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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. IV, No. 34, 11th Waning of Kason 1379 ME www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com Sunday, 21 May 2017

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WEEKEND SPECIAL
Today's issue contains an 8-Page special pull-out supplement

Vice President U Myint Swe addresses the meeting between the government and the entrepreneurs in Yangon. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

VP facilitates business operations through sector-wise assistance

Out of 83 decisions made in five meetings between the entrepreneurs and the government, 75 have been resolved and works are coordinated in order to resolve the remaining eight, said Vice President U Myint Swe yesterday.

"The remaining eight are issues that need time or are related to legal matters, but accelerated efforts are being made for their soonest realization" said the Vice President at the sixth meeting with entrepreneurs in Yangon yesterday which is aimed at facilitating their operations through the sector-wise ministry assistance.

He also appreciated the coordinated efforts of the work committees for the country's inflation rate falling consecutively year on year which was manifested by seven per cent in March to 4.74 per cent in this April. Illegal trade is being eliminated as the most important part on the economic progress, he said, elaborating on the channeling of funds received through selling of illegal goods to different parties. Because of the rise in the rewards, the anti-illegal trade campaign is gaining more ground, he said. He said activities of Food and Drug Authority have become more active and smooth, and the sector-wise suggestions and requirements of the entrepreneurs have been responded swiftly. The private sector development committee and its five subordinate bodies are effectively solving the problems of businesspersons. The work of establishing Data ID Card System Digital Government Strategy and E-Government Systems is also encouraged.

U Kyaw Win. **PHOTO: MNA**

Dr Than Myint. **PHOTO: MNA**

The respective ministers and chief minister of Yangon Region explained sector-wise implementations and support for entrepreneurs. The president of Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry extended greetings, followed by a general round of discussions. The vice president gave the concluding remarks. —Myanmar News Agency ■

225 CCTVs used in Yangon to monitor security, traffic violations

PHOTO: ZAW GYI

YANGON Region government said CCTVs (closed-circuit television) have been installed at 140 traffic lights to improve security and to monitor traffic violations.

So far, 225 CCTVs have been installed at back alleys and crowded areas in townships including South Okkalapa, Thingangyun, Hline, Bahan, Dagon Myothit (East), Kyimyindine and Shwepyitha and were monitored from respective police stations and General Administrative Department offices.

Ks 250 million from government fund was used in installing CCTVs in 25 townships and set-up control rooms in the respective police stations.

An additional 288 CCTVs were installed at 140 out of a total 154 traffic light points in Yangon and starting from 15 May Yangon region police force personnel are monitoring it from the Control Center at People's Park in Dagon Township.

Installation of CCTVs at traffic light points was started in 2016 February at the total cost of Ks 18.93 billion. Installing of CCTVs will be continued at the remaining 14 traffic light points and 60 CCTVs will be installed at 20 inspection gates, 30 no parking areas and 30 heavy traffic areas.— Zaw Gyi ■

Prime farm producing fruits using modern technology greenhouse system

AFTER learning of strawberry and berries being produced using modern technology greenhouse system near Heho airport, Kalaw Township, Southern Shan State, public relation officer Ko Kyaw Thuya of Prime Company was contacted and he arranged for our reporters to visit the farm on 19 May.

Kyaw Thuya said the company office is on Meiktila-Kalaw-Taunggyi Pyidaungsu expressway in Namkon Ward, Heho and is producing high value strawberries and berries using modern technology greenhouse system. The greenhouse is constructed with Israeli technology and farm manager Ko Chan Mye Aung and agriculturist Ko Chan Thar explained in details on how works are being done with foreign experts and local agriculturists.

The farm is near Heho airport, Kalaw Township and is situated on about 99 acre of land that includes 17 acres of Demonstration Training and Research Farm (DTRF), green house, pump house, packing house, nursery on 12 acres of land and Integrated Safe Food Delivery System (ISFD) area of 70 acres. Currently strawberry, black berry, raspberry and onions are planted. Land preparation work was started on the farm in 2016 and more than 20 varieties of fruits and vegetables were produced.

All berries are from Switzerland and strawberry is planted by runners while raspberry is planted using root plant cutting. The life of a strawberry is about 6 to 8 months and blackberry and blueberry are 10 to 15 years.

A single strawberry plant produces about 1-1.5 kg of strawberry.

Pollination is by bee in greenhouse and naturally in open field. Natural fertilizers and green leaves are used.

Two production greenhouses each having an area of 2400 square meter and a nursery of 1800 square meter are in used with net vent and window ventilation systems.

Netafin Drip Irrigation system from Israel was used and this system reduces water usage by 50 per cent while water and fertilizers are provided simultaneously reducing labor charges. The system increases production and reduces pest and bacterial effects on the plants.

Comparison of greenhouse and open field system

Greenhouse system	Open field system
Able to control pest	Unable to control pest
Low possibility of plant disease occurrence	Higher possibility of plant disease occurrence
Can be planted the whole year round	Could not be planted the whole year round
EC/PH controllable	EC/PH uncontrollable
Weather controlled	Weather uncontrolled
Low area available for planting	Huge area available for planting
Good quality plant produced	Fair quality plant produced
High value plant can be planted	Difficult to enter a market

Comparison of traditional and drip irrigation system

Traditional irrigation system	Drip irrigation system
High water usage	Low water usage
Could not use water and fertilizer simultaneously	Water and fertilizer applied simultaneously
High numbers of workers required	Fewer number of workers required
Root development is weak	Root development is good
EC/PH uncontrollable	EC/PH controlled
Low investment	High investment

There is no plan now to expand the farm to other area but onion, cabbages and peanuts will be planted in addition to strawberry and berries.

Prime Agri Limited is an investor, developer, and operator of an integrated agriculture and food operation in Myanmar, centered around food safety and sustainability compliance. It is setting the standard in Myanmar as a reliable and preferred supplier of agriculture and food products that comply with the standards of premium export and domestic market. Prime Farm is the first operation in Myanmar to be certified and registered as Global GAP (Good Agricultural Practice) compliant.

The PRIME iSFD "integrated Safe Food Delivery System" ensures compliance, quality, and transparency throughout PRIME Agri's supply chain -- from crop inputs and primary production to post-harvest, and in downstream value adding for intermediate and finished goods. For reporting and transparency throughout its integrated operations, the SIM-Chainpoint track and trace platform is being adopted.

PRIME Agri actively incorporates social impact in its commercial initiatives and also partners with a consortium of international donors that include DFID, EUAID, USAID, Swiss Development Corporation, AUSAID. Another PRIME Agri subsidiary, Smallholder Prosperity Enterprises Myanmar Ltd (SPE Myanmar), is developing smallholder and rural subsistence farmers into commercial outgrowers within PRIME's iSFD. – Naing Tun (TGI) ■

Strawberry and blueberry farm seen near Heho airport, Kalaw Township.

Senior General arrives back Yangon after attending 14th ACDFIM held in Manila

DEFENCE Services Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and party arrived back Yangon at 7:15 pm yesterday after attending the 14th ACDFIM held in Manila of the Philippines.

The Myanmar delegation led by the Senior General was welcomed back at Yangon International Airport by Brig-Gen Thet Pon, Commander of Yangon Command, and senior military officers, Ms Stephnie Alexis A.Cruz, Charge d' affaires from Philippine Embassy in Myanmar and responsible officials.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing arrives back Yangon International Airport. **PHOTO: MNA**

Italian funded project supportive of putting Bagan into World Heritage list

The introduction of Capacity Building for Safeguarding Cultural Heritage in Myanmar (Third phase) in progress. **PHOTO: MNA**

CAPACITY Building for Safeguarding Cultural Heritage in Myanmar (Third phase) would be supportive of putting Bagan into World Heritage list and enhancing efficiency in archaeological research and conservation, said Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko yesterday.

He was speaking at the introduction ceremony of the project funded by the Italian government and implemented by the ministry in cooperation with the UNESCO.

The project will prioritize the ministry's needs and national level actions, said the minister, explaining the government's ardent efforts to restore earthquake-hit Bagan one of the famous tourist destinations of the world. The UNESCO experts are aiding the restoration work, he said.

The restoration of the rich ancient heritages of Myanmar benefits its posterity, said Italian Ambassador Mr. Pier Giorgio Aliberti, adding, both Italy and Myanmar have the same goal of further cementing bilateral cooperation in the field. As Italy favours the work of safeguarding ancient cultural heritages, the country will continue assisting Myanmar till the project achieves success, he assured.

UNESCO resident representative Ms. Min Jeong Kim, Director-General of Archaeology, National Museum and Library Department U Kyaw Oo Lwin, and Mr. Michele Romono, a junior professional officer of UNESCO took part in the discussions. The ceremony at Novotel Hotel in Yangon ended with the concluding remarks by Mr. Maurizio Di Calisto, director of the Italian Agency of Development Cooperation.

The first phase of the project was launched in 2012 during which trainees learnt advanced GIS knowledge. The second phase reinforced the successful results of its predecessor and laid foundation for putting Bagan in the World heritage list.

The third phase serves as the provider of management programs for the three ancient Pyu cities the first ever World heritage of Myanmar.— Myanmar News Agency ■

A tanker moored at Made Island terminal. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

First crude enters China through Myanmar-to-China pipeline

CRUDE oil pumped from Made Island terminal to China arrived at a border station on 19th May passing through the Myanmar-China pipe line.

South East Asia Crude Oil pipeline project started pumping crude oil through the 32 inch diameter, 770 km long pipeline from Made Island crude oil terminal to People's Republic of China on 2 May.

The project will annually transport up to 22 million metric tons of crude oil to China.

Myanmar will annually receive Right of Way fee of US$ 6.905 million and profit share according to the shareholding on the pipeline usage fee US$ 31.56 per metric ton of crude oil transported.

In addition to job opportunities, states and regions that the pipeline passes through are provided with socio-economic development works.

The pipeline starts at Kyauk-Pyu in Myanmar's west and enters China at the border city Ruili and is a joint investment by CNPC and the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Myint & Associates Offshore Supply Base Ltd receives MIC approval for New Business Venture

Myint & Associates Offshore Supply Base Ltd. (M&AOSB), a subsidiary of Myint & Associates Co., Ltd. and a member of the MPRL E&P Group of Companies, has received approval from the Myanmar Investment Commission to invest in an Offshore Supply Base Project, according the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.

M&AOSB estimates that it will invest approximately US $ 50 million to construct the initial phase of the project and it expects that it will generate MMK 25 billion of state revenues over the first ten years of the project.

The company now plans to fast track its project, and is confident that its facility will be ready for business by the end of 2019, said the statement released by the M&AOSB after the granting of approval by MIC.

M&AOSB intends to build and operate its Offshore Supply Base in Nga Yoke Kaung Bay area in Ayeyawady Region where it is most ideally situated for a project of this type.

The offshore supply base will have a tremendous impact towards serving the offshore oil and gas sector.

The development of this base will create a significant number of jobs for the local community and contribute to increased development of the Ayeyawady Region with extensive improvements to infrastructure.

M&AOSB, which has been working on its Offshore Supply Base Project for the past two years, has undertaken a number of feasibility studies and is well advanced in its planning. It has already conducted an EIA and SIA in consultation with local stakeholders.

M&AOSB intends to capture this large and ever-growing market and, in addition, provide its services to the already discovered offshore fields (such as Block A-6) together with any that may be developed in the future.

MPRL E&P was founded in 1996 and has since been the main contractor to MOGE with regard to undertaking production enhancement operations in Mann Field, located in Central Myanmar.

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The file photo shows the offshore supply base. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

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

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Farmers carry grass as they walk through a paddy field in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Monsoon agricultural loans to be provided in Mandalay

MYANMAR Agricultural Development Bank planned to provide monsoon agriculture loans, amounting to Ks 1,291,923.50 lakh from May to September.

Loans provided will be Ks 1.5 lakh per acres for paddy and 50,000 kyats for other crops the maximum loan a farmer can get for 10acres. The interest is set at 0.67 kyat for 100kyats per month.

Totaling 148,000acres at farms involving 8,000 acres of paddy fields and 140,000 acres of other crops were cultivated in Kyaukpadaung Township, Mandalay Region and a total of 92,000acres, 72,000acres of paddy fields and 20,000acres of other crops fields were cultivated in Wundwin Township in Mandalay Region will receive the highest amount agriculture loans.

Five townships of Mandalay region and Mokgok Township will receive the lowest amount of loans with 925 lakhs kyats for 610 acres of paddy fields and 20 acres of other crops fields. Yamethin Township had the highest failure rate in repayment while there were some repayment failures in Kyaukse and Myittha Townships.—The Mirror ■

Mangroves to be planted near Kyauktan

THE Yangon region government will plant mangroves to prevent natural disasters after measuring the land along Mottama Gulf, which is in contact with Kyauktan Township, Yangon Region, according to the region government of Yangon.

The land area will be measured with modern equipment to determine how many mangrove trees are needed. Then the authority will plant the mangroves.

"This land is much widened due to the receding of the seashore by silting. So it cannot be measured with a few people. We have to use international modern equipment and numerous manpower to achieve this work. To measure the land bank, we have already submitted a proposal for the budget. We expected to get the budget this year. If we get the budget, we will start planting the mangroves to prevent the natural disasters", said Yangon Region Security and Border Affairs Minister Colonel Tin Aung Tun.—200 ■

Myint & Associates Offshore Supply Base Ltd receives MIC …

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MPRL E&P later signed a PSC contract to conduct exploration activity in offshore Block A-6 in 2007 and made the first gas discovery in the southern offshore Rakhine Basin in 2012 during its Pyi Thar exploration drilling campaign. Subsequently, in late 2015, MPRL E&P and its partners consisting of Woodside and Total, embarked on the Shwe Yee Htun exploration drilling campaign and .drilled a second exploration well in Block A-6. Exploration well Shwe Yee Htun-1 was drilled in record setting water depths of 2034 meters and resulted in a second gas discovery which was officially announced in January 2016.

Appraisal well drilling is now scheduled to take place commencing in June 2017 whereby two appraisal wells will be drilled back-to-back. M&AOSB is a critical element towards enabling any potential development in Block A-6 to be pursued in an accelerated manner.—Maung Swe ■

Heroin, stimulants seized in Mohnyin, Lashio

A LOCAL anti-narcotic squad searched a motorbike driven by Thar Htway together with Ma Thanda on board on the Union Road at Myaing Thaya village in Mohnyin Township on 19 May. The police detained them in possession of 132 kilos of heroin and 370 stimulant tablets.

