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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Thursday, 22 March 2018



Vice President U Myint Swe is welcomed back at Yangon International Airport yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Vice President U Myint Swe returns from Morocco

VICE President U Myint Swe and delegation who attended the Crans Montana Forum on Africa and South-South Cooperation in Morocco departed from Casablanca city in Morocco on 20 March, 2018.

Vice President U Myint Swe and delegation were seen off by State Administer H.E Mr.Zitouni, Myanmar Ambassador to Morocco U Myint Lwin and officials at Mohammed V International Airport. The delegation led by

Vice President U Myint Swe arrived in Yangon yesterday afternoon and they were welcomed by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Yangon Mayor U Maung Maung Soe and other officials concerned.—MNA ■

President U Htin Kyaw resigns from his post

The Office of the President issued an announcement dated 21 March. Following is the announcement.

**Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Office of the President
Announcement 1/2018**

5th Waxing of Tagu, 1379 ME
21st March, 2018

1. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Htin Kyaw has resigned from his post as he wants to take a rest from his current duties with effect from 21 March 2018.
2. The position will be filled within seven days in accordance with Subsection (b), Section (73) of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint resigns

DEPUTY Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw U T Khun Myat confirmed that Speaker U Win Myint had resigned during yesterday's parliamentary session in Nay Pyi Taw.

U Win Myint was elected as a legislator from Patheingyi Constituency in the 2012 by-elections. He also was elected as a lawmaker in the 2015 General Elections representing Yangon Region's Tamu Constituency.

Deputy Speaker U T Khun Myat said yesterday that a new Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker will be elected in accordance with rules



and regulations.

U Win Myint, 66, is considered to be one of the candidates for the presidency, which was vacated by U Htin Kyaw for health reasons.

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'BEST BANK IN MYANMAR'

Awarded by FinanceAsia 2017

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint resigns

FROM PAGE-1

In other legislative business in yesterday's hluttaw session, MP U Sai Ba Thein of Langkho Constituency asked the Ministry of Defence if it has a plan to return the confiscated land in Langkho Township to owners.

Myawady Trading Ltd of the Ministry of Defence did not confiscate the land, but bought the land from the State while the land were used by the then Ministry of Industry-1 for plantation in the township, according to Deputy Minister for Defence Rear-Admiral Myint Nwe.

The payment of Ks16.8 million for more than 16 acres of land were settled with the then Ministry of Industry-1.

Therefore, the Ministry of Defence has no plan to abandon the land, said Rear-Admiral Myint Nwe.

In the meeting, Daw Khin

Hnin Thit of the Padaung Constituency asked the Ministry of Industry if it has a plan to resume operation of the No. 1 Steel Factory (Myingyan) which is currently suspended.

In reply to the question, Union Minister for Industry U Khin Maung Cho said the ministry

has drawn the Master Plan for the project, saying that the ministry will form the Special Task Force Team to operate the factory.

"Currently, the State is reviewing the project," said the Union Minister.—Myo Thu Hein(MNA) ■

Amyotha Hluttaw forms Construction, Industry, Electricity and Energy Committee



U Min Oo. PHOTO: MNA



U Myo Win. PHOTO: MNA



U Kyaw Lin. PHOTO: MNA



U Thein Lwin. PHOTO: MNA

THE Amyotha Hluttaw agreed yesterday on the formation, rights and duties of the Committee on Construction, Industry, Electricity and Energy, which will review the various sectors.

The committee, headed by MP U Saw Moe Myint (a) Samuel of Kayin State Constituency (1), was formed with 15 members.

According to the explanation provided by U Min Oo, member of the Amyotha Hluttaw Rights Committee, at the meeting, the Committee on Construction, Industry, Electricity and Energy will review and give suggestions for improving the construction sector, turning the country into an agro-based industrial nation,

promoting agro-based industries, boosting agro-based products and promoting the production of import-substitute products and exports, while encouraging small and medium enterprises and heavy industries.

In the electricity sector, the committee will explore ways to produce sufficient electricity from renewable energy in the country, as part of the efforts to supply electricity to the whole country, said U Min Oo.

In the energy sector, the committee will give priority to domestic sufficiency, making the best use of oil and natural gas to bring benefits to the people and the local people in areas where

natural resources are found, he added.

"The committee can hold meetings with responsible persons in the ministries and invite non-governmental organisations to hold meetings with them. Besides this, the committee is obliged to seek permission from the speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw, through the chairman of the committee, to visit various areas for their work," said U Min Oo.

U Mya Min Swe of the Magway region constituency No (9), was announced as the secretary of the committee, while the members are U Naing Ko Ko of Kachin State constituency (12), U Phayay Yae (a) U Myint Than Tun

of Kayah State constituency (1), U Sai Than Naing of Kayin State constituency (5), U Ngun Hay of Chin State Constituency (1), U Ko Ko Naing of Sagaing region constituency (8), U Zaw Hein of Taninthayi region constituency 7, U Maung Maung Swe of Mandalay region constituency (9), U Soe Thiha (a) Maung Tu of Mon State Constituency (10), U Kyaw Kyaw Win of Rakhine State Constituency (8), U Ye Myint Soe of Yangon region constituency (7), U Mong Ohn Khaing of Shan State constituency (10), U Soe Moe of the Ayeyawady region constituency (1) and Col Zaw Lwin, representative of the Tatmadaw.—Aye Aye Thant (MNA) ■

Kanan ethnic minority celebrate golden jubilee party

A traditional festival marking the 50th anniversary for the Kanan ethnic minority was celebrated in Hawyaw Village, Bamauk Township in Sagaing Region yesterday.

At the ceremony, Chief Minister of Sagaing Region Dr. Myint Naing and the Kanan community leader U Tun Wai gave speeches before Kanan Area Administrator U San Shwe Myint spoke words of thanks. Afterwards, the regional cabinet members led by the chief minister presented Ks. 10 million for commemorating the golden jubilee event. Local cultural troupes performed entertainment to the audience. Daw Tint Tint, wife of the Chief Minister awarded cash to cultural troupe members. The Chief Minister and party presented certificates of honour to the donors and visited Kanan traditional cultural booths. The chief minister also held a meeting with the village administrator and staff from the Ministry of Education at a monastery in the village.—Ko Min ■

MoU signed by Nippon Foundation and education department of Border Affairs Ministry

THE Department of Education and Training of the Ministry of Border Affairs signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) yesterday morning at the meeting hall of the Ministry.

Union Minister Lt-Gen Ye Aung delivered an opening speech and Executive Director

of Nippon Foundation Mr. Yuji Mori explained the MoU.

Director-General U Thein Htay Oo from the Department of Education and Training of the Ministry of Border Affairs and Executive Director of the Nippon Foundation Mr. Yuji Mori signed the MoU.

The foundation and the de-

partment began a working relationship when a five-year term of capacity development courses for the civil servants in the Ministry started in 2013.

Now the foundation has an agreement to overtake launching the courses in 2018-2020 with the use of \$600,000 in funding.—Myanmar News Agency ■



The signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Education and Training Department under the Ministry of Border Affairs and The Nippon Foundation of Japan on a staff training programme being held. PHOTO: MNA

Press Release on Conclusion of the Official Visit of the State Counsellor to the Commonwealth of Australia and her attendance to the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit

Myanmar delegation led by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has attended the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit held in Sydney on 17 - 18 March 2018 and paid an official visit to the Commonwealth of Australia on 19-20 March at the invitation of the Hon Malcolm Turnbull, Prime Minister of Australia.

The State Counsellor, together with other ASEAN leaders, attended the related events of ASEAN-Australia Special Summit, ASEAN-Australia Special Summit's Plenary Meeting and Leaders' Retreat held from 17 to 18 March 2018.

The State Counsellor apprised the meetings on the complexities of Myanmar's democratic transition, peace and national reconciliation as well as challenges including the situation in Rakhine State, and stressed the need to help Myanmar to help itself in resolving these challenges, especially in strengthening human resource development.

The State Counsellor also emphasized that with a view to facilitate ASEAN integration, it is important not only to narrow the development gap among member States, but also to bridge the gap in their

perceptions on the challenges. She also stressed the need for peace makers to be first at peace with themselves and to cope with the emotion of hate, anger and fear and urged that in countering terrorism, member States need to address those negative emotions which create divisions between different communities. She also highlighted the need to maintain ASEAN's unity, consensus approach and mutual respect among member States.

During the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit, an MOU on Cooperation to Counter International Terrorism was signed between ASEAN and Australia, as well as a Sydney Declaration was adopted outlining to promote cooperation between ASEAN and Australia under 3 pillars such as Regional Security, Future Prosperity and People.

In the evening of 18 March, State Counsellor and Party left Sydney to Canberra by air to pay an official visit to Australia at the invitation of the Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, Prime Minister of Australia.

On 19 March, State Counsellor attended the welcoming Ceremony by the Hon Malcolm Turnbull, Prime Minister of Australia and held

the bilateral talks with Prime Minister the Hon Malcolm Turnbull. During the meeting, the two sides discussed in further promoting bilateral relations, trade and investment, and the continued provision of assistance to Myanmar in capacity building projects including in education sector and in resolving the situation in Rakhine State. State Counsellor also received Mr. Bill Shorten, Leader of the Australian Labour Party, and planted a tree at the National Arboretum in commemoration of her official visit to Australia. In the afternoon, State Counsellor met with Myanmar Community in Australia at Albert Hall.

The State Counsellor successfully attended all major official functions during the official visit. Some of the scheduled appointments, however, have to be cancelled as it is necessary for the State Counsellor to take rest for her return trip to Myanmar as she suffered acutely from motion sickness due to long air journey and boat trip.

The State Counsellor and Party arrived back to Nay Pyi Taw by air in the evening of 20 March 2018.—Ministry of Foreign Affairs ■

VP U Henry Van Thio attends Myanmar Rubber Forum 2018

VICE President U Henry Van Thio attended the Myanmar Rubber Forum 2018 held by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation at Hotel Max in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the opening ceremony, the Vice President delivered a speech elaborating the aim of the rubber forum.

The government and the private sector must cooperate to develop the rubber sector and work together with foreign businesses, as well, he said. A strategic plan must be in place to produce natural rubber and develop the midstream (logistics) and downstream (distribution and selling) sectors of the rubber industry, as well as encourage more research on natural rubber, he stated.

The rubber industry is rated second among the most important industries in the world after the iron and steel industry, he noted. Rubber products are essential components in the production process at factories, especially in the production of automobile tyres. Rubber plants are top-buyer raw materials for factories in Myanmar and a commodity that generates high income through exports, he said.

