicting hints of people’s disapproval such as ‘People are disappointed at YBS.’ It can be tantamount to the opposite meaning, so we cannot accept it. If time goes past, people will decide whether YBS is successful or not. Such a claim

that YBS is a failed one without gaining success is not acceptable because now is the period under implementation. In fact I would not like people to say such an untimely accusation”, she said.

According to Daw Nilar Kyaw, the YRTA is implementing the Yangon Bus-line System under a one-year project, reviewing situations every quarter.

As regards the motion urging the regional government to transparently publicise the matters of the public transport system in Yangon Region, and taking action against violators in accord with effective disciplines, 26 Hluttaw representatives discussed this during the 24 April session. During this meeting it was said that the YBS had weaknesses in preparation and management.

Regarding the motion put forward by U Wai Phyto Han, Yangon Region Hluttaw representative, it has been approved

unanimously by the Hluttaw session held on 27 April, it has been learnt.

“Following the cabinet change in Yangon, we have put forward the motion to make the government trying to change improve more than the present situations, in accord with our motto: time to change”, said U Wai Phyto Han, the Yangon Regional Parliamentarian who submitted the motion.

With a view to reduce traffic jams and to make bus lines systematic, the Yangon Region Cabinet changed bus systems on 16 January. Three months later, some travellers still find it inconvenient to ride the bus, it has been learnt.

The YRTA issued a notification that there have been over 80 bus lines plying in Yangon Region with more than 3,500 buses, according to YRTA. It has been learnt that 2.5 million Yangon residents rely on buses daily.

Parliamentary delegation leaves for the Philippines

A DELEGATION led by Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Mahn Win Khaing Than left by air for the Philippines yesterday to attend the ASEAN parliamentary leaders coordination meeting and 30th ASEAN Summit in Manila, from 27 to 30 April.

The delegation was seen off at Yangon International Airport by Speaker of Yangon Region

Hluttaw U Tin Maung Tun, Deputy Speaker of Yangon Region Hluttaw U Linn Naing Myint and officials. Director-General of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Office U Kyaw Soe and Deputy Director-General of Amyotha Hluttaw Office U Thiha Han accompanied Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than. —Myanmar News Agency



Mahn Win Khaing Than, Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, is being seen off by officials as he departs for the Philippines. PHOTO: MNA



Myanmar delegation led by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attends a dinner hosted by G&D Security Printing Co, Ltd in Munich. PHOTO: MNA

Myanmar eyes close military ties with Germany

At the invitation of General Volker Weiker, Chief of Staff of the Bundeswehr, the German armed forces, Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and party arrived at Tegel International Airport in Berlin, Germany on 26 April.

The Senior General was welcomed at the airport by Myanmar Ambassador to Germany Daw Yin Yin Myint, Myanmar military attaché Brig-General Aung Kyaw Moe (Army, Navy and Air) and wife, Commandant of the Engineers Train-

ing Center and Director of the Engineer Corps, Brig-General Lutz Niemann and wife. In the evening, the Senior General and party attended a dinner party hosted by G&D Security Printing Co, Ltd in Munich.

On 27 April morning, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing was welcomed a ceremonial guard of honour by General Volker Weiker at the Federal Ministry of Defence. On their arrival at the Federal Ministry of Defence, the Senior General and entourage were warmly greeted by General Volker Weiker and officials.

Then, the chiefs of the two armed forces took salute from the guard of honour and inspected it.

Afterwards, the Senior General together with the German armed forces chief laid a wreath at the Bundeswehr Memorial. In the talks with his counterpart at the hall of the Federal Ministry of Defence, the Senior General expressed his willingness for information exchange in fighting against terrorism, inviting the German armed forces chief to pay an official goodwill visit to Myanmar. —Myanmar News Agency

Vice President stresses need to protect farmers rights



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

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Myanmar is an agriculture-based country in which 70 per cent of farmers depend on the agriculture sector, as do residents in cities connected to agriculture and livestock, which is why speedy efforts for the tasks of farmer rights, protection and farmer's welfare will be carried out, he added.

The Vice President, who is also the leader of the Leading Committee, spoke about five essential aims for protecting the rights and enhancing the economic welfare of farmer's law, which will support farmers with help for suitable loans, assistance with production, investment and technology to increase production, suitable prices for their agricultural products in the market,

to effectively carry out the rights, protection and interests of farmers who own small plots, and to offer support for the grievances and losses caused by natural disasters as much as possible.

He said plenary decisions have been made under the law's chapter 3, section 5 to implement help for farmers who suffered losses in 2016 natural disasters, Ks4.67 billion for crop substitution, Ks4.19 billion for the maintenance of dams, and Ks2.47 billion for the maintenance of roads and bridges, which will be provided from a separate government fund.

With the objective of farmers being able to cultivate crops on time, the amount of loans was increased from Ks1 lakh to Ks1.5 lakh for one acre of rain-

ny season paddy production in 2016-2017, while loans for other crops will be increased from Ks20,000 to Ks50,000 per acre. It is important that Union level ministers, region and state governments, working committees composed of delegations from non government organisations and private entrepreneurs collaborate together in this effort, he said.

Then, Union Minister Dr. Aung Thu, Secretary of the Steering Committee for Farmers Right, Protection and Interests Promotion explained the ongoing plans, sector-wise activities for high agricultural production and breeding for farmer rights, protection and promotion of interests.

Later, discussions on the

interest promotion for breeders, cultivators, farmers through the States and Regions were made by State and Region Chief Ministers and the members of Nay Pyi Taw Council. Union Ministers and those present also discussed the short-term, long term and future vision for the farmers.

The Vice President said the results from this meeting should be implemented practically and another meeting may be called depending on the needs. The plenary meeting was attended by Union Ministers, the Attorney General, Regions and States Chief Ministers, members of Nay Pyi Taw Council, Vice Chairman of the Central Bank, Permanent Secretaries, Directors-General, responsible personnel and invitees.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Improvements for Yangon Bus Service passengers in progress

PLANS are being made to improve passenger convenience in the YBS bus system, while a report has been submitted to the union level for a scheme to punish those who break the rules and regulations, said Daw Nilar Kyaw Yangon Region Minister for Electricity, Industry, Transport and Communication at the Yangon Region Hluttaw meeting yesterday.

"We are doing our best to reduce the number of transfers passengers are facing and we will not increase the number of routes but try to make the existing routes work better. There are 138 Vehicle and Traffic Laws for irresponsible driving, but in reality they are not practical and if the misconduct crosses over our jurisdiction, then we may have to transfer it to the police side, and for that we have submitted to the union level," said Daw Nilar Kyaw.

The minister made her remarks in response to a question asked by U Wai Phyo Han of Yangon Constituency in the Yangon Region Hluttaw meeting on 24 April, asking whether a transparent plan for upholding rules and regulations for public

transport will be shared with the public.

To complement the YBS bus system, efforts have been made to upgrade the Yangon Circular Train, while private businesses are working on a water taxi service which may link jetties with bus stops.

In response to remarks made by Hluttaw representatives, Daw Nilar Kyaw replied, "We altered the original bus routes after listening to the public and discussing with the bus route managers. I cannot accept everyone saying YBS has failed when we are still in the early stages of implementation. The people will make the final decision on its effectiveness."

Currently a law concerning the Yangon Region Transport Authority is being drafted and under the YRTA administration includes buses, taxis, cargo trucks, private vehicles, trains and water and air crafts, therefore efforts are being made to draft a well-rounded law for each sector.

Since its inception in January 2016, 6,000 complaints have been filed against the YBS bus system including overcharging, rude behavior towards passen-

gers, driving past the speed limit, failure to follow the bus route completely, and physical violence.

"Depending on the severity of the complaint, licenses of the drivers and spares may be revoked, or more severe cases may result to expulsion from the YRTA and a ban from working in the transport sector," said Daw Nilar Kyaw.

Currently 10 mobile teams are monitoring bus gates and bus stops for misconduct by bus drivers and spares. In the old Ma Hta Tha system around 5,900 cases were handled in a three-month inspection while in the YBS system 6,500 cases were handled in a three-month period, which leads us to believe that the increased number means complaints are being handled more effectively, she said.

In the old bus system there were 12 deaths and 130 injuries, while in the YBS system there have been seven deaths and 109 injuries.

The YBS system has over 3,700 vehicles running over 80 bus routes for the 2.5 million citizens of Yangon who commute daily.—*Zaw Gyi (Panita)*

Five suspects detained in Buthidaung Township

ACTING on a tip-off, security forces detained five men on suspicion of receiving terrorist training in Lodesar Khai Village of Buthidaung Township on Wednesday.

The suspects are believed to be related to 13 suspects including Abudulamain and Aduraw Shi from Kyauktaung Village, who

conducted and had undergone terrorist training in Lodesar Khai village, Maungyi Taung Village-tract in Buthidaung Township, Rakhine State on 7 March.

The suspects have been handed over to border guard police and security forces are seeking further information.—*Myanmar News Agency*



The workshop on Public Service Media in progress. PHOTO: MNA

Workshop on Public Service Media held in Nay Pyi Taw

A workshop on Public Service Media (PSM) jointly organised by the Ministry of Information, Myanmar Journalists Association and the Article 19 for materialising the Public Service Media Bill took place at the hall of the ministry in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

At the workshop, Director-General of the Information and Public Relations Department U Maung Pe and Article 19 Project Manager Ma Yadanar Thein extended greetings, followed by discussions of PSM, international norms, development of ethnic media, types of PSM that should be used in Myanmar and ways to change state-run media into PSM, including finance and advertisement resources. The PSM Bill was submitted to the parlia-

ment in 2013 and was revoked in 2015.

The IPRD director-general said that the necessities and weak points of the PSM Bill are expected to be discussed at the workshop by the participants. The Article 19 project manager highlighted the roles of civil society organisations in implementing the PSM Bill being carried out by the Ministry of Information.

The workshop was attended by the officials of the ministry and members from Myanmar Journalists Association, Pen Myanmar, Myanmar Women Journalists Association, Burma News International, Myanmar Media Lawyers' Network, Myanmar Journalist's Network and Article 19.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Myanmar, ROK sign technology agreement

A ceremony to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on Technology Advice and Solutions from Korea (TASK) between the Ministry of Industry and the Korea Institute for Advancement of Technology (KIAT) was held at the Kempinski Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Industry and the president of KIAT Mr. Jae Hoon Chung made opening speeches, followed by briefings from ministry officials about agriculture in Myanmar, an update on the companies that manufacture farming equipment and reviews and implementations from Ko-

rean officials about TASK.

Union Minister U Khin Maung Cho and the KIAT president signed the MoU. The event is aimed at forming frameworks for technological advancement and cooperation between the companies and research organisations of the two countries.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Lake Reed attracts more tourists from India

THE Chin State cabinet is promoting tourism based on Lake Reed, and have found that most of the tourists are from the neighbouring country of India, said the State Hluttaw representative from Haka town.

The lake is located in the north of Reh Khaw Da, a small town that lies near Myanmar's northwestern border with India, making it a convenient trip for those coming from the South Asian country.