Similarly, Lashio anti-drug squad searched a vehicle driven by Wah La together with Eaik Nham and Sai Maung Myint on board near Maw Keinayi old cement plant on Lashio-Tangyan road in Lashio on the same day. The police discovered 1,170 stimulant tablets from the vehicle. Police filed charges against them under the Anti-narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—Myanmar Police Force ■

Monks, people stage demonstration in Nay Pyi Taw

A DEMONSTRATION staged by Myanmar Buddhists Alerting Society was held yesterday morning in Shwe Nantha Ward football field, Ottarathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw.At the demonstration, one monk and 3 people gave speeches and read out a 7-point statement that includes resignation of the Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture and releasing of 4 persons detained for a nationalist movement. Monks and peoples from Yangon, Mawlamyine, Mandalay and Pakokku and from towns along the road to Nay Pyi Taw came in groups by car and the demonstration was held from 9 to 11 a.m. with a limited strength of 300 but there were a number of people gathered at the demonstration to listen to the speeches.—Maung Maung Min ■

Over 1,000 pre-1995 model buses left to deregister

OVER 1,000 pre-1995 model CNG buses later than 1995 model remain to deregister although the deadline for deregistration of old model buses is set 20th July 2017, said an official from Yangon Region Road Transport Administration Department.

A total of 2,739 buses earlier than 1995 model are allowed to deregister and currently, only 1,615 buses are made deregistration. After deregistration, a slip for of family used cars will be returned.

The bus owners need to deregister their cars in due course. The large numbers of slip are likely to come out in the auto market.

Currently, deregistration number still decreases and it is hard for all those buses to be deregistered before the deadline.

A deregistration of old buses began in Nov 2016. As of second week of May, 796 dyna vehicles, 476 city buses, 264 BM buses and 79 mini buses were deregistered so far.—200 ■

Buses run on the road in Yangon. CNG buses remain to deregister although the deadline for deregistration of old model buses on 20 July 2017. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR**

Myanmar's trade with ASEAN reaches $9.6bn

MYANMAR's trade value with members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nationstotalled US$9.607 billion in the last fiscal year of 2016-2017, according to the figures released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Of the total, the country's export with the regional trade partners represented $3.093 billion, while the import stood at $6.513 billion in total.

Thailand is ranked first in the list of top three ASEAN traders with $4.277 billion, including $2.908 billion from normal trade and $1.369 billion from border trade, followed by Singapore with $2.967 billion, Malaysia with $980 million.

Bilateral trade with Indonesia stood at $827 million, Vietnam at $494 million and the Philippines at over $56 million. However, trade with Brunei, Laos and Cambodia were fewer than $3 million.

The country's major imports include consumer goods, electronic devices, capital goods, automobile and accessories, and intermediate goods. It monthly exports a wide range of agricultural products, dried and fresh marine products, minerals and industrial finished goods.

The trade with ASEAN countries was $8.697 billion in 2011-2012 FY, $8.411 billion in 2012-2013 FY, $11.038 billion in 2013-2014 FY, $12.604 billion in2014-2015 FY and $10.432 billion in 2015-2016 FY. —Shwe Khine ■

Solar energy to power Maubin industrial park

SOLAR energy will be distributed at the recently opened Maubin Industrial Park, according to Ayeyawady Region government.

The electricity infrastructure plays a vital importance for the development of industrial zone. The State still cannot supply sufficient electric power for the park. And so, the companies concerned are preparing to supply solar energy, said U Win Htay, Ayeyawady Region Electricity, Power, Industry and Communication minister at a MoU signing ceremony between Won Toll Company and Maubin Industrial Development Company.

Thirty megawats will be initially produced for Maubin industrial park. The operation is expected to commence in end of July. We target to complete this within a year, said U Kun Zaw Tun from Won Toll Company. The operation is likely to start once the electricity seller/buyer companies and the regional government agreed on a series of agreements. The project will be developed on 150-acres of land. The solar project will spend US$90million and charges for a unit of electricity are set 5.5 Baht on average for Maubin industrial Park. The Maubin Industrial Park is reported to create over 70,000 job opportunities, with a target to employ up to 200,000 labourers in coming three years. Maubin and Nyaungdon Industrial zones play a crucial role to effectuate the industrail development in Ayeyawady Region, said Kayin Ethnic Affair minister to Ayeyawady Region. —Myint Maung Soe ■

30 megawatt solar energy for Maubin Industrial Park within a year. **PHOTO: MYINT MAUNG SOE**

Crop insurance scheme to be experimentally carried out

A CROP INSURANCE scheme for hydrological drought and water scarcity will be initially launched, said U Ye Min Aung, the general secretary of Myanmar Rice Federation.

The highest rainfall of 112 millimeter which broke out about a decade ago will be based for this insurance scheme. The scheme will be introduced in Shwebo and Pyay towns. If the initial stages of this scheme bring out a fruitful result, the plan will proceed to other regions and states.

A Sompo Japan insurance company will provide technical assistance for this insurance plan. Meanwhile, Myanma Insurance will provide a portfolio of services teaming up with Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank. A Sompo insurance company is drawing up policy and setting premium. After that, they will submit the facts and seek approval from the authorities concerned. They have planned to implement this insurance scheme this year. The farmers who purchase this crop insurance will get access to certain amount of the weather impact based on the set rainfall. This insurance system will cover the damages of crops due to erratic weather condition in the country, it is learnt.—200 ■

External trade hits $3.1billion, with $645 million in trade deficit

THE TOTAL value of external trade in first 42 days of the current fiscal year reached US$3.1 billion, with a trade deficit of more than $600million, the Commerce Ministry reported.

The total import from the foreign trade partners exceeded $1.8 billion, while the value of exportamounted to $1.226 billion in total. When compared with the same period of last FY, the trade value was $2.578 billion, including $1.069 billion from the export sector and $1.508 billion from the import sector, with $438 million in trade deficit.

This year's trade value increased by $522 million matched against last year. Between 1 April and 12 May of this year, the country sentover $750 million worth of marketable products to international markets by sea and $468 million worth of goods through cross-border gates. It importedgoods amounting to $1.570 billion via maritime route and other $304 million from borders. According to the ministry, the country suffered a trade deficit of over $91 million in FY2012-2013. The trade deficit rose to $2.555 billion in FY2013-2014. It continues to increase to $4.109 billion in FY2014-2015 and $5.441 billion in FY2015-2016. Myanmar registered trade deficits of $5.5 billion in FY2016-2017.—Swe Nyein ■

Three years after coup, Thailand on crucial path to reach democracy

BANGKOK — Thailand on Monday marks the third anniversary of the 2014 coup that toppled the country's elected government, as it moves toward democracy following last month's promulgation of a new constitution.

The move has indicated Thailand will hold a general election, which is expected next year. The election has been delayed as there are important royal events — the cremation of late King Bhumibol Adulyadej in October and the coronation of King Maha Vajiralongkorn which is likely to be held late this year.

In fact, Thai military rulers have been moving in accordance with their roadmap to a "fully functioning democracy" that the junta announced shortly after the coup.

From the first day of taking power until now, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has been reiterating that he took power with an intention to end political turmoil, which had continued for nearly 10 years. The junta leader also conducted a reform process aimed at preventing the country from returning to political deadlock again.

Prayut also promised to hold a general election to restore a civilian government that will take over the reform task.

Although the junta's promises were gradually seen, in reality, the Constitution has paved the way for it to cling to power with the provision stating that the National Council for Peace and Order, the junta's official name, will appoint 250 senators with a five-year term. In addition, the appointed senators can also be involved in a process to allow an outsider to be the prime minister.

An academic, Yutthaporn Issarachai, of Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, has predicted that the new government will be one of the weakest governments in the country. He said the new election system will lead to a coalition government with low unity.

"More importantly, the government will work with the appointed Senate which is shadowed by the military government," Yutthaporn said.

The academic noted he gave Prayut and his government 5-6 points out of 10, saying the country's future would not be free from the junta even though the election takes place.

Regarding reconciliation, Yutthaporn said the Prayut government has walked in a wrong way in healing the political rift and building reconciliation.

"A reconciliation process driven by state agencies or the military is not a good idea as some particular groups do not trust the military," he said, adding civilians should take more roles in the reconciliation process.

Prayut previously assigned Defence Minister Prawit Wongsuwon to be in charge of building reconciliation and organizing meetings to hear comments and ideas from political parties and groups.

Thailand's Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha receives a flower while arriving at a weekly cabinet meeting at Government House in Bangkok, Thailand on 2 February, 2016. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Around 10 meetings were held, and the reconciliation committee is now concluding the key issues before disclosing them to the public.

However, the political academic noted the NCPO's significant progress in maintaining the country in order to acquire special powers. Article 44 in the interim constitution is one of the special powers which Prayut frequently uses in handling unresolved problems.

Under Article 44, Prayut as the NCPO leader has absolute power to give any order deemed necessary to promote unity and prevent an act that undermines national peace and security.

Since Article 44 replaced martial law in December 2014, more than 100 orders have been used by Prayut, such as tackling corruption cases, human trafficking problems and illegal fishing.

In spite of the peaceful situation, Yutthaporn said it would be a temporary calm under stringent law enforcement.

"The wave under the water is still moving, so the government needs to build reconciliation, even though it may not happen in the near future," he said.

Numerous orders and special powers have caused concerns about human right violations. Assembly of people with political objectives was barred by the military. The government is also closely monitoring social media with several social media users apprehended over their messages that violated the laws.

Human Right Watch's representative in Thailand, Sunai Phasuk, told Kyodo News that the unchecked power used by the junta could bar the country from acquiring true democracy.

"The junta's promise to restore democracy turns into a lie in the face of unending rights repression and tightened control," he said.

"General Prayut continues to rule with unchecked power three years after the coup while criticism is systematically prosecuted, political activity is banned, media is censored and free speech is stifled," Sunai added.

The human right advocate also noted that the new Constitution ensures the military rulers would not take responsibility for rights violations they committed. More importantly, it will strengthen and prolong military control even though the election is set to be held.

Chaturon Chaisaeng, a key member of the Pheu Thai Party, which led the government overthrown in the 2014 coup, said the Prayut government failed to achieve its goals in solving problems, especially with regard to the economy and political rifts. He said an exact date of the election could help ease economic pressure and allow investors to more easily make decisions.

"General Prayut has to understand that the international community wants Thailand to become democratic and the power to return to the people, more or less," Chaturon said. —Kyodo News ■

Quake deep under sea in Philippines unlikely to cause damage — agency

SHANGHAI — A magnitude 5.6.earthquake struck near the centre of the Philippine archipelago on Saturday, but the Philvolcs seismology agency said the tremor was too deep to raise fears of casualties or damage.

The quake struck shortly after 9 am (0100 GMT). The China Earthquake Networks Center (CENC) estimated its depth at 540 km (336 miles) under the Bohol Sea, 99 km (62 miles) south of Cebu City. CENC had estimated its magnitude at 6.0.—Reuters ■

Cambodian parties begin election campaign amid crackdown

PHNOM PENH — Cambodian parties on Saturday launched campaigns for 4 June local elections against the backdrop of a political crackdown by Prime Minister Hun Sen, who has vowed to stay on after more than three decades in power.

Hun Sen's main rival, opposition leader Kem Sokha, held a rally with tens of thousands of supporters in the capital, Phnom Penh. He promised to fight corruption and give more power to local authorities in the Southeast Asian country. Thousands of Hun Sen's supporters gathered in another part of the city.

The local elections next month could be a springboard for next year's general election.

Opponents accuse Hun Sen of stepping up political attacks ahead of the elections — stopping demonstrations, detaining activists and threatening journalists. Hun Sen has said that if his party doesn't win there could be civil war in the country devastated by the Khmer Rouge genocide in the 1970s.

Saturday's rallies were peaceful. Opposition leader Kem Sokha told supporters: "We will lead to victory and be in power in the nearest future."

His supporters who flew flags from motorbikes, tuk tuks and trucks as they headed to other provinces to campaign.

Kem Sokha became leader of the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) in March after the resignation of Sam Rainsy, who said he was quitting because he feared a government attempt to ban the party.

At the rally for the ruling Cambodian People's Party, city Governor Pa Socheatvong read a statement from Hun Sen, who promised to do better for the people and highlighted the achievements of the party under his rule.

"It took this nation from the dark past and most painful time to a delightful period full of hopes," the message said. —Reuters ■

Singapore's ICA seizes 3,000 Erimin-5 tablets, 260 grams of methamphetamine

SINGAPORE — Singapore's Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) seized 3,000 Erimin-5 tablets and 260 grams of methamphetamine, or ice, on Thursday, said ICA and Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) in a joint statement on Friday.

The seized drugs which are estimated to be worth about 55,000 Singapore dollars (39,694 US dollars) were uncovered by ICA officers from the rear of the car's glove compartment in a Singapore-registered car.

While investigations are still ongoing, ICA said under the Misuse of Drugs Act, those who trafficked more than 250 grams of methamphetamine face death penalty.

In a separate statement, CNB said Singaporean drug trafficker Muhammad Ridzuan Md Ali was executed at Changi Prison on Friday for trafficking in 72.50 grams of pure heroin.

The Misuse of Drugs Act provides for the death penalty if the amount of diamorphine trafficked is more than 15 grams, said CNB.

"The Home Team agencies will continue to conduct checks on passengers and vehicles at the checkpoints to prevent attempts to smuggle in undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contrabands," ICA added. —Xinhua ■

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un waves to North Korean scientists and technicians, who developed missile "Hwasong-12" in this undated photo released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on 20 May, 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

North Korea says US has to roll back 'hostile policy' before talks

UNITED NATIONS — North Korea's deputy UN envoy said on Friday that the United States needed to roll back its "hostile policy" toward the country before there could be talks between the pair.

"As everybody knows, the Americans have gestured (toward) dialogue," North Korea's Deputy UN Ambassador Kim In Ryong told reporters on Friday. "But what is important is not words, but actions."

"The rolling back of the hostile policy towards DPRK is the prerequisite for solving all the problems in the Korean Peninsula," he said. "Therefore, the urgent issue to be settled on Korean Peninsula is to put a definite end to the US hostile policy towards DPRK, the root cause of all problems."

