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State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, right, welcomes Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator of the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. **PHOTO: MNA**

State Counsellor receives UN's Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator

STATE Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator of

the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Ms. Ursula Mueller yesterday morning at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they

exchanged views on matters pertaining to humanitarian assistance, including humanitarian programmes to be linked with development, capacity building, education, the empowerment of women and

ways and means to enhance cooperation between Myanmar and the United Nations.

Also present at the meeting was the Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Unexpected thunderstorm hits Yangon

THUNDERSTORMS, lightning, isolated heavy rainfall, and gale-force winds hit Yangon yesterday, knocking down trees, ripping off roofs, causing power outages and dropping temperatures.

"The strong wind hit for 20 minutes. It blew out things from shops," said a vendor in Botahtaung Township.

The strong weather also hit Seikan, Pazundaung, Kyauktada, Pabedan, Dagon and Bahan townships, causing flooding, cutting telephone lines and power cables, ripping off roofs, and uprooting trees.

Branches from trees fell onto cars and confusion occurred due to the unexpected rain and strong wind, but there no reports of deaths or injuries.

The Meteorology and Hydrology Department has warned people to be alert to the possibility of thunderstorms, lightning, isolated heavy falls, gale force winds and hailstones in April and May.—Zaw Gyi ■



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Two new lifts installed at East Gate of Shwedagone Pagoda

TWO lifts at the East Gate of Shwedagon Pagoda have been entrusted to the Pagoda's board of trustees yesterday after the installation process was completed.

The new lifts substitute the old lifts, which were installed in 1996. The new elevators have a capacity for 20 people for each lift and were donated by the Mitsubishi Electric Corporation (MELCO) to ensure the safety of visitors to Shwedagon Pagoda which is 2606 years old.

Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, patron of the Shwedagon Pagoda Board of Trustees U Win Naing and Mr. Sasaki from MELCO launched the occasion of the new lifts by cutting ceremonial ribbons.

Shwedagon Pagoda is a must see location for local and foreigner visitors in Myanmar there are about 80,000 visitors a day on normal days. On days of religious significance, the number of visitors to the pagoda has reached around 200,000.—MDN



Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein and Shwedagon Pagoda Board of Trustees cut ribbons to open two lifts at the East Gate of Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: MDN**

Trees, lamp posts blown off by heavy rain in Nay Pyi Taw

Untimely rainfall blew off power lines and trees in Zabuthiri, Ottarathiri, Pobbathiri, Pyinmana, Dekkhinathiri and Zeyarthisiri townships on 31 March evening. Therefore, electricity supply was cut off in the 33-KV sub-power stations of Nos. 1, 3, 6, 8 in Nay Pyi Taw, and the 33-KV and 11-KV power lines in Pyinmana Township.

Electricity and Energy Deputy Minister Dr. Tun Naing, Permanent Secretary U Tin Maung

Oo and other officials inspected the lamp posts and power lines in Zeyartheikdhi, Pyinnyatheikdhi, Bawgatheikdhi and Mingalartheikdhi wards in Zabuthiri Township, and cleared the fallen trees to prevent traffic congestion. The officials also conducted inspection tours in Nay Pyi Taw general hospital (1,000-bed hospital) to ensure it got uninterrupted power supply, which had been cut during the heavy rainfall.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Guidelines for vehicle drivers to follow during Thingyan

During the 2017 Thingyan there were a total of 357 vehicle accidents which resulted in 759 casualties and 139 fatalities. The accidents mostly happened in Bago Region, Sagaing Region, Mandalay Region, and Ayeyawady Region.

Therefore we urge vehicle drivers during this 2018 Thingyan to follow these guidelines to avoid unnecessary accidents.

1. Avoid driving while intoxicated.
2. Avoid driving over the speed limit and racing.
3. Do not drive a vehicle without a license plate.
4. Do not remove the side doors and back door of the vehicle.
5. Do not drive end-of-life vehicles or vehicles undergoing repairs.
6. Do not drive in the opposite lane.
7. Do not drive tractors or other slow vehicles into the festivities during Thingyan.
8. Do not remove the exhaust pipe from motorcycles, drive noisily, conceal or remove the license plate, carry more than two people, or drive without wearing a helmet.
9. Avoid installing car horns with multiple sound effects.
10. Avoid displaying rude words, inappropriate art, vinyl, or other items on vehicles.—Myanmar Police Force

MRF appeals for rice sector at meeting with vice president, entrepreneurs

By May Thet Hnin

OFFICIALS from the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF) have appealed for an improvement in the rice sector at a meeting between Vice President and entrepreneurs on 2 April.

Last year, a decision was taken to set up an agribusiness service centre in 33 townships. "The government should issue notification letters to facilitate loans from the China EXIM Bank," said U Ye Min Aung, Secretary of MRF.