Moreover, the authorities



Reed Lake in Chin State has attracted visitors.

are promoting community based tourism (CBT) in Lake Reed so that the cultural mores of ethnic Chins can be exposed to tourists

from India and beyond.

Lake Reed is unique in that it is shaped like a heart.

The natural lake is 2,966 feet

high above the sea level.

The famous heart-shaped lake is 832 acres wide and has a 3-mile circumference and is over

50 feet deep.

What makes Lake Reed unique is that the lake is never short of water.—200

Reforestation by private sector and government

THE forestry department will plant 36,000 acres of forest per year while private sector will plant 28,000 acres of forest per year beginning in the 2017-2018 fiscal year, according to the forestry department.

If the forestry department and the private sector grow forests at that rate, over 2 million acres of forest will emerge across the country over a 10-year period.

Under the government plan, 352,438 acres of forest will be planted by the forestry department, whereas 285,004 acres of forest will be planted by private companies. Plus, 500,000 acres of natural forest maintained in the arid zone. And 770,332 areas of forest will be planted by the syndicates for the local people.

Moreover, 30 per cent of land will be made into forest land. Although timber extraction

was suspended in the 2016-2017 fiscal year, timber weighing 269,727 tonnes and teak weighing 1,274 tonnes will be produced in the next fiscal year.

Timber extraction has been suspended since 2016-2017 to reduce deforestation. Bago Yoma timber extraction has also been suspended for 10 years. The authorities plan to reduce the volume of timber in fiscal year 2017-2018.—*Min Thu*

International Modern Technology and Machinery Expo to be held in Mandalay

AN international modern technology and machinery expo will be held from 23 to 25 May in Kanaung hall at the Industrial Zone in Mandalay, according to an official from Exhibition Organising Committee. The exhibition will be held with an aim of introducing international modern technologies and machineries to industrial entrepreneurs from Upper Myanmar and the Mandalay Industrial Zone.

The exhibition is being held for the second time, organised by Ngwe Pinle Media with the assistance of Mandalay Industrial Management Committee. The first exhibition was held in 2016 in Nay Pyi Taw.

"This expo will include talks concerning the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC), Internal Revenue Department, social welfare and labour issues, occupational hazards, banking and

insurance. In addition, technological companies will introduce modern technologies and accessories through demonstrations. Entertainment programmes will also be included in this expo." said an exhibition organising committee official. A domestic products show and competition will also take place, with the best machineries and products selected for prizes for the best products of 2017.—200

Intellectual Property Laws need awareness promotion

INTELLECTUAL property laws such as industrial design, invention trademarks and literature and artistic patent rights need awareness promotion in Myanmar, because only a few people know that intellectual property laws even exist, according to Daw Swe Zin Htike, vice chairperson of Intellectual property entrepreneurs' association.

"Myanmar people are not very much aware of the intellectual property (IP) law. Even the inventors and manufacturers are not aware of the IP laws," she added.

Lack of knowledge of IP laws in Myanmar has led people from other countries to register Myanmar traditional make-up (Thanakkha) and local products such as fruits and vegetables as

their patented products, in accord with the IP laws.

People need to be aware of the IP laws and to be able to protect their own products.

The ministry of planning and finance permitted the establishment of an Intellectual Property Entrepreneurs' Association on 26 June, 2014 with a view to rapid development of the IP sector.—200

ICRC delegation visits Buthidaung in Rakhine State

A 10-member delegation led by Mr. Jacques Ducros De Lafarga De Romefort from the International Committee of the Red Cross visited Buthidaung Prison in Buthidaung, Rakhine State yesterday morning.

The ICRC delegation members discussed with In-charge U Chan Aye Kyaw over provision

of healthcare services to the prisoners and confinement of the inmates.

They also looked round the hostels for the inmates, prison hospital and lockdown zone. In the evening, the delegation members met with the prisoners and interviewed them.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Raw opium seized in Tangyan

An anti-narcotics squad from Tangyan stopped and searched a motorcycle ridden by Ma Nan Kham Aung near Pin Taing, a small-vehicle passenger gate in Ward 3, Tangyan on Wednesday. Local police arrested Ma Nan

Kham Aung, 28, after she was found to be in possession of six kilos of raw opium. Police have taken action against Ma Nan Kham Aung under the Anti-narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—*Myanmar Police Force*

Illegal goods worth Ks16.93 billion seized in fiscal year 2016-2017

ILLEGAL goods worth Ks16.92 billion were seized in fiscal year 2016-2017, said an official from the Ministry of Planning and Finance on 24 April at a meeting which held at the Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw to clarify matters regarding the ministry's performance during their first year.

"People are saying that the goods will not flow well if the ministry checks the illegal goods at the checkpoints, which are too narrow to check three, four vehicles simultaneously. So, we have widened the checkpoints to be able to check at least two or three vehicles at the same time to reduce the delay of flowing of the goods," said the official. The

customs department seized illegal goods worth Ks16.92 billion at the Yaypu and Mayanchaung checkpoints, as well as through the checkpoints in other regions in fiscal year 2016-2017, according to the customs department.

"Our Yaypu and Mayanchaung checkpoints were reopened recently. In fiscal year 2016-2017, the head office seized illegal goods worth Ks6.58 billion, the customs checkpoints from other states and regions seized the goods worth Ks7.29 billion and Yaypu checkpoint seized illegal goods worth Ks2.22 billion. The Mayanchaung checkpoint seized illegal goods worth Ks822.9 million in March alone.—*Min Thu*

LOCAL Business

USDA forecasts gains in rice, corn production in Myanmar

THE Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) said that rice and corn production in Myanmar is expected to increase in the 2016-17 marketing year, while production of wheat is forecast to fall.

Rice production in 2016-17 is forecast at 12.2 million tonnes, up from 12.16 million tonnes in 2015-16. The increase reflects the recovery of the main rice growing areas of the region that were affected by major floods in 2015, the USDA's April 20 report said.

Looking ahead to 2017-18, rice output is expected to climb to 12.3 million tonnes in anticipation of favorable weather con-

ditions and increased use of machinery, the agency noted in its report.

Consumption of milled rice is forecast at 10.8 million tonnes in 2016-17 and 10.9 million tonnes in 2017-18, reflecting expanded demand by the animal feed sector in Myanmar.

Rice exports, meanwhile, are forecast to increase to 1.4 million tonnes in 2016-17 and 1.45 million tonnes in 2017-18 in anticipation of higher demand from China and the E.U., coupled with easing of inspections along the border.

"In addition, the Myanmar government plans to sign memorandum of understanding agree-

ments for rice purchases with Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, which could stimulate demand for Myanmar rice," the USDA said.

Corn production in Myanmar is forecast to increase to 2.1 million tonnes in 2016-17 and 2.25 million tonnes in 2017-18, driven by the expansion of rain-fed corn growing areas, particularly in the eastern part of the country, the USDA noted.

"Farmers primarily use high-yield hybrid seeds, which account for more than 90% of corn production," the USDA said. "Hybrid corn seeds are provided by Thai-, China- and Vietnam-based companies, such

as, CP, Seed Asia, Ayeyarwady, Seven tiger, etc., mostly through contract farming. About 50% of Myanmar's corn production area is located in Shan State (eastern region of the country)."

Corn exports for 2017-18 are forecast to remain flat at 1.2 million tonnes, the same level as 2016-17. The USDA said about 98% of Myanmar's corn exports take place along the border between Myanmar and China, with the remaining 2% exported to Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Pakistan.

Wheat production in Myanmar is forecast to fall to 180,000 tonnes in 2016-17 and 170,000 tonnes in 2017-18 due to the lim-

ited area suitable for wheat cultivation and poor price incentives compared to other crops such as chick pea and coriander seed, the USDA said. Farmers in Myanmar primarily grow wheat for animal feed and subsistence.

But consumption of wheat flour is expected to continue to grow behind changing lifestyles in the country that are being fueled by a demand for a more western-oriented diet.

"New bakeries, cafes and fast food shops around the country are fueling the demand for snack and baked goods derived from wheat flour," the USDA said.—Eric Schroeder/ world-grain.com

Large cargo ship docks at Sule Port

THE Cargo Ship called M V Tomini Amity, by which Myanmar will ship rice to West African countries, has docked at Pier 2 of Sule Port Terminal, making it the second-largest largest cargo ship to ever enter Sule Port.

The 185-meter-long cargo ship was unloaded in Bangladesh and arrived at Sule Port Terminal on 24th April in order to load 22,000 tonnes of rice. The ship will then sail to India so that the rice can be distributed to West African countries.

It is a milestone in Myanmar history that the cargo liner successfully docked at Sule Port Terminal because transportation charges are

reduced for shippers.

The transportation charges will be over Ks6,000 per tonne when the rice bags are sent from Hlaingthaya to Sule Port. When the merchants transport the rice bags to Thilawa, the bus fare will cost over Ks 8,000 a tonne. Therefore, the arrival of the cargo ship at the Sule Port significantly brings down the cost of shippers and merchants. If the transportation cost can be slashed, the merchants can offer higher prices to the farmers, said Captain Henry U Khin Maung of the agent of the ship owner.

Large trucks with container trailers are not allowed to run from 11 am to 3pm on the road

from Hlaingthaya to Sule, causing delays for cargo ships anchored at port. Meanwhile, the merchants are attempting to load 3,000 tonnes onto the ship.

The ship is likely to leave from Sule Port Terminal on 2nd May. The 190-meter-long cargo ship entered Sule Port on 6th April, which is reported to leave from Pier 2 of Sule Port yesterday, it is learnt.

The successful docking was accomplished with the help of the managing director, chief navigator and officials from Myanma Port Authority, which is under the guidance of the Ministry of Transport and Communications.—Soe Win (MLA)



Rice bags being loaded onto the cargo ship M V Tomini Amity at Pier 2 Sule Port. The successful docking of the cargo ship significantly reduces transportation costs. PHOTO: SOE WIN (MLA)

660 tonnes of mango exported to China within a week

A total of 660 tonnes of mangoes worth US\$0.224million were exported to China from 8th to 14th April, according to the Commerce Ministry.

About 2,500 to 3,000 tonnes of the Sein Ta Lone variety are produced from Sagaing Region, which will be sent to the China market through the Muse 105th mile trade camp.

There are over 70,000 acres of mango farms across the country. An acre of Sein Ta Lone mango produces a tonne of mango, whereas three tonnes of Yingwe mango are produced per acre.

These two mango varieties

— Sein Ta Lone (Solitaire diamond) and Mya Kyauk (Emerald) are mainly exported to foreign countries such as Japan, South Korea, Russia and Ukraine. Myanmar's mango fetches a good export price.

There are over 200 varieties of mango in Myanmar and only 191 varieties are being cultivated. Sein Ta Lone, Shwe Hinthia and Padanmyar Ngamauk local mango varieties are the most favourable varieties in the market and so they are shipped to the foreign countries. The remaining varieties are distributed only in the domestic market.—Mon Mon

Mizoram bans import of pigs and piglets from Myanmar and Bangladesh

MIZORAMS southernmost Lawngtlai has banned import of pigs and piglets from neighbouring Myanmar and Bangladesh.

The prohibitory order was issued on 27th April in the district, banning imports of pigs and piglets from the two countries for

two months.