The Vice President said the government was supporting the development of the rubber indus-



Vice President U Henry Van Thio delivers the speech at the Myanmar Rubber Forum 2018 in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

try to increase production and exports. Associations concerned with the rubber industry should be strengthened and collaboration with farmers and experts increased to further develop the rubber industry, he stated. The quality and production rate of Myanmar's rubber industry is low compared with other producers such as Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Viet Nam. Therefore, Myanmar rubber does not fetch a good price in the international market. To remedy this situation, stakeholders must increase their capacity building, adopt effective technologies from other countries and share research materials and areas of

expertise. He said the government would help develop the rubber industry to create more job opportunities and prevent local talent and workforce from migrating to foreign job markets. The forum will be a platform for all stakeholders to discuss and find solutions to problems and areas of development in the industry, he noted.

Dr. Aung Thu said the development efforts would be focused on increasing the per acre production in plantations, improve the quality of rubber to meet international standards, and produce more end-products and furniture from rubber tree wood.

Following this, the participants viewed a video on the history of Myanmar's rubber industry. Next, Dr. Yu Sein, Chairperson of Myanmar Rubber Planters and Producers Association (MRPPA), gave a presentation on the differences between natural rubber and rubber from plantations in the Taninthayi region, as well as the difficulties and shortcomings of the industry.

Next, World Wildlife Foundation-Myanmar Country Director Dr. A. Christy Williams talked about sustainable rubber plantations, followed by Centre for Economic and Social Development Executive Director Dr. Zaw Oo providing an explanation on

Myanmar's rubber value.

After the opening ceremony, VP U Henry Van Thio took a commemorative photograph with the participants, before viewing the exhibits of rubber products and furniture displayed by the rubber companies at the hotel.

The second part of the forum continued in the afternoon, where the participants discussed developing the production of natural rubber, forming a lasting network to work on the development continuously, intensifying the research on rubber, as well as the workings and accomplishments of MRPPA, the rubber market in Mon State, training of skilled workers, establishment of a rubber plantation zone, and the development of the rubber sector in the Ayeyawady region.

Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr. Aung Thu, Union Minister for Commerce Dr. Than Myint, chairpersons of the Hluttaw committees, the Hluttaw representatives, state and regional ministers, departmental heads, representatives from the MRPPA, businesspersons, local and foreign experts, and other officials attended the forum.

The Myanmar Rubber Forum 2018 will continue today at Hotel Max.—Myanmar News Agency ■

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The MV Silver Shadow cruise ship docks at Myanmar Integrated Port Limited (MIPL), Thilawa, in Yangon. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

Foreign cruise ships dock in Myanmar

A number of foreign cruise ships now dock in Myanmar, boosting the Myanmar tourism industry, according to the hotels and tourism industry.

A total of 12 foreign cruise ships have either docked or will dock at Yangon jetty from January to April 2018. The 12 foreign cruise ships include seven US cruise liners, two German cruise liners, one British cruise liner and two Japan cruise liners.

The MV Silver Shadow cruise ship, with more than 300 passengers from the United

States, arrived at Myanmar Integrated Port Limited (MIPL), Thilawa, in Yangon to dock here from 18 to 20 March. The MV Black Watch cruise ship, with 475 passengers, most of them British, will arrive at MIPL in Yangon from 20 to 22 March, while the MV Amadea cruise ship, with more than 400 passengers, most of them German, will arrive at MIPL from 22 to 24 March, said an official from Myanmar Voyages Tourism Company.

Through arrangement with Myanmar Voyages Tour-

ism Company, ships from the Japan-based MV Ocean cruise line, the US Crystal cruise line and the MV Azamara Journey cruise line will also dock in Myanmar in April.

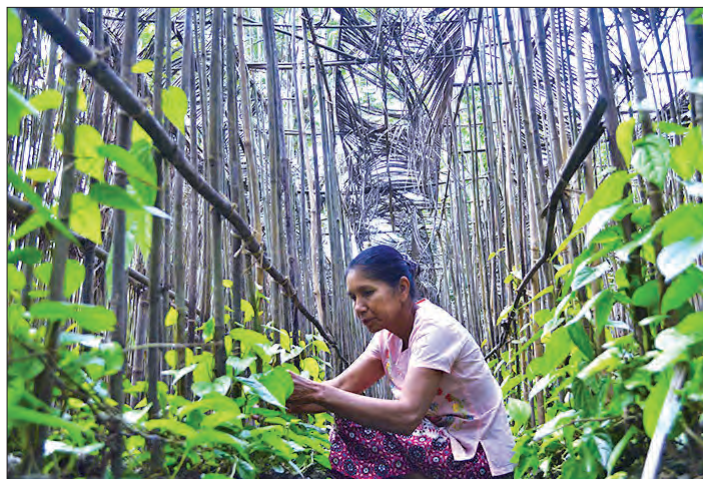
The number of tourists arriving in Myanmar is likely to decline 25 per cent in 2018, owing to the impact of foreign media. However, foreign cruise ships can help promote the Myanmar tourism industry, said U Thet Lwin Toe, chairman of the Myanmar Tourism Entrepreneurs Association.—GNLM ■

Poor technology affects betel farming

BETEL farmers have incurred heavy losses this season due to the use of poor technology and lack of adequate knowledge, according to a report in Myanmar Alinn yesterday.

To cultivate on farms damaged by vermin and erratic weather, soil testing kits and equipment are a must to test soil classification, soil pH and water. Owing to high costs, many farmers do not follow the proper procedure, resulting in low yield and inferior betel quality, said a betel leaf grower from Pantanaw Township.

It costs between Ks100,000 to Ks1 million to use the soil



A woman nurtures betel plants at her farm in Bogalay, Ayeyawady Region. **PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE**

testing kits and equipment, depending on the quality. However, soil testing service is a must for betel farmers.

Soil testing kits can be used for gardening too. Salinity and sodicity play a crucial role in determining the fruit and vegetable quality and production. For this, moderate and reasonable levels

of salinity and sodicity are essential.

For Myanmar's betel leaves to get a strong market share in the export market, quality production throughout the year, which is free from chemical residues, as well as systematic farming methods, are needed.—Myat Thu (AMIA) ■

Three new turtle species emerge in Myanmar

SCIENTISTS attending the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List 2018 meeting have assigned three new turtle species to Myanmar.

Previously, only eight species of turtles and tortoises were known to be endemic to Myanmar. However, now, there are 11 turtle and tortoise species, which can only be found in Myanmar.

The three new turtle species are the Myanmar soft-shell turtle, the Myanmar leaf turtle and the Myanmar peacock soft-shell turtle.

Some 90 species of turtles and tortoises were reviewed during the IUCN Red List meeting. Previously, the soft-shell turtles found in South East Asia were part of a single species, but following the meeting, soft-shell turtles exclusive to Myanmar were categorised separately.

The Myanmar box turtle and Myanmar black turtle, which were defined as a sub-species of the eight species, have been clubbed as one species at this meeting.

The 11 species of turtles and tortoises, which are endemic to Myanmar, include a tortoise species, four soft-shell turtle species and the remaining that live on land and in sea.

The 11 endangered species of turtles and tortoises in Myanmar are: Myanmar soft-shell turtle, Myanmar leaf turtle, Myanmar peacock soft-shell turtle, Myanmar roofed turtle, Myanmar narrow headed soft-shell turtles, Myanmar star tortoise, Myanmar flap shell turtle, Myanmar eyed turtle, Arakan forest turtle, Myanmar black turtle and Myanmar box turtle.

Turtles and tortoises that live only in Myanmar are staring at possible extinction. Therefore, the Forest Department conducted a Myanmar turtles conservation programme, in cooperation with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA).—GNLM ■

MRF urges government to reopen old ports to reduce transaction costs

THE Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF) has requested the government to reopen old ports, in a bid to reduce transaction costs, as high charges at Yangon International Port are forcing international traders to move to other countries, according to a recent report in the Myanmar Alinn.

"The port charges are high, and we need immediate action to compete with other countries in a highly competitive market," said U Ye Min Aung, general secretary of MRF.

The MRF has submitted the request to reopen the Mawlamyine, Patheingyi, Sittway and Dawei ports, which were trading hubs during the colonial-era. Currently, the general port charges have increased by some US\$30, compared with India, Thailand, Viet Nam and Pakistan, forcing international buyers to move to foreign markets.

From April 2017 to early February 2018, some 3 million tonnes of rice and broken rice, worth \$948 million, were exported to foreign trade partners. Also, 4 million tonnes of rice are expected to be shipped by 2020. Therefore, the MRF wants more



Sittway port in Rakhine State. PHOTO: MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

sea ports and waterways to be developed.

To reuse old ports, preparedness is needed to improve the waterways, port facilities and the export/import process, U Win Khant, Permanent Secretary of the Transportation and Communications Ministry, told Myanmar Alinn.

Earlier, Myanmar's rice was exported to 40 countries. The rice export market has now penetrated some 62 countries, including China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Belgium and Poland.

Last month, the export price of rice was between \$356 to \$430 per tonne, depending on its quality. Some rice varieties bring in more profits through

the sea trade, while others fetch a higher price through the border trade, according to rice merchants.

The main challenges in the rice industry are the availability of pedigree seeds, high input costs, high production costs, the lack of technology, high transaction costs and logistics problems, said U Mann Kyaw Win, Deputy Chairman of MRF.

Rice is integral to Myanmar's agricultural products. Some 75 per cent of the production is used for domestic consumption, while the remaining is exported. Last fiscal year, some 1.7 million tonnes of rice and broken rice, worth \$554 million, were exported.—Phyo Lwin Aung (AMIA) ■

YSX to hold educational talk, panel discussion

By May Thet Hnin

THE Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) will celebrate its second anniversary on 25 March at the YSX office, during which it will hold an educational talk and a panel discussion.

At the ceremony, the Planning and Finance Deputy Minister, Myanmar Loan Implementation Sub-committee Chairman U Maung Maung Win and YSX Managing Director U Yin Myo Zaw will deliver the opening speeches.

Author and financial advisor U Kyaw Myo Tun will give an educational talk on the topic "Capital Market Development in Frontier Economies and Equity Investment", while the YSX's listed company officials will mod-

erate the panel discussion on the topic "Future Outline of Listed Companies", said U Thet Htun Oo, executive senior manager of YSX.

Moreover, the securities company will open the securities account between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. for those who want to invest in stock and share trading for the first time. Discussions will also be held on the stock-share trading issue.

Those interested in attending the ceremony have to register by calling the following numbers: 01-371274, 07-371276 and 09442739797.

Currently, there are more than 100,000 shareholders, but only 33,000 are listed. Only 300 to 500 participate in trading each day, said U Thet Htun Oo. ■

Thilawa SEZ attracts \$20 million more than last year

FOREIGN investments worth some US\$400 million flowed into the Thilawa Special Economic Zone prior to the end of this fiscal year, according to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.

This figure is up by \$20 million compared with last year. Japan, Singapore, Thailand, South Korea, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands were the largest investors.

The manufacturing sector absorbed most of the foreign

direct investments (FDI), accounting for 73 per cent of the total FDI in the zone. Capital was also injected into the trading, logistics, service, real estate and hotel sectors. Japan invested the highest in Thilawa SEZ, followed by Thailand.