The centre will provide services such as the sale of pedigree seeds, fertilisers and machinery for land restoration, crop drying and storage services. The centre will also provide technical assistance and contract farming services. The agribusiness service centre will be constructed in the Yangon, Ayeyawady, Bago and Mandalay regions, and Mon, Kayin and Shan states and Nay Pyi Taw. To implement these projects, the Myanmar Agribusiness Public Corporation, MRF and the China International Trust Investment Corporation Group, China's state-run investment company, signed a memorandum of understanding in Nay Pyi Taw in July 2017. They have already submitted a proposal to obtain a US\$400-million loan to implement the projects.

A drying and storage centre will be constructed in 10 states and regions to produce

high-quality rice and sell them at a high price. The MRF also appealed for a fund of Ks15 billion from the Ks60-billion SME loans kept aside for the rice sector in 2018 to implement the activities.

"The storage centre can store rice and beans, depending on the season. The local farmers will be able to receive higher prices for their crops if they have storage facilities, as they will not be compelled to sell their crops due to the lack of a storage centre. Some of the local farmers said the rice traders were purchasing their products at low prices. Therefore, we request the government takes up this issue as a priority," said U Ye Min Aung. The drying and storage centre will be set up in 10 states and regions, barring Chin State, the Taninthayi Region and Nay Pyi Taw. The MRF requested the

Department of Agricultural Research to provide more breeder and foundation seeds, which are long and slender. The MRF also invited private entrepreneurs to cooperate in the production of good quality rice.

Moreover, the MRF has requested a loan from the bank, according to bank procedures, by paying land registration No. 7, to prevent illegal rice trading through the border gate.

"We have requested the government to clamp down on illegal rice trading. The country will incur tax losses if illegal rice trading continues," said U Ye Min Aung. Myanmar exported 3.2 million tonnes of rice, as of 19 March. Myanmar has also intended to export four million tonnes in 2020. Further, it plans to increase rice exports to new markets. ■



This photo taken on 27 December, 2017 shows a farmer working in a rice field on the outskirts of Yangon. **PHOTO: AFP**

“The priority goals of the Union Government I will carry out the implementation of the priority goals of the Union Government which are as follows:

1. Rule of law and improvement of the socio-economic life of the people,
2. National Reconciliation and internal peace,
3. Amending the Constitution which is the foundation for building a Democratic Federal Republic.

(Excerpt from the speech by President U Win Myint at the ceremony to take oath of office at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 30th March 2018)

“Not only in Rakhine State which has received the attention of the world, but in the entire country let us strive collectively for security of mind and body.

(Excerpt from the speech by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the 2nd Anniversary of NLD Government on 1st April 2018)

Meeting held for Nay Pyi Taw Mayor Maha Thingyan Festival

TO successfully organise the 1379 ME Myanmar Traditional Thingyan Festival, a coordination meeting of the steering committee and sub-committees was held in Nay Pyi Taw City Development Committee meeting hall yesterday morning.

Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman, Nay Pyi Taw City Development Committee Chairman, Mayor Dr. Myo Aung attended and delivered a speech.

The meeting was also attended by chairmen and members of the steering committee and sub-committees, Nay Pyi Taw Council member Col Min Naung and U Aye Maung Sein, Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee members U Aye Myint, U Min Thu, Daw Sabe Htway and U Min Thein, Permanent Secretary and heads of departments, officials from Nay Pyi Taw command and Nay Pyi Taw Police Force, officials from Nay Pyi Taw Council, Myanmar Radio and Television, Department of culture, Special Investigation Branch, members of Rakhine Cultural group, Nay Pyi Taw Fire

Brigade, Nay Pyi Taw Police, Nay Pyi Taw traffic police and Shwe Than Lwin Company.

First, Myanmar Traditional Thingyan Festival Steering Committee Chairman, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman, Mayor Dr. Myo Aung delivered an opening speech to successfully organise the Nay Pyi Taw Mayor Maha Thingyan pandal.

Next, chairmen and secretaries of sub-committees and meeting attendees explained the status of preparation and works conducted.

In the townships of Nay Pyi Taw, a total of 22 pandals, including the Nay Pyi Taw Mayor Maha Thingyan pandal, were being constructed and walking Thingyan will also be organised, it is learnt. The opening and closing of the Nay Pyi Taw Mayor Maha Thingyan Festival will be broadcast live by Myanmar Radio and Television. Rakhine nationals in Nay Pyi Taw are also learnt to participate in the festival with a Rakhine traditional Thingyan pandal.—Myanmar News Agency ■



The coordination meeting to organise the 1379 ME Myanmar Traditional Thingyan Festival held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**



Officials from Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement hand over cash aid to pregnant women, children below two years in Maungta yesterday. **PHOTO: AYE MIN THU, KYAW THU WIN**

Cash aid provided for pregnant women, children in Maungta

TO improve their health and nutrition, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement provided cash aid to expecting women and children below two years in Maungta yesterday.