North Korea, also known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), has vowed to develop a missile mounted with a nuclear warhead that can strike the mainland United States, saying the program is necessary to counter US aggression.

US President Donald Trump warned in an interview with Reuters in late April that a "major, major conflict" with the North was possible, but he said he would prefer a diplomatic outcome to the dispute over its nuclear and missile programmes.

Trump later said he would be "honoured" to meet the North's leader, Kim Jong Un, under the right conditions. A US State Department spokesman said the United States remains open to talks with North Korea but the country would have to "cease all its illegal activities and aggressive behaviour in the region."

New South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who took office last week, campaigned on a more moderate approach toward the North but he has said it must change its attitude of insisting on arms development before dialogue can be possible.

The UN Security Council first imposed sanctions on North Korea in 2006 and has strengthened the measures in response to the country's five nuclear tests and two long-range rocket launches. Pyongyang is threatening a sixth nuclear test. —Reuters ■

Propulsion problems put Australian warships out of action

SYDNEY — Australia is investigating if problems in the propulsion systems of two $1.5 billion warships built by manufacturers from Spain, Germany and Britain are the result of design flaws.

Naval engineers are trying to figure out exactly what is causing the problems onboard the HMAS Adelaide and HMAS Canberra, the largest ships ever constructed for the the Royal Australian Navy.

Both Landing Helicopter Docks (LHDs) were built by Spanish firm Navantia using propulsion pods from German company Siemens , and fitted with with combat and communications systems by British company BAE Systems.

Oils have leaked into parts of the vessels' propulsion system where they shouldn't be, naval chiefs said in a briefing on Friday.

"Am I disappointed? Yes. We were not expecting to find this," said Vice Admiral Tim Barrett, the chief of the Royal Australian Navy.

Rear Admiral Adam Grunsell, the head of maritime systems in defence force's capability acquisition and sustainment group, said the problem could be a design issue, but stressed it was too early to speculate.

The HMAS Adelaide, which is currently dry docked in Sydney Harbour, will miss the biennial Talisman Sabre joint military training exercise with the United States in June, Barrett said. It was unknown, as yet, what role HMAS Canberra would take.

The three companies are working with the navy to help identify the problems.

A spokeswoman for BAE Systems in Australia said the company was working with the navy to restore the ships' capabilities.

A representative from Navantia was not immediately available for to answer questions. Siemens declined to comment.

HMAS Canberra and HMAS Adelaide were commissioned in late 2014 and 2015 respectively, and were touted as a the next generation of Australian naval ships when they took to the sea. —Reuters ■

Inhumane Acts Are Unacceptable In Our Society!

Khin Maung Oo

By nature, human beings love peace and stability, and we all want to lead secure and pleasant lives. So, the word, "Humane," meant for "Showing kindness toward people and animals by making sure that they do not suffer more than is necessary," comes to our word bank. Being mortal, we are afraid of being killed, tortured and treated with cruelty. If we have such feelings, we need to be considerate that others would have similar feelings. Today, we are seeing and hearing about bloodshed, fighting, cruel acts and gory incidents across the world, presently even in our country. These are regarded to be inhumane acts. Had we thought it would hurt if we had our finger or hand cut accidently or otherwise, we should have had a similar consideration for others . Here, we should notice that there are many atrocious people in our surroundings. News items about people who committed gory crimes are being found in dailies, journals, TVs and internet websites. We have had vicarious pity and thrills from these, especially from scenes of wars and military attacks.

These days, news about rapists, especially pedophile rapists have been heard. These morally debauched rapists are not above not only fulfilling their lust but also killing their females victims. In our environment, we have had very cruel criminals who will commit crimes if they are paid well. As long as they are at large in our societies, we will have to live and sleep in fear and anxiety. These criminals are visible ones so we can find them out one day or sometime, on one condition that they should not get away with a slight punishment, if they have been arrested. Failing that, they will be ready to commit their former wicked and inhumane habits, if they have been released from prisons after having done several years.

Another kind of inhumane acts goes on in our societies and communities without any proper action being taken. They can be said to be silent killers or subversive activists who will never be reluctant to destroy our world. They are none other than ultra-opportunists who will look only for their self interests. They are producing and importing impure or adulterated food that is hazardous to health. As known by all, food is concerned with everyone, especially school-age children. Now that the new academic year is coming, we should take this matter into consideration very seriously. Dyed food can be known easily, but as for contaminated and dangerous imported food, it should be examined by the Food and Drug Administration and those must be banned from selling if found to be hazardous.

Another threatening danger is inhumane deeds of those who spread rumors with the intention of instigating riots among people. They will do whatever they can for their own sakes. We should not condone their ill-willed mischief. A piece of false information can spark into a riot or a bloody inter-communal clash. As conscientious citizens, we are required to find out such people and their inhumane acts to save the future of our posterity. ■

ASEAN's Top 6 Economies to Watch in 2017

Paulius Kuncinas,

Managing Editor, Asia, Oxford Business Group

WHAT a difference a hundred days can make in geopolitics.

The much-anticipated risk of an outright trade war between the US and China following US President Donald Trump's election has subsided after leaders of the two countries met face-to-face to find common ground. The macroeconomic focus has shifted back to oil prices, commodities and growth demand developments in Asia, and the threat of protectionism and isolationism has been averted for now.

> As the economic outlook improves once again, South-east Asian nations are expected to be top performers this year

Best return on risk: Six countries to watch

As the economic outlook improves once again, South-east Asian nations are expected to be top performers this year. Recent Oxford Business Group (OBG) CEO Surveys conducted in Myanmar, Vietnam and Indonesia show that the majority of business leaders expect high-single-digit growth. Indeed, developing Asia as a whole is on track to deliver growth of 5.7% in 2017, following a 5.8% expansion in 2016, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

In my view, that forecast could be exceeded if China continues to outperform expectations, and India sees a 7.4% annual increase in economic activity. However, ASEAN businesses continue to cite bureaucratic and compliance hurdles, plus hidden trade barriers, as serious challenges facing further integration and development.

Vietnam: 5th year of solid growth

The star performer in trade and investment in 2017 remains Vietnam, whose economy is expected to expand by 6.5% in 2017, after seeing 6.7% growth in 2016.

This is the fifth year of solid growth for this $205bn economy that is enjoying a confidence boost from the recent EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Whilst actual implementation is scheduled for 2018, Vietnam has been attracting an increasing share of FDI thanks to a strong consumption story and competitive cost of manufacturing. Sustainable expansion, inflationary pressures and inclusive growth remain the top challenges for Vietnam.

Myanmar: Closing the gap

For its part, Myanmar is still one of the region's top investment destinations in early 2017: the ADB predicts the country's GDP will grow by 7.7%, up from 6.3% in 2016. However, in GDP per capita terms it has yet to close the gap on most ASEAN nations. The hope is that in the wake of banking and capital markets reforms, other sectors will attract much-needed investment, though the boom in real estate prices in Yangon is creating some risk of asset inflation in this burgeoning market.

The new Companies Act and streamlined regulation introduced this year are expected to make it easier for foreign companies to set up partnerships with local companies. The biggest challenge for Myanmar – as in Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines – is to attract long-term investment in the infrastructure and energy sectors.

The Philippines: Welcome slowdown

The Philippines, meanwhile, already a leading service economy, is expected to see more moderate growth of 6.4% this year, following a stellar 6.8% expansion in 2016. This is, however, regarded as a welcome slowdown given that private consumption accounts for nearly 70% of GDP and analysts have voiced concerns about overheating. The challenge for the Philippines remains poor infrastructure and high concentration of economic activity in Metro Manila, with traffic congestion a much-cited burden to logistics costs.

Malaysia: Focus on tourism

Malaysia, along with Singapore, continues to be a top regional integrator. The region of Johor, for instance, is planning new initiatives to create a tourism hub as well as a gateway to ASEAN. Indeed, regional trade and investment offers the best opportunity to stay on track to achieve developed nation status by 2020.

With highly developed banking, health and education sectors, Malaysia has plenty of growth potential in services. Price pressure in Q1 was one of the main challenges, as the government continued to phase out fuel subsidies. The country also faces a likely correction in real estate prices as demand for property softens following a correction in oil and gas prices.

Thailand: New sources of growth

Thailand continues to be a leader in food processing, automotives as well as electronics. The new source of growth is expected to come from services, especially health, hospitality and IT.

SEE PAGE 9

Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong (Second Session)

Let's cultivate philanthropic spirit for development of country

IT is often said that good health is a gift. But after I read the news of KBZ Brighter Future Foundation donating Ks500 million to philanthropic groups assisting AIDs victims, I have come to realize that not everyone is lucky enough to receive this gift.

This deadly disease is born from the global terror that is the virus that causes AIDS. In addition to being harmful to the afflicted, it also makes them outcasts of society. HIV/AIDS has spread quickly throughout Myanmar in less than a decade.

There is an estimated 190,000 people suffering from HIV/AIDS, and the last available statistics from 2013 revealed that number had increased by 6,700. The silver lining is that around 65,000 of the patients are receiving systematic treatment with ART (Antiretroviral therapy). However that is somewhat eclipsed by the vast lack of knowledge about the subject in a developing country, resulting in discrimination from society and depression from insufficient medicine. The worst is when their own families and communities discard them, rendering them helpless and inviting them to depart from this life before their time has come.

Philanthropists consoling children. **PHOTO: THURA LWIN (ECO)**

The unfortunate stigma behind this is the belief that those who have contracted HIV were lust driven and broke the rules of society. While it is true that there are those who got infected for caving into their carnal desires, the other side of the coin shows that some were just dealt a bad hand by life. "A single barbus spoils the entire boat," and like that phrase, most of society discards the infected.

Working tirelessly for the past decade in providing a safe place of refuge for all people infected with HIV, even when their own flesh and blood have abandoned them, are none other than Aung Foundation's founder Sayama Daw Than Myint Aung and NLD AIDs Center founder Daw Phyu Phyu Thin.

Novelist Sayama Daw Than Myint Aung leads numerous philanthropic movements including Thuka Yeikmyone, a shelter for orphans with HIV, Seesar Yeik, a home for the aged, Aung Foundation for training future leaders of society, a separate home for the aged from performance arts community, Yadanar Sanctuary for orphans and Aung Myay Philanthropic School.

"Philanthropists like us have to be able to arrive at the needed places at the right time and this cannot be accomplished with kindness alone, but needs support with compassion and honesty to deliver donations on time. I promise we will make use of the donated assets in effective places," said Daw Than Myint Aung, displaying her compassionate spirit.

Sayama Daw Phyu Phyu Thin has been working since 2002 in providing aid to AIDs-related efforts. She is also building a Damayone (Religious building) coupled with the NLD Aids Center in North Dagon, Yangon.

Working in philanthropic organizations demands sacrifice and in the unbalanced economy of Myanmar it is a struggle just dealing with the basic necessities for the needy.

Chairman of KBZ's Brighter Future Myanmar Foundation Daw Nan Lai Kham has stated, "Our foundation has been relentless in supporting efforts for the benefit of the nation and its people. We as dutiful citizens feel compelled to help philanthropists like Sayama Daw Than Myint Aung and Daw Phyu Phyu Thin and for this we receive great joy."

The Brighter Future Myanmar Foundation, in compliance with the motto "Together with the people", has donated over Ks120 billion since 2007 in their efforts in helping development of various sectors across the country.

There is a monumental need for similar passionate philanthropists is Myanmar.

The Buddha once said, "If you wish to care for me, care for the aged and the sick." As I conclude my writing to raise awareness and express gratitude for philanthropists and their supporters like Brighter Future Foundation, I hope compassionate spirits are awakened in the people and with that I express my gratitude in my heart again and again. —Thura Lwin (Eco) ■

ASEAN's Top 6 Economies to Watch in 2017

FROM PAGE 8

The policy focus recently has been on expanding regional corridors to close the income gap between Bangkok and poorer areas in the north.

The overall growth for 2017 is expected to reach 3.5% compared to 3.2% in 2016 and will largely be driven by further gains in manufacturing as well as consumption and investment growth.

External headwinds and baht appreciation could weigh on the growth outlook.

Indonesia: Streamlining regulation

Indonesia, which faced many questions over its foreign investment policy, appears to be turning a corner. The tax amnesty implemented last year has improved fiscal and financial sector liquidity. At the same time, President Joko Widodo's administration has made it a priority to signal to investors that the country is streamlining regulation.

Going forward

The common theme throughout the region is the need for long-term access to finance to fund investments in better road, air and sea connectivity. Further deepening of financial markets and increased risk sharing requires regional development banks that can channel savings into long-dated projects. In that regard, the process of further ASEAN integration, and the renewed impetus for cooperation in Asia after the recent US presidential election, could prove to be the main drivers of investment in regional infrastructure.

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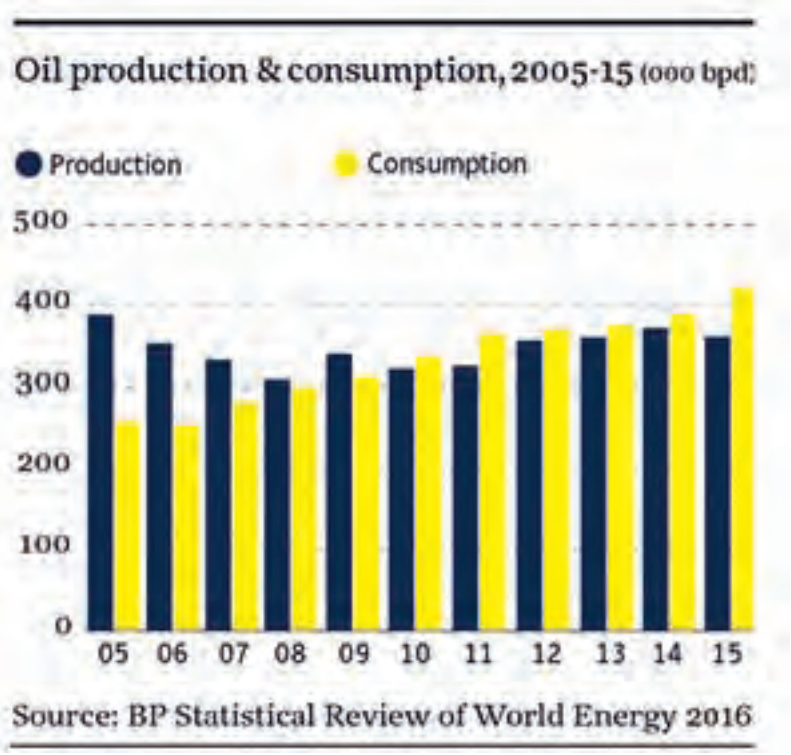


Under fire at home, Trump lands in Saudi for first foreign trip

US President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump arrive aboard Air Force One at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on 20 May, 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

RIYADH — Dogged by controversy at home, President Donald Trump opened a nine-day foreign trip on Saturday in Saudi Arabia, looking to shift attention from a spiraling political firestorm over his firing of former FBI Director James Comey last week.