Of the 2,400 hectares of land allotted to Thilawa SEZ, 400 hectares have been demarcated for Zone A. The construction work in Zone A has been completed and construction in Zone B on 101 hectares has begun.—Ko Htet ■

Myanmar, Japan promote cooperation in SME development

A Myanmar-Japan SME Seminar and Business Exchange session was held at the office of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) last Monday to promote cooperation in the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

At the session, Japanese businessmen shared their experiences and best practices for SME development.

Technology and financial assistance is needed for SME development. Japan will contribute through development aid to enhance the SME sector, said Noriyuki Yonemura,

chairman of Japan-Myanmar Economic and Investment Centre (JMEIC).

The development of SMEs is hampered by illegal trade. For this, human resources development activities and entrepreneurs must be encouraged, said U Saw Dino Ku from Ayeyawady Farmers Development Bank.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency has provided a two-step loan facility across the country to facilitate the SME businesses.

SMEs are critical to Japan's economy. It is important to create a business environment, which has a high score in the

ease of doing business index.

Japanese businessmen working in the plastic, agriculture, water pipeline and related accessories, auto parts and construction materials, and interiors decoration businesses, as well as wire networks and event arrangement services, human resource development schools and financial corporations participated in the business exchange session.

Some 27 Japanese businessmen and more than a hundred Myanmar businessmen, officials from the industry ministry and the UMFCCI attended the SME Seminar and Business Exchange.—GNLM ■

Lobsters bring good price due to low supply in Rakhine

THE scarcity of lobsters in Rakhine State has set prices soaring, according to a report in the Myawady Daily.

The scarcity of lobsters is attributed to unsystematic and illegal fishing methods, and the decreasing number of fishermen. Fishermen use boats and vessels to catch lobsters, while others dive to reefs. Moreover, the fishing period set by the government coincides with the hatching time, noted U Khin Aye Maung from the Kyaukpyu Lobster Businessmen Association.

The fishing period is from

June to September, while the hatching period for lobsters and prawns is at about the same time of year.

Earlier, the price of lobsters soared to Ks73,000 per viss. The prevailing price of lobsters remains steady at Ks63,000 per viss. More than 100,000 viss of lobsters were previously supplied to Yangon, while Rakhine fishermen currently supply only 50,000 viss, said a lobster businessmen.

Agriculture and fishery enterprises are the main businesses in Rakhine State.—GNLM ■

Dr. Pe Myint attends Ethnic Literature and Culture Development Festival in Taunggyi



Dr. Pe Myint formally opens the Ethnic Literature and Culture Development festival. **PHOTO: MNA**



Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint visits the booth displaying hand made artifacts of Intha tribe. **PHOTO: MNA**



An ethnic woman demonstrates traditional weaving. **PHOTO: MNA**



An ethnic troupe performs at the Ethnic Literature and Culture Development festival. **PHOTO: MNA**



An ethnic dance troupe performs traditional dance at the opening of the Ethnic Literature and Culture Development festival. **PHOTO: MNA**

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint attended the Ethnic Literature and Culture Development festival and funfair at the Awaiyar Kone Myint Tharyar grounds in Taunggyi, Shan State, yesterday morning.

The five-day event is being held from 9.30 a.m. to 11 p.m. and is organised by the Ministry of Information and the Shan State government.

Dr. Pe Myint, along with Shan State Chief Minister Dr. Lin Htut and Minister for Bamar Ethnic Affairs Dr. Aung Than Maung, opened the festival by cutting a ribbon. School children then sang a song titled "A Unity Song" to entertain the guests.

During the opening speech, Dr. Pe Myint said, "This festival aims to revive literature and the cultural heritage of Shan State, as well as ensure sustainable development in the region."

"Although every ethnic tribe

in the country has its own literature and cultural heritage, it is of vital importance to promote them as much as we can to prevent from extinction," he noted.

Some ethnic races have their own languages, yet they need support to develop their literature, he added. "Myanmar is an ethnically diverse nation of various ethnic races; therefore, we are duty-bound to preserve our own language, literature, culture and customs," he said.

According to the 2008 constitution's Article 22, the Union shall assist: (a) to develop language, literature, fine arts and culture of the national races; (b) to promote solidarity, mutual amity and respect and mutual assistance among the national races; (c) to promote socio-economic development, through education, health, economy, transport and communication, and so forth, of less-developed national races.

Later, officials presented certificates of honour to the representatives of various groups. Dozens of dove-shaped balloons were then released as a sign of peace, after which the officials took a commemorative group photograph.

The festival included reading the papers on a wide range of ethnic minority groups in Shan State, such as Tai Lue (Shan Gyi), Gon Shan, Tai Khamti, Tai Sa (aka) Mai Tar, Tai Leng (Shan), Tai Neua (Shan), Wa, Pa-O, Danu, Inn Thar, T'ang (Palaung), Kokang, Kachin, Kayan, Yin Net, Yin Kyar, Taung Yoe, Hta Naw, Lisu, Akha, Lahu and Enn at Taunggyi University convocation hall.

Arrangements were made to entertain the audience with musical concerts and the display of booths, entertainment and traditional food stalls at the fire balloon launching field in Taunggyi.—State IPRD



An ethnic dance troupe performs their traditional dance at the opening of the Ethnic Literature and Culture Development festival. **PHOTO: MNA**



Adult Ayeyawady dolphin found dead in Madaya

AN adult Ayeyawady dolphin was found dead on the banks of Ayeyawady River, Madaya Township, Mandalay Region, on 20 March, according to the Madaya Township Fishery Department.

The cause of death was attributed to old age, based on its tooth and size. However, authorities have not ruled out human involvement in the killing of the dolphin, as considerable feed was found inside its stomach. However, there were no injuries on its body.

The female dolphin was 7 feet and 3 inches in length. An official from the Fishery Department assumed that the dolphin may have been around 30 or 40 years old. The Forestry Department is conducting an awareness campaign for Ayeyawady dolphin conservation, in cooperation with the Wildlife Conservation Society. Therefore, the number of cases of electro-fishing has decreased considerably.

However, local villagers claimed the dolphin was killed by electro-fishing. Authorities have sent samples of the dolphin's body parts to the laboratory to determine the cause of its death.

According to the February 2018 data, there were 76 dolphins living between Mandalay and Bhamo, while 69 dolphins were found in 2017.—Aung Thant Khaing ■

Bus tickets to Ruby Land's festival sold out

SINCE many people want to participate in the 800th anniversary of Mogok, the demand for bus tickets from Mandalay to Mogok was incredibly high, so all bus tickets sold out yesterday.

The 800th anniversary of Mogok will take place on March 29, 30 and 31. The celebration will be held at Mhone Kwin in Mogok, and includes rice offering ceremony, sport tournaments, music entertainment and games, sermons and ethnic people's dancing performances.

There are more than 10 bus lines running between Mandalay

and Mogok, an area where different kinds of gems are produced. However visitors and locals could not get bus tickets now, even tickets for traveling back to Mandalay are also sold out.

"Tickets are not easily available starting today because the number of passengers traveling to Mogok is so high now. The possibility of getting advance bus tickets to travel back from Mogok is uncertain," said Ko Maung Maung Soe, a bus driver from the Shwe Pyi Hein bus line.

"I tried to get bus tickets to go to the festival, but staff from bus lines told me that tickets

are not available. I called all bus lines to go to Mogok, and I was told that bus tickets were sold out," said Ma Shwe Yee Lwin, who wants to visit Mogok.

The celebration is held with the aim to develop the gem stone and tourism industries and to show the beauty of the region and the culture of the people in Mogok, which is surrounded by mountains.

The committee for the celebration of the 800th anniversary of founding Mogok said that it has planned for more than 6000 visitors and accommodations and food are free.

"People all over Myanmar are interested in the festival, so the demand for bus tickets in advance is very high. So, bus lines should add more buses. I have heard that some people have to pay more money than the usual bus fare," she added.

People can travel from Mandalay to Mogok by motorcycle for six hours. Another way to go to Mogok is from Pyin Oo Lwin, which takes just 5 hours and 30 minutes by motorcycle.

A wide range of ethnic people are living in Mogok which boasts large numbers of historic pagodas.—MDN ■

MOPF grants Ks25 billion loan to upgrade local oil mills

THE Ministry of Planning and Finance (MOPF) has provided loans worth Ks25 billion to the Myanmar Edible Oil Millers Association (MEOMA) to improve local oil mills, according to a report in Myawady Daily yesterday.

The MEOMA will provide loans to local oil millers this year, U Khin Soe, president of MEOMA, told Myawady Daily.

Some Ks5 billion will be allocated for peanut seed production through contract farming with the farmers. Some Ks7 billion is for upgrading the oil mills, while the logistics and warehouse sector will receive

Ks10 billion in loans.

The MEOMA will provide loans through the Myanmar Economic Bank at an interest rate of 9 per cent. The loan term has been set at three to five years. This loan plan is meant to upgrade oil mills, so they can meet the requisite health standards and seek the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) certificate. Millers who do not receive FDA's approval by the end of the year might be forced to suspend their business. The oil millers will receive loans based on the FDA's guidelines for upgrading, said U Khin Soe.—GNLM ■

CPI shows slight increase in Feb

THE consumer price index (CPI) recorded an increase of 0.12 per cent in February compared with January, on account of high prices of tobacco, liquor, food, house rental charges and repair costs, house utensils and maintenance costs, as well as health and transport costs.

People with low and medium incomes have been affected by the high CPI.

The CPI in Kayin and Mon states, as well as the Taninthayi, Bago, Magway and Sagaing regions and Nay Pyi Taw, showed a slight decline in February compared with the previous month. Rakhine and Shan states and the Yangon and Ayeyawady regions recorded an increase in their CPI, according to statistics released recently by the Central

Statistical Organisation (CSO), operating under the Ministry of Planning and Finance.

The annual rate of inflation in February 2018, based on the 2012 survey, was recorded at 4.16 per cent, which showed a slight decline against January.

The inflation rate in February 2017 was recorded at 7.99 per cent, and it dropped 2.3 per cent in July 2017. The rate climbed again from August last year and fluctuated in February 2018.

The year-on-year inflation rate was 5.11 per cent in February 2018 versus February 2017.

Rakhine State recorded the highest inflation rate at 8.46 per cent, as of February 2018, followed by Mandalay city at 6.85 per cent and Kachin State with

5.88 per cent.

Yangon city recorded an inflation rate of 3.05 per cent, while Nay Pyi Taw recorded 3.3 per cent.

Previously, the inflation rate was evaluated based on the 2006 survey. The base year was then changed to 2012. The CSO conducted a household income and expenditure survey in 82 townships in November 2012.

The inflation rate in the first five-year plan from the 2011-2012 fiscal year (FY) to the 2015-2016 FY rose. In a bid to reduce the inflation rate, the authorities concerned are making efforts, based on the policies of finance, currency, trade and foreign currency control, according to the second five-year national development plan.—Ko Htet ■

People should be aware of heat and UV risks

MARCH, April and May are the hottest months in Myanmar. During this time, the country experiences a high ultraviolet (UV) index and unfavourable weather conditions for a period of three months until the rainy season, which begins in mid-June.