Under the Maternal and Child Cash Transfer (MCCT) programme, the ministry's officials and leaders of the villages provided Ks90,000 for six months to each expecting woman and children below two years in Maungta.

“For the first time, some 2,180 pregnant women were provided Ks45,000 each for three months, amounting to more than Ks70 million. The current programme is being conducted for two times, Second and Third. Earlier, more

than Ks340 million was provided to 3,878 pregnant women in 73 village-tracts of Maungta Township without any discrimination. Health care was also provided to them by the public health department. The aim of the cash programme is to develop the body and brain growth of the child. Our ministry will also participate in receiving returnees. They will be accommodated at reception centres and provided food and other things,” said Ko Kyaw Aung Sein, a person responsible for facilitating the MCCT programme, during the cash aid providing ceremony held in Myoma (east) Ward in Maungta.

“I came to receive the cash aid. I am nine months pregnant. This time, I received Ks90,000

for six months. I am grateful to the officials of the health department and the social welfare department for their support. I will use the cash aid for the newborn's development. It is very convenient, as hospitals and clinics are within our reach,” said Ma Khin Soe Soe, a pregnant woman from Maungta Myoma (east) Ward.

Under the MCCT programme, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement is providing cash aid in Rakhine State, Chin State and the Naga self-administered zone. The ministry is also providing social welfare facilities, especially to vulnerable persons, pregnant women and elderly persons. —Kyaw Thu Win, Aye Min Thu ■

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edited.

Imported Thanakha based cosmetics affecting local Thanakha market

THE local Thanakha market in Myanmar is facing a downturn due to the entrance of Thanakha based cosmetics from abroad, according to the Myanmar Thanakha Planters and Producers Association.

The association has planned to hold workshops on the challenges of the local Thanakha market.

It is the first challenge for local producers in 30 years, local Thanakha planters and producers said.

"We are facing a harrowing experience with the drastic decline of local Thanakha in the market. Myanmar people love Thanakha, so they opt for cosmetics that are labeled as a Thanakha based product whether it really includes Thanakha or not," said U Kyaw Moe, Chairman of the Myanmar Thanakha Planters and Producers Association.

Although Thanakha based cosmetics have entered Myanmar, there are no official pur-



Piles of Myanmar thanakha bark being sold in the market. Thanakha is used as traditional cosmetics. **PHOTO: MYANMAR DIGITAL NEWS**

chases of Thanakha from the association, he added.

"We will demand that the FDA and the Ministry of Commerce allow importing Thanakha based cosmetics only if they can show legal documents of purchasing My-

anmar's Thanakha," he said.

Myanmar's Thanakha Festival was held at the Kyauktawgyi Pagoda in Mandalay on 30 and 31 March where Thanakha wood, stone slabs to grind Thanakha bark, and locally made cosmetics with Thanakha were

displayed.

It is the first festival held in Myanmar, and 30 stalls were opened by Thanakha producers from Shwebo, Ayardaw, Pakokku, Myaing and Yesagyo towns where Thanakha plants are mostly grown.—MDN ■

Noisy motorbike exhausts crushed by road roller in Monywa

NOISY motorbike exhaust pipes seized by local traffic police were destroyed by a road roller vehicle on 1 April at a police station in Monywa Township, Sagaing Region.

The exhausts pipes were seized because their noise levels disrupted the tranquility of the community. Local police undertook a crackdown on 15 February before matriculation

exams commenced, said a traffic police captain from Monywa police station.

There were 225 exhaust pipes that police confiscated between 15 February and 31 March.

"Some bike riders love the loud noise that comes from their motorbikes. They change their bike's muffler in order ramp up the sound while they cruise

around. It is not good for the residents of our community because noise pollution is an assault on people senses and it disturbs the serenity of Monywa. That's why we seized the exhaust pipes," said Police Captain Zaw Win Naing, head of No.111 Traffic Police in Monywa Town.

The crackdown on noisy motorbike exhaust pipes is going to carry on until the end of

the water festival, which begins on 13 April.

"The number of motorbikes with noisy exhaust pipes is decreasing now in Monywa," he added. Police confiscated motorbikes with offensive exhaust systems and riders can claim their motorbikes by installing a new normal exhaust pipe after facing court charges, the traffic police said.—Win Oo ■

The cost of Mandalay City Mahar Thingyan pandal to be reduced nearly Ks fifty million

THE cost of the Mandalay City Mahar Thingyan pandal will be reduced nearly fifty million Kyats this year according to the Mandalay City Development Committee.