With delicate diplomatic meetings facing him, including three summits, Trump faces a challenge of advancing his "America First" agenda without alienating key allies during his first trip abroad.

Stepping off Air Force One in 100-degree heat with his wife, Melania, Trump and his entourage received a red-carpet welcome from Saudi King Salman.

The trip has been billed by the White House as a chance to visit places sacred to three of the world's major religions while giving Trump time to meet with Arab, Israeli and European leaders.

But uproar in Washington threatened to cast a long shadow over the trip. His firing of Comey and the appointment of a special counsel to investigate his campaign's ties to Russia last year has triggered a stream of bad headlines.

The New York Times reported Trump had called Comey a "nut job" in a private meeting last week in the Oval Office with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and US ambassador to the United States Sergei Kislyak. Flynn's contacts with Kislyak last year were a factor in triggering a federal investigation and he was fired in February.

The White House did not deny the report, but said the "the real story is that our national security has been undermined by the leaking of private and highly classified conversations."

After a royal banquet, Trump and the king were to have private talks and participate in a signing ceremony for a number of US-Saudi agreements, including a $100 billion deal for Saudi Arabia to buy American arms.

National oil giant Saudi Aramco expected to sign $50 billion of deals with US companies on Saturday, part of a drive to diversify the kingdom's economy beyond oil exports, Aramco's chief executive Amin Nasser said.

Trump is to deliver a speech on Sunday aimed at rallying Muslims in the fight against Islamic militants in Riyadh on Sunday. He will also attend a summit with Gulf leaders as part of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council.

Shortly after taking office, Trump had sought to block people from several Muslim-majority nations from entering the United States, but the travel ban has been blocked by federal courts.

The 70-year-old president's travel to Saudi Arabia, Israel, Italy and Belgium will be Trump's longest time away from the White House since he took office four months ago.

Even his hand gestures were likely to draw scrutiny in the Middle East, where the thumbs-up sign, a signature move of Trump's, is considered taboo.

The uproar over Comey's firing was unlikely to go away.

"It's almost always true that when a president goes on a big foreign trip, especially one that has some important summits ... that that dominates the news and knocks most other stuff out," said Republican strategist Charlie Black.

Trump, who has expressed a desire for friendlier relations with Moscow, drew a storm of criticism this week when it emerged that he had shared sensitive national security information with Russia's foreign minister during a meeting last week in the White House.

The president was already under attack for firing Comey in the midst of an FBI probe into Russia's role in the 2016 election and possible collusion with Trump campaign members. Moscow has denied any such interference. Trump has denied collusion and denounced the appointment of a special counsel as a witch hunt. His fellow Republicans in Congress have expressed frustration that Trump's pro-business economic agenda, highlighted by a plan to cut corporate and individual taxes, have been pushed to the backburner by the turmoil.

"He clearly did have a bad two weeks. And clearly it's my hope that he does ... right the ship, that he improves so that we can just get going," Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan said on the Hugh Hewitt radio show on Friday.—Reuters ■

WORLD BRIEFS

US trade rep Lighthizer says Japan agrees on fighting trade barriers

HANOI — US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Japan's economy minister, Hiroshige Seko, expressed an interest in strengthening bilateral trade and fighting trade barriers on Saturday, a statement from the US trade representative said after the meeting.

The statement said they had a cordial first meeting, on the sidelines of the meeting of trade ministers from Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) countries in Hanoi, Viet Nam.

It said they: "agreed to promote mutually beneficial trade, fight trade barriers and trade distorting measures, foster economic growth, and help establish high standards."— Reuters ■

Saudi to open militant-monitoring centre during Trump visit

RIYADH — Saudi Arabia will open a digital centre to monitor the activities of Islamic State and other Islamist militant groups online, a senior Saudi official said on Saturday, as US President Donald Trump began a visit to the kingdom.

Mohammed al-Issa, secretary-general of the Saudi-based Muslim World League and director of the Defence Ministry's new Ideological War Centre, told reporters the centre would open on Sunday in an inauguration ceremony with Trump and Saudi King Salman.— Reuters ■

Rouhani wins Iran's presidential election with 23.5 million votes — official

DUBAI — Iran's President Hassan Rouhani has won the country's presidential election with some 57 per cent of the total votes, the country's Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmanifazli said on Saturday.

"Of some 41.2 million total votes cast, Rouhani got 23.5 ... and won the election," Rahmanifazli said in remarks carried live by state TV. Rouhani's hardline rival Ebrahim Raisi got 15.8 million votes, he said.— Reuters ■

Two suicide car bombs explode on highway near oilfields in southern Iraq

BASRA, (Iraq) — Two suicide car bombers blew themselves up at checkpoints on a highway near oilfields in the southern Iraqi province of Basra on Friday, killing several people, police sources and an interior ministry spokesman said.

Iraq's South Oil Company said there was no disruption to operations but oil police were put on maximum alert in response to the attack, officials said.

Bomb attacks in southern Iraq, where the bulk of the country's oil is produced, are relatively rare.

The victims included two soldiers, a traffic policeman and an unknown number of civilians travelling in a bus.

The first blast took place at the Rumeila checkpoint and the second around one km away at another checkpoint called al-Sadra, an interior ministry spokesman said.—Reuters ■

A man inspects the site of a suicide car bombing on a highway near oilfields in southern Basra, Iraq on 20 May, 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Afghan Taliban launch three-pronged assault on Ghazni city

GHAZNI, (Afghanistan) — Taliban fighters launched a three-pronged attack on parts of the central-eastern Afghan city of Ghazni overnight, driving a Humvee packed with explosives into the entrance of a district governor's compound during the assault, police said on Saturday.

The assault on Ghazni, on the highway linking the capital Kabul with the southern city of Kandahar, ramps up the Taliban's spring offensive and comes as US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis prepares to present recommendations to President Donald Trump on future troop levels in Afghanistan.

In the north of the country, the Taliban has stepped up its operations and targeted Kunduz, a city that they have twice managed to seize for brief periods in the past.

The Taliban have had a strong presence in the province of Ghazni for years, but provincial police chief Aminullah Amerkhil said the overnight attack from three directions was the fiercest launched by the insurgents. However, he said his men had held out.

Hashim Zwak, the police chief of Waghaz district, was wounded in the hand during the fighting. He described how the militants drove a Humvee packed with explosives into the entrance of the district governor's compound and blew it up before other fighters tried to overrun the police defenders.

"They put all their effort into it but they could not defeat us," Zwak told Reuters from a hospital in Ghazni city.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said, however, that the fighters had gained control of Waghaz district, straddling the highway to the south of the city and fighting was continuing in other areas.

He said several members of the security forces had been killed and many vehicles destroyed along with weapons and ammunition.

The provincial police chief said the Taliban had suffered far heavier casualties, with 25 fighters killed, while only two members of the security forces died.

"The Taliban put all their pressure on Afghan security forces to take control of at least one district but we fought well and pushed them back," Amerkhil said.—Reuters ■

Syrian rebels begin to leave besieged Homs district — Reuters witness, monitor, state media

BEIRUT — Syrian rebels began to leave the last opposition-held district of Homs city on Saturday under an evacuation deal that will see President Bashar al-Assad's government take back the area, a Reuters witness, a monitor and state media said.

At least one bus carrying rebel fighters and their families left the al-Waer district earlier, and dozens more were expected to follow, bringing some 2,500 people out of the neighbourhood long besieged by government forces and their allies.

The evacuation of al-Waer district is one of the largest of its kind, after a series of similar deals in recent months brought many areas of western Syria long held by the opposition and besieged by government and allied forces back under Assad's control.

The al-Waer agreement began to be implemented in March. By the time it is completed, up to 20,000 people will have left the district, the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group says.

Many of the rebels are to head for insurgent-held Idlib province in Syria's northwest and to the town of Jarablus along the country's northern border with Turkey, pro-Damascus media reported.

Some are to stay in al-Waer and hand over their weapons. —Reuters ■

South African prince of Mandela's clan abducted by gunmen

JOHANNESBURG — A prince of the AbaThembu clan of South Africa's late anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela has been abducted by gunmen in the city of Mtata in the Eastern Cape province, police said on Friday.

Prince Mankunku Dalindyebo is the brother of jailed King Buyelekhaya Dalindyebo, who began a 12-year sentence in December 2015 for arson, kidnapping and assault.

"He was abducted in Mtata at 1630 (1430 GMT) and that is all the information we have. The police are looking for him and those who took him," police spokesman Mzukisi Fatyela told Reuters. There was no known motive. The brothers are traditional leaders of Mandela's clan in a poor, rural region of the Eastern Cape. South Africa recognizes several royal families, who command considerable respect, especially in the countryside. Local media reported that the family has been at loggerheads over who should assume the role of acting king as the monarch serves his prison sentence, with some backing Prince Mankunku's claim to the throne. The provincial government in February officially recognized the king's son as the acting ruler of the nation. —Reuters ■

The vehicle can now move with no one inside and fire from a 30-mm cannon. **PHOTO: TASS**

Russian defence company awaits final go-ahead to test unmanned armoured

MOSCOW — Russia's Military Industrial Company is awaiting the final stamp of approval from the Russian Defence Ministry to conduct munitions tests for the unmanned Tigr (Tiger) armoured vehicle equipped with a 30-mm autocannon, the company's CEO, Alexander Krasovitsky, told TASS.

"We received the approval from the Defence Ministry's top brass for this assignment and we are going forward with it. At present, we are developing and coordinating with the Defence Ministry a munitions test programme for this vehicle," Krasovistky said. As he put it, once the programme is approved, the company will seal contracts on munitions tests with organizations that will provide the means for these trials. "Munitions testing is a complicated process that requires considering a wealth of details essential for an objective result. So, there is no actual timeline, but we want to complete it as soon as possible," the CEO elaborated. Earlier he mentioned in an interview with TASS that Military Industrial Company developed an unmanned version of the Tiger armored vehicle. The vehicle can now move with no one inside and fire from a 30-mm cannon. According to Krasovitsky, it was developed in cooperation with Engineering and Manufacturing Agency (766 UPTK) with the permission of the Russian Defence Ministry, using its own resources.

The combat module installed on the Tiger was equipped with a 30-mm autocannon from the Uran-9 unmanned combat ground vehicle.—Tass ■

North Korea says linking cyber attacks to Pyongyang is 'ridiculous'

UNITED NATIONS — North Korea's deputy United Nations envoy said on Friday "it is ridiculous" to link Pyongyang with the WannaCry "ransomware" cyber attack that started to sweep around the globe a week ago or the hacking of a UN expert monitoring sanctions violations.

WannaCry has infected more than 300,000 computers in 150 nations. It threatens to lock out victims who have not paid a ransom within one week of infection. French researchers said on Friday they had found a last-chance way to save encrypted files.

"Relating to the cyber attack, linking to the DPRK, it is ridiculous," North Korea's Deputy UN Ambassador Kim In Ryong told a news conference when asked if Pyongyang was involved in the global WannaCry attack or the UN hack.

North Korea is also known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

"Whenever something strange happens, it is the stereotype way of the United States and the hostile forces that kick off noisy anti-DPRK campaign deliberately linking with DPRK," Kim said. — Reuters ■

Assange hails victory after Sweden drops probe, says prepared to end impasse

STOCKHOLM/LONDON — Swedish prosecutors dropped an investigation of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange on Friday over a rape allegation, but British police said he would still be arrested if he left the Ecuadorean embassy in London where he has been holed up for five years.

Assange, 45, took refuge in the embassy in June 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden after two women made rape and sexual molestation allegations against him, which he denies.

He feared Sweden would hand him over to the United States to face prosecution over WikiLeaks' publication of swathes of classified military and diplomatic documents in one of the largest information leaks in US history.

Appearing on the balcony of the embassy after the Swedish announcement, Assange said he was ready to talk to Britain "about what is the best way forward" and with the US Department of Justice, but also defended his right to stay put.

"The road is far from over. The war, the proper war is just commencing," he told supporters and media after raising a clenched fist in a gesture of victory.

Police in London said they were still obliged to arrest Assange if he left the embassy for skipping bail. They said this was a much less serious offence than rape, but he could still face up to a year in jail if convicted.

Assange is a cyber hero to some for exposing government abuses of power and championing free speech, but to others he is a criminal who has undermined the security of the West.

The former computer hacker enraged Washington by publishing hundreds of thousands of secret US diplomatic cables that laid bare often highly critical US appraisals of world leaders from Russian President Vladimir Putin to the Saudi royal family.

Earlier on Friday Swedish Chief Prosecutor Marianne Ny said the rape investigation could not proceed due to legal obstacles.

"We are not making a statement about his guilt," Ny said, adding that the investigation could be reopened if Assange came to Sweden before the statute of limitations deadline for the rape allegation in 2020.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is seen on the balcony of the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, Britain on 19 May, 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Assange always denied the rape allegations and said they were a ploy to get him whisked off to the United States. —Reuters ■

EU eyes start of Brexit negotiations on 19 June

BRUSSELS — European Union officials are preparing for talks on Britain's exit from the bloc to begin on 19 June but expect confirmation of the date only after the British election on 8 June, EU sources said on Friday.

The European Commission will conduct the negotiations with London on behalf of the remaining 27 EU governments. Their ministers will meet on Monday to confirm the mandate they are giving to the Commission's chief negotiator, Michel Barnier.