UV indexes between 10 and 11 can be harmful and pose several health risks. A UV Index reading between 8 to 10 means very high risk of harm from unprotected sun exposure. Take extra precautions because unprotected skin and eyes will be damaged and can burn quickly. Experts suggest liberal use of sunscreen, sunglasses and protective clothing

People should also avoid direct sunlight between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., by seeking shade and wearing headwear and long-sleeved clothes at all times.

While a UV index reading between 0-2 poses little danger from the sun's UV rays, an index between 6-7 poses considerate health risks, with severe damage to the eyes and skin if unprotected. Any measurements above 11 mean extreme risk of harm from unprotected sun exposure, with skin and eyes burning within minutes.

People are urged to follow instructions of the Health Department to protect themselves against UV rays.

Another potentially harmful weather condition is the formation of cumulus clouds in the summer season. Lightning, thunder, isolated heavy rainfall, gale force wind, lightning strikes and hailstones can occur due to cumulus clouds.

Thunderstorms mostly happen in April and May in Myanmar.

Since 1980, the country has seen an increase in the number of thunderstorms, which have killed over 100 people in some years, weather experts said.

Some like it hot, but heat in the summer months can be fatal. In 2016, the world experienced its hottest year since the 1880s when modern records began to be kept, marking the third consecutive year of record-high temperatures. Less than four months into 2017, parts of Myanmar, India and Australia were already in the throes of heat waves.

Researchers have established a direct link between global warming and heat-related deaths from killer heatwaves.

People should pay attention to the daily weather forecasts of the Meteorology and Hydrology Department and should be alerted to adverse weather conditions.

Over the past 25 years there have been 24 costly disasters in Myanmar, once every year on average. Victims numbering about 4 million suffered losses of approximately US\$4.7 billion.

According to the 2016 index for potential losses due to natural disasters, Myanmar is ranked number 8 out of 191 countries with a 6.8 score. As per the study of past events, natural disasters in the past two decades claimed heavy casualties totaling over 600,000, in which earthquakes stood first, followed by storms, heatstroke and drought.

The devastating natural disasters that have occurred in recent years have alerted the people and authorities to cooperate in reducing the risks of natural disasters for the sake of the safety of the people.

The value of our volunteers

Organizational Development
Department
MRCS

Executive Summary

In June 2012, inter-communal violence in the Rakhine State erupted with a series of violence conflicts between Buddhist and Muslims causing deaths and displacing 150,000 people. The sensitive environment made it very challenging for the Myanmar Red Cross to access all communities. In order to deliver its mandate of serving the most vulnerable from all sides of the conflict, MRCS mobilized a total of 320 volunteers from other states/ regions and deployed them to Rakhine for a 25 to 30 day mission.

The study highlights the economic value of volunteers based on the volunteering hours they have rendered during the same period. The study underscores as well the key role of volunteers as front liners in the inter-communal conflict- translating Movements as they went about helping those in need, giving priority to most urgent causes regardless of race, religion and parties involved in the conflict. The unwavering courage of volunteers has heightened people's respect for Myanmar Red Cross as an impartial and neutral humanitarian organization that is capable of helping everyone and anyone in need even in times of communal conflict.

This study focuses on this significant volunteer mobilization covering the period from June 2012 to April 2013.

Key Findings

- Total number of beneficiaries reached 70,651 of beneficiaries reached
- 847 people were assisted for emergency evacuation.
- Total number of volunteers mobilized: 320
- Total number of volunteering hours: 87,320 hours at an average of 273 hours per volunteer
- Equivalent full paid staff :45
- Total volunteers investment: MMK 151,684,550 or CHF 166,853.00 and average of investment of MMK 474,014/ CHF 521.40 per volunteer
- Total volunteer value of the Rakhine operation is MMK 295,164,315.97/ CHF 324,660
- VIVA ration: 1:2, meaning that for every one MMK spent for each volunteer, MRCS received two MMK's worth of services from each volunteer.

"Red Cross volunteering is very interesting and inspiring and gives me a long term commitment to support the lives of the vulnerable"

U Thet Naing, volunteer with 35 years of RC experiences.

Objective of the studies:

1. Determine the economic value of the services rendered by the volunteer mobilized for the MRCS Rakhine operation.

2. Provided evidence based recommendation to improve volunteer management in MRCS Myanmar Red Cross Society

Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) was established in 1920 as the branch of Indian Red Cross Society. Burma (Former name of Myanmar) separated formally from India in 1937 and in 1939 the society obtained national status. The organization was renamed MRCS in accordance with legislative change of Burma to Myanmar in 1989. Today MRCS is the leading humanitarian organization in Myanmar and it is committed to improve the lives of the most vulnerable to promoting humanitarian values and community based Health and Care and Disaster Management.

Volunteer development for the Rakhine operation

Description of situation in Rakhine

The unrest in Rakhine State in Myanmar began in June 2012 with a series of violent conflicts primarily between Buddhists and Muslims. The Myanmar government authorities have responded to the conflicts by imposing curfews and by deploying their troops in the region. The government announced a state of emergency on 10 June 2012 allowing military to participate in the administration of the region. The conflicts have caused approximately 240 casualties and about 150,000 people have been displaced due to the unrest.

The sensitive environment in Rakhine made it very challenging for local MRCS volunteers to access all communities affected by the ethnic conflicts. In order to deliver its mandate of serving the vulnerable from all sides of the conflicts, MRCS mobilized volunteers from other states/ regions and deployed them to Rakhine for a 25 to 30 day mission. This caused the increase in transportation and per diem costs for volunteer mobilization. However, this also made the MRCS the only recognized and respected aid organization that could access to all areas without needs for armed escorts. Red Cross volunteers are doing their utmost best to preserve their acceptance among all communities by providing impartial aid.

In the Rakhine conflicts, MRCS is demonstrating the seven fundamental principles in action, emphasizing neutrality and impartiality, by providing aid to both sides of the conflicts regardless of the ethnicity, religion, sex, age and beliefs. This is essential ensure safe access to the conflicts site in Rakhine and in order parts of the country at all times.

Rakhine Operation volunteer profiles

A total of 320 RC volunteers participated in the Rakhine operation between June 2012 and april 2013. The volunteers were divided into four groups, each doing different role depending on their previous experience and skills. The four groups were: First Aiders, relief workers, health educators and administrative and reporting volunteers.

While a lot of female MRCS volunteers wanted to participate in the Rakhine operation, they were deliberately not include in favour of male volunteers. The focal point for volunteers cited the following reasons in making this decision:

1. The accommodation place in hall type, 80'

x 70' extension of relief warehouse, only one room for 35 volunteers.

2. There if no separate bathroom and latrine for male and female.

3. Deploying female volunteers in this specific situation will require a different safety and security arrangement which the organizers are not yet able to do.

A significant majority of those who volunteered for this operation are under 30 years old. Majority of them were longtime volunteers of the MRCS. But there were newly recruited volunteers as well. They all come from different races.

The recruitment of Red Cross volunteers deployed in Rakhine

The minimum requirements for a volunteer to be mobilized in the Rakhine operation are:

- Between 18 and 65 years old.
- Has completed Basic First Aids training within the last two years.
- Physically, mentality and emotionally fit.
- Willing to work with both sides of the conflict according to the 7 Fundamental principles.
- be able to work at least 30 days in Rakhine.
- Must act according to the Volunteer Code of Conduct.

- In addition, it is preferred that the volunteer:
- Has undergone Emergency Response Training or National Disaster Response Training/
 - Is a First Aid Instructor of health educator:

Volunteer management

The MRCS-OD Department has the responsibility of recreation, briefing, deploying, supporting and debriefing volunteers for the Rakhine Operation. The key tasks of the department include:

1. Deciding how many Red Cross volunteers are needed, what kind of experience and skills they should have and how long they will be volunteering.
2. With approval from the secretary general, coordination with the state/region Red Cross Committees to recruit volunteers that fits the deployment criteria.
3. Developing security guidelines for Red Cross volunteer working in communal conflict situation.
4. Developing and implementing a volunteer deployment pal for each state/reion to ensure sufficient number of volunteers are available in every batch that is sent to Rakhine .
5. Sending of letter of reminder to state/region Red Cross to keep local authorities always properly informed and updated to MRCS could get their full support.
6. Collecting of Red Cross volunteer data and making practical preparation for their deployment (accommodation, transportation, local support ect.) and for their going home.
7. Calculating budget and ensuring financial support to the deployed team.
8. Getting insurance coverage for the deployed team.
9. Organizing a briefing (before deployment) and debriefing (after they have completed their

mission) for Red Cross volunteers at Yangon office.

10. Organizing a briefing session in Sittwe on the tasks ahead for each volunteer.

11. Ensuring that OD Department will actively participate in the monitoring an evaluation of volunteer management issues raised in Rakhine.

12. Ensure that all deployed volunteers are well appreciated and recognized.

Volunteer duty hours

The Rakhine operation volunteers work form 8 am to 4 pm seven days per week. All volunteers have one or two recreation time visits to view point, Sittwe during 30 days of deployment. The recreation time visits were organized after a full day volunteer work and to ensure they did not affect the actual volunteering hours.

"We facilitated and educated group of children and woman at IDP camps on personal hygiene and hand washing practice. We heard that community people said "they are getting more confident than before." This makes me happy and I promised to join again the deployment team going to Sittew."

The duties of Red Cross volunteers in the Rakhine IDP (Internally displaced persons) camps:

1. Provided First Aid services and health care education.
2. Organise mobile health clinics.
3. Organise water and sanitation activities such as water collection, distribution, water purification, installation of water tanks and fumigation of latrines.
4. Conduct hygiene promotion.
5. Relief goods distribution (participation in rice distribution donated by Qatar Red Cross Crescent, Turkish Red Crescent and World Food Programme.)
6. Emergency medical evacuation, when necessary.
7. Provided psychosocial support to IPs.
8. Gather relevant data and prepare report to be submitted to team leader.

Services delivered by volunteers in the Rakhine between June 2012 and April 2013

For the period under study, the volunteers have reached 70,651 beneficiaries, broken down as follows:

- 35,400 people received First Aids treatment.
- 25,347 people received health education.
- 9,030 people got psychosocial support.
- 847 people were assisted during emergency evacuation.

Analysis of the volunteer investment and value audit

A. Total volunteer investment

The total volunteer investment shows all the expenses associated with having volunteers. It must be emphasized that these expense, were incurred by MRCS because of the involvement of volunteer in the Rakhine operation.

TO BE COUNTINUED

In a Horrifying New Twist, Myanmar Elephants Are Being Poached For Their Skin

In Asia, the biggest threat to elephant survival has long been habitat loss. That may be changing

By Brian Handwerk
SMITHSONIAN.COM

For three years, the postdoctoral fellow at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute had been working with a team of researchers to track Asian elephants in Myanmar using GPS collars. By learning how the massive animals moved in areas they shared with humans, they hoped to find ways to help pachyderms and humans coexist. But the researchers soon began noticing something strange.