"Mandalay City Development Committee spent about 326 million Kyats for the 2017 Thingyan festival. The mayor earmarked a total of 275 million Kyats for the Thingyan festival for this year, nearly 50 million Kyats less than last year. We

reduced the cost for entertainment" said Joint Secretary of City Development Committee U Thet Naing Tun.

Although hiring artists for entertainment was reduced, the Myoma Amateur Musical Instrument Association, the Myanmar traditional Hsaing professional Sein Twint Lwin and the modern orchestra Dream Lover will entertain during the four-day Thingyan festival.—MDN ■



Traditional Thingyan Festival celebrated at Mandalay City Mahar Thingyan pandal in Mandalay in 2017. **PHOTO: MNA**

Muse depot bans artificially ripened mangoes

IN a bid to protect the interests of mango growers, mango sales have been suspended at Muse depot, said U Sai Maung Nyunt, chair of the Muse fruit depot.

According to U Sai Maung Nyunt, a few unscrupulous businessmen have been using artificial chemicals to ripen mangoes quickly, harming the export quality and market share of Myanmar mangoes, he noted.

While mango trade has been suspended at Muse depot, mango growers and exporters will receive awareness training linked with Mandalay fruit grower groups.

“Artificially-ripened mangos are sour. Such fruits have short shelf-lives and lose their quality rapidly. The Diamond Solitaire (Sein Ta Lone) variety dominates the Chinese market. If the mango quality drops, it will ruin the market. Therefore, mango trading was halted at Muse depot, so that low-quality mangoes do not enter the Chinese market,” said

U Sai Maung Nyunt. Most of the mangoes exported to China are from Kyaukse District and Patheingyi Township, Mandalay region. According to the 2017-2018 official data, there are some 24,104 acres of mango farms in Mandalay, producing some 65,970 tonnes of the fruit. Of these, some 21,570 tonnes of mangoes are shipped abroad.

Mango exports do not need an export licence. They need to pass the customs inspection. Chinese merchants have complained about the declining quality of mangoes, said U Sai Maung Nyunt. Diamond Solitaire (Sein Ta Lone) is among the top Myanmar mango varieties in China, followed by local varieties Hinthta and Yin kwe.

Authorities and related organisations will take preventive measures and hold awareness campaigns to ensure artificially-ripened mangoes are not sent to China in April.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay sub-printing house) ■

Beef products to be exported to China

THE Ministry of Commerce has allowed traders to export frozen beef, dried beef and other beef products to China through the Muse 105th mile trading camp.

Besides frozen beef, live oxen have also been authorised for export, said U Yan Nang Tun, Director-General of the Trade Department. Apart from draught cattle, cattle and oxen from commercial farms and manageable farms are also exported. The demand for beef is growing in China each year.

The country imports live cattle with health certificates, said a businessman who owns a medium-sized enterprise.

Currently, there are more than 5 million cattle working in farms in the country, said U Aung Myint Than, Director-General of the Department of Livestock Breeding and Veterinary.

The department has already vaccinated 1.95 million cattle against common diseases, such as the foot-and-mouth disease.—Myat Thu (AMIA) ■



Workers carry rice bags at a jetty in Yangon. PHOTO: GNLM/PHOE KHWAR

Fresh paddy supply brings down price by half at Muse border

By May Thet Hnin

WITH supply exceeding demand, both in China and Myanmar, rice exports to China through the Muse trade channel have dropped by half this harvest season.

“Some 60,000 to 70,000 rice bags were being sent to China. Now, some 30,000 to 40,000 rice bags are being traded,” said U Chan Thar Oo, vice chair of Muse rice commodity depot.

Currently, fresh paddy has entered the market, and so, the demand has gone down with the glut. The prices of summer paddy, including the 90-day crop variety and the Yadana Toe variety, have declined by some Ks1,000 per bag.

The rice market was cool in the same period in the preceding years. Trade is likely to pick up pace in June and July, said U

Numerous rice exporters flock to the border gate hoping to fetch a good price for their summer paddy in May

Chan Thar Oo.

U Than Oo, secretary of Bayintnaung commodity depot, said the export price showed a decline of Ks3,000 compared with last month. Rice prices are likely to increase slightly in the post-Thingyan period.

“Chinese merchants have studied the trends in the Myan-

mar market, including the growing season and harvest time. They deliberately halt their purchases, hoping for lower prices. They have suspended buying for a while to observe the market,” he noted.

Numerous rice exporters flock to the border gate hoping to fetch a good price for their summer paddy in May. However, some rice merchants end up with losses, as Chinese merchants highlight the high moisture content in Myanmar rice.

“Currently, more than 200 accounts of Myanmar businesspersons engaged in the re-export of sugar have been frozen. This has, however, not affected the rice market,” said U Chan Thar Oo.