The order was issued following reports that pigs and piglets were getting infected with the dreaded Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS) and classical swine fever.

The order was issued as pre-

vention of further spread of the diseases in the district as well as other parts of the state. PRRS, which hit the state in endemic proportions, resulted in the death of more than 3,000 pigs and piglets in 2013 and more than 4,000 pigs and piglets in 2016.—GNLM

Private companies to be granted all types of insurance

Private insurance companies will be allowed to offer all types of insurance, according to U Kyaw Win, the Union minister for planning and finance.

Myanmar Insurance has granted licences to 11 private insurance companies since May, 2013. Currently, Myanmar Insurance has granted licences for only 12 types of insurance out of 40 types. How-

ever, the best selling types of insurance at the private companies are: travelling insurance; total vehicle insurance; fire insurance; and life insurance. However, the government will soon grant permission to the private companies to be engaged in selling all 40 types of insurance. "Moreover, the government will also grant the private companies permission to offer

farmer insurance and overseas employment life insurance. We have already submitted the proposal to the government to grant all types of insurance to private sector. As soon as the government approves our proposal, Insurance Business Regulatory Board (IBRB) will announce the approval," said U Khin Maung Win, general manger of Myanmar Insurance.—200

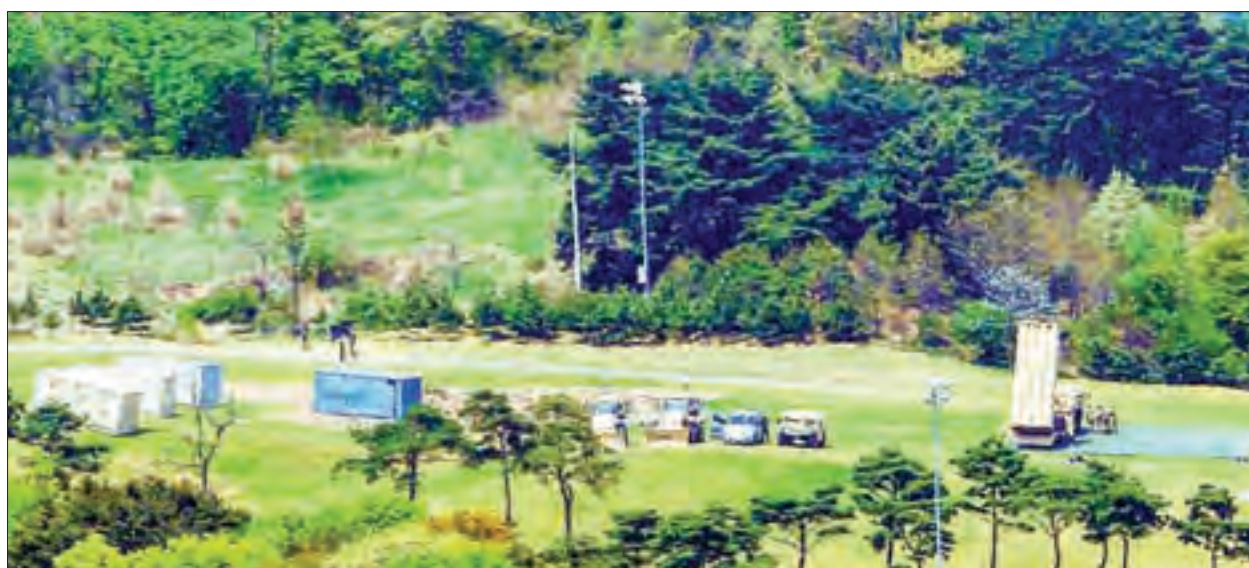
China welcomes US saying it's open to talks on North Korea

BEIJING/SEOUL — China on Thursday welcomed an apparently softer tone by the United States on the North Korean nuclear and missile crisis but stressed its opposition to a US missile defence system being deployed in South Korea.

China has long promoted dialogue to resolve the “Korean nuclear issue” as North Korea has repeatedly threatened to destroy the United States which in turn has warned that “all options are on the table” in ending North Korean provocations.

The Trump administration said on Wednesday it aimed to push North Korea into dismantling its nuclear and missile programmes, which are in violation of UN Security Council resolutions, through tougher international sanctions and diplomatic pressure.

“The United States seeks stability and the peaceful denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. We remain open to negotiations towards that goal.



A Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) interceptor (R) is seen in Seongju, South Korea, on 26 April, 2017.
PHOTO: REUTERS

However, we remain prepared to defend ourselves and our allies,” it said in a statement.

Asked about the US comments, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said China had noted that many US officials had recently made such remarks.

“We have noted these expressions, and have not-

ed the message conveyed in these expressions hoping to resolve the Korean nuclear issue peacefully through dialogue and consultation,” he said.

“We believe this message is positive and should be affirmed.” South Korea and the United States agreed on Thursday on “swift punitive measures” against North Korea in the

event of further provocation. The South also said the deployment of a U.S. anti-missile defence system was moving ahead effectively a day after angry protests against the battery and fierce opposition from China. South Korea on Wednesday moved parts of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system to its deployment

site on a golf course about 250 km (155 miles) south of the capital, Seoul, signalling a faster installation of the system. Several hundred South Korean villagers protested near the site, hurling water bottles at vehicles moving the parts in.

The top US Commander in the Pacific, Admiral Harry Harris, said on Wednesday the THAAD

system would be operational “in coming days” bolstering the ability to defend the US ally and the 28,500 US troops stationed there.

A photograph taken of the site showed a THAAD interceptor on the back of a mobile launcher erected and pointed skywards on green lawn as a military transport helicopter hovered nearby. China says the system’s advanced radar can penetrate deep into its territory and undermine its security. It is adamant in its opposition. “The deployment of the THAAD anti-missile system in South Korea damages the regional strategic balance and stability. The Chinese side is resolutely opposed to this,” Defence Ministry spokesman Yang Yujun told reporters.

“China’s military will continue to carry out live-fire military exercises and test new military equipment in order to firmly safeguard national security and regional peace and stability.” —Reuters

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World Bank provides 59 mln USD for modernizing Bangladesh power sector

DHAKA — The World Bank has approved 59 million US dollars financing to help Bangladesh meet the increasing demand for electricity by improving the reliability and efficiency of the entire power system, the Washington-based lender said in a statement on Thursday.

The Power System Reliability and Efficiency Improvement Project will reduce power outage and load-shedding, as well as cut electricity generation costs, said the statement.

The project will modernize the electrici-

ty generation process and practices with installation of new software and hardware, as well as upgrading the transmission system.

The project will also lower greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the use of carbon-intense fuel in electricity generation.

“In the last five years, Bangladesh has almost doubled its electricity generation capacity to meet increasing demand for electricity. Yet, our 2017 Doing Business Report still ranked 187 out of 190 economies on the Getting Electricity indicator,” said

Qimiao Fan, World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.

“The project will help address bottlenecks and modernize the overall power system. This will reduce outages, save fuel in power generation, and help bring affordable and reliable electricity to households and businesses.”

According to the 2013 World Bank Enterprise Survey, businesses in Bangladesh face power outages for 840 hours per year on average with an output loss equivalent to 3 per cent of GDP.

Only 70 per cent of rural households in Bangladesh have access to electricity.

As the government aims to double electricity generation capacity again in the next five years, it will be important to expand the transmission network and optimize the national power system operation to accommodate the increased power flows.

The project will help construct and rehabilitate a 40 km transmission line and remove bottlenecks in other important lines.—Xinhua

Philippines bans open-pit mining as minister toughens crackdown

MANILA — Philippine Environment Secretary Regina Lopez said on Thursday she will ban open-pit mining in the country, toughening a months-long crackdown on the sector she blames for extensive environmental damage.

The ban comes just days before the outspoken environmentalist-turned-regulator faces a confirmation hearing in Congress that could lead to her removal as minister after a storm of complaints from

pro-mining groups.

Lopez, who has already ordered the closure of more than half the country’s operating mines and has previously described open pit mines as “madness”, said it was within her prerogative to ban the practice, which is allowed under Philippines mining law. “Each open pit is a financial liability for government for life,” she told a media briefing. “It kills the economic potential of the place.”

The ban will take effect

immediately but will not cover existing mines, she said. Mining is a contentious issue in the largely underexplored Southeast Asian country after past examples of environmental mismanagement.

Lopez in February ordered the permanent closure of 22 of 41 operating mines in the world’s top nickel ore supplier and later cancelled dozens of contracts for undeveloped mines to protect water resources.

Miners have argued

her actions are illegal and no mine has yet been closed as companies pursue an appeals process that can only be settled by President Rodrigo Duterte.

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines described her latest move as “absurd.”

“With this open-pit ban, she is essentially banning the mining of shallow ore deposits that can only be extracted using open-pit mining,” said Chamber spokesman Ronald Recidoro.—Reuters

India, Sri Lanka ink key agreement on economic cooperation

NEW DELHI — India and Sri Lanka on Wednesday signed a key agreement on economic cooperation as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held extensive talks with his Sri Lankan counterpart Ranil Wickremesinghe in the national capital to strengthen bilateral ties.

“Deepening economic collaboration. India-Sri Lanka signed MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) on cooperation in economic project,” Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Gopal Baglay tweeted after the pact was sealed.

The talks between the two leaders took place at the iconic Hyderabad House in the heart of the national capital. “Partnership for prosperity and development. Prime Minister @NarendraModi receives Sri Lankan PM Wickremesinghe at Hyderabad House,” Baglay tweeted ahead of the talks.

And after the bilateral discussions, Modi took to social media and tweeted “Held comprehensive talks with PM Ranil Wickremesinghe on ways to strengthen India-Sri Lanka ties for the benefit

of our citizens.”

Earlier in the day, the visiting Sri Lankan prime minister met with Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Road and Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari.

“Visit of a special partner. Sri Lankan PM Wickremesinghe arrives in Delhi on 25 April, meets EAM Sushma Swaraj today (Wednesday),” Baglay tweeted.

The Sri Lankan prime minister also held discussions with former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the country’s main opposition Congress leader Sonia Gandhi.

Wickremesinghe’s five-day tour to India, starting Tuesday, is a visit that is just ahead of Modi’s slated tour of the island nation next month.

Sri Lanka has proposed to sign an MoU with India next month during Modi’s visit, which proposes Indian investment in development of port and oil tank farms in Trincomalee, setting up a power plant and terminal, piped gas supply in Colombo, and highway and railway projects.—Xinhua



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (R) shakes hands with his Sri Lankan counterpart Ranil Wickremesinghe before their meeting at Hyderabad House in New Delhi, capital of India, on 26 April 2017. India and Sri Lanka on Wednesday signed a key agreement on economic cooperation as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held extensive talks with his Sri Lankan counterpart Ranil Wickremesinghe in the national capital to strengthen bilateral ties. PHOTO: XINHUA

China launches first domestically built aircraft carrier

DALIAN, (Liaoning) — China launched its second aircraft carrier Wednesday morning in a Dalian shipyard in Liaoning Province in northeast China.

The new carrier, the first developed and built by China, was transferred from a dry dock into water at a launch ceremony starting at about 9 am in the Dalian shipyard of the China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation.