After affixing GPS collars to 19 elephants, many of those elephants began dropping off the map. What the team found when they investigated signals from elephants that had stopped moving was horrifying: Dead, rotting carcasses strewn throughout the jungle.

And something about these corpses stood out to them immediately. They'd been skinned.

"When they are finding these carcasses they've been professionally butchered, the skin is removed and the trunks, sometimes the feet and the ears," McEvoy says. "It's quite a harrowing thing to see that in the field, particularly for the Burmese people who have quite a connection with these elephants."

Within a year of being fitted for a collar, seven elephants the team had tagged were dead. When the team's Burmese contacts started asking local people questions, they realized that they'd unintentionally uncovered a disturbing new problem: These elephants were poached for their skin.

Different Threats

It's no secret that human lust for ivory has decimated African elephants. Savanna-dwelling populations have declined by 30 percent in just the last seven years, and forest elephant numbers plunged a staggering 62 percent from 2002 to 2013. Moreover, a recent study found that 90 percent of the market's ivory is from elephants dead less than three years, proof that ongoing poaching is intimately linked with the African elephant crisis.

But what researchers found in Myanmar wasn't about ivory. Most of the elephants found dead didn't even have tusks. So what was driving this?

In Asia, where around 50,000 wild elephants live scattered across 13 nations, the biggest challenge to elephant survival has historically been habitat loss. The region's already dense human populations continue to grow, expanding into elephant territory and forcing the pachyderms into smaller and smaller spaces. "Of course they will raid the crops," says McEvoy. "They can eat quite a lot, but even just walking through a rice paddy can destroy the livelihoods of a lot of people. They occasionally raid houses if there is food stored inside a small house."

Altercations spurred by elephants eating or trampling crops result in the deaths of people and elephants alike. According to the Myanmar Elephant Conservation Action Plan, more than a dozen people are killed by elephants each year. Still, there's no doubt to McEvoy which species is impacted most. "By and large it's the elephants who lose out," he says. "They lose their habitat, and they often get killed."

Part of the reason poaching isn't as big in Asia is that tusks aren't as common among Asian elephants. Only 25 to 30 percent of male Asian elephants have tusks (percentages vary by region) and no females have them.

SEE PAGE-10

Senior General pays homage to Kaunghmulon pagoda in Kachin

COMMANDER-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, accompanied by his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla, paid homage to the Kaunghmulon Pagoda yesterday in Machanbaw Township, Putao District, Kachin State.

After paying homage to the Kaunghmulon Pagoda, the Senior General and wife offered fruits, flowers, water and oil lights to the Buddha image of the pagoda. The Senior General and his wife then presented a cash donation to the Pagoda Board of Trustees. An official of the board returned a certificate of honour. After going round the pagoda clockwise, they viewed the environs of the Malikha River and the precinct of the pagoda. The



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing pays homage to Kaunghmulon pagoda in Kachin State yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Senior General made coordinations to designate the religious area and build brick fences for the precinct of the pagoda.

The Senior General also paid homage to Maha Tezawunta

Shwezigon Pagoda and Maha Tezawunta Shwedagon Pagoda adjacent to Kaunghmulon Pagoda and offered flowers and water.

After paying obeisance to natural Kyauknaga Pagoda in Machan-

baw, the Senior General, wife and party offered flowers and water.

The Senior General and party met with local people of Kaunghmulon Village and posed for photos. Kaunghmulon Pa-

goda is located on the eastern bank of Malikha River near Kaunghmulon Village in Machanbaw Township, Putao District, Kachin State.—Myanmar News Agency ■

15th JMC-U meeting calls for more trust building

By Ye Kaung nyunt

A lack of mutual respect, understanding and trust is causing unwanted complications in state-level ceasefire talks, said JMC-U Chairman Lt-Gen Yar Pyae in his opening speech in yesterday's Union Joint Monitoring Committee meeting.

The 15th JMC-U meeting was held yesterday at the National Reconciliation and Peace Center on Shweli Road, and discussed negotiations and dialogue taken for the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in the period between the 14th JMC-U meeting and the 15th meeting, the opening of more local-level Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC-L) Centres, establishing Local Civilians Monitoring (LCM) groups, and appointing a venue for the JMC Conference.

In his opening statement, Lt-Gen Yar Pyae said that some JMC-S meetings only mention building trust, but it is not enough to just say the words,

he said.

"All stakeholders must be able to rely on each other to build mutual respect", he said. He added that participants in state-level Ceasefire Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC-S) meetings need to support each other and discuss mutually beneficial regional development while building trust and respect with each other.

"The main duty of the JMC is to monitor and facilitate disagreements and conflicts," said Lt-Gen Yar Pyae. "We need to establish JMC-L centers and LCM groups and we need to hold workshops and trainings to help facilitate them. Military commanders from both sides need to join in the JMC-S meetings and all Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) who signed the NCA need to hold JMC meetings and involve the grassroots. We have agreed that civilian representatives will hold a meeting once every four months prior to any JMC meeting," he said.

Saw Isaac Po, an EAO rep-



15th Union Joint Monitoring Committee meeting being held in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: YE KHAUNG NYUNT**

resentative and JMC-U Vice Chairman-1, said at the meeting that it is not only the EAOs that need to build trust, but also the local residents of each state.

"The local people have been exposed to the negative side of armed conflicts for generations and are filled with fear and worry", he said. Without the participation of local residents, the NCA and JMC meetings will only break their trust, he said. He

added that, official negotiations aside, free unofficial meetings are also needed and everyone has to find solutions to cause of problems rather than shifting blame on each other. "Blaming does not solve anything, it magnifies them", he said.

U Pyae Sone, civilian representative and JMC-U Vice Chairman-2, said the lack of trust breeds doubt and to remedy this, everyone from the high-

er ups to the grassroots needs to have the opportunity to meet and talk with each other. He said the separation of borders hamper this endeavour and can even be seen as a weakness to the JMC. He said the monitoring part of the JMC is still weak.

"The JMC-U, JMC-S, and JMC-L all take place in the urban cities but the actual issues are taking place in the villages and the woods. For them to take part in these dialogues, we need Local Civilians Monitoring (LCM) groups," said U Pyae Sone.

The New Mon State Party (NMSP) joined the JMC-U meeting for the first time. The NMSP signed the NCA on 13 February 2018.

Attending the 15th JMC-U were representatives from the Tatmadaw and EAOs, civilian representatives, and representatives from JMC-S and JMC-L centers from various States and Regions. The 15th JMC-U meeting will be held from 21 to 23 March. ■

In a Horrifying New Twist, Myanmar Elephants Are Being Poached For Their Skin

FROM PAGE-8-9

That means even ivory poachers generally spare breeding females and calves, which take years to come to maturity. And because elephants are polygamous, surviving males can help pick up the reproductive slack for

those that have been killed, which prevents numbers from plunging.

Unlike poaching for ivory, however, the skin trade makes all elephants valuable to poachers. Females and even calves are targeted. That's bad news for long-lived animals who re-

produce slowly, putting years of resources into the survival of each calf. As McEvoy puts it: "hunting females and calves is a really quick way to drive a species towards extinction." That's why the new findings are so disturbing, says Peter Leimgruber, head

of SCBI's Conservation Ecology Center and last author of a new study on the phenomenon published in the open-access journal PLOS One. "It was very surprising," says Leimgruber, who leads the elephant tracking team along with SCBI conservation biologist

and co-author Melissa Songer. "I've worked on elephants in Myanmar for some 20 years and I never thought that poaching really played any major role."

If elephant skin becomes a highly desired product like ivory, however, that could change. ■

Israel admits 2007 Syrian 'nuclear reactor' strike for first time

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israel's military admitted for the first time Wednesday it was responsible for a 2007 air raid against a suspected Syrian nuclear reactor, a strike it was long believed to have carried out.

The admission along with the release of newly declassified material related to the raid comes as Israel intensifies its warnings over the presence of its main enemy Iran in neighbouring Syria.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has also repeatedly called for the nuclear deal between world powers and Iran to be changed or eliminated.

US President Donald Trump, who met Netanyahu at the White House this month, has said that the nuclear deal must be "fixed" by 12 May or the United States will walk away.

An Israeli military spokesman declined to respond to questions related to the admission and the release of the documents, including over the timing, which could be seen as a warning regarding Iran's activities.

The declassified material includes footage of the strike, video of a speech by military chief of staff Gadi Eisenkot on the operation and pictures of secret army intelligence communiques about the site. A military statement summarising the operation lays out the case for why Israel carried out the strike at the desert site in the Deir Ezzor region of eastern Syria on what it says was a nuclear reactor under



Picture released by the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) shows Syrian President Bashar al-Assad (C) looking at a project plan during a visit to Deir Ezzor in April, 2007. PHOTO: AFP

construction.

It has long been widely assumed that Israel carried out the strike. Syria has meanwhile denied it was building a nuclear reactor.

"On the night between September 5th-6th, 2007, Israeli Air Force fighter jets successfully struck and destroyed a Syrian nuclear reactor in development," the Israeli statement says.

"The reactor was close to being completed. The operation successfully removed an emerging existential threat to Israel and to the entire region — Syrian

nuclear capabilities."

'Strategic implications'

Israel's admission is by no means the first time its military has been identified as the source of the attack.

In 2008, less than a year after the strike, US officials accused Syria of having sought to build a secret nuclear reactor and acknowledged Israel destroyed it in the raid. The UN atomic watchdog declared in 2011 that the Syrian site was "very likely" to have been a nuclear reactor, adding that information provided to it suggested that it was being built

with North Korean assistance.

Israel said in its new disclosures that secrecy surrounding the strike was necessary due to the sensitive security situation.

In defending the strike, it notes that Islamic State group jihadists later overran much of Deir Ezzor during Syria's civil war, while also saying that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad "in the past used chemical weapons against his own citizens."

"The nuclear reactor being held by Assad would have had severe strategic implications on the entire Middle East as well as

Israel and Syria," it said.

While Israel's admission will come as little surprise, the declassified material provides new details on what is widely known as "Operation Orchard."

The material speaks of an ultra-secretive operation, with very few knowing details of the strike and a cover story provided.

Israeli intelligence had picked up on what it determined was the construction of the nuclear reactor and followed its development, it says.

Four F-16s and four F-15s were involved in the strike, with the operation beginning at 10:30 pm on 5 September and the planes returning at 2:30 am the following day. Grainy footage of the strike included in the material shows a target locking on to a building that is blown apart shortly afterward.

Israel determined that the alleged reactor was "totally disabled, and that the damage done was irreversible."

Israeli military chief of staff Lieutenant General Gadi Eisenkot, who was northern commander at the time, recalled in a video in the material meeting with his officers shortly before the raid.