During the last FY, more than 1 million tonnes of rice and broken rice were sent to China through the Muse gate. ■



GTMH introduces cloud services

Yangon-based Golden TMH (GTMH) launched its cloud-based monetary services for financial institutions yesterday.

At the ceremony held at the Myanmar Banks Association in Yangon yesterday, GTMH, which is owned by Myanmar citizen, explained the cloud computing

services which are the first of its kind in Myanmar.

GTMH linking with two data centres in Myanmar and joining hands with international cyber security experts will provide cyber security services. —Thae Naing Oo (Myanmarsar) ■



The head office of the Central Bank of Myanmar in Nay Pyi Taw.

Two-year Journey of the Central Bank of Myanmar

By Min Min Zaw (Kalay)

THE news team interviewed Central Bank of Myanmar's Governor U Kyaw Kyaw Maung on their second 1-year performance review.

Q: We would like to know the Central Bank of Myanmar's main performances.

A: During the two year term of the incumbent government we have managed a measure of domestic price stability in the country and have also provided financial services to unbanked people in remote areas. In 2013, the Central Bank received more autonomy after the President signed the Central Bank of Myanmar Law. Since then the CBM has been working on monetary stability, financial system stability, and payments and settlement system development.

Q: Can you tell us the results of administering financial stability?

A: We adhere to the reserve money targeting monetary policy framework we have implemented. We have laid down an interest rate policy, minimum reserve requirement, an open market operation, and foreign exchange policy as well.

Q: Could you explain to us about the interest rate policy?

A: Currently, the Central Bank Rate is 10 per cent per annum (pa). The Minimum Bank Deposit Rate is 8pc pa, while the Maximum Bank Lending Rate is 13pc pa. We want the interest rates to reflect the domestic market and not for the policy's sake. The Central Bank will review its interest rate policy based on inflation and the fiscal deficit

Q: Can you explain about the deposit auction?

A: As part of the interest rate policy, if the reserve money increasing rate is greater than the target it is put to deposit auction and the surplus is subtracted. If the reserve money increasing rate is lower than the target it is put to loan auction and the surplus is added. Currently, Myanmar's macro economy is over the target so we have conducted deposit auctions.

Q: How did you stabilize the inflation rate?

A: We try to put the total reserve money and the separate reserve money into our target amount framework. The inflation rate in Myanmar averaged 9.99 per cent in 2015-2016 financial year, 6.81 per cent in 2016-2017 financial year, and dropped to 4.61 per cent on December 2017.

One of the main reasons for inflation is that CBM has to print more money to fill in the government spending. To reduce that, CBM and the Ministry of Planning and Finance have cooperated to hold monthly auctions for treasury bills and treasury bonds to private and state-owned banks.

The first treasury bill auction took place on 28 January 2015 and the first treasury bond auction took place on 20 September 2016.

Q: How have you managed foreign exchange rates?

A: We shifted from a fixed exchange rate system to a managed floating exchange rate system on 1 April 2012. We have daily foreign exchange auction and we issue daily reference exchange rates.

We established the Interbank FX market in August 2013. In March 2016 we have also switched to an electronic reporting system



Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar U Kyaw Kyaw Maung.



Central Bank of Myanmar's officials and Japan Financial Assessment Agency sign a MOU in January 2018 to develop banking sector.

The inflation rate in Myanmar averaged 9.99 per cent in 2015-2016 financial year, 6.81 per cent in 2016-2017 financial year, and dropped to 4.61 per cent on December 2017.

for our bank customers concerning their transactions.

The CBM has taken a number of steps to support the kyat's value and tackle dollarization. One of them includes using the value of the kyat instead of the foreign price value when displaying monetary prices.

Since 10 August 2012, private and public banks have been granted authorized dealer license and money changer license while non-bank entities are

granted only the money changer license. Money changers are permitted to deal American USD, the Euro, Singapore dollar, Thai Baht, and Malaysian Ringgit. As of 13 March 2018 we have issued 95 money changer licenses and subsequently opened 425 money changing counters.

Q: Can you tell us what CBM's king system has done to grow?

A: In July 2017 we put in

place new regulations to align Myanmar's banking standards with international Basel II standards.

It requires financial institutions to maintain enough cash reserves to cover risks incurred by operations.

Domestic banks will not be allowed to take on financial exposure to a single individual or entity of more than 20% of its core capital.

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In two years, inflation rate has been cut in half

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Q: Have there been any reductions on regulations?

A: Again in 2017 we aimed to help manage local banks' exposure to non-performing loans as risks rise in the financial sector. Banks are now required to convert all their outstanding overdrafts into term loans with a maximum maturity of up to three years. The banks must also submit a term loan management framework approved by the board of directors to the CBM.

Q: What has CBM done for financial inclusion?