Prime Minister Theresa May formally told the EU in March that Britain was leaving after a referendum last June. A tight two-year countdown to departure on 30 March, 2019, has been made slightly tighter by May calling the election last month in a bid to strengthen her hand in the talks. Her ruling Conservative Party is tipped to win the election with an increased majority.

EU officials refuse to discuss even basic practicalities for the talks with London before the vote – in part in retaliation for Britain's refusal to sign off on some EU budget amendments, citing a pre-election "purdah", or freeze on decision-making.

"The 19th (of June) is tentative, because Britain cannot confirm anything until after the elections," one official involved in the Brexit negotiation process said. "The 19th is ... the earliest date they can envisage."

Barnier told his Commission bosses at the start of May that in the withdrawal talks, the EU would focus on securing citizens' rights, financial issues and borders, and he hopes for a deal on these issues between October and December. If that timetable holds, the EU would be ready to start discussing the shape of its future trade relationship with Britain and a transition period leading to it between December 2017 and spring 2018, Barnier said, according to minutes of the commissioners' weekly college meeting on 3 May.

Barnier said he would propose to his British counterpart that the discussions take place in four-weekly cycles. The first week would be devoted to preparations by the 27 governments and the European Parliament and the second to an exchange of documents with Britain. The third week would be for negotiations themselves — EU officials expect the British to come to Brussels for the week — and the fourth to report the results to the 27 governments and the European Parliament and prepare the next round of talks.

There would be five thematic negotiation teams on the EU side in the first phase that is to last until agreement is reached on the key points on Britain's withdrawal from the EU. —Reuters ■

Highland Venezuelan town blitzed by looting and protests

An opposition supporter throws a petrol bomb while clashing with riot security forces during a rally against President Nicolas Maduro in Caracas, Venezuela on 18 May, 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

LOS TEQUES, Venezuela — Like many Portuguese immigrants to Venezuela after World War Two, Manuel Fernandes spent a lifetime building a small business: his bread and cake shop in a highland town.

It took just one night for it to fall apart.

The first he knew of the destruction of his beloved "Bread Mansion" store on a main avenue of Los Teques was when looters triggered the alarm, resulting in a warning call to his cellphone at 7 pm on Wednesday.

Fernandes was stuck at home due to barricades and protests that have become common in seven weeks of anti-government unrest in Venezuela. So he was forced to watch the disaster unfold via live security camera images.

"There were hundreds of people. They smashed the glass counters, the fridges. They took everything — ham, cheese, milk, cornflakes, equipment," the 65-year-old said, as workmen secured the shop on Friday with thick metal plates.

"I've dedicated everything to this. My family depends on it," said the distraught businessman, on a street where most neighboring stores were also ransacked in a frenzy of looting in Los Teques this week. Unrest and protests against President Nicolas Maduro's socialist government since early April have caused at least 46 deaths plus hundreds of injuries and arrests. They have also sparked widespread nighttime looting.

When a mob smashed its way into a bakery in El Valle, a working class neighborhood of Caracas, last month, 11 people died, eight of them electrocuted and three shot.

This week, Maduro's government sent 2,000 troops to western Tachira state, where scores of businesses have been emptied.

In Los Teques, an hour's drive into hills outside Caracas, locals spoke of up to half a dozen more deaths in looting and clashes this week between security forces and young protesters from a self-styled 'Resistance' movement.

There has been no official confirmation of those deaths. Reuters journalists visiting the town on Friday had to negotiate permission from masked youths manning roadblocks and turning back traffic at the main entrances.

Mostly students, the young men said they had put academic work on hold and were determined to stay in the street until Maduro allowed a general election, the main demand of Venezuela's opposition in the current political crisis. —Reuters ■

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV MATHU BHUM VOY. NO (1036)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MATHU BHUM VOY. NO (1036) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21.5.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P/M.I.T.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MOL (S'PORE) PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV INNWA STAR VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV INNWA STAR VOY. NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21.5.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T/A.I.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV ANDAMAN STAR VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ANDAMAN STAR VOY. NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21.5.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S CONTINENTAL SHIPPING LINE PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

One Direction's Harry Styles' debut album tops the UK chart

LONDON—Frontman of British brand "One Direction" and teenage heart throb Harry Styles saw his eponymous debut album go straight to the top of the UK charts on Friday, selling nearly 57,000 copies.

Styles found fame with five-member "One Direction" in 2010 when they formed as part of the British reality TV show "The X Factor" but the band was reduced to four singers in March 2015 when Zayn Malik announced he was quitting.

The other four band members said the group would be taking a break from early 2016 and Styles, who stars in upcoming World War Two drama "Dunkirk", released his debut single "Sign of the Times" last month.

In the singles chart, Luis Fonsi, Daddy Yankee and Justin Bieber remained Number one for the second week with their song "Despacito", according to the Official Charts Company. —Reuters ■

British singer Harry Styles from the band One Direction arrives to attend the presentation of the Burberry Autumn/Winter 2014 collection during London Fashion Week 17 February, 2014. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

European migration crisis gets super-power treatment in Cannes

CANNES, France — A Syrian refugee is gunned down by border police but instead of dying he finds he can fly, in "Jupiter's Moon", a film about the European migration crisis that baffled audiences at the Cannes Film Festival.

Director Kornel Mundruczo, from Hungary which has taken a particularly hard line on immigration, called it a "provokingly political movie" but also "happily playful".

"It's definitely not a movie which you can put into a box easily — you need time after the movie to find your own answers," Mundruczo told a news conference on Friday.

In competition for the Palme d'Or, the film's title refers to one of the moons orbiting Jupiter that, it is speculated, may harbor life. The moon is called Europa — Europe — the place millions of migrants are trying to reach.

"Is it a bird? Is it a plane? Is it a satire on anti-refugee paranoia? Is it a religiose parable of guilt and redemption? Is it a Euro-arthouse superhero origin myth?" wrote The Guardian's Peter Bradshaw, eventually settling on calling "Jupiter's Moon" a "messily ambitious and over-extended movie with some great images". Critics applauded the flying effects and spectacular chase scenes, but found the symbolism heavy-handed and/or indecipherable.

"You'll believe a man can fly in Kornel Mundruczo's stunningly shot supernatural migrant thriller, but you might not know what it means," wrote Variety's Jessica Kiang.

The festival runs until 28 May.—Reuters ■

Director Kornel Mundruczo and cast member Merad Ninidze and Zsombor Jeger pose at 70th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France on 19 May, 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

No spoilers! 'Twin Peaks' premiere urges guests to keep secret

LOS ANGELES — As co-creator David Lynch introduced the first screening of his much-anticipated revival of the 1990s TV series "Twin Peaks", he evoked the image of the tall green Douglas fir trees that came to define the mysterious small town setting of his show. "Douglas firs are beautiful trees and if we're very quiet, we can hear the rustling needles as we move through the forest, getting closer and closer and now we're here," Lynch told an audience late on Friday, embracing his penchant for being enigmatic.

Ahead of Showtime's "Twin Peaks" debut on Sunday, the cast and creators have closely guarded the details of the new season. Guests and reporters at the Los Angeles premiere were urged to not reveal any of the plot details of the first two episodes screened on Friday night. Mystery — and perhaps a special level of bizarreness — has been part of the fabric of "Twin Peaks" since its inception on ABC in 1990, following FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) as he arrives in a small lumber town to investigate the strange and supernatural circumstances of the murder of teen homecoming-queen Laura Palmer.

MacLachlan, who reprises his role as Cooper, told Reuters, "I can't say much but we do drink coffee and it is damn good. And we do have cherry pie."

The pie and brew took on cult status in the original showing. Co-creator Mark Frost said the new 18-part season "had to be in its own way, as startling and different and arresting as it was the first time."

"This was not an exercise in nostalgia, this was an attempt to move the ball forward both narratively and cinematically," he said. The series finale in 1991 left multiple cliffhangers, but most notably the fate of Cooper after his surreal encounters with the killer spirit Bob and his own evil doppelganger in the show's other-worldly Black Lodge. The spirit of Palmer tells him, "I'll see you again in 25 years," and the last scene sees Cooper smash his head against a bathroom mirror with a sinister laugh as the reflection of Bob looks back at him.

Numerous original cast members reprised their roles, such as Sheryl Lee as Palmer, Madchen Amick as Shelly Johnson and Dana Ashbrook as Bobby Briggs, while new additions include Naomi Watts and Laura Dern.

"It's so beautiful when we're in this golden era of what filmmakers can do on cable television ... to bring David back into this arena where he has freedom to create with such autonomy is incredible," Dern said.—Reuters ■

Collection bag from Apollo 11 moon mission to be sold at auction

NEW YORK — It is a simple, square white bag that traveled to the moon in 1969 on Apollo 11 and carried back to Earth the first sample of lunar material ever collected. That bag could fetch up to $4 million when it goes on the auction block at Sotheby's New York in July.

The bag — which contains remnants of moon dust and is labeled "LUNAR SAMPLE RETURN" — is a collection pouch used by astronaut Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon, during the Apollo 11 mission. The bag was used to hold rocks and dust from the lunar region known as the Sea of Tranquility.

Scheduled for 20 July, the 48th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing, the auction will be the first legal sale of such an artifact from the mission, Jim Hull, head of exhibits and artifacts at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), said in a telephone interview on Friday.

While there are legal restrictions on sales of material from moon missions, including lunar rocks and dust, it is believed some items have been sold on the black market.

The bag wound up at Sotheby's after a roundabout journey that included an attempt by NASA to get it back from its current owner.

Apollo 11 blasted off on 16 July, 1969, with three astronauts aboard. Four days later, Armstrong and astronaut Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin flew the spacecraft Eagle down to the moon's surface.

As part of the mission, the astronauts gathered lunar samples.

After nearly 22 hours on the moon, Armstrong and Aldrin returned to the lunar module, lifted off and rejoined Michael Collins in the Columbia spacecraft for the journey back to Earth.

They landed on 24 July and received a hero's welcome.

But the collection pouch got mixed up with other sample bags that were never used to hold lunar materials, Hull said.

At one point, the bag was seized the US Department of Justice during an investigation, and then mistakenly auctioned off to its current owner, Chicago-area attorney Nancy Lee Carlson.

An Apollo 11 Contingency Lunar Sample Return Bag, used by astronaut Neil Armstrong on Apollo 11 to bring back the very first pieces of the moon ever collected, is seen in an undated photo supplied by Sotheby's auction house in New York on 19 May, 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Interested in the history of the bag, Carlson sent it to be analyzed by NASA, which confirmed its provenance through testing.

Ownership of both moon rocks or dust and artifacts from lunar missions is generally restricted, Hull said, and upon identifying the bag and finding that it contained remnants of lunar dust, the space agency sought to keep it.

But NASA lost a legal fight to keep the bag, and a US District Court judge ordered it returned to Carlson in February.

Sotheby's expects the artifact to fetch between $2 million and $4 million, according to an emailed statement. Hull called the bag "invaluable" because it contains lunar dust and was used on such a famous mission.

Carlson paid only $995 for the bag as part of a mixed batch of items.

Sotheby's said Carlson plans to donate a portion of the sale proceeds to charity and to establish a scholarship at her alma mater, Northern Michigan University.

—Reuters ■

mitv Myanmar International
Programme Schedule

(21-5-2017 07:00am ~ 22-5-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:25	Am	The World's Largest Book
07:50	Am	Excavation At Kawhmu
08:03	Am	News
08:27	Am	The Longest Living Siblings (Part-2)
08:48	Am	Toddy Palm Product Shop
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Dawei - Tavoy, Travel To The Southern Part of Myanmar
09:45	Am	My Tour Around Hopone City
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Sayit-wyne Girls
10:48	Am	Dhamma School

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:25	Pm	Mrauk U, Treasure Trove of Rakhine Culture
07:44	Pm	Modifying Natural Thanakha Bark into Ready-Made Skin Care Product
07:51	Pm	Today Myanmar: Hyacinth Stalk
08:03	Pm	News
08:27	Pm	Myanmar Music Icon Ko Nay Win, Creator of Myanmar Own Tune Songs (Episode-2)
08:51	Pm	Crocodile Keeper

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

From fear of water to gold medal, Bosnian swimmer beats the odds

SARAJEVO — Six-year-old Bosnian Ismail Zulfic was born without arms and with a foot deformity and overcame his fear of the water to win a gold medal at a regional swimming competition.

At the competition in Croatia, Ismail was cheered on by members of his swimming club, set up by Amel Kapo to coach disabled swimmers, and by his parents, who drive him twice a week to Sarajevo, 70 km (45 miles) from their home in the central Bosnian town of Zenica for swimming lessons.

Ismail's parents never dreamed their shy boy, who developed a fear of water after an incident in a rubber pool, would become a medal-winning swimmer. He could barely be persuaded into the water for therapeutic treatment for his back, which Ismail bends constantly to eat, write, use a joystick or fit on his swimming goggles with his feet.

But then he met Kapo, who set up the Spid swimming club more than a year ago after noticing that many disabled swimmers went to the pool without professional supervision. Kapo taught Ismail to swim.

"After a few months of practice Ismail was able to dive in and swim the length of the Olympic sized pool without any help," Kapo said, explaining that the boy's success was the result of mutual trust and Ismail's determination.

A year later Ismail powered to the finish of the 50-metre back stroke, well ahead of rivals, some nearly twice his age, at the regional competition in Zagreb.

"I like to win," a smiling Ismail told Reuters, adding he also holds a medal in skiing. Kapo said his club sought only to give the children a taste of competition, but along with Ismail, five other Spid swimmers won gold medals and two won silver.

Their achievement is even more remarkable given the lack of state aid for disabled children in Bosnia. Kapo and three other volunteers provide swimming lessons in what is the only club of its kind in the country. It costs 1,650 Bosnian marka ($939) a month to use the municipal swimming pool, paid for by donations from local businesses.

The long trips to swimming lessons are costly for Ismail's father Ismet, a steel factory worker, and his unemployed mother Elmina. "We are managing somehow. In the end no money can buy the smile that lights up Ismail's face when he swims and the pride he gives us," Ismet said.

Kapo said he hoped Ismail's example would help raise awareness and overcome the exclusion faced by many people with disabilities in Bosnia.

—Reuters ■

Thiem ends Nadal's unbeaten run on clay

ROME — Austria's Dominic Thiem dumped seven-times champion Rafael Nadal out of the Italian Open 6-4, 6-3 on Friday to reach the semi-finals.