"I don't give them the exact details of the target and its essence, but I say that there's going to be a significant attack in the upcoming 24-48 hours, an event that in low likelihood could lead to war," he said. "Low, to me, is even 15 or 20 per cent, which is a lot."—AFP ■

Sarkozy faces second day of questioning in Libya probe

PARIS — Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy returned to police custody on Wednesday for a second day of questioning over allegations the late Libyan dictator Moamer Kadhafi helped finance his 2007 election campaign, sources close to the inquiry told AFP.

Sarkozy, 63, arrived just before 8am (0700 GMT) at the bureau of officers specializing in corruption, money laundering and tax evasion in the western Paris suburb of Nanterre, an AFP journalist said.

He was first taken into custody on Tuesday morning, but left the police building around midnight.

His lawyers did not respond to requests for comment.

Since 2013, investigating magistrates have been probing

media reports, as well as statements by Kadhafi's son Seif al-Islam, that claimed funds were provided for Sarkozy's run at the presidency.

The case is France's most explosive political financing scandal and one of several legal probes that have dogged the rightwing politician since he left office after one term in 2012.

Brice Hortefeux, a Sarkozy ally who was a top minister during his presidency, was also questioned Tuesday until about 11:30 pm.

"Testifying freely, the details provided should put an end to a series of errors and lies," Hortefeux later wrote on Twitter.

Under French law Sarkozy can be held for questioning for up to 48 hours, after which he can be either released, told to return

for further questioning later, or brought before a judge to potentially face charges.

Suitcases of cash?

In 2011, as NATO-backed forces were driving Kadhafi out of power, Seif al-Islam told the Euronews network that "Sarkozy must first give back the money he took from Libya to finance his electoral campaign."

Sarkozy has dismissed the allegations as the rantings of vindictive Libyan regime members who were furious over France's military intervention in Libya that helped end Kadhafi's 41-year rule and led to his death.

He has also sued the investigative website Mediapart, which has led media coverage of the Libyan allegations since 2012, publishing a document allegedly signed by Libya's intelligence

chief showing that Kadhafi had agreed to fund Sarkozy to the tune of 50 million euros (\$62 million).

The case drew heightened scrutiny in November 2016 when

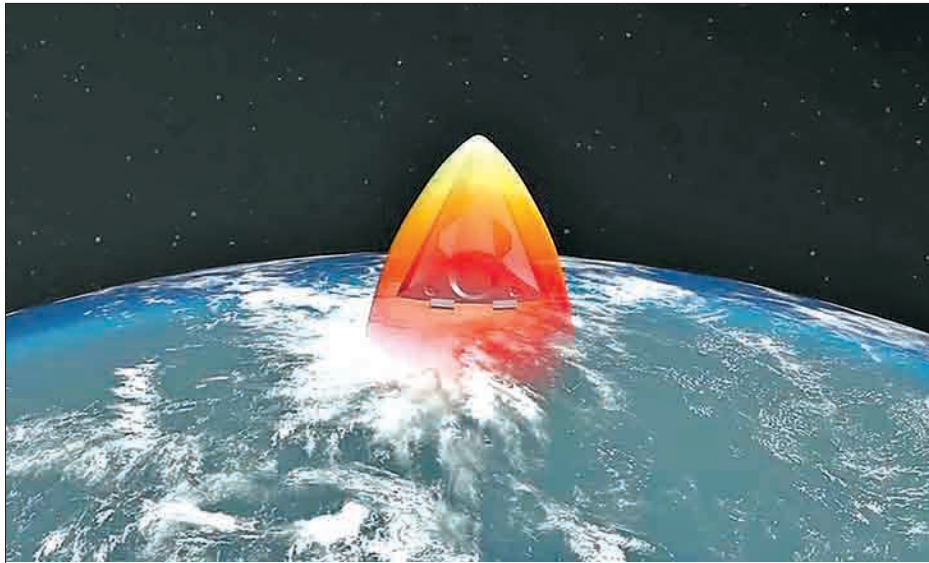
a Franco-Lebanese businessman admitted delivering three cash-stuffed suitcases from the Libyan leader in 2006 and 2007 as contributions towards Sarkozy's first presidential run.—AFP ■



Sarkozy is being questioned at the bureau of officers specialising in corruption, money laundering and tax evasion in the western Paris suburb of Nanterre.. PHOTO: AFP

Russia to use SS-19 ICBMs as carriers for Avangard hypersonic glide vehicles — source

MOSCOW — Soviet-made UR-100N UTTKh (NATO reporting name: SS-19 Stiletto) intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) will be the first carriers for hypersonic glide vehicles of Russia's most advanced Avangard missile system, a source in the Russian defence industry told TASS on Tuesday. "In the early 2000s, about 30 UR-100N UTTKh liquid-propellant missiles were delivered from Ukraine for the 'gas debt.' After the disintegration of the USSR, they were kept at warehouses in their unfueled condition, i.e. they were actually new and capable of going on combat duty to serve for several dozen years. A part of these missiles will become the carriers of the first series of hypersonic glide vehicles in the next few years," the source said. "With the acceptance of heavy RS-28 Sarmat missiles for service, such ve-



About 30 UR-100N UTTKh liquid-propellant missiles were delivered from Ukraine for the 'gas debt,' according to the source. **PHOTO: TASS**

hicles will be mounted on them as well," the source added. Speaking about the combat characteristics of the new hypersonic glide vehicle, the source noted that the yield of the nuclear warhead mounted on it — "over 2 megatonnes in TNT equivalent" — was quite enough to fully destroy "especially important

targets." Today the yield of the armament of strategic nuclear carriers in Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, China and other countries normally does not exceed 1 megatonne. The world's most powerful weapon was tested in the Soviet Union in 1961: the AN-602 thermonuclear air bomb had a yield of 58 meg-

atonnes. TASS has not yet received an official confirmation of the information provided by the source.

Avangard and UR-100N UTTKh missiles

Russian Deputy Defense Minister Yuri Borisov said earlier that the Defense Ministry had signed a contract on the production

of the Avangard hypersonic strategic system. The new weapon was mentioned for the first time by Russian President Vladimir Putin in his State of the Nation Address to the Federal Assembly on 1 March.

Russia's Strategic Missile Force Commander Sergei Karakayev later specified that the trials of the Avangard hypersonic missile system had been successfully completed.

The Avangard is a strategic ICBM system carrying a hypersonic glide vehicle. According to open sources, the complex was developed by the Research and Production Association of Machine-Building (the town of Reutov, the Moscow Region) and was tested from 2004. The glide vehicle is capable of flying in the dense layers of the atmosphere at hypersonic speed, maneuvering along its flight path and by its altitude and breaching any anti-missile

defence. The new complex is expected to go on combat duty no later than 2019, after its test launch is conducted successfully, another source in the defence industry told TASS earlier. As the source also said, the number of missile divisions within Russia's Strategic Missile Force will not increase: the most advanced systems will arrive for the existing missile formations. The UR-100N UTTKh (SS-19 Stiletto) missile is a heavy upgrade of the UR-100 missile complex developed in the Soviet Union in the 1960s by the Design Bureau-52 led by Vladimir Chelomei. It was accepted for service in 1980. Currently, Russia's Strategic Missile Force operates 30 silo-based missiles of this type, according to open sources. The missile has a takeoff weight of about 100 tonnes and a throw weight of around 4.5 tonnes. —Tass ■

The Republic of Union of Myanmar Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population Social Security Board Open Tenders Invitation for developing and implementation of Social Security Information System

1. Social Security Board (SSB) wants to acquire a comprehensive Social Security Information System in Myanmar Kyats. Any interested domestic, international or joint-venture companies are eligible to submit the tender proposal.
 2. The project is to deliver an integrated solution comprises of the followings:
 - Data center implementation
 - Development and implementation of SSB core business processes such as employee/employer registration process, contribution collection process, benefits provision process, claims management process, medical services provision process and e-Money services, etc.
 - Setting up and operate the SSB smart card printing processes
 - Implementation of software packages such as accounting, human resource management, hospital management, and building and inventory maintenance, among others.
 3. The tender forms including Terms of Reference and Tender Discipline can be purchased at the Administrative Department, Social Security Board (Head Office), No (OU- 77), corner of Thiriyadanar and Naykyar (8) Street, Ottarahiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar during office hours starting from 19-3-2018 to 28-3-2018.
 4. The closing time to submit tender proposal is 16:30 pm on May 11, 2018 at the above mentioned address. Any tender submitted after the closing time will not be considered.
 5. For further information, please visit the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population website <http://www.mol.gov.mm> and inquire the following address within office hour:
 - Information and Communication Department, Social Security Board, Nay Pyi Taw
 - Phone - 067-3417925, 3417951, 3417952
 - Fax - 067-3417926
- Tender Invitation and Appraisal Committee
Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population

Trump trade war biggest risk to world economy: German experts

FRANKFURT AM MAIN — US President Donald Trump's tariffs on steel and aluminium risk escalating into a threat to the international trading system, a highly-regarded group of German economists said on Wednesday.

"An escalation of the trade conflict would damage international value chains and in the medium term threaten the international rules-based trading system," warned the German Council of Economic Experts — known as the "Wise Men" although one member is a woman. The economists highlighted other dangers in a regular report, including a disorderly British departure from the European Union, a tricky Italian election outcome dominated by populists, "geopolitical risks" from war and conflict and a financial crisis trigger-



US President Donald Trump. **PHOTO: AFP**

ing a sudden slowdown in the Chinese economy. But "frictionlessly functioning world trade is of central importance for the continuation of the global upturn," they said. That made the threat to trade from Washington the biggest factor in their judgement that "risks to economic development have recently increased."

Trump has ordered border taxes of 25 per cent on steel imports and 10 per cent on aluminium, provok-

ing promises of retaliation from partners like the European Union — which Trump in turn vowed to meet with further levies of his own.

EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom and representatives from national capitals have rushed to Washington to try and turn the president aside from a transatlantic trade showdown.

So far they have little to show for their efforts.

Other Trump policies met with a warmer response from the German economists, who noted that massive tax cuts and spending increases could "strengthen growth momentum in the US more than predicted" — boosting the economies of Washington's trading partners.

For Germany, the experts upped their economic growth forecast for 2018 slightly, to 2.3 per cent, while their first prediction for 2019 called for a slight slowdown, to 1.8 per cent.

Easy-money policy from the European Central Bank and planned government spending increases under Chancellor Angela Merkel's fourth government are pushing Europe's largest economy to grow at a faster pace than it can maintain for the long term, the economists said. —AFP ■

Japan, Russia at odds over missile defence system

TOKYO — The foreign ministers of Japan and Russia expressed conflicting stances on Wednesday about the effect on Russia of Japan's planned installation of a US-made land-based missile defence system.

At a joint press conference after his first meeting with a foreign counterpart since Russian President Vladimir Putin won a fourth term, Sergey Lavrov expressed concern that the Aegis Ashore system "will have a direct effect on Russia's security," effectively becoming part of the US missile defence network.