A: The Central Bank of Myanmar has permitted private banks to open branches in different regions and states for all the country's citizens to have access to the developing banking sector. We also permitted mobile banking and mobile financial services from banks and non-bank entities.

For the public to obtain bank services with ease, Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) permitted private banks to expand and open branches. As of end March 2016 there were a total of 1,247 bank branches and during the two-year period 24 private banks had opened 386 more bank branches and at the present there are 1,653 bank branches country wide.

In order to do banking works easily as trade and investment increase with foreign countries, permission was granted to nine foreign banks to open branches in 2015. During 2016, four more foreign banks were permitted to open branches bringing the total of foreign bank branches to (13).

With an aim for mobile operators to provide financial services in addition to banks and financial institutions, two network operators and one non-bank finan-



CBM employees use the ST 305 model to count cash notes.

cial institution were permitted to provide mobile financial service.

Q: What has been done to combat money laundering and terrorist financing?

A: CBM is working together with partner organisations to conduct Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) processes. It has drawn up a national level strategy and is cooperating with relevant departments and ministries including Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Planning and Finance and Union Attorney General Office to amend the Anti-Money Laundering law.

Q: Explain about works done to develop financial payment and clearance system.

A: Starting from 5 January 2016, CBM and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is continuing the implementation of second phase technical assistance program for the CBM-NET (RTGS) System to be in line with International Standard.

Starting from February 2018 CBM and Internal Revenue Department worked together for tax payers who had an account in any banks to use the Customer Credit Transfer Function in the CBM-Net System to pay tax online to

Internal Revenue Department account in Myanmar Economic Bank and its branches.

Q: What is the status of co-operating with international organisations?

A: CBM is working together with International Monetary Fund, World Bank as well as South East Asian Central Banks Centre – SEACEN Centre for banking sector development. Furthermore it is cooperating with countries in the region for the ASEAN Financial Integration process and ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, Korea) Financial Cooperation.

Q: What are measures taken to prevent losses from crypto-currency?

A: Crypto-currency is not a currency backed by gold or any other similar things but a digital currency that is created from mathematical algorithm based on cryptography.

Of the many Crypto-currencies in use, Bitcoin is the most used. Some countries had established regulations to prevent losses from using Bitcoin and other crypto-currency. Japan had defined the payment by Bitcoin and other Crypto-currencies as payment with non-legal currencies according to Japan's Service



Employees have access to the CBM's private library.

Act (2016). Central Bank of China had permitted private organisations to trade Bitcoin but starting from 5 December 2013, financial institutions like bank are prohibited from doing it.

An announcement ought to be made against investing and persuading to invest in crypto-currencies including Bitcoin.

In September 2014, Central Bank of Bangladesh has announced that Virtual Currency users are breaking the Anti-money Laundering Law and are liable to be prosecuted.

Central Bank of India had announced that license was not given to any organisation or company and no one had been given the authority to use Virtual Currencies including Bitcoin. On 13 January 2018, Indonesia Central Bank had designated

Virtual Currencies including Bitcoin as non-legal currencies and Malaysia Central Bank also didn't recognize it as legal currency. Monetary Authority of Singapore has issued advisories to warn members of the public of the risk of investing in Bitcoin as it is not a legal currency and the high possibility of losses in trading it.

In 2016, a company in Myanmar had started to encourage the public to invest and use S-Coin and upon learning of this CBM had issued a notice to banks on 22 December 2016 to increase Customer Due Diligence (CDD) for anyone who contact and work with the bank.

On 9 June 2017, banks were cautioned to follow the guidelines and instructions for AML/CFT processes and to report to the Financial Intelligence Unit if any suspicious financial transaction is found. The banks were also warned that if a bank is found to be used for AML/CFT activities, management action will be taken against it.

Announcement ought to be made against investing and persuading to invest in Crypto-currencies including Bitcoin. The announcement should include the fact that doing so is against the rules and regulations on AML/CFT. Hardware and software for Crypto-currency usage and trade should be banned and websites, mobile software and other intermediary services should be banned and controlled.

The matter of Crypto-currency was discussed in the CBM Board of Directors' Meeting held in 23 February 2018 where a decision was made to report to the President Office and seek permission to make an announcement of not recognizing the usage of Crypto-currency. CBM is continuing the main works and responsibilities to achieve its principal aim. Thank you. ■
(Translated by Chris and ZM)



The Audit Department of Central Bank of Myanmar.



Employees shred and dispose of old worn out paper currency.

Cooperation is key for development of private sector

OUR country's economy will rise only when the private sector develops. Ninety per cent of the country's economy is in the private sector and 99 per cent are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

Some 230 obstacles faced by the businesses were answered by the relevant Ministries, states/regions governments and the five work committees.

In the export sector, a record value of more than \$14 billion was reached through the export of rice, cereal, raw rubber and garments. Some 3.52 million tonnes of rice were exported.