Beaten twice by Nadal in the space of a month, in the Barcelona and Madrid Open finals, Thiem took his revenge by handing the 30-year-old Spaniard a first clay court defeat of the season in Rome.

The upset, after one hour and 51 minutes, ended Nadal's 17 match unbeaten run on clay.

Thiem will now take on either world number two Novak Djokovic or Argentina's Juan Martin del Potro, meeting for the 18th time on Friday evening, in Saturday's semi-final at the Foro Italico.

The aggressive eighth seed had Nadal rattled from the start and broke the Spaniard in the first and fifth games to go 5-1 up before Nadal fought back to 5-4.

Thiem then broke for a 4-3 lead in the second set with successive backhand and forehand winners and held on to leave Nadal serving in vain to stay in the match.

The Austrian clinched victory on his first matchpoint as Nadal hit wide.

Dominic Thiem of Austria celebrates after winning the quarter final match of ATP Rome Open 2017 against Rafael Nadal of Spain in Rome, Italy in on 19 May, 2017 . **PHOTO: REUTERS**

The Spaniard will now focus on the French Open, where he will be aiming for a 10th title at Roland Garros.

Rising German star Alexander Zverev earlier reached the semi-final with a 7-6(4), 6-1 defeat of world number six Milos Raonic.

Zverev, 20, will face John Isner for a place in the final after the American beat Croatian Marin Cilic 7-6(3), 2-6, 7-6(2).

"It's another stepping stone in my career," Zverev told the ATP's website. "I feel like I have played very well today. I returned very well.

"So I'm happy to be in the semis and playing John tomorrow, who I know very well from our Saddlebrook (Florida) days. It's going to be a great match."—Reuters ■

Pogba to return for Manchester United on Sunday

LONDON — Paul Pogba will return for Manchester United for Sunday's home game against Crystal Palace after missing the last two matches due to the death of his father, manager Jose Mourinho said on Friday.

The Portuguese is focusing on next Wednesday's Europa League final against Dutch side Ajax and is set to field a youthful team for the largely meaningless final game of the Premier League season. With United sixth in the domestic league and unable to finish in the top four, the Europa League is Mourinho's only hope of securing Champions League football next season.

But he told reporters that midfielder Pogba, the world's most expensive player, would feature at Old Trafford.

"Paul Pogba is fine. Strong guy. Strong mentality. He needs to play on Sunday because he has not trained or played for a while," Mourinho said after the Frenchman joined the players at an open training session.

The manager said he did not know whether England striker Wayne Rooney would feature.

Chris Smalling would be absent, and missed training on Friday, but is expected to be fit for Wednesday while Marouane Fellaini was "a question mark" with United waiting on a scan after he suffered a hamstring injury.

"Tim Fosu-Mensah plays Sunday and if the reaction is good and if he manages to play the game without problems, then he's an option for us for the final," said Mourinho. —Reuters ■

Manchester United's Paul Pogba. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Myanmar Football Federation to receive fund, US$ 170,000 from FIFA

MYANMAR Football Federation will receive US$ 170,000 from FIFA, Federation International de Football Association to cover the expense of Myanmar football selected teams during their international competitions, according to U Phone Zaw Naing, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Myanmar Football Association.

U Phone Zaw Naing, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and U Ko Ko Thein, general secretary of Myanmar Football Association attended the FIFA Congress few days ago.

In this congress, officials from Myanmar Football Federation met individually with the President of Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and made a discussion for the development of Myanmar football.

FIFA is not supporting funds to all nations. Myanmar has been selected for the funds by FIFA.

"FIFA is providing the fund to Myanmar with the title of FIFA SOLI DARITY. The fund will not be given in lumpsum at a time. This fund, US$ 170,000 would be provided by FIFA when it is requested for the expense of our selection teams during the international competitions," said U Phone Zaw Naing. —Myanma Alin ■

SUNDAY SPECIAL
21 May 2017

www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Beyond a degree

By Mg Win Myat
(Yangon University of Foreign Languages)

Some people exclaim, "What shall we do after getting degree? "And it is difficult to find jobs though we have graduated". Actually, they graduated from university without knowing what to do. This is a common problem among the youths as soon as they'd just graduated. Some aimed to get just a degree, and enrolled the university without thinking much about their life. They waste their time by having fun with their friends without focusing on their specialized majors. Some are forced to apply the university where they don't want to go, but for their parents' wish. How selfish their parents are!

Actually, youths have to pass through their future by themselves after their parents' death. Thus, they have to choose the career which is the same with their interest. If not, they will be walking in wrong way, and won't know what to do with their degree. Some may apply for any job which is not related to their degree. Some may be stuck in a job they hate. That's a point why it's important to find a job you enjoy after degree.

The key is very simple. Ask yourself some questions first. If you enjoy working alone, a job which requires teamwork won't suit you. So, you need to find out individual works. Moreover, before you take matriculation examination, you should have a certain plan which university you would like to join that also fits your interest. If you disgust to see bleeding or terrible wounds, you can't be a good doctor or nurse. If you are terrible at calculating, you can't be a good accountant. So, choose the other professions or educational area though you are qualified to learn at such kinds of institutes. If not, you won't be outstanding or can't apply your study as your profession in this area. In the same way, if you are impatient working with children, how can you be a good teacher?

One thing I would like to highlight is that every educational area can be used as our profession. There is no degree which is useless for everyone. But we must realize what to do and how to apply with our degrees. Today, every country is trying to be more developed. To be able to catch up with them, youths are very important to build a modernize country with their profession. Therefore, let's try together by applying our educational knowledge which is the same with our interest. ■

"ITPEC Examinations"

By Kris Ye Yint
International Language & Business Centre (ILBC), Yangon

"Information & Communications Technology has been growing at an unprecedented speed since it evolved. During its growth, it created impacts in the fields of connectivity, awareness and development by enhancing access to information. As the impacts of ICT greatly rely on how people use it, if we utilize it in the correct form, it could be used for positive results and on the other side, if utilized improperly, it can result in unexpected effects.

In order to use ICT in the correct forms to seek development, people must first learn how to operate ICT. Despite having a variety of global standardization tests which determine a person's skill level in ICT, most are not widely known. Therefore, I would like to give information about an IT Professional Test called Information Technology Professionals Examination Council (ITPEC).

ITPEC is the organization for conducting ITPEC Examinations in Asian countries. ITPEC Common Examination is a tool to measure the IT skills and knowledge of IT Professionals, and is based on the Information Technology Engineers Examination of Information-Technology Promotion Agency (IPA), Japan.

ITPEC was founded in November 2005 in co-operation with IPA Japan. The organization is composed of 7 member countries namely Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Malaysia, Mongolia and Bangladesh.

The ITPEC examination has 3 levels which are Information Technology Passport Examination (IP), Fundamental Information Technology Engineer Examination (FE) and Applied Information Technology Engineer Examination (AP). The exams test the candidates' IT Skills in the field of Strategy in System and Business, Project & Service Management and Technology.

The examination is conducted in English in 7 countries of ITPEC biannually in April and October, on the same day with the same questions to justify the level of examination. The questions of the examination are made by the Question Making Committee of each ITPEC member county in cooperation with Japanese Question Making Committee. The highest scoring candidates are also given scholarships which include excursions to Japan.

The results of ITPEC examinations is used as an IT standard assessment in the & members countries and Japan. Since ITEE has been formed in 1969, the total number of applicants have reached over 17 million, and certifications have been given to 2.1 million. ITEE is also used as IT human resource development tool in about 91% of IT vendor companies in Japan. Many companies are offering incentives to the examination passers. In addition, Central and local governments of Japan impose the ITEE as one of the system procurement requirements.

The ITPEC exam was mostly participated by IT Professionals aged between 20 - 30 of whom are either undergraduates, graduates or working people. However, at the last examination of ITPEC in the IT Passport Category which was conducted on April 23, there has been a 12 -year-old boy from Yangon, namely Wai Yan Myint Mo, answering the examination.

It was astonishing that Wai Yan Myint Mo was participating in a good form which has proved the development IT Talent in Myanmar, even from the youth, and has inspired many.

To conclude, I would like to state that ICT is a skill to be accomplished by every citizen to assist in the development of Myanmar. In regard to assessment, ITPEC Examinations is one of the must-answer tests to get streamlined job opportunities for IT Professionals who aim to work in Japan and its member countries.

It has been highly prioritized as an IT assessment by companies or government and incentives has been given to the examination passers with opportunities for scholarships and excursions to Japan. The participation of Wai Yan Myint Mo has also shown the development of ICT in Myanmar. Therefore, I highly urge my fellow IT Professionals to participate in this October ITPEC examinations and help support the development of ICT in Myanmar." ■

Basic English Grammar for Basic Students

Lesson 3: Nouns

In the last Lesson 2 , we opened the box named "*Nouns*" and looked at some nouns we have come across in our English lessons.

Nouns are the names of people, animals or things. And among these nouns, we have already discussed about *"Common Nouns"*, which are used for all common people or animals or things and *"Proper Nouns"*, which are used for some specific or special people or animals or things.

In today's lesson, we are going to study about *"Collective Nouns"* and *"Abstract Nouns"*.
A *"Collective Noun"* is the name of a number of (as collection) people or animals or things, taken together and spoken as one whole.

e.g . a team of footballers, an army of soldiers, a flock of sheep, a herd of cattle, a bunch of grapes
All these people, animals and things are taken together as a whole and these are *"Collective Nouns"*.

Exercise 3

I. Mention any five Collective Nouns you know.

II. Underline the Collective Nouns from the followings: ..

(a) The Police dispersed the crowd.
(b) Can you bring me a dozen of pens?
(c) I will pluck that bunch of grapes.
(d) I saw a herd of cattle grazing in the field.
(e) Which team is the winner in this football match?

III. Make sentences with the following Collective Nouns

(a) Army,
(b) a basket of strawberries,
(c) a bottle of milk,
(d) a litter of puppies
(e) a shoal of fish

Abstract Nouns
An Abstract Noun is usually the name of a quality, action or state considered apart from the object to which it belongs.

e.g. Quality … goodness, bravery, brightness, honesty, kindness
Action …..laughter, movement, judgement, hatred, dancing
State ……. Childhood, boyhood, youth, slavery, sickness

Can you make sentences with these words? Do it.
All the names of Arts and Sciences are all Abstract Nouns.

e.g. Music, Chemistry, Grammar, Historical News, Mathematics

We can speak of a brave soldier, but we cannot touch his bravery.
We can see and smell a beautiful flower, but we cannot touch and smell the beauty.
We can also think of these qualities apart from the person or thing.

We can speak of what persons do or feel apart from the persons themselves and the name given to it is the *"Abstract Noun"*.

IV. Mention any five Abstract Nouns. Make sentences of your own with these words.

V. Underline the Abstract Nouns from the followings: ..

(a) Have you ever heard about the strength of Hercules?
(b) Honesty is the best policy.
(c) Her laughter is as sweet as a silver bell.
(d) We use to do foolish things during our childhood.
(e) No one can avoid death.

Hope that you can understand the lesson well and also do your exercises well !
You will see the answers to these Exercises in your next Sunday's paper.

Bye for now class! See you next Sunday!
Your English Teacher , GNLM.
Email: dr.nunuwintin.rose.dawn@gmail.com

Answers to the Last Week's Exercises
Exercise 2 .

I. Underline the names of people in the following sentences.
The underlined words are as follows:..
(a) boy, brothers, sisters
(b) Mon Mon, Mar Mar, friends
(c) Ko Ko, Nyi Nyi, brothers
(d) Mary, John, Mr. and Mrs.Brown, children
(e) driver

They are called "*Nouns*" in English Grammar .

II. Underline the names of the animals in the followings: ..
The underlined words are :..
(a) ant
(b) Cats, dogs, pets
(c) Oxen, cows
(d) sparrow
(e) bunny

III. Underline the name of the things in the following sentences
The underlined words are as follows:..
(a) chairs, table, room
(b) Barbie doll
(c) bag, school
(d) books, pencils
(e) rose, plant

IV. I'm sure that you can write down 15 Common Nouns
(5 people, 5 animals, 5 things)

Here are some examples :..
boy, girl, father, teacher, tailor
cat, dog, monkey, fish, goat
bag, pen, pencil, eraser, cup

V. I'm sure that you ncan write down 15 Proper Nouns
(5 people, 5 animals and 5 things)

Here are some examples ..
King Mindon, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi,
U Tin Oo, May Thinzar Oo,
Queen Elizabeth II
Michael the Police Dog,
Mo Mo the elephant, Bunny Rabbit,
Donald Duck, Shwe Khe the parrot
the Shwedagon Pagoda, the Ayeyawady,
the Than Lwin Bridge Mawlamyine, Yangon

VI. Choose the Common Nouns and the Proper Nouns

(a) rains, children, house, grand-father	U Ba
(b) songs, party,	
(c) grand-daughter	Hsu Thinzar
(d) visit,	Mandalay, Mandalay Hill, Maha Myatmuni Pagoda
(e)	the Ayeyawady, Myanmar
(f) falls	Pyin Oo Lwin
(g) flowers	Roses, Jasmines
(h) trees, plants	Mount Poppa
(i)	Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw
(j) cities, country	

Read the passage and answer the questions.

Alan Smith's father bought him a small shop, and Alan sold milk, butter, cheese, eggs and other things in it. His shop was in a small town, and it was open on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and on Sunday morning, but it was shut on Sunday afternoon and on Monday.

Alan went to some farms on Monday and bought their best butter and cheese and eggs from the farmers, but he bought his milk in the town.

A truck brought it to his shop in the morning. Alan and his wife worked in the shop, and they sold a lot of their food, because it was good and clean.

A fat woman came into the shop on Saturday. She bought some eggs and some butter, and then she said to Alan's wife, "Your eggs and your butter are dear today.

Why are Saturday and Sunday dearer than Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday?"

Alan's wife was unhappy. She looked at the fat woman, and then she looked at Alan, but she did not give an answer.

Then Alan smiled and said, "Our food is not dearer on Saturday and Sunday! It is cheaper on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday!"