Japan's Taro Kono, meanwhile, asked for Russia's understanding, saying the system "will not pose a threat to any neighboring country, including Russia."

Japan says the system

will increase its ability to intercept ballistic missiles from North Korea.

The ministers also discussed preparations for a planned summit in May between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Putin in Russia. For Abe, the summit offers a chance to make progress on a long-standing territorial row over the sovereignty of a Russian-held chain of islands.

Abe and Putin agreed in December 2016 to begin discussing joint economic projects on the islands, but progress has been slow since then.

Japan and Russia still need to work out the details of a special system that they have agreed is necessary in order for the projects not to compromise either side's legal position on the islands' sovereignty.



Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono (R) and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov hold talks in Tokyo on 21 March, 2018. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Kono and Lavrov agreed to speed up negotiations on the projects ahead of the May summit, and Lavrov said the talks so far have been "moving along in a good atmosphere."

Called the Northern Territories in Japan and

the Southern Kurils in Russia, the islands were seized by the Soviet Union at the end of World War II. The disagreement over their sovereignty has prevented Tokyo and Moscow from signing a postwar peace treaty.

Japan hopes the

projects, in various fields including tourism and aquaculture, could eventually lead to a settlement on the islands, while Russia stands to benefit economically.

After their talks, Kono and Lavrov signed a dialogue plan that lays out

bilateral meetings to be held this year and in 2019. According to the Japanese Foreign Ministry, it is the third such plan adopted between the countries, and covers both bilateral and international issues.

Lavrov said that during Abe's Russia visit in May, he and Putin will participate together in a ceremony to open a year-long bilateral cultural programme.

Wednesday's meeting took place amid an international uproar over the use of a nerve agent to poison a former Russian spy in a city in southern England earlier this month. Britain and many of Japan's other peers have blamed Russia for the attack, and Japan has condemned the use of chemical weapons while refraining from pointing the finger at Moscow. —Kyodo News ■

Singapore passes terror attack blackout law

SINGAPORE — Singapore's parliament on Wednesday passed a controversial law giving authorities the power to block all electronic communications at the scene of a terror attack, despite protests it will erode media freedom. The law allows police to stop anyone within the vicinity of what they deem to be a "serious incident", including a terror attack, from taking photos and video or communicating about police operations through text and audio messages. The government says the affluent financial hub is a prime target for militants, and that during attacks elsewhere live broadcasts unwittingly helped attackers to anticipate moves against them. However activists argue the law risks further damaging an already poor record what it comes to press freedom in the tightly-controlled city-state. Josephine Teo, the second minister for home affairs, told MPs the meas-



Singapore's parliament has passed a terror attack blackout law despite fears of its effect on media freedom. PHOTO: AFP

ure would only be used in a specific area and would be lifted when security operations are over. "Reporting is still allowed, just not live reporting. We will allow selected media into the area for later coverage," she said. Lawmakers voted overwhelming in favour of the measure. Parliament is dominated by MPs from the People's Action Party, which has governed Singapore for over five decades.

When the proposal was tabled in parliament earlier this year, Shawn Crispin, Southeast Asia representative of the Committee to

Protect Journalists, said it would "black out the news precisely when the public needs to be accurately informed". Singapore's domestic press is closely controlled. Media watchdog Reporters Without Borders ranks the country 151st out of 180 countries in its World Press Freedom Index, with a number-one ranking being the best. Civil society groups have also raised concerns that the term "serious incident" is vaguely defined and could lead to authorities targeting already rare peaceful protests.—AFP ■

PESTICIDES TRADE NAME CHANGING					
We, Htet Thiha Naing Co., Ltd. would like to change the trade name of the following products, which Manufactured by Dongguan Ruidefeng Biotechnology Co., Ltd. registered under Pesticide Registration Board, Myanmar. If any object or enquiry, please contact to Pesticide Regestration Board, Plant Protection Division Department of Agriculture, Yangon from here to next (2) weeks					
No	The Old Trade Name	Change to New Trade Name	Active Ingredients	Registration Number	Registration Type
1	RDF Ban 15% GR	MAR DAR	Chlorpyrifos 15% GR	2015-2533	Provisional
2	RDF Abamiorid	THIK TAU KNET	Abamectin 0.5%+ Imidacloprid 4.5% EC	2016-3105	Experimental
Htet Thiha Naing Co., Ltd. (09-978071268)					

PESTICIDES TRADE NAME CHANGING					
We, Htet Thiha Naing Co., Ltd. would like to change the trade name of the following products, which Manufactured by Shenzhen Noposion Agrochemicals Co., Ltd. registered under Pesticide Registration Board, Myanmar. If any object or enquiry, please contact to Pesticide Regestration Board, Plant Protection Division Department of Agriculture, Yangon from here to next (2) weeks.					
No	The Old Trade Name	Change to New Trade Name	Active Ingredients	Registration Number	Registration Type
1	Noposion Abamectin 5%EC	HTET MAT TIN	Abamectin 5%EC	2014-1931	Provisional
2	Noposion Emamectin Benzoate 3.4WG	BAN DO	Emamectin Benzoate 3.4%WG	2015-2727	Provisional
3	Noposion Dimethomorph 80WG	HTET METHO	Dimethomorph 80%WG	2015-2731	Provisional
4	Noposion Hexaconazole 25SC	HTET HEXA	Hexaconazole 25%SC	2015-2732	Provisional
5	Noposion Acetamiprid 200 SL	TAR MI NAY TAR	Acetamiprid 200 g/l SL	2015-2734	Provisional
6	Noposion Chlorpyrifos 480EC	FIGHTER FOS	Chlorpyrifos 480g/l EC	2015-2737	Provisional
7	RDF Thiophanate-methyl 500 SC	HTET MATE SWE	Thiophanate-methyl 500 g/l SC	2015-2739	Provisional
Htet Thiha Naing Co., Ltd. (09-978071268)					



The performers will include K-pop group Girls Generation, seen here in the US in 2014. PHOTO: AFP

S Korea musicians to play first concert in North since 2007

SEOUL — K-pop stars will play the first concerts by South Korean artists in the North for more than a decade, officials said on Tuesday, as the dramatic thaw in relations kicked off by the recent Winter Olympics gathers pace. Seoul will send a total of 160 performers to Pyongyang for a four day visit from 31 March to 3 April, according to a statement issued after inter-Korean talks at the border truce village of Panmunjom. The group will include local pop legends Cho Yong-pil and Choi Jin-Hee,

five-member K-pop group Red Velvet and Seohyun, a member of the famous K-pop group Girls' Generation. They will stage the first performances by South Korean acts in the North since 2007. "It was not easy to select songs that are wanted by both sides," Yoon Sang, South Korea's chief delegate to the talks, told a press briefing on Tuesday.

Seoul said the North had invited the art troupe "in order to keep the momentum for peace and reconciliation", which was galvanised by the Winter

Olympics and built on when South Korean special envoys met North Korean leader Kim Jong Un earlier this month. The North sent its own art troupe to South Korea to celebrate the the Olympics last month, with 140 members of the Samjiyon Orchestra staging two performances. Despite the misgivings of some South Koreans, tickets were in high demand, with 156,000 people applying for 530 pairs of available seats. The South Korean troupe will give two concerts, at the 1,500-seat East Pyongyang

Grand Theatre and the Ryugyong Jong Ju Yong Gymnasium, which can accommodate some 12,000 spectators, Yonhap news agency reported. The concerts come ahead of an inter-Korean summit slated for late April at Panmunjom. In 1985, South Korean musicians held their first concert in Pyongyang as part of cultural exchanges.

Following a historic summit between Seoul and Pyongyang in 2000, various Korean singers, including Cho Yong-pil, performed in the North.—AFP ■

It takes hard work to survive: Amitabh Bachchan

JODHPUR — Megastar Amitabh Bachchan has once again shared the details of the grueling schedule of his upcoming film "Thugs of Hindostan".

The 75-year-old actor, who is currently in the city filming the Vijay Krishna Acharaya-directed movie, has been busy with overnight shoots.

"Mornings begin for some ... end for some. Depends how you wish to see them. How else can the pattern of our work be described... it began yesterday in the evening of the day and has just ended in the morning of the today. It takes hard work to survive and breathe," Bachchan wrote on his blog at around 6:00 am today.

The actor recently sparked health concerns when he asked his team of doctors from Mumbai to pay him a visit. There were reports that Bachchan was ill, but the actor and his wife, Jaya, soon confirmed that he was having back and shoulder pain.

Aamir, who stars in the movie along side Bachchan, had revealed that the veteran actor had suffered a back and shoulder injury. The Yash Raj Films project also features Katrina Kaif and Fatima Sana Sheikh.—PTI ■

Feels great to be 40, will continue to challenge gender stereotypes: Rani

MUMBAI — Rani Mukerji on her 40th birthday recalled her journey in Bollywood and the actor said it was not an easy one as she had to prove her worth every single day. The "Hichki" actor has penned a letter on the occasion and thanked all the filmmakers she worked with in the past 22 years for giving her roles that challenged the society norms.

"It feels great to be 40! It feels great to have also worked for 22 years and having been incredibly lucky to get so much love and appreciation. Very rarely do we artists get material that can genuinely cause social change, cause change in attitude and thinking and I have been fortu-

nate enough to get such content multiple times. I truly feel blessed. "I thank all the film-makers who have trusted me with their characters. Your characters, your films, became my identity," Rani said in the letter. Rani said she realised it very late that she was "born to be an actor" and that surviving in the film industry is tough as the actors, especially females, have to justify their existence every day. "I realised very late that I was actually born to be an actor, that I was born to entertain. And I hope I have been able to do just that. As a woman, I must admit, it has not been an easy journey. I had to prove myself everyday. Actresses have to prove

themselves everyday," Rani said. The actor also addressed the stereotypes and myths that prevail and are particularly targeted at female actors in the industry in her letter. "A woman has a short career span, a married woman's equity dies, women are not bankable commodities at the box office, 'female-centric' (I hate this word!!) films are huge risks, a married actress who is also a mother is the final nail in the coffin of her dreams, ambitions and aspirations — these are some of the discriminatory stereotypes that we have to live with and try to overcome every single day," she said. Rani said that contrary to males, female actors are

judged everyday on the basis of their looks, dancing skills, voice and how they carry themselves in public. "For a woman, the disparity with a man is huge and glaring in this industry. We are judged for our looks, our dancing skills, our height, our voice, our acting, how we carry ourselves every time we step out of the house — we have to be the best and yet we are thought to be extremely dispensable. I have been asking my friends to talk about their weaknesses and how they overcame them," she added.