It is China’s second aircraft carrier, coming after the Liaoning, a refitted Soviet Union-made carrier put into commission in the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy in 2012.

China began building its second carrier in November 2013, with dock construction starting in March 2015.

The main body of the carrier has been completed, with equipment of major systems including

propulsion and electricity installed.

Putting the carrier into water marks progress in China’s efforts to design and build a domestic aircraft carrier.

After the launch, the new carrier will undergo equipment debugging, outfitting and mooring trials.

The launch ceremony included a performance of the national anthem, ribbon cutting, breaking a champagne bottle on the bow, and steam whistles from ships nearby.

The ceremony was attended by Fan Changlong, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission, as well as leaders of the PLA Navy and China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation.

Ma Xiaoguang, a Chinese mainland spokesperson with the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State

Council, said Wednesday he was proud of the great achievement made by the country in modernizing the national defence and military.

“[The move] will help to strengthen our capability to safeguard national sovereignty, territorial integrity, as well as major and core interests,” Ma said at a press conference in Beijing.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang, meanwhile, reiterated China’s adherence to peaceful development, adding that the country follows a national defence policy that is defensive in nature.

“The purpose of developing China’s national defence forces, including its navy, is to safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests, as well as to protect world peace,” he said at a daily press briefing.—Xinhua



China’s second aircraft carrier is transferred from dry dock into the water at a launch ceremony in Dalian shipyard of the China Shipbuilding Industry Corp. in Dalian, northeast China’s Liaoning Province, on 26 April 2017. PHOTO: XINHUA

Court finds city negligent over schoolgirl’s death in tsunami

SENDAI — A high court on Thursday upheld a lower court ruling that ordered the city of Higashimatsushima in Miyagi Prefecture to pay around 26.5 million yen (\$238,000) in damages to the family of a schoolgirl killed by the tsunami following the 2011 earthquake in northeastern Japan.

The Sendai High Court found that the city-run Nobiru Elementary School was partly to blame for her death because it allowed her to go home after the quake struck without the person who had been registered to pick her up. The 9-year-old girl went home accompanied by the parent of another child. But her parents were not at home when it was subsequently hit by the tsunami triggered by the March 11 quake.

A teacher agreed to allow the parent of the other child to take the girl home as the school’s principal had made an exception to the rule, allowing third persons to pick up pupils as long as the school could confirm the relationship between them.

“The school had the responsibility to keep (the girl) under its protection,” Presiding Judge Masato Furukubo said in noting the school’s rule of only handing over its students to registered personnel in cases of emergency.

“The principal could have foreseen that the girl’s life would be in danger by letting her go home,” Furukubo said, recognizing a causal link between the school principal’s negligence and the girl’s death.

While a slew of lawsuits have been filed against administrators such as schools and firms over deaths caused by the mas-

sive tsunami, the latest ruling is apparently the first by a high court holding an administrator responsible.

During the trial, plaintiffs claimed the school should not have allowed the other parent to pick up the girl, and it should have foreseen that a tsunami would engulf her home.

They also said the school should have evacuated people to the second floor of the school building rather than its gymnasium where they had actually gathered and claimed it failed to collect information about the tsunami over the radio.

In the same ruling, the court rejected the damages claim by the family of an 86-year-old woman who was engulfed in the tsunami at the same school, deeming it could not have foreseen the tsunami reaching the gymnasium she had fled to and endorsing the lower court ruling.

The woman died along with at least 17 others when a 3.5 metre tsunami hit the gymnasium, which was packed with about 340 people at the time. The school was a designated as an evacuation site in the coastal city in Miyagi Prefecture.

The Sendai District Court in March 2016 ordered the city to pay damages to the girl’s family while rejecting the damages claim by the families of two other residents, including the woman, prompting the city and her family to appeal. Among similar lawsuits filed against administrators is the case of Okawa Elementary School in Miyagi, in which 74 students were killed by the tsunami.—Kyodo News

Opinion

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com with your name and title. Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish “Letter to the Editor” that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

Conservation of Forests and Trees

Khin Maung Oo

SINCE time immemorial, natural forests and trees have grown exuberantly and abundantly in Myanmar. It was a pleasant place for the people to live in, as it had been sparsely populated and trees in the regions in which it rained too much, had grown heavily so much so that sunshine did not shed its light onto the ground.

With the increasing population and unrestricted deforestation, the numbers of trees have been decreasing and we are severely suffering from climate change. As a consequence of deforestation we have been suffering from flash floods, torrential rains and drought.

According to data collected in 1918, 68.9%of the area in Myanmar had been covered by forests with only 42.92% in December 2015, reducing by 20% of the forest area within 80 years. It was a great loss for the country.

Surveys carried out every 5 years by FAO had shown that 51.54% of the country was covered by forests in 2000, 49.25% in 2005, 46.96% in 2010 and 42.92% in 2015. The area covered by forests had been decreasing.

Why have very precious trees been cut down in such an unrestricted way? The only answer to this question is none other than greed and selfish interests. It must be said that those who had cut down trees and forests and those who have the duty to protect them from being destroyed are responsible for it. Giving too much favor to a handful of people led to great loss for the public.

Now, conservation of forests and reforestation is being implemented. Though we all know the evil effects of deforestation, illegal cutting down of trees is still being done almost on a daily basis. There may have been difficulties in seeking out and arresting those who are responsible for illegal cutting down of trees due to security situations of the broader areas. Yet, prevention must be made for the interest of the people under the careful surveillance of those responsible in these border areas.

It is not sufficient to prevent illegal logging with existing teams and organizations. As there are people in every region, people’s forces must be exerted. The public must be organized by sharing educative talks on trees and forests. Campaigns for reforestation and reducing deforestation must be performed with awareness and alertness by people’s co-operation.

Though the State had been carrying out plantation of forests since 2007, there are still limitations so success is small. As it is difficult to implement with the State’s effort alone, private forest plantations must be encouraged.

Forests are as precious as gold. Myanmar fell into the hands of imperialists on account of teak. Simultaneously, the country is experiencing climate change due to deforestation. Provided that forests are conserved and planted systematically, our forest areas will increase again and we will be able to regain our good weather.

“Though the State had been carrying out plantation of forests since 2007, there are still limitations so success is small.”



Tourists taking the bullock carts for sightseeing in Bagan, Mandalay Region. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH

Ye Myat Tun

CALL me partial, but I think Myanmar has some of the world’s greatest heritage sites. Ask most natives and they will agree. Our temples rival Ankor Wat, our ancient cities are remarkably preserved and accessible, and our people are voted time and time again the friendliest and most authentic in Asia. So, why, then, have most never heard of the big brother adjacent to Thailand?

Officials and laymen all agree- now is the time to visit Myanmar. Crippling international sanctions have been lifted, the country is modernizing rapidly, and the cloistered era of cultural purity and authenticity is waning. In twenty years, the country will be quite different. It has changed remarkably in the past five. How much longer will buffalo carts roam the streets? Will smiling faces adorned with fragrant yellow thanaka evolve to become Sephora-painted canvases? Perhaps, and it is fitting. It is my aim to reach those longing to capture the last few years of the last untouched Southeast Asian culture, before my great country becomes everything that its citizens dream of.

I propose a call to action: that our citizens take the responsibility of marketing the country personally. Spreading awareness is as simple as creating a Facebook page. Investing in our country is every citizen’s duty and in the best interest of all. In addition, for those possessing higher clout who are paying attention, I’d like to pass on inspiration by sharing some interesting strategies and best practices successfully adopted and implemented by other countries. Most of the countries listed freely share their strategic plans online in PDF format:

1) **Let’s Get Personal:** The wildly popular skiing community of Aspen, Colorado (USA) has created a personal connection between locals and tourists. They have implemented the “Adopt a Tourist Program,” where discounts are offered to locals and tourists who team together and share experiences. This is a great way for Myanmar locals to improve their English or chosen second language and develop strong international connections.

2) **Let’s Clean House:** The Chinese government uncovered a local problem that was a hindrance to tourism, and I think it



MraukU is a well-known site of ancient temples and pagodas in Rakhine State. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH



People cross U Bein bridge over Tuangthaman Lake in Mandalay. PHOTO: REUTERS

might hit close to home for us. Many complaints by foreign tourists were about unsanitary conditions in public toilets. Thus began the “toilet revolution” of China- a renovation project of as many as 100,000 public toilets still in the works today.

3) **Let’s Get Back to our Ethnic Roots:** New Zealand is advertising authentic cultural experiences by capitalizing on their Maori heritage by launching New Zealand Maori Tourism in 2004. The Maori Arts and Crafts Institute puts New Zealand on the map as a major tourist site. Locals and students display carving, weaving, and storytelling to travelers on Maori cultural tours. I have a vision of cultural tours geared towards our ethnic groups: Shan, Kayin, Mon, etc.

4) **Let’s Look to the Future:** In 2007, the Tourism Ministry of Turkey produced an official document that rocked the international tourism industry- the ambitious Tourism Strategy for 2023. Their objective is to “become one of the top five visited countries in the world, therefore generating mass tourism revenue.” Turkey has many obstacles to overcome, starting with how the world has historically viewed the country. Improvements have been made along the coasts, the road systems, and internationally sponsored golfing events seeing the likes of Tiger Woods.

5) **Let’s Develop the Little Man:** Canada’s Federal Tourism Strategy recognizes that while major hotel chains, airlines, and tour operators are important, 98% of their tourism sector consists of small and medium-sized local businesses. Therefore, creating a favorable atmosphere for these businesses to flourish is essential. For Myanmar, that means promoting and supporting the local hotels, restaurants, and tour companies.

6) **Let’s Ask Big Brother for Help:** Ireland’s Tourism Action Plan 2016-2018 is in full swing, employing admirable, long-term tourism tactics that exceed marketing and promotion and delve into restructuring government procedures. Recognizing that each tourist destination needs to have an edge over competing markets, these governments have supported significant financial investments in essential physical infrastructure, events and activities, and promotion, all to be carried out in 23 actions addressing issues ranging from involvement with local authorities to visitor accommodation

capacity.

7) **Let’s Get Smart:** 2017 is the age of smart technology. Cebu City in the Philippines has learned to capitalize on the smart phone application craze. Officials have developed a smartphone app to market local events, chiefly their annual Sinulog Festival. The guide includes the story of the festival as well as listings of places to stay during the Sinulog, information on heritage tours, and where to sample local cuisine. Hello, Thingyan App, complete with a list of open eateries and events during the festival!

8) **Let’s Own Our Online Business Presence:** Canada has launched The Meetings, Conventions, and Incentive Travel Program (MC&IT) to generate business leads for Canadian partners. Their multilingual website engages high-yield customers and encourages them to host their events in Canada.

9) **Let’s Get Talking:** Realizing that Jamaica’s Tourism relied heavily on word of mouth, the country’s tourist board launched the 2004 campaign: “Once you go, you know.” It has been wildly successful and is still in motion. They spread the word that their exotic country was a friendly and safe place for the entire family. Myanmar would do well to adopt this reputation.