Exercise

Look at these questions. Find the right answers. Then write the questions and the answers:

1. Was Alan's shop open on Monday?
   (a) No, it wasn't. (b) Yes, it was.

2. Was Alan's shop shut on Saturday?
   (a) No, it wasn't (b) Yes, it was.

3. Was Alan's shop open or shut on Sunday morning?
   (a) It was open. (b) It was shut.

4. Who sold Alan cheese?
   (a) His father did. (b) The farmers did.

5. Who brought Alan's butter to his shop?
   (a) A man in a truck did. (b) Alan did.

6. Who brought milk to Alan's shop?
   (a) A man in a truck did. (b) Alan did.

7. Why did a lot of people buy food from Alan?

   (a) Because he and his wife worked in the shop.
   (b) Because the food was clean and good.

8. Who answered the fat woman's question?
   (a) Alan did. (b) Alan's wife did.

9. Was the answer an angry one, or a nice one?
   (a) It was a nice one. (b) It was an angry one.

10. Was the food in the shop dearer on Friday or on Saturday?
    (a) It was dearer on Friday.
    (b) It was dearer on Saturday.

(Answers will be covered next Sunday.)

L A HILL

Answer from last Sunday 1. (a), 2. (b), 3. (a), 4(a), 5. (b), 6. (a), 7. (c), 8. (a), 9. (b), 10. (b)

Invitation to young writers for Sunday section

The Global New Light of Myanmar is accepting submissions of poetry, opinion, articles, essays and short stories from young people for its weekly Sunday Next Generation Platform. Interested candidates can send their works to the **Global New Light of Myanmar** at No. 150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon or by email to **dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com** with the following information: **(1)** Sector you wish to be included in (poetry, opinion, etc.), **(2)** Real name and (if different) your penname, **(3)** Your level of education, **(4)** Name of your School/College/University, **(5)** A written note of declaration that the submitted piece is your original work and has not been submitted to any other news or magazine publishing houses, **(6)** A color photo of the submitter, **(7)** Copy of your NRC card, **(8)** Contact information (email address, mobile number, etc.).— Editorial Department, The Global New Light of Myanmar news office

21 MAY 2017
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Causes of language extinction in Myanmar and reactivation programmes

By Dr Khine Khine Thinn
National University of Arts and Culture (Yangon)

Naga ethnic people perform the traditional dance as the celebrate their traditional new year. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE humans need to communicate each other, using spoken languages for the purpose of mutual understanding and intent. Accordingly, language is common communication by voice in the distinctively human manner, using arbitrary sounds in conventional ways with conventional meanings to express emotions notions and attitudes, and communicate each other. Language is the most important thing in the real life and mental activities of human beings, and the most useful structure of communication, and the most progressive system.

There are two specific patterns of language: spoken language and written language. I would like to focus on the root causes of extinction of spoken languages of the ethnic peoples of Myanmar. Even though the national races share cultural affinities, there are differences among the ethnic peoples' languages in terms of geographical locations and places. For example, as the ethnic Chin communities inhabiting in mountainous regions of Myanmar constitute 44 tribes, their customs are indistinguishable, but their spoken languages are differential. In the same way, the Bamar people living in different plain regions of Myanmar belong to numerous dialects.

In my attempt to quench my thirst for making research, I have analysed numerous resources for references related to the linguistic books in Myanmar, the documentations on languages of ethnic minorities that are compiled by Professor David Bradley, and relevant websites. I also made an interview with officials working for the Ministry of Social Welfare.

The ethnic peoples in Myanmar

Located in South-East Asia region, Myanmar is bordered on the north by China, on the east by Laos and Thailand, on the south-east by Thailand, on the west and south-west by India and Bangladesh. Myanmar consists of 14 states and regions. There are more than 135 different tribes and ethnic groups in Myanmar. The majority of tribes and ethnic groups of Myanmar are the Kachins, Kayahs, Kayins, Chins, Bamars, Rakhines and Shans.

The Kachins live mainly in Kachin State and widely speak Tibeto-Burman language family. The Kachins comprise 12 sub-groups namely Jingpaw, Lashi (La Chit), Maru (Lawgore), Lisu, Rawang, Zaiwar (Atsi) and so on. The Jinghpaw dialect is mostly spoken language in Kachin State. There are 11 racial dialects such as Jimphaw, La Chit, Lawgore, Lisu, Rawang and Zaiwar. The Lawgore dialect is second most spoken language in Kachin State.

The Kayahs comprising 9 sub-groups of Kayah such as Gheko, Geba, Ka-Yun (Padaung), Pale, Manu Manaw, Yin Baw and Yin Talai, dwell in Kayah State. While he Kayah people speak Kayah language, other tribes speak their own dialects. The Kayahs speak 11 dialects such as Kayah, Ka-Yun, Pale.

Anthropologists found that the Kayins have their origin in Mongolia. The Kayins comprise 11 sub-groups such as Kayin, Kayinpyu, S'gaw, Paku, Pwo.

The Kayin language refers to Sino-Tibetan language family. They can be defined as northern Kayin and southern Kayin based on their geographical places and locations. While the Poe Karen, Sgaw Karen and Paku are called southern Kayin, Bwe and Pa-Le-Chi Kayin are called northern Kayin, and Kayin language family has 8 dialects.

An ethnic Kayan girl plays in Panpet village, Demoso township, Kayah state. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

The Chins, Tibeto-Burman groups, live mostly in Chin State. There are many tribes and ethnicities among the Chin people such as Chin, Meithei (Kathe), Saline, Ka-Lin-Kaw (Lushay), Khami, Awa Khami, Anun, Oo-Pu. Recognizing 53 different ethnic tribes in Chin State, they speak Tibeto-Burman language family.

Generally, Tiddim Chins, Falam Chins, Haka Chins, Mindat Chins, Matupi Chins, Kanpetlet Chins, Paletwa Chins are categorized as lowland tribes. But there are only 44 tribe-like types in terms of their clan-based culture among the Chin people.

According to the documentation of World Council of Indigenous People, the Chin language is classified into 29 dialects.

The Bamars have nine tribes who can be divided into Bamar, Beik, Dawei, Yaw, Yabein, Kadu (Kado), Salon (Salone) and Hpon. The Bamar people live all over the States and Regions. The kadu and Kanan people live in upper Mu River Basin and the Meza Basin of Sagaing Region. The Salon (Salone) people live in an archipelago and islets scattered through Dawei District, Malay Peninsula and archipelago of the southern Thailand.

There is a set of documentation compiled by the World Council of Indigenous People, showing that the Bamars can be classified into 14 dialects.

The Mon people live mostly in Mon State and the Mon group is composed of only one race. The Mons are classified as typical Mongoloid and the Mon language is included in the group of the Mon-Khamer languages in the Austroasiatic stock. The Mon people speak only one language, but their accent is varying as their regions are diverse.

The Rakhines contain specifically seven tribes namely Rakhine, Kamein, Khami, Daingnet, Maramagyi, Mro and Thet, and live in the Rakhine State. The Rakhine language is related to the Lolo-Burmese that is a coherent branch of the Tibeto-Burmese languages.

Chin ethnic women are seen at their traditional home in Chin State. **PHOTO: TIN WIN**

Accents differ among the Rakhine people as they live in ethnically diverse regions all over the State. The ethnic communities like Thet, Daingnet, Mro and Maramagyi have own dialects, that are divergent from the Rakhine language, but are included in the same group.

The Thet people speak the language that is very similar to Bengali language, and believe in Buddhism. The Daingnet people speak the language that resembles Bengali language, and believe in Buddhism. The Kamein people also believe in Buddhism, and speak like the people of the Rakhine people residing in Yanbye Township. Referring to documentation of the World Council of Indigenous People, the Rakhine group encompass seven different dialects.

The research papers on the Shans mention that they were descendants of Tai ethnic group who are members of a Mongoloid group.

The Shan group embodies such ethnic communities as Shan, Yun (Lao), Danu, Palaung, Taungyo, Intha, Pa-O, Khamti Shan, numbering 33 indigenous peoples in total. All together 33 dialects are inclusive in the Shan group.

The Shans are members of the Tai-Kadai language family, and have close relationship with the Thai language. In 1969, Mr. Brown, the researcher on Shan literature, found that the Shan-related dialects can be categorized into three groups as dialects of eastern, southern and northern ones.

While the language that the people of eastern Shan State use is similar to that of the northern Thailand, the people of southern Shan use some words of Bamar in spoken language. In the same way, the northern Shan language is influenced by Chinese.

Ethnic languages experiencing critical danger of extinction

According to findings of the UNESCO, out of 113 languages, 28 are experiencing critical danger of extinction. They are Akeu, Amok, Angku, Anung, Bisu, chawte (Chothe), Danaw, En, Ganan, Hpun, Kadu, Laomian, malin, mok, Moklen, Mon, mru, Palaung, Pale, Pyu, Riang, Ruman, Sak, Tailoi, Taman, Taruang, Wa and Yaw. It is found that Akeu language, Bisu language, Chothe lanauage, Laomain language, moklen language and Yaw language are definitely endangered and Anung lanauage, Mru language, Ganan language, Kadu language, Palaung language, Pale language, Rumai language, Wa language are severely endangered. According to UNESCO's surveys, Hpun, Malin, Phu, Taman are facing danger of extinction on account of small population and rare use by the ethnic people.

The cause for extinction of ethnic languages

In Myanmar, Myanmar language is the official language of the country and 69 per cent of the population use Myanmar language as their language. According to surveys conducted in 1983, major languages used in Myanmar include Myanmar (69%), Shan language (8.5%), Kayin language (6.2%), Rakhine language (4.5%), Mon language (2.4 %), Chin language (2.2%) and Kachin language (1.4%).

The cause of the extinction of ethnic languages in Myanmar includes the ban on ethnic languages in basic education schools since 1962. When Myanmar regained independence from the British, Myanmar language was designated as the official language of the country. In other countries, more than one ethnic language is designated as the official language. For instance, there are 19 official languages in India and there are 11 official languages in Africa. When a language has become an official language of a country, it is used in administration, education and other various sectors and it is also preserved. In the past, other ethnic languages were allowed to be used in schools. In 1962 when General Ne Win took over the power, he prohibited use of the other ethnic languages at schools with the excuse that other languages would discourage the learning of subjects like sciences and mathematics. This is the reason why ethnic languages have become extinct.

Chin ethnic woman. **PHOTO: THAR NYAN**

In addition, there are also other factors that hinder use of ethnic languages at schools. There are 8 major ethnic languages including Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Bamar, Mon, Rakhine and Shan. In Kachin ethnic group, there are twelve major languages including Jaingphaw, Lacheik, Lawwaw, Lisu and Rawan. They are using 11 different ethnic languages and there are also different ethnic languages in other ethnic groups, too. As a result, it is difficult to use all ethnic languages at schools. The inconvenient factors include lack of written language, building up of vocabulary suitable to be used at schools, tests and teaching materials and insufficiency of teachers and unwillingness of the students and their parents to study a different tongue. For these reasons, ethnic language are not used in schools.

As Section 22 (A) Basic Principles of the Union of the State Constitution approved in 2008 promulgates that The Union shall assist :(a)to develop language, literature, fine arts and culture of the National races, it can be assumed that the Union will help for the development of ethnic languages. However, it is stated in the Section 450 of General Provisions of the constitution that Myanmar language is the official language. The constitution fails to mention that ethnic languages will be used as official languages in respective states. If a language is not recognized as an official language, there is little chance to use the language and it is difficult for the language to survive in the long run. Therefore, it can be said that the constitution of Myanmar still lack the provisions to promote ethnic languages.

Moreover, another cause for the extinction of ethnic languages is the low population of the language users and less chance to meet the people from the same ethnic group as they live in different parts of the country. As their population is low, they feel ashamed to speak their own language and they have to use another language as their everyday language while their own ethnic language does not have alphabets. For instance, Phon ethnic group, which had a population of about 700 in 1958, had only about tens in the year 2000. Among them, only six people can speak their own language, according to Dr Tun Aung Kyaw, who compiled a thesis on Phon ethnic group. It can be said that the causes of the extinction of the Phon language include having to use Shan language as lingua franca in Shan State, low population, feeling ashamed to use their own language, forgetting their language because it is not their daily language and lacking alphabets for a written language.

Prevention of extinction of ethnic languages

According to the UNESCO 2003 report, about 6,000 to 7,000 languages are spoken across the world and about half of them are facing extinction. In Myanmar, about 20 ethnic languages are facing distinction and Phon, Malin, Phyu and Kaman languages have already been extinct, according to the UNESCO report titled 2009 World's Languages in Danger of Map Ethnologues.

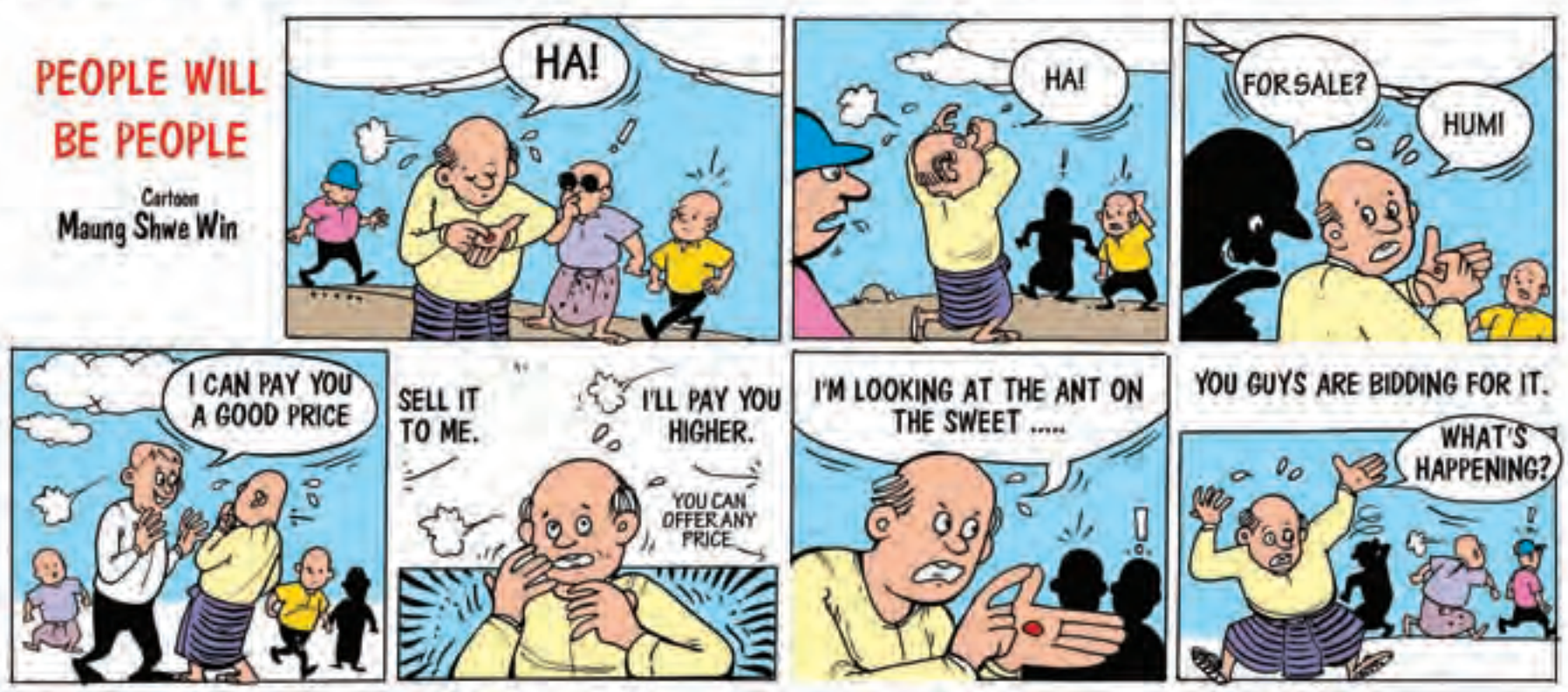
Therefore, it is necessary to reconsider the education policies in the light of the survival of ethnic languages. In my opinion, multilingual education should be adopted in Myanmar.