Rani said she wanted to break all such stereotypes in the industry and it was one of the reasons that propelled her to make a

comeback to films after marriage and motherhood. "On my birthday, I cannot skirt these massive 'hichkis' that my fellow actresses and I have faced/face and will face every day." "I have tried to take on this sexist stereotype by coming back to acting after my marriage and motherhood. And I promise you, I will continue working and battling these stereotypes with all my fellow stunning, beautiful, kind and talented actresses and hope to see our society and the film industry mature further," Rani said. Rani said it fills her with joy to see social changes and she wants to "see many more victories for all of us. It's about time.—PTI ■

Eternal noodles: Obama 'bun cha' table encased in Viet Nam

HANOI — The table where former US president Barack Obama famously slurped noodles in downtown Hanoi has been preserved — chopsticks and all — under a glass box for eternity, in a move that has attracted legions of bemused diners to the once low-key eatery.

Bun Cha Huong Lien restaurant, since dubbed “bun cha Obama”, shot to stardom in 2016 when the then-US leader took a break from official duties on a Hanoi visit to enjoy a \$3 bowl of pork noodles with fried spring rolls with globetrotting chef Anthony Bourdain.

Now customers are thronging to the hotspot for a taste of that famous evening.

“I’m very happy to sit near the table where President Obama once sat because I love Obama very much,” office worker Tran Dinh Ha told AFP during the busy lunch rush.

Pictures of Obama and Bourdain’s budding bromance over dinner — filmed for the chef’s CNN series “Parts Unknown”



The glass-encased table where former US President Barack Obama sat with chef Anthony Bourdain at Bun Cha Huong Lien restaurant, now dubbed ‘bun cha Obama’, in Hanoi’s Old Quarter. **PHOTO: AFP**

— quickly went viral, and now plaster the walls of the simple joint in Hanoi’s leafy Old Quarter.

Business has boomed ever since the presidential pork dinner.

But the owner insists she isn’t dining out on the Obama fame and has resisted offers from customers wanting to buy the table, instead freezing the dinnertime tableau for posterity.

“I think it’s appro-

priate to preserve the memory of Mr Obama,” owner Nguyen Thi Lien told AFP, as amused tourists snapped selfies with the encased table, set with clean bowls, plates, chopsticks and condiment jars.

Lien wouldn’t say whether the dishes on display are the ones used by Bourdain and Obama, who she described as “modest and friendly”.

The transparent box is a form of preservation,

and reverence, familiar to Hanoians: Viet Nam’s much-praised revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh is embalmed and encased in glass at his mausoleum in central Hanoi.

Still, not all of Lien’s customers welcomed the stunt with open arms.

“Not sure how I feel about this,” Bourdain said on Instagram under a photo of the table at which he apparently once sat. —AFP ■

Egypt's Pharaonic-style park opens museum on Chinese culture

CAIRO — Egypt’s Pharaonic Village park near the capital Cairo opened on Sunday evening a museum on the Chinese culture and civilization.

The museum starts with a map of China’s provinces based on population distribution, while the center of the main hall contains a model of the Great Wall of China and another one of the Forbidden City, the historical home of many Chinese emperors.

Located on a main street in Giza province, the well-known Pharaonic Village, which tells visitors the history of ancient Egypt through depicting the everyday life of the Pharaohs, seeks to introduce the Chinese culture to its visitors as one of the oldest

civilizations in the world.

“The growing Sino-Egyptian relations in various fields, the amazing rise and development of China, and the desire of Egyptians and Arabs to know more about the Chinese experience are reasons behind the village’s establishment of this museum,” Magdy al-Zayyat, the Pharaonic Village’s general manager, told Xinhua at the opening ceremony.

He added that the Chinese Museum in the Pharaonic Village realizes a dream of the village’s founder Hassan Ragab, who was the first Egyptian Ambassador to China following the establishment of the diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1956.—Xinhua ■

Prince Harry, Markle choose lemon elderflower cake for wedding

LONDON — Meghan Markle, together with her fiancé Prince Harry, has chosen a fellow London-based American, pastry chef Claire Ptak, to make a lemon elderflower cake for their upcoming wedding, the couple announced on Tuesday.

“Prince Harry and Ms Markle have asked Ms Ptak to create a lemon elderflower cake to incorporate the bright flavours of spring,” Kensington Palace, the prince’s official residence in London, said in a statement.

“It will be covered with buttercream and decorated with fresh flowers.”

The pair were “very much looking forward to sharing this cake with their wedding guests,” it added.

California-raised Ptak is a food writer and stylist, recipe developer and consultant, as well as the owner of the small but celebrated Violet bakery in east London. She started the business as a stall on trendy Broadway Market, before

opening her cafe nearby in 2010 with a focus on using high quality, seasonal and organic ingredients.

Ptak had previously worked as a pastry chef under renowned chef Alice Waters at her Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, California.

“I can’t tell you how delighted I am to be chosen to make Prince Harry and Ms Markle’s wedding cake,” she said in the statement.

“Knowing that they really share the same values as I do about food provenance, sustainability, seasonality and most importantly flavour, makes this the most exciting event to be a part of.”

Fellow American Markle, a former actress, used to run her own lifestyle website, and previously interviewed Ptak for her blog.

She and Prince Harry will marry at St George’s Chapel, Windsor Castle, a residence of Queen Elizabeth II’s located west of London, on 19 May.—AFP ■

Over half of Japan’s elderly are now aged 75 or older: gov’t data

TOKYO — Japan’s aging has reached a new level as a government estimate showed on Tuesday people aged 75 or older make up more than half of the country’s elderly population.

The number of the age group was estimated at 17.70 million, eclipsing for the first time the number of people aged 65 to 74, which stood at 17.64 million, according to the Internal Affairs Ministry’s preliminary demographic estimate as of 1 March.

Those aged 75 and older make up 14.0 per cent of the country’s entire population of 126.52 million, with 6.93 million being men and 10.77 million women, the data showed.



File photo taken on 7 March, 2018, shows senior citizens exercising in Funabashi, Japan. The country’s aging has reached a new level as a government estimate showed on 20 March that people aged 75 or older make up more than half of the elderly population. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

The number of people aged 85 or older stood at 5.59 million, of which 1.73 million were men and 3.87 million women.— Kyodo News ■

Myanmar in must-win match against Kyrgyzstan today

IN the third round of AFC Asian Cup qualification, the Myanmar national men's football team will play against Kyrgyzstan today at 12:30pm at Incheon Football Stadium in South Korea.

The Myanmar team has been in Incheon, South Korea since 16 March to train and acclimate.

The official training programme of Myanmar team was followed yesterday amidst falling snow. It was 3 degrees Celsius yesterday in Incheon.

The entrance for today's match will be free for all the fans who attend the match in Incheon. Myanmar television stations MRTV and MWD will broadcast the game live, according to the Myanmar Football Federation.

Myanmar football stars Aung Thu and Kyaw Ko Ko, both of whom play for teams in the Thai' league, will likely participate in today's match.

In qualification games of Group A, India advanced to the next stage after earning 13 points in five matches.

Myanmar and Krygystan will fight for the second runner up position of Group A. Krygystan has gained seven points with two wins, one draw and one loss in four matches, while Myanmar has earned five points with one win, two draws and one loss.

A win today is essential in order for Myanmar to advance to the next stage, said an official from Myanmar Football Federation.—Kyaw Zin Lin ■



Myanmar national football team seen training in Incheon, South Korea. PHOTO:MFF



French international Paul Pogba has struggled for regular game time under Man United manager Jose Mourinho in recent weeks.

PHOTO:AFP

Pogba tantalises with Neymar comments

BUENOS AIRES — Out-of-favour Manchester United midfielder Paul Pogba said it would be a pleasure to play with Paris Saint-Germain's Neymar, whom he described as pure "joy on the pitch" in an interview with an Argentine sports channel on Tuesday.

"Neymar is the definition of joy on the pitch," the French international told Argentina's TyC Sports.

"When I look at him on the pitch, he enjoys playing, with his technique, his ability and all that.

"I love watching him play. He's a different guy, he has his own style. If one day I'm going to play with him, it'll be a pleasure."

He was returning the favour after Neymar said in 2016 that

he admired Pogba's style and would love to play alongside him.

Pogba, despite arriving at United in 2016 for a then world-record fee of £89 million (105 million euros), has fallen out of favour with manager Jose Mourinho, leading to speculation about his future.

France coach Didier Deschamps said "he can't be happy" with his current situation at Old Trafford after the 25-year-old joined up with the squad for Friday's friendly against Colombia.

Neymar, who joined PSG for a world-record 222 million euros (\$264 million) from Barcelona last year, suffered a fractured bone in his right foot last month in a match against Marseille.—AFP ■

Myo Chit Youth, GV Athletic, Zombie won big in MFF Futsal Open Cup

MYO Chit Youth, GV Athletic and Zombie notched double-digit, lopsided wins in Group (A), (B) and (J) matches of the MFF Futsal Open Cup 2018 yesterday at Thuwunna National Indoor Stadium in Yangon.

In Group (A) matches, GV Athletic trounced Monster Hero United by the incredible score of 35-1, while Myo Hla Thida beat MGG by the much closer score of 4-3.

In Group (B) matches, Best

Friends played United to a 4-4 draw, while Zombie earned a big shutout win over YGR Star by a score of 23-0.

In Group (J) matches, Myo Chit Youth beat Montaung by a score of 21-0, while Shwe Myawaddy played to a 2-2 draw with Myoma.

During all of yesterday's matches, a minute of silence was observed to honour Myo Chit Youth futsal team player Chit Minn Aung, who died on

18 March.

Officials also recognised the standout play of individual players from each game played yesterday. The man of the match performance awards were garnered by Aung Myo Thet Tun from Myo Chit Youth, Thura Aung from Shwe Myawady, Hein Thu Aung from GV Athletic, Wai Phyo from Myoma Hla Thida, Chit Thae Aung from United and Nay Lin from the Zombie team.—Kyaw Zin Lin

Surgeon says Neymar's recovery is 'going well'

PARIS — Brazil team doctor Rodrigo Lasmar said that Neymar's recovery from foot surgery "is going well", as the star forward bids to be fit for the World Cup in Russia.

Lasmar, who operated on Neymar on 3 March, said he speaks "two or three time a day" with the physiotherapists working with the Brazil and Paris Saint-Germain player.

"For now, everything is going well, they tell me every detail of Neymar's recovery," Lasmar told French sports daily L'Equipe.

"They are working hard and in a very professional way so that he can return as quickly as possible and, above all, so there won't be any further problems for his foot or posture."

He added that he planned to reassess the injury in mid-April.

Neymar, who missed Brazil's 7-1 semi-final thrashing on home soil by Germany through injury four years ago, is key to his country's hopes at this year's World Cup, which starts on 14 June. At the time of the operation, Lasmar said Neymar would

be out for between "two-and-a-half to three months".

The 26-year-old, who joined PSG for a world-record 222 million euros (264 million) from Barcelona last year, suffered a fractured bone in his right foot last month in a match against Marseille.

Record five-time winners Brazil open their World Cup campaign against Switzerland in Rostov on 17 June, ahead of further Group D matches with Costa Rica and Serbia.—AFP ■