10) **Let’s #Campaign:** Part of the GREAT British Campaign (#OMGB- Oh My Great Britain) is to encourage prior visitors to return and visit all of Great Britain via social media. The #OMGB social campaign invited travelers to share travel pictures on social media using the campaign hashtag. The successful campaign generated over £800 million in additional visitor purchases and spending by overseas tourists and £12.7 million in partner funding for their inbound activity in 2015/ 2016.

Now is the time to visit Myanmar, and now is the time to kick-start a massive promotional program to boost our economy. There is no need to wait on a major national project, though having one would be splendid. Locals can take to their new smartphones now and tweet away with their thumbs to bring Myanmar to the top of Southeast Asian tourism destinations.

Ye Myat Tun is a local hotelier, entrepreneur, and consultant with 20 years of hospitality management experience locally and overseas in the USA and Caribbean.



Ngwesaung beach in Patheingyi, Ayeyawady Region. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH

Macron slower off mark than Le Pen in last French election lap

PARIS — Far-right leader Marine Le Pen has made a more impressive start than favourite Emmanuel Macron to the last lap of the French presidential election, a poll showed on Thursday.

Macron, tipped in all opinion polls so far to win convincingly against the National Front chief on 7 May, has made several potentially costly public relations missteps since they both qualified for the decisive run-off in a vote last Sunday.

The Elabe poll for BFM TV found that one out of two people surveyed considered Le Pen's campaign had taken off well, compared with 43 per cent for Macron.

Striking workers jeered Macron, a 39-year-old former economy minister, on Wednesday during a visit to the Whirlpool tumble-drier factory in his hometown of Amiens in northern France after Le Pen unexpectedly turned up there hours earlier and posed for selfie photos with people at the site.

As the French media



Emmanuel Macron, head of the political movement En Marche!, or Onwards!, and candidate for the 2017 presidential election, attends a campaign rally in Arras, France, on 26 April 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

acknowledged successful one-upmanship by Le Pen, her second-in-command said that she, in stark contrast to Macron, had refused to stand by as firms like Whirlpool sought to shift production out of France to cheaper countries.

"Some people say that the state cannot do everything but what they mean is that the state can't do anything at all," Florian Philippot told France Inter radio.

"Mr Macron offers no hope. In this case, people

cannot stand by and do nothing, they have to stand up and fight."

Although Macron held his ground during Wednesday showdown over Whirlpool and the tension eventually eased, television channels repeatedly broadcast footage of the candidate being heckled, marking a stark contrast with coverage of Le Pen posing for photographs with workers.

She said in a statement on Wednesday evening that, if elected, she would not let the factory be shut

down as planned in 2018 and she would bring it under state control for a time if necessary to secure its future.

"Marine Le Pen has said that, if need be, she could temporarily nationalise the factory to save the plant," the candidate's niece, Marion Marechal-Le Pen, also a National Front member and member of France's parliament, told RTL radio.

With polls indicating Macron winning with around 60 per cent of votes on 7 May, he has also taken heat for seemingly acting as if victory were already in the bag.

Rivals and potential allies alike criticised his visit on Sunday night to an elegant Parisian restaurant for celebrations after coming out on top in the first round of voting.

The visit to the Left Bank brasserie made him an easy target for Le Pen's campaign which seized on the incident to portray the former investment banker as a member of an arrogant political elite out of touch with the people.—Reuters

Archaeologists restore ancient Roman temple in Israeli port



People work during an archaeological excavation at the foot of the Crusader wall in the old city of Caesarea, Israel, on 26 April 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

CAESAREA, (ISRAEL) — Archaeologists in Israel have begun work to restore a once-towering ancient-Roman temple in the modern-day Mediterranean city of Caesaria.

As part of a \$27 million project that aims to triple tourist numbers, scores of workers have erected scaffolding, cleared rubble and begun excavations around the more than 2000-year-old ruins.

Caesaria was a vibrant Roman metropolis built in

honour of Emperor Augustus Caesar by King Herod, who ruled Judea from 37 BC until his death in 4 BC.

Historians tell how the temple loomed above the ancient skyline, perhaps as tall as the Acropolis in Athens, and could be seen from afar by ships voyaging to the holy land.

Caesaria already draws about 1 million tourists each year who can walk among the ruins of aqueducts and the region's oldest surviving Roman theatre.

The project's backers want to turn the city into a major archaeological site in Israel, second only to Jerusalem.

The Israel Antiquities Authority hopes the temple restoration will eventually triple the number of visitors.

The first phase — a system of four vaults, or arches, that will be restored on the temple platform — could be completed by the end of the year.

"The whole experience of the visitor will be com-

pletely different. He will be able to sense the atmosphere and actually understand the essence of the building," said Doron Ben-Ami, an archaeologist with the antiquities authority. "This is something that you don't get at any other archaeological site today."

The dig has also unearthed some surprises, like a small mother-of-pearl tablet engraved with a symbol of the Jewish menorah, which is a seven-branched candelabrum.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Russian warship sinks following collision with cargo ship in Black Sea, all rescued

ISTANBUL — A Russian warship sank after hitting a cargo ship in the Black Sea on Thursday due to heavy fog, but all were rescued, Turkish media said.

The incident occurred off the coast of Kilyos in Istanbul, not far from the Bosphorus Strait, where the Russian warship crashed into a cargo ship and sank later, Turkish press reports said. Initial reports said 15 troops went missing, but the Turkish coast guard confirmed later on its website that all 78 Russians onboard were rescued.—Xinhua

Italy PM says EU must remain united during Brexit negotiations

ROME — Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni said on Thursday the 27 European Union countries should remain united during negotiations with Great Britain on its exit from the bloc.

Speaking in parliament ahead of an extraordinary EU summit on Saturday called to set the terms for the negotiations, Gentiloni said he expected negotiations to begin in mid-June, and he "trusted" they would lead to a positive result in which the United Kingdom would remain a "friend and ally".—Reuters

Armed man wounds two policemen in France's La Reunion

PARIS — An armed man wounded two policemen before he was arrested in the French Indian Ocean island of La Reunion, local authorities said Thursday.

Earlier in the day, an armed man opened fire on two police officers from the National Police Intervention Group (GIPN) during his arrest. He injured them before being put under control, La reunion prefecture said in a statement posted on its website.

The assailant was injured during the arrest, the statement said, without giving further details.

According to local media, the shooter was a 22-year-old man. He was suspected of radicalization. The anti-terrorism section of Paris prosecutor office opened a probe into the shooting, they added. —Xinhua

Iraqi forces free town of Hatra in northern Iraq from IS

BAGHDAD — Iraqi paramilitary units, known as Hashd Shaabi, retook control of the town of Hatra in the south of Iraq's northern province of Nineveh on Thursday, after clashes with Islamic State (IS) militants, the paramilitary units said.

"The paramilitary fighters, backed by the army's helicopter gunships, completely freed the small town of Hatra after they drove out the IS militants from the town, some 100 km southwest of Mosul," the media office of the predominantly Shiite Hashd Shaabi said in a statement. Hundreds of the Hashd Shaabi fighters entered the town from the southern edge and fought sporadic clashes against the IS militants while they freed its neighborhoods, the media office said.—Xinhua

Bicycle bomb injures 15 Afghan civilians in eastern province

JALALABAD, (Afghanistan) — Fifteen Afghan civilians were injured in a bomb blast in Afghanistan's eastern province of Nangarhar on Thursday, the provincial government spokesman said.

"An Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attached to a bicycle was detonated in a main square in Bati Kot District roughly at 10:30 am local time, injuring 15 innocent civilians," spokesman Attaullah Khogyani told Xinhua. Five of the injured were shifted to a main hospital in provincial capital as they were suffering severe wounds while 10 wounded people received treatment in the district's hospital, the official added.—Xinhua

UK could join US action in event of new Syria chemical attack — Johnson

LONDON — Britain would find it difficult to refuse a request for military assistance in Syria from the United States if President Donald Trump decided to take action against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad over chemical weapons use, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said.

The United States accused the Syrian army of carrying out an April 4 attack in which scores of people died from poison gas. It responded by launching cruise missiles against a Syrian air base, and has said it would not tolerate use of chemical weapons by the Assad government.

Britain endorsed the US response to the chemical attack, but was not directly involved. However, Johnson suggested the government would back Trump militarily if requested to do so in the event of any future chemical weapons attack.

“If the Americans were once again to be forced by the actions of the Assad regime ... and they ask



British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson takes part in an international news conference on the future of Syria and the region, in Brussels, Belgium, on 5 April 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

us to help it would be very difficult to say no,” Johnson told BBC radio. Johnson said it remained to be seen whether such military assistance might need the permission of parliament, which in 2013 voted against bombing Assad’s

forces in Syria to deter them from using chemical weapons.

The April attack in Syria has raised tension between Western powers and Russia, which has provided military backing to Assad’s government.—*Reuters*

Damascus slams French report of alleged chemical attack in Syria

DAMASCUS — Syria’s Foreign Ministry on Thursday slammed what it called “fabricated allegations” by the French government over a report in which France said the Syrian forces were behind a chemical attack early this month on a rebel-held town.

In a statement, the ministry slammed the French report as “mere allegations” and “lies” aiming to hide the truth of who was really behind the “crime.”

Earlier in April, the Western powers accused the Syrian army of carrying out a toxic attack against the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun in Idlib Province in northwestern Syria.

The alleged attack claimed the lives of more than 70 people.

The Syrian government

repeatedly denied having any sort of chemical weapons following the 2013 deal with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

But on Wednesday, France said its intelligence proved that the Syrian government forces were behind the chemical attack.

“The Western countries have always mastered the lies and deceptions to implement their policies,” the ministry said.

It said the French government doesn’t possess the legal speciality to determine what happened in Khan Sheikhoun.

“The Syrian Arab Republic denounces this misleading campaign, which proves France’s full partnership in the aggression against Syria,” the ministry said.—*Xinhua*

Pope heads to Egypt with Christians in retreat across Middle East

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis flies to Cairo on Friday, less than a month after church bombings killed 45 people in two Egyptian cities as part of a concerted campaign by Islamist militants to rid the Middle East of Christians.

Home to some of the faith’s earliest churches, the region’s Christian communities have been in decline for decades, but wars this century in Iraq and Syria, and the emergence of Islamic State have put their future in doubt.

Francis said on Tuesday he hoped his visit could be a “consolation and ... encouragement to all Christians in the Middle East”. He also wants to improve dialogue with Islam.

“The pope is very conscious of the fact that the Middle East may lose its entire Christian presence,” said Nina Shea, the head of the Center for Religious Freedom at the Washington-based Hudson Institute think tank.

“These are ancient communities that have their roots in the earliest Church. They aren’t grafted on, or the result of Western evangelization. They are unique and they are being lost,” she told Reuters by telephone.

The largest exodus has been in Iraq, where Christians were caught up in the sectarian violence that wracked the nation following the US-led invasion in 2003 and then actively persecuted as the Islamic State grew in power from 2014.

No precise figures exist, but Shea said Christian numbers had

fallen from 1.5 million in 2003 to between 100,000 and 200,000 today. Others say up to 400,000 may still live there, but many have lost their homes and been displaced.

As Islamic State, also known as Daesh, started to seize towns and cities across Iraq, they ordered Christians who fell into their clutches to convert, pay a tax or face death.