At the meeting with Vice President U Myint Swe in Yangon on Monday, businessmen from private industries dealing with rice, fish, sugar and sugarcane products and peas and beans reported to the Vice President about the obstacles they were facing and requested the government to assist them.

Upgrading of the fish and prawn farming industry, which is likely to help grow GDP rate in a short time, would be up-

graded by the private sector in attempts to reach a target of US\$2 to 3 billion income from the export of fish and prawn within or two years.

To upgrade the infrastructures in the fish and prawn industry, experts from Indonesia, Taiwan and China will be hired to work with Myanmar workers and the process would create more than 100,000 job opportunities.

Meanwhile, the decline of prices for peas in the price of peas has hit Myanmar farmers hard this year, eroding their confidence to grow the crops again next year. The traders have urged the government to assist them in finding more export markets for peas.

For the rice industry, the traders sought help from the government to get loans from a foreign bank to establish an Agribusiness Services Centre (ASC) and to set aside more than Ks15 billion for SMEs in the rice industry in 2018.

The government has also invited the private sector to cooperate with the government in its efforts to ease rules, promote small and medium enterprises, development the trade sector, provide vocational training and build infrastructure. To gain a quick win in solving these issues, the government has arranged to hold the private-public dialogues to discuss the issues presented by the businessmen if the responses to them by the ministries concerned are thought to be inadequate.

Cooperation between government and the private sector is sine qua non for country-wide private sector development.



Residents collect drinking water from a lake in Dala township located outside Yangon city. PHOTO: AFP



People carrying buckets of water in Dala township on the outskirts of Yangon. PHOTO: AFP

Utilization of Water Resources in Myanmar

By Min Khant Soe (Zayar Myay)

MYANMAR is primarily an agricultural country and the economy of the nation is also mainly depends on the agricultural products. To increase the agricultural productions for the rising demand of a growing population, double crop cultivation of paddy rice and other crops has been introduced by implementing the large-scale irrigation systems. In the large irrigation system the proper water management system is essential to develop the effective use of water resources.

Geography

Myanmar has a total area of 676 590 km² and the country's southern coastline lies on the Andaman Sea and to the southwest the Bay of Bengal, it is bordered by Bangladesh to the west, India to the northwest, China to the northeast and Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand to the east.

Geographically, Myanmar can be divided into five regions which are the northern and western mountains, the eastern plateau (Shan plateau), the central basin and coastal strip. The country is mountainous, rising to more than 5 800 m above sea level in the far north, and reaching an elevation of well over 2,000 m over much of Shan state in the northeast, and

in Rakhine and Chin states in the west.

In Myanmar the cultivated areas are concentrated in the Ayeyarwady river basin, while potential for further expansion lies mainly in Upper Myanmar; in the Chin, Kachin and Shan states.

Climate

Myanmar has a tropical monsoon climate and the rainfall is highly seasonal, and being concentrated in the hot humid months of the southwest monsoon. In contrast, the northwest monsoon is relatively cool and almost entirely dry. The annual rainfall is around 2 341 mm and 90 per cent of the discharge flows between May and October.

Water resources

Myanmar is endowed with abundant water resources. Therefore the north-south direction of Myanmar's mountain ranges is reflected in the flow of its major rivers, of which two are international. There are many river basins: the Ayeyarwady-Chindwin river basin, the Sittoung river basin, the Thanlwin river basin, Rakhine coastal basin and the Tanintharyi coastal basin respectively.

Two Major Natural Lakes

There are two major natural lakes which are the Inle Lake and the Indawgyi Lake. The largest is known as the Inle Lake in Shan state and the Indawgyi Lake in Kachin state. The background history of the Irrigation and Water Utilization has improved in Myanmar.

Indawgyi Lake

Indawgyi Lake is one of the largest inland lakes in Southeast Asia. It is located in Mohnyin Township in the Kachin State of Myanmar. The lake measures 13 kilometers (8.1 mi) east to west, and 24 kilometers (15 mi) north to south. There are over 20 villages around the lake.

The Indawgyi Lake is a biosphere reserve which is a unique kind of protected area that differs from a national park, wilderness area, national forest, or wildlife refuge in having three very different,

but equal, aims: conservation of genetic resources, species, and ecosystems; scientific research and monitoring; and promoting sustainable development in communities of the surrounding region. Both the Indawgyi Lake and the Inle Lake are listed as biosphere reserves in Myanmar.

The lake is about 24 kilometers long and about 10 kilometers wide and it is surrounded by hills covered with forest. The biosphere reserve is an area of 133,715 hectares that includes the lake and the surrounding wetlands and forest to a distance of about 15 kilometers.