It is advisable that students in Myanmar be taught in native language, regional languages or national language and international languages.

At government schools, mother tongue of the nation races and the official language should be used. This will enable students to be well verse in their mother tongue as well as the official language as well as to grasp the very essence of the subjects they are studying. In addition to these benefits, this will be able to prevent the extinction of the ethnic languages. However, consensus of all ethnic groups is important to choose the medium of instruction with complete fairness as there are many different ethnic languages in Myanmar. Even if a language has been chosen as the medium of instruction, it is necessary to prevent the other ethnic languages from extinction. Kadu, Kanan and the languages that do not have alphabets should be preserved as language banks by studying them linguistically and grammatically. It is also a way of preserving the ethnic languages from extinction.

The Government should preserve the languages of ethnic people in accordance with the section 22 (a) of the constitution.

SUNDAY COMICS



Interview with Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Hong Liang

A wide-ranging interview with the Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Hong Liang by the Global New Light of Myanmar and MITV touched upon democratic and economic reform, peace process and bilateral relations between Myanmar and China.

Chinese Ambassador Mr. Hong Liang speaks during the interview at his residence in Yangon. **PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE**

Q: I would like to know your impression, according to your diplomatic career and international experience, on Myanmar's transition to democracy and the tangible results of this process.

A: Myanmar started the democratization process in 2010. Actually before that, a lot of preparation work had been done. We were very glad to see in the year 2015 the general election was quite successful. In the year 2016, we also witnessed a very peaceful and smooth transition of power from the former administration to the current administration. We are glad to see Myanmar right now is undergoing domestic reform and opening up to the world.

This is a great achievement for the democratization process for Myanmar, I think, the credit should firstly be given to the Myanmar people, and the contributions by the major political parties including the Tatmataw, are also very critical to the success of the transition. As we know, democracy means to have a government by the people, of the people and for the people, which is the common sense and common value for all the nations. However for a particular country, it has its own particular national conditions. Every country should pursue its own democratization process in line with its own national conditions. There is no exception, as you know, for all the countries on that process. We hope Myanmar will achieve success in searching for its own democratization process in line with Myanmar's own national condition.

To realize national reconciliation is the most important task in Myanmar democratization process. In my view, national reconciliation in Myanmar consists of two parts:

The first part is the reconciliation among major political parties including Tatmadaw. The second part is the reconciliation among the ethnic armed groups, the government and the Tatmataw. The two reconciliations are very essential for the success of the national reconciliation in Myanmar. We are very glad to see that the NLD Government is taking a quite inclusive approach to push forward the national reconciliation, which is widely applauded by the Myanmar people and the international community.

We are aware that in the course of the democratization process, Myanmar is still facing a lot of challenges and difficulties. But we believe that there is a will there is a way. China as a close neighbor to Myanmar, we will play our role to help Myanmar have a success.

> Friendship, especially people to people friendship, is very important for our future cooperation, which is fundamental ground for our cooperation.

Q: Along the transition to democracy, you mentioned about Myanmar's peace process, from war to peace, and also China's commitment to peace process. Could you elaborate more on China's support for Myanmar peace process?

A: Myanmar is facing two major issues: one is peace, another is development of its economy. In the region of conflicts, peace is the priority concern of the local people; But for other areas, economic development is the major concern of that part of the people. In my view, peace process and economic development are equally important for Myanmar. Without peace, development will lose its ground; Without development, peace will not be sustainable. So peace and development should walk together hand in hand and reinforce each other. Peace process in Myanmar have already achieved some progress, with 8 Ethnic Armed Groups (EAG) having already signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). It is our expectation in the near future more EAGs will sign the NCA, and we are also glad to see the First 21st Century Panlong Peace Conference held last year was a success. We expect the Second 21st Century Panlong Peace Conference will be another success.

Peace process is actually a process of the parties concerned building up mutual understanding and mutual trust. It is not simply an issue of laying down the weapons or giving up confrontation. As H.E State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said very clearly, when we are at the peace process, everyone needs to consider what you can give rather than what you can take. That means to give is more important than to take. I think this idea is very important for us to push forward the peace process. That means when we are taking account of our own concerns, we have to take account of others' concerns. We should accommodate each other. Only in this way, can we build up mutual understanding, mutual trust and mutual confidence, and then peace will be on the way approaching us.

Inclusiveness is very critical to the success of the peace process, no party should be neglected or left out in this reconciliation course. Dialogue in whatever form is the first step to enhance mutual understanding and mutual trust. Especially for those non-signatories of NCA, dialogue is more important.

We don't think it is realistic to put preconditions for dialogue. Dialogue should not be sabotaged by any preconditions. As for those signatories of NCA, it is imperative for the local people to see the lowering fruits of the peace process, they wish to benefit from that process, improvement of their livelihood and economic development, which is the work for government to do in the future. The economic development in the areas of the NCA signatories, will set a good example for the non-signatories, and encourage them to give a positive consideration to join in the NCA.

Q: Could you talk about the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation recently held in Beijing? What is your prospects for the future China-Myanmar cooperation?

A: The BRF was very successful. We really appreciate the support from the government of Myanmar, especially from H.E State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who attended the Forum and had very good talks with Chinese leaders H.E.President Xi Jinping and H.E.Premier Li Keqiang. As H.E.President Xi Jinping said very clearly that the Belt and Road firstly should be the road for peace and then road for prosperity. I think we share many common views on how we cooperate on the Belt and Road Initiative. I would like to say more words about peace. Peace process is not just a grave concern of Myanmar but also a grave concern of China, because in the past years, China suffered a lot from the conflicts in the northern part of Myanmar. The conflicts in the Northern part of Myanmar impose serious threat to the peace and stability in China-Myanmar border areas. I think you have noticed a lot of reports that when the conflicts broke out bullets and shells flying from the Myanmar side to the Chinese side on many occasions. Many Chinese lost their lives or were injured. We are very concerned about that. So the peace process is not just at the price for Myanmar people, but also at the price for Chinese people.

When the conflicts came out, a lot of Myanmar people fled to the Chinese side. But anyway, we have given them a very good treatment, because they are our Paukphaw brothers. We gave them a very good arrangement for resettlements.

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Chinese Government supports the Myanmar Government in pushing forward the peace process in an inclusive manner, and we expect that the peace could be realized in the spirit of Panglong Conference. In our view, the spirit of the Panglong conference means the peace process can only be achieved through negotiations in a peaceful way, rather than by force or by any forms of confrontation, and we hope that the Ethnic Armed Groups' requests should be sensible and their sensible requests should be given due consideration and respect.

According to the need of the Myanmar side, the Chinese Government has appointed a special envoy to help Myanmar Government, to facilitate and promote the dialogue among the EAGs, the Myanmar Government and the Tatmadaw.

In the meantime, Chinese Government and Myanmar Government have initiated a new mechanism i.e. 2+2 High-Level Consultation which is headed by the senior representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the military of our two countries. We already have two rounds of effective consultations. This mechanism is mainly focusing on maintaining the peace and stability of our border and also to promote the cooperation between Chinese side and Myanmar side in Myanmar peace process, especially for the northern part of Myanmar.

Chinese Government is working very hard with relevant parties on the resumption of talks between the EAGs in the northern part of Myanmar and the Myanmar Government and Tatmadaw. Also we are urging the EAGs in the north to actively and positively participate in the peace process, and we also suggested them to give a consideration to sign the NCA at an early date. In the meantime, the Chinese Government also suggested to the Myanmar Government and Tatmadaw to take more flexible approach in addressing the concerns of relevant EAGs in the north, trying your best to persuade the EAGs to give positive consideration on signing NCA.

At the present stage, the urgent task for Chinese Government is to prevent the conflict in China-Myanmar border areas. In this regard, the Chinese side is keeping close communication with relevant parties, including EAGs and also the Tatmadaw, we hope them exercise restraint. Meanwhile, China has to keep the military presence along our border just in case of any emergency.

Q: Could you tell me plans to strengthening economic cooperation between our two countries? I also would like to know about the cooperation agreements signed during BRF.

A: Five agreements have been signed between our two countries in BRF, namely MOU on Cooperation within the Framework of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative, MOU on Health Cooperation, MOU on the Establishment of China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zone, MOU on Cooperation in Post-quake Restoration and Protection of Historic Monuments of Bagan, and Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation by which China will give a new batch of grant to Myanmar. These agreements are very important for our future cooperation, covering various areas.

Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping as they meet at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China, May 16, 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Friendship, especially people to people friendship, is very important for our future cooperation, which is fundamental ground for our cooperation. As H.E State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said, Myanmar and China are close neighbors, we cannot move away from each other and have to be good friends. China and Myanmar share a very long border and a lot of ethnic groups living across the border, who are brothers and sisters. That's why we call each other Paukphaw. This is a very important common asset between China and Myanmar. We have to cherish it and hold it very dearly in our hearts and pass it on to the following generations to come. Last year, the Chinese Embassy together with the local communities in Myanmar celebrated the first Paukphaw Friendship Day in Yangon on June 8th which is the date for establishment of our diplomatic relations. Next month, we will celebrate the second China-Myanmar Paukphaw Friendship Day in Yangon. We hope this event will continue in the future.

> Several key areas deserve our attention for China to help Myanmar achieve its economic development, such as agriculture and rural development, industrialization and urbanization in Myanmar.

In order to further enhance our people to people friendship, China-Myanmar cooperation should focus on the people's interests. China-Myanmar cooperation should be people's interest oriented. We have to meet the demand of the Myanmar people, such as education and training, public health, poverty reduction and eradication, youth and cultural exchange programs, disaster prevention and relief, environment protection, and of course the peace process.

Chinese Government is encouraging Chinese companies in Myanmar to actively deliver more social responsibilities. We think they have to be part of Myanmar community, living in harmony with local community to get understanding and support of the local people. More and more Chinese companies are very keen on delivering their social responsibilities. I still remember in the year 2015 when I started portfolio as ambassador here, serious floods hit Myanmar and a lot of Chinese companies extended their helping hands to the local communities, which were warmly received by the local people. We hope in the future more such kind of activities will be delivered. The Chinese companies investing in Myanmar are not only contributing to economic development, but also social development of Myanmar.

Another important sector for our friendship is Buddism. Buddism is a very important ingredient to Myanmar culture and Chinese culture. The Budda tooth relics visited Myanmar four times. The exchange programs in the area of Buddism is very important to strengthen our people to people understanding and friendship. Our two governments have agreed to cooperate on restoration and repairing of pagodas in Bagan, which is very significant and will further enhance friendship between our two peoples.

The role played by the Media is also critical to the friendship between our two peoples. Myanmar now is a very open society, with a lot of different voices. We hope that as a responsible media, we should give the right information and correct view to the people, to help them have a good understanding of our relations and friendship. This is very essential for a smooth development of our bilateral relations.

Q: What is your additional thoughts for further cooperation of bilateral relations between Myanmar and China?

A: Just now, we talked about Myanmar's economic development and how China could help the Myanmar economic development. I think we can do a lot in the future, because Myanmar is still a developing country. Economic development is the key to address those fundamental issues in Myanmar. It will not only improve the welfare of the people, but also it will make a great contribution to facilitate the peace process in Myanmar. As I say peace and development could reinforce each other, it could help each other.

China right now is the largest trading partner for Myanmar, and also the largest foreign investor in Myanmar. China is very keen in helping Myanmar develop its economy and actually we do have the resources, we do have the capacity to help Myanmar develop its economy. As you know, China right now is the second largest economy in the World and is still maintaining a quite fast growth. Myanmar is a close neighbor to China. We think that Myanmar should make full advantage of the geographical proximity with China, to benefit from the China's development, to share our developments and achievements. This is the opportunity for Myanmar which should not be missed. Now China and Myanmar will work together on the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative. As I said the Belt and Road firstly should be road for peace, and secondly it should be for common development and regional prosperity. This is another opportunity for Myanmar's economic development.

Several key areas deserve our attention for China to help Myanmar achieve its economic development, such as agriculture and rural development, industrialization and urbanization in Myanmar, transportation and logistics system, energy and electricity generation, special economic zones in Myanmar, especially Kyauk-phyu SEZ, which we will work closely with Myanmar, and China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zone, which we have already signed the MOU during BRF.

In the course of helping Myanmar develop its economy, the Chinese government encourages Chinese companies to work together with the local companies and other international companies investing here in Myanmar, because we hope that Chinese companies, Myanmar companies and other international companies could cooperate with each other in search for a win-win situation. All participants in Myanmar development should benefit from each other. Only in this way, we can realize sustainable development of Myanmar economy and also sustainable development of Chinese companies here in Myanmar.—GNLM ■