Those Christians who could, fled abroad or to Kurdish-held areas in the north. They appear highly reluctant to return to their old homes even as Iraqi forces gradually retake lost territory, including large swathes of the city of Mosul.

“Daesh were people from

Mosul, there were friends, people we know,” said Kharallah Jamil, the Christian owner of a construction company who escaped with his family to the Kurdish city of Erbil after Islamic State forces seized his property.

“I can’t say whether we will go back. We were betrayed. People in Mosul were cooperating with Daesh, following their interpretation of Islam.”

Christianity spread through the Middle East during the first century, overtaking pagan Eastern cults and co-existing with older faiths, like Judaism and Zoroastrianism. Although Islam gained predominance in the region from the 7th century, many Muslim rulers allowed Christians

freedom of worship.

Centuries of status quo frayed with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in World War I. At the time, Christians made up some 15 per cent of the regional population, but the figure now stands below four percent, according to the Pew Research Centre.

The figures vary from country to country. While Saudi Arabia officially has no Christian nationals, up to 40 per cent of Lebanon’s population is Christian, according to the US Central Intelligence Agency.

Lower birth rates among Christians by comparison with Muslims has helped lower the overall ratio. Economic emigra-

tion has also played a part, with Western countries traditionally more willing to welcome in Christians than Muslims.

There are more Christians from Jerusalem living in Australia than there are Christians left in the Holy City, according to Palestinian data, with the Palestinians saying Israeli occupation has convinced many local Christians to move abroad.

While Christian migration from the Israeli-occupied West Bank has been a constant trickle, it has turned into a flood in nearby Syria, torn apart by six years of civil war.

From a population of some 1.25 million in 2011, less than 500,000 remain today, according to ADF International, a Vienna-based group which promotes religious freedom.

As in Iraq, the minority group has been persecuted by Islamic State, which has publicly executed Christian men and sold Christian women into slavery.

Even in areas still under control of President Bashar al-Assad, the mood is grim.

“There’s not many left here. Most of our relatives, friends, maybe 70 per cent have travelled or migrated abroad,” said Suzanna Tannous, a Christian housewife from the Ghassani district of Damascus, only a kilometre from rebel-held Jobar.

“There’s no future for us here,” she said, speaking in a cafe, the sound of falling shells thudding in the distance.—*Reuters*



Vehicles drive past a billboard ahead of Pope Francis’ visit in Cairo, Egypt, on 26 April 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

California fossils, stone tools may rewrite New World human history

WASHINGTON — In what may be one of the most significant discoveries ever in archeology in the Americas, researchers on Wednesday said stone tools and broken mastodon bones unearthed in California show humans had reached the Americas by about 130,000 years ago, far earlier than previously known.

The researchers called five rudimentary tools — hammerstones and anvils — discovered in San Diego County alongside fossil bones from the prehistoric elephant relative compelling evidence, though circumstantial, for the presence of either our species or an extinct cousin like

Neanderthals.

San Diego Natural History Museum paleontologist Tom Deméré said until now the oldest widely accepted date for human presence in the New World was 14,000 to 15,000 years ago, making the San Diego site nearly 10 times older.

The finding would radically rewrite the understanding of when humans reached the New World, through some scientists not involved in the study voiced skepticism.

“If the date of 130,000 years old is genuine, then this is one of the biggest discoveries in American archeology,” University of Southampton paleolithic archeologist John McNabb,

who was not involved in the research and called himself “still a little skeptical.”

No human skeletal remains were found. But the stone tools’ wear and impact marks and the way in which mastodon limb bones and molars were broken, apparently in a deliberate manner shortly after the animal’s death, convinced the researchers humans were responsible. They performed experiments using comparable tools on elephant bones and produced similar fracture patterns.

“People were here breaking up the limb bones of this mastodon, removing some of the big, thick pieces of mastodon limb bones,



Paleontologist Don Swanson points at rock fragments near a large horizontal mastodon tusk fragment at the San Diego Natural History Museum in San Diego, California, US, in this handout photo received April 26, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

probably to make tools out of, and they may have also been extracting some of the marrow for food,” said archeologist Steven Holen of the Center for American Paleolithic Research in South Dakota.

US Geological Sur-

vey geologist James Paces used state-of-the-art dating methods to determine the mastodon bones, tooth enamel and tusks were 131,000 years old, plus or minus about 9,000 years.

Some skeptics suggested alternative explana-

tions about the material excavated beginning in 1992 at a freeway construction site, suggesting the bones may have been broken recently by heavy construction equipment rather than by ancient humans. —Reuters

Germany’s poor hold key to election as inequality grows

DORTMUND, (Germany) — For all its economic success, Germany has a growing problem with inequality and poverty, and yet Chancellor Angela Merkel seems to be deflecting the blame so far as the battlelines are drawn for elections in September.

Renowned for its highly-skilled workforce, Germany has in fact a greater proportion of working poor - people who have a job but are struggling with poverty - than Britain, France and even some less wealthy EU states such as Hungary or Cyprus. Nowhere is the widening gap between rich and poor more evident than in the Ruhr region, an urban sprawl of five million people that was once the centre of Germany’s heavy industry.

A highway that ploughs through the western region is nicknamed the “social equator”, separating suburbs hit by the decline of coal mining and steelmaking from those that have benefited from the new industries that now power German growth.

To the north, soup kitchens and food banks tend to the unemployed, homeless and refugees as well as the working poor. To the south, highly qualified workers drive luxury cars to glass buildings

housing high-tech and pharmaceutical companies. Sensing an opportunity to beat the conservative chancellor on 24 September, the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) are trying to mobilise disgruntled Germans. “Many people fear that their pension won’t be enough, the rent can’t be paid, or that their children will be permanently on limited job contracts,” SPD deputy chairman Ralf Stegner told Reuters. But recapturing these voters, many of them once SPD loyalists, is proving tough going. North Rhine-Westphalia, home to the divided Ruhr region and where poverty has risen more than in any of Germany’s 16 oth-

er states, should be fertile ground for the message. Likewise, pensioner Edith Rena, 75, would seem an obvious target voter.

“I worked for 40 years and raised two children alone,” Rena said, resting on her trolley packed with fruit and vegetables bought at a discount at a food bank in Dortmund, the Ruhr’s largest city. “I come here because it’s cheap so I can save money to buy presents for my grandchildren.” Rena has received welfare support since retiring 10 years ago from a department store sales job as her 620 euro (\$675) monthly state pension doesn’t cover her living expenses and rent. — Reuters



An old man in need leaves the soup kitchen ‘Kana’ with food supplies from a food bank in a poor district of the city of Dortmund, western Germany, on 7 April, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Brazil lawmakers pass labour bill in bittersweet victory for Temer

BRASILIA — Brazil’s lower house of Congress on Wednesday approved the main text of a bill to relax the country’s restrictive labour laws, a main plank of President Michel Temer’s efforts to bolster investment and pull the economy out of its worst recession ever.

The measure passed by 296-177 in an expected victory to Temer who is struggling with low approval ratings amid a sweeping corruption scandal. The lower house still has to vote amendments to the proposal, which scraps some limits to temporary work, before it heads to the Senate.

Despite the victory by a wide margin, Wednesday’s vote shows that Temer still faces some resistance from his allies to secure enough support to approve his unpopular proposal to reform a costly pension system.

The pension reform is expected to face a vote in

the lower chamber in the next two weeks but, since it amends Brazil’s constitution, it will require approval by three-fifths of the lawmakers or 308 votes which the government may not have yet.

The labour reform vote was seen by the Temer administration as a thermometer of support for the pension proposal.

Approval of the labour bill by the lower house came two days before a national strike and demonstrations called by labour unions and leftist parties to protest Temer’s reform programme that they say undermines workers’ rights to the benefit of business interests.

Backers of the labour bill say it will modernize employment rules that date from the 1950s and encourage investment by lowering labour costs for businesses.

If passed by the Senate, the measure would relax

restrictions on temporary workers, introduce guarantees for outsourced work and let collective bargaining agreements between unions and employers override some rules of the labour code. The bill is fiercely opposed by unions because it would abolish mandatory payment of union dues by Brazilian workers.

Public transport, schools and banks in Brazil’s largest cities are expected to be affected by Friday’s 24-hour strike called by the unions. But the government has a majority in Congress and is confident it will get the reforms approved.

Temer has made concessions to make the pension reform more palatable to lawmakers facing elections next year. The changes have cut fiscal savings by 25 per cent, to about 600 billion reais (£148 billion) over 10 years, the Finance Ministry said. —Reuters

Bank Holiday

All Banks will be closed on 1st May (Monday) 2017 “May Day”, under the Negotiable Instruments Act.

Central Bank of Myanmar

Plastic-eating worm could provide solution to pollution

LONDON — Scientists have found that the caterpillars of wax moths have the ability to eat plastic shopping bags, suggesting a biodegradable solution to plastic pollution.

The wax worm, usually bred as fish bait, is a scourge of beehives across Europe, as the worms consume beeswax as their main diet and live as parasites in bee colonies.

A chance discovery occurred when Federica Bertocchini, a researcher at the Spanish National Research Council and an amateur beekeeper, was removing wax worms from the honeycombs in her hives. She put the worms in a plastic shopping bag that later became riddled with holes.

The discovery led Bertocchini and other scientists at Cambridge University to conduct further research.

Polyethylene, one of the toughest and most commonly used plastics for making plastic bags and packaging, takes between 100 and 400 years to degrade in landfill sites.

By contrast, scientists in this study put 100 wax worms on a plastic shopping bag from a British supermarket. Holes started to appear after just 40 minutes, according to the study published in the journal Current Biology on Monday. And after 12 hours, these wax worms devoured 92 milligrams of plastic mass from the bag.

The degradation rate

using wax worms is more than 1,400 times faster than previous tests involving bacteria. The microbes could only biodegrade plastics at a rate of 0.13 milligram in a day, according to a separate study last year.

To confirm that the plastic bag was digested by some enzymes produced by the wax worm rather than it biting through the plastic bag, scientists smashed some of the wax worms and smeared them on polyethylene bags. Holes appeared again.

"The caterpillar produces something that breaks the chemical bond, perhaps in its salivary glands or a symbiotic bacteria in its gut," said Paolo Bombelli, a biochemist at Cambridge University and the first author of the study.

"If a single enzyme is responsible for this chemical process, its reproduction on a large scale using biotechnological methods should be achievable," Bombelli added.

The study provides new hope for scientists to work for a solution to plastic waste that chokes oceans and landfills.

"We are planning to implement this finding into a viable way to get rid of plastic waste, working towards a solution to save our oceans, rivers, and all the environment from the unavoidable consequences of plastic accumulation," Bertocchini noted.—

Xinhua

Venezuela to exit Organization of American States: FM

CARACAS — Venezuela's Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez said Wednesday that the country would leave the Organization of American States (OAS).

In a live TV address, Rodriguez said that "the OAS has persisted in intrusive actions against the sovereignty of our country and for this, we proceed to withdraw from the Organization."

On Thursday, 27 April, Venezuela will deliver a letter to the OAS announcing its exit, triggering a process that will last 24 months, said the minister.

According to Rodriguez, this decision was carried out at Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's instructions to protect the country's "sovereignty", adding that Venezuela would not participate in future OAS events as they advocate for "interventionism."

Venezuela has long accused the OAS secre-



Photo provided by Venezuela's Presidency shows Venezuela's Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez delivering a speech in Caracas, Venezuela, on 26 April 2017. PHOTO: XINHUA

tary-general, Luis Almagro, of being a leader in instigating a "coup" against the government of President Maduro.

This exit is not conjecture, it has to do with the dignity of our people, said Rodriguez.

The minister also compared the OAS' actions to the stance it took against Cuba in 1962, when it

kicked the country out before reinstating it in 2009.

After her announcement, Rodriguez continued lambasting the OAS, tweeting that "we will never allow those who bend the knee to offend Venezuela! Our sacred nation! Nation of Bolivar! Fatherland of Chavez! We will win!"

Earlier on Wednesday, the OAS had held a special

meeting in Washington DC and voted in favor of calling an emergency meeting of foreign ministers to discuss the situation in Venezuela.

This meeting is likely to discuss whether to apply the OAS' Democratic Charter to Venezuela, which would suspend its membership.

Alongside this, Venezuela has called for an urgent session of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) to discuss what Rodriguez called "threats against the constitutional order in Venezuela, as well as the interventionist actions undermining its independence, sovereignty and its right to self-determination."

Venezuela has been racked by a political and economic crisis, which has spiralled into clashes between government and opposition supporters in April, leaving at least 29 people dead.—Xinhua

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As the wharves, warehouses and Chellan Offices of Yangon Port will be closed on the 1st MAY 2017 (Word Workers Day) Loading, Unloading and delivery for Goods will be received on Payment as Holiday Fees.

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Judge issues injunction in SEC's 'Hamilton' Ponzi case

NEW YORK — A federal judge on Wednesday issued a preliminary injunction freezing assets belonging to the alleged operators of a Ponzi scheme centered on the resale of tickets to the Broadway blockbuster "Hamilton," concerts by British singer Adele, and other popular shows.

US District Judge Louis Stanton in Manhattan also put the US Securities and Exchange Commission's civil fraud case against Joseph Meli and Matthew Harriton over the alleged fraud on hold, so that federal prosecutors could pursue a related criminal case against Meli and another defendant.

Lawyers for Meli and Harriton had supported putting the SEC case on hold.

The SEC accused the men of raising more than \$97 million from at least 138 investors in 17 US states, using some of the money to repay early investors, and diverting other sums for gambling, jewelry, private school tuition and other expenses.

According to the SEC, Meli and Harriton had promised double-digit returns from reselling blocks of tickets to Broadway shows such as "Hamilton" and

the upcoming "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child"; concerts by Adele, Metallica and Nine Inch Nails; and a festival with Bob Dylan, Paul McCartney and the Rolling Stones.

Stanton said the injunction freezing the defendants' assets and barring them from raising more money was appropriate because the SEC had "made a substantial showing of likelihood of success" in showing that they had violated US securities laws.

In the criminal case, Meli and co-defendant Steven Simmons were accused of running a similar scheme that defrauded people who thought they were investing in a hedge fund.

Meli and Simmons have pleaded not guilty in that case, while a lawyer for Harriton has said his client was a "victim" in the alleged ticket resale scheme.

A lawyer for Meli did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In an April 6 court filing, he had said letting the SEC civil case go ahead would unfairly burden Meli's constitutional right to defend himself in the criminal case. The case is SEC v Meli et al, US District Court, Southern District of New York, No. 17-00632.—Reuters



PHOTO: REUTERS

Never expected to be treated like a star in the West: Priyanka

MUMBAI — She might have become one of the most successful stars in the West, but actress Priyanka Chopra has said she did not go to Hollywood with the attitude that people will instantly recognise her.

The 34-year-old actress said she is fine with giving her introduction to people who do not know her.

"We can't say that if we are stars in India we will be stars everywhere. That's not cool. Every country has different celebrities. So, I never expected that."

"I am okay to walk into a room and introduce myself as, 'Hello, I am Priyanka Chopra. I am an Indian actor.' There's nothing small about it, our achievements are quite big,"

Priyanka told reporters.

The actress said the American media was never mean to her "except a few" and she never felt insignificant on a foreign film set.

"I haven't seen them (American press) being that good to any other Indian actor if you think like that. They have been loving, friendly and encouraging of me..."

"We are one-fifth of the world's population so, our representation in world cinema is legit. It's on us, we have to make sure we are good enough. But I don't feel small when I walk in a foreign set," she said.

Priyanka's maiden Hollywood film "Baywatch" releases on 25 May.—PTI

Jessica Biel goes deep and different for messed-up 'The Sinner'

LOS ANGELES — Jessica Biel got all messed up for her new TV show -- a psychological thriller in which she plays a young mother who commits a startling act of violence and can't remember why.

Biel, 35, the wife of singer Justin Timberlake and a young mum to 2-year-old Silas, said she took the role in "The Sinner" because she wanted to be "a little nuts."

"The Sinner," which will be broadcast on the USA channel in August, is a far cry from Biel's best-known work — the "7th Heaven" drama series about a Christian family.

"It was totally different from what I've done recently and in the



Jessica Biel. PHOTO: REUTERS

past and I think that's why I was probably attracted to it," Biel told reporters at the red carpet launch of "The Sinner" at the Tribeca film festival on Tuesday.

"You just have to go really deep within yourself as a human being and find what you can relate to in this person that has this ability to, you know, act on her passions, or act on her anger or fear insecurity or pain," she added.

Biel plays a seemingly normal mother who is triggered to stab a man to death during a family outing at the beach. The show takes a deep layered look at her mind and explores why she did it, rather than the who or the what behind the act.—Reuters

'Silence of the Lambs' director Jonathan Demme dies of cancer

NEW YORK — Jonathan Demme, the eclectic movie director whose work ranged from thrillers like "The Silence of the Lambs" to documentaries on leading musicians, died early on Wednesday of complications from esophageal cancer, his publicist said.

The 73-year-old director of ground-breaking AIDS movie "Philadelphia" died in his Manhattan apartment surrounded by his wife, Joanne Howard, and three children, publicist Annalee Paulo said in a statement.

Demme's most recent feature film was the 2015 comedy "Ricki and the Flash," starring Meryl Streep as an aging rocker.

Streep called him a "big hearted, big tent, compassionate man - in full embrace in his life of people in need," in a statement on Wednesday.

New York-born Demme won a directing Oscar for the 1991 thriller "The Silence of the Lambs," which also won Oscars for best picture and for its stars Anthony Hopkins and Jodie Foster.

Foster said she was heartbroken at his death. "Jonathan was as quirky as his comedies and as deep as his dramas. He was pure energy, the unstoppable cheerleader for anyone creative," she said.

Demme's work was wide ranging, including comedy and thrillers to bold fare like 1993 film "Philadelphia," one of the first mainstream Hollywood movies to tackle the AIDS crisis. The movie brought an Oscar for Tom Hanks.

Hanks on Wednesday called him "the grandest of men."

"Jonathan taught us how big a heart a person can have, and how it will guide how we live and what we do for a living," Hanks said in statement.



US director Jonathan Demme arrives for the red carpet at the Venice Film Festival in Venice, Italy, in 2008. PHOTO: REUTERS

Demme also directed concert and music documentaries for Bruce Springsteen, Kenny Chesney and Neil Young, the band Talking Heads, and more recently, "Justin Timberlake + the Tennessee Kids."

Steven Van Zandt, a member of Springsteen's E Street Band, described him on Twitter as "one of the most beautiful souls on the planet."

Barry Jenkins, who directed 2017 Oscar best picture "Moonlight," recalled Demme's support and warmth when that film was first doing the festival rounds. "My

man Demme was the kindest, most generous. A MASSIVE soul," Jenkins tweeted.

Demme's other notable films include the 2008 independent drama "Rachel Getting Married," the 2004 version of "The Manchurian Candidate," 1988 comedy "Married to the Mob" and the 1998 adaption of Toni Morrison's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel "Beloved."

Paulo said the funeral for Demme would be private and that in lieu of flowers the family had asked that donations be made to the group Americans For Immigrant Justice in Miami.—Reuters

Slimy salamander ‘Snot Otter’ aims to wow Bronx Zoo crowds

NEW YORK — The Eastern Hellbender, a slimy giant salamander creepy enough to be nicknamed “Snot Otter” and “Old Lasagna Sides,” is making its debut before animal lovers at the world-renowned Bronx Zoo.

The two-foot-long amphibian is North America’s only giant salamander. After being kept behind closed doors at the zoo for years as part of a conservation effort, they are now making their first public appearance, said Kevin Torregrosa, zoo herpetologist, or amphibian and reptile specialist.

Found in freshwater rivers and streams from northern Georgia to upstate New York, hellbenders have flat heads and bodies, small eyes and sticky, wrinkly skin. They get little

respect from age-old nicknames based on the fold of slippery reddish-brown skin that gives them the look of lasagna.

“Their appearance can be a bit comical,” Torregrosa said on Wednesday.

But the seldom-seen hellbenders command admiration from conservationists who hail them as an aquatic version of a “canary in the coalmine,” or early indicator of threats to an ecosystem. Their slimy skin is used to pull in oxygen to breathe, and when they die it is a warning that pollution and human encroachment are damaging the environment, Torregrosa said.

“They are a very valuable indicator of the ecosystems in which they are found,” Torregrosa said.

The creatures made their public debut over the



An Eastern Hellbender salamander swims in its enclosure at the Bronx Zoo in New York, US, on 18 April 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

weekend in a habitat inside the zoo’s Reptile House. But their habit of hiding under rocks, their preferred

location for laying hundreds of eggs, makes it so hard to glimpse them that it took a zoo photographer

two days to get an image, a zoo spokesman said.

Listed as “near threatened” by the International

Union for Conservation of Nature and as “a species of special concern” by New York State, young hellbenders have been raised for years by the zoo in a special bio-secure room.

Thirty-eight were tagged with identification chips and released into the Allegheny River Basin in 2013.

Eggs were then collected from the Susquehanna Watershed of New York and Pennsylvania the following year and, as a result, 103 hellbenders have been raised in the Bronx for future release into the wild, the zoo said in a press release.

Only two larger salamander species are known to exist: the Japanese and Chinese giant salamanders, both of which can grow up to six feet long.—Reuters

Old enough to recall Mexican Revolution, too old for bank card

MEXICO CITY — Born at the turn of the past century, Maria Felix is old enough to remember the Mexican Revolution but too old to get the bank card needed to collect her monthly 1,200 pesos (\$63) welfare payment for the elderly.

Felix turns 117 in July, according to her birth certificate that local authorities recognize as authentic — which could put her in the ranks of the world’s oldest living people.

But Felix went three months without state support for poor elderly Mexicans after she was turned away from a branch of Citibanamex in the city of Guadalajara for being too old, said Miguel Castro, development secretary for the state of Jalisco.

Welfare beneficiaries now need individual bank accounts because of new transparency rules,

Castro said.

“They told me the limit was 110 years,” Felix said with a smile in the plant-filled courtyard of her small house in Guadalajara.

Felix, who sells candies from a stand outside her home, got by on her modest sales but was delighted when Castro became aware of her case, delivering a check and an apology to her in person.

“Sooner or later, God provides,” said Felix, waving a wrinkled hand. “Here I am.”

In an emailed statement, Citibanamex, a unit of Citigroup Inc, said Felix’s age exceeded the “calibration limits” of its system and it was working to get Felix the bank card as soon as possible. It said it was adjusting its systems to avoid a repeat of the situation.

Castro called the sit-

uation “absurd” and said his office would keep giving Felix checks until the problem was resolved.

Felix, who has outlived six of her 10 children, has survived tougher times. She said her father was killed and her mother kidnapped when she was a young child and that her two siblings later disappeared in the 1910-1920 Mexican Revolution.

“I grew up like an animal on the street,” Felix said. But she also looked back fondly on the past, frowning as she described the rudeness she said was rampant today.

“Before you were poor but happy, in peace,” Felix said.

Felix credits her longevity to God and described a diet of stewed beans, nopal cactus, greens and the Mexican fruit pin-guica — although she added she had trouble digest-

ing beans these days.

Alma Salas, the head of the Jalisco Institute for the Elderly, said Felix was in surprisingly good health and had refused a wheelchair she tried to give her last year — preferring a cane instead.

The world’s oldest living person is now 117-year-old Violet Brown of Jamaica, according to the Gerontology Research Group.

Only 2 per cent of claims by people who say they are over 115 are verified by a process requiring multiple documents, according to the group’s website.

Felix said she did not spend much time worrying about her welfare payments.

“Whether they give me help or not, I’ll be as happy as I have been all of my poor life,” Felix said.—Reuters

UK tourism set for boost from weak pound and ‘staycationers’

LONDON — The British hotel and leisure industry is set for a bumper year as a weak pound boosts demand from foreign tourists and deters Britons from travelling abroad, a survey by Barclays showed on Thursday.

Nearly two-thirds of international holidaymakers surveyed by the bank said they were more interested in holidaying in the UK compared with this time last year. The top driver of this was the weaker pound, cited by 31 per cent, while greater spending power was cited by 30 per cent.

“2017 looks set to be a strong year for the British hospitality sector with both domestic and international

visitors increasingly intent on spending more time here,” Mike Saul, head of hospitality and leisure at Barclays, said.

“The impact of a weak sterling, at least temporarily, has boosted the UK’s international appeal.”

The weaker pound means that Britons conversely get less bang for their buck abroad, and rising inflation is also fuelling demand from domestic holidaymakers. Nearly a third of UK holidaymakers expected to spend more of their holiday time in Britain this year, and 38 per cent of those who cited cost as a factor said that the weaker pound had made holidays in the UK preferable to going abroad.—Reuters

mitv

Myanmar International

Programme Schedule

(28-4-2017 07:00am ~ 29-4-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Discovering Tribes: Pre Kayaw (Their Life and Customs) (Part-1)
07:52	Am	Tea Leaves
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	The Longest Living Siblings (Part-1)
08:48	Am	A Tourist Destination of Shan State
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Safari World
09:38	Am	Sons of the lake
10:03	Am	News
10:25	Am	Simple Living With High Spirit

10:38	Am	Myanmar's Export: Mango
10:47	Am	Shop Shop Shop - Bogyoke Market

(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	New
07:27	Pm	Lawka Nandar Wildlife Sanctuary And Its Rare Star Tortoises
07:51	Pm	A Star for Great Achievement
08:03	Pm	New
08:26	Pm	Bogalay Tint Aung: A Man of Versatility (Part-1)
08:53	Pm	Myanmar Masterclass: Still Life (glass)

(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)

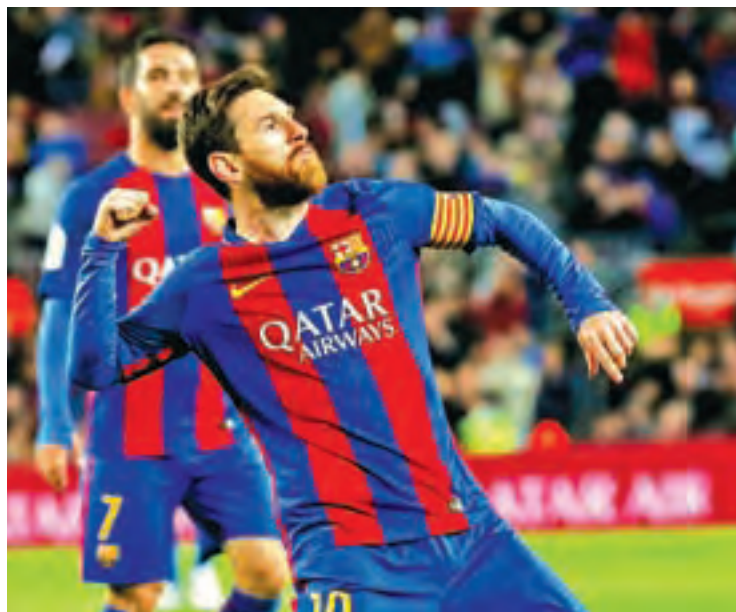
(For Detailed Schedule – www.myanmaritv.com/schedule)

MRTV

Programme Schedule
(28- 4- 2017, Friday)

6:00 Am	2:50 Pm
◆ Paritta by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw	◆ Talk on Old Film
7:00 Am	4:35 Am
◆ Breakfast News	◆ Documentary (Part-2)
7:30 Am	5:05 Pm
◆ MRTV Travelogue	◆ Documentantary (Part-3)
8:35 Am	5:35 Pm
◆ Current Affairs	◆ Weekly Sport Info
9:15 Am	6:15 Pm
◆ Documentary	◆ Teleplay
10:30 Am	7:15 Pm
◆ NRC Programme	◆ TV Drama Series
11:15 Am	8:00 Pm
◆ Documentary	◆ News/International News/ Weather Report
11:30 Am	8:35 Pm
◆ MRTV Worker's Programme	◆ Documentary
12:50 Pm	9:00 Pm
◆ Myanmar Movie (Part-2)	◆ Teleplay
2:05 Pm	9:15 Pm
◆ TV Drama Series	◆ TV Drama Series

Real Madrid, Barcelona still neck and neck after big wins



Barcelona's Lionel Messi celebrates a goal at Camp Nou stadium, Barcelona, Spain, on 26 April 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

BARCELONA — Real Madrid thrashed Deportivo La Coruna 6-2 to stay level with Barcelona at the top of La Liga on Wednesday after the Catalans crushed Osasuna 7-1, condemning the minnows to relegation.

Lionel Messi, Andre Gomes and Paco Alcacer scored twice each and Javier Mascherano netted his first goal for the club from the penalty spot as Barcelona built on Sunday's Clasico victory.

Real, though, showed they would not be easily toppled.

Zinedine Zidane made nine changes for the trip to the Riazor but Madrid's reserves still made light work of Depor, with Isco running the show and finding the net along with James Rodriguez, who hit a brace, Alvaro Morata,

Lucas Vazquez and substitute Casemiro.

Madrid have 78 points from 33 games, while Barcelona have the same tally from one game more.

Osasuna, rooted in 20th place, were relegated after 17th-placed Leganes beat Las Palmas 3-0 to move 12 points clear of the bottom club, an insurmountable total with four games to go because of their inferior head-to-head record.

"We had to win. We have suffered a lot since January. We've lacked both points and luck, and when that's the case it's hard to turn things around," said Osasuna coach Petar Vasiljevic.

Messi opened the scoring with a mazy dribble capped with

a neat chip over goalkeeper Salvatore Sirigu before Gomes volleyed home Ivan Rakitic's cross to double the lead.

Roberto Torres whipped in a free kick just after halftime to drag his team back into the match before Barcelona ran riot with a flurry of goals.

"I think it was a complete performance," said Barcelona coach Luis Enrique. "When they got back to 2-1, which was the worst moment because they're back in the game and you never know, we were able to put our foot on the accelerator and close the game out.

"The way we played, we deserved to win by a large margin."

Madrid deserved much the same against Depor after dominating from the start. —Reuters

Zwekapin United trounces YREO 5-2 in KBZ Bank Women's League

THE last day of the 2016-2017 Women's National League (KBZ Bank Women's League) Week 2 continued at the Aung San Stadium yesterday evening with Zwekapin United trouncing YREO FC 5-2.

Zwekapin United put pressure on YREO FC from the very beginning of the match. Aye Nandar Hlaing scored the opener three minutes after the kick-off.

With the YREO FC players still in shocked with the opener, San Thaw Thaw scored a second goal and Captain Than Than Htwe added a third goal

for Zwekapin United FC at the 11 and 24 minute mark, respectively.

Captain Nwe Ni Win equalised the match at the 26 minute mark for YREO, but Nan Kay Ngon soon scored the fourth goal for Zwekapin United. In the second half, YREO's players showed better performance and controlled the match.

Captain Nwe Ni Win touched the ball directly into the net at 60 minutes and YREO FC got the second equaliser but Nan Kyay Ngon shot the fifth goal for Zwekapin United at 84 min— Kyaw Zin Lin



Players from Zwekapin United and YREO in action during KBZ Bank Women's League at Aung San Stadium in Yangon on 27 April. PHOTO: MFF

Sharapova marks comeback from ban with win over Vinci

STUTTGART, (Germany) — Former world number one Maria Sharapova made a winning comeback to the tour on Wednesday following her 15-month doping ban, beating Italian Roberta Vinci in straight sets in the first round of the Stuttgart Grand Prix.

The 30-year-old Russian, a three-times winner on Stuttgart's clay courts, received a controversial wild card for the German tournament, having had no ranking points after more than a year out following her suspension. She had a nervous start in front of a supportive crowd but quickly found her strokes and her trademark shrieks to power past the world number 36 7-5, 6-3 and set up a second-round clash against fellow Russian Ekaterina Makarova. "It's the best feeling in the world.

To know I would be walking back into the arena was very special," Sharapova said in a courtside interview. "I was waiting for this moment for a long time." She added: "When I am on the court, because I have been doing it for so long, even though you are rusty and trying to get a rhythm, you try to block everything out.

I am a competitor by nature. That's when I am at my best." Sharapova has also received invitations to play in Madrid and Rome and will find out in May whether she will be

given a wild card for the French Open.

Some players, including Vinci, have criticised the wild card awards, saying a doping

offender should have to start from scratch and build up their ranking by playing in the lower tournaments again.

"I am not an individual that's angry or bitter. I let things go," she told a post-match news conference. "I am being offered wild cards from tournament directors.

I am not getting a wild card to receive a trophy or a gold platter. "I still have to go through matches and win them." Sharapova's initial two-year suspension was reduced to 15 months after she tested positive at the 2016 Australian Open for meldonium, a medication the Russian had been taking within the rules but which was then reclassified as a banned drug.

"It's important to play, points, games, sets. It is a journey that officially starts today and I look forward to playing as many matches as I can," said Sharapova, the second highest paid female athlete last year according to Forbes.—Reuters



Maria Sharapova. PHOTO: REUTERS