Inle Lake

The Inle Lake is a freshwater lake located in the Nyaungshwe Township of Shan State. It is the second largest lake in Myanmar with an estimated surface area of 44.9 square miles. The watershed area for the lake lies to a large extent to the north and west of the lake. The main business in this region is agriculture with the floating gardens. Due to its picturesque siting and diverse fauna, combined with the unique lifestyles and traditions of human inhabitants, the lake is considered as one of the primary tourist destinations in Myanmar. The Inle is not only designated as the 190th World's Eco-region but also nominated as one of the fresh water biodiversity hotspots.

Water resource and utilization

Myanmar is rich in water resources and the catchment area of Myanmar's rivers comprises about 737800 km². Potential water resources volume is about 1082 km³ for surface water and 495 cubic km for groundwater, as well constitute national water resources annually.

As an agro-base country of Myanmar, water utilization for agricultural sector stands for 90% while industry and domestic use is only about 10% of the total water use. The total utilization of the nation's water resources is only about 5 percent of the potential. It is clear that the physical potential for further development of water resources in Myanmar is quite substantial.

However with the increase of population and enhanced need for water for economic activities, there is increasing pressure on use of surface water and extraction of groundwater. Control and management of surface water and groundwater is therefore important for sustainable development of the country in future.

Irrigation and water reservoirs

Most of the irrigation reservoirs were sited on the tributaries and streamlets of main water resources. Consequently while not impeding or hindering the flow of main water resources, the impact of the dams on environment have also been negligible. Similarly no major reservoirs that could impede flow have been constructed in the catchment of the Ayeyarwady River, which is Myanmar's main water channel.

Consumption of storage water from reservoir is not only for the irrigation but also for drinking purpose. Analysis of water quality from most of reservoirs is carried out, and most of the results show water quality of storage reservoir is suitable for agriculture purpose.

Utilization of water resource management

It is needed for the authority concerned to raise awareness to the public through education and to convey the importance of water resources for the economic, social and all-round development of all the sectors.

Therefore concerted efforts should be made to get clean drinking water. We should be aware of the global water-shortage caused by ground water over-pumping and aquifer depletion. The adequate treatment of waste-water is required and it is a solution to this problem.

Whatever it is, it is better to make efforts for implementation of solving water issues such as acquisition of adequate water supply, valuation of water, protection from floods and storms, conservation of water resources with systematic management in the long run.

Translated by Win Ko Ko Aung

How will Myanmar SMEs develop?

By Yin Aw

Exploring the challenges

Even though Myanmar has adopted the Small and Medium Enterprise Law, the availability of finance in starting up SMEs, administering and running them has been a challenge. Obstacles include the difficulty in acquiring financial capital and high interest rates for loans. Experts have pointed out that the Central Bank of Myanmar should have developed its monetary policy to reduce the interest rate. The monetary policy of Central Bank is implementing the reserve money targeting so that inflation or stability of prices can be maintained. Short-term loans, high interest rates, insufficient financial support and incapability to show collaterals for borrowing money are still barriers in running SMEs. A standardization committee is needed to set appropriate standards in order to produce standard goods.

Good cash flow

Developing bank function, private businesses and trading all play important roles to have good flow of investment and capital. It is very crucial to have a chance to compete in a free market for SMEs owners. In order to have free market system, SMEs sector should be prioritized. On the other hand, while the government has been carrying out the rightful economic policy, SMEs should be more encouraged. SMEs and banks rely on each other.

With the support of Central bank of Myanmar, the higher the qualities of the private banks are, the stronger the SMEs are. As the ASEAN Economic Community has emerged, the local banks are trying to keep abreast with other banks of ASEAN countries, improving their financial services is essential. Those who are willing to establish businesses without enough capital, those who have entrepreneurship, those who have capacities, those who know the nature of business and those who are confident with their business have access to the loans with their business plans.

SMEs can earn higher amount of income as compared than that of the interest rate they had to pay back when they profit. Risk Management Department of the bank should have to make assessments on the project proposed by SMEs in the case of project based lending. Evaluation on the competency of SMEs is a part of risk management. Credit Bureau and its regulation are needed for the banks to be able to provide loans. The promising SMEs should have been overviewed by banks for the loans access. Nowadays, it can be seen that the government is offering loans for SMEs development through state banks while taking the loans from international financial institution.

Project Appraisal teams have to visit to the ground places in order to check and monitor the SMEs. It depends on SMEs to create job opportunities and to fulfill the economic needs for state building process. It is learnt that Agriculture and high technology are the highlighted sectors for long term. To classify the prioritized sectors is needed. Myanmar SMEs should be aware of avoiding cooperate low competent businesses while large amount of goods imported by neighboring countries have been widely spread at the local market.

Being a country located between two densely populated countries, SMEs need to be developed to enhance agriculture exports which are the most important export items. In order to increase the agriculture exports not only the capitals but also technology, skills and labor resources are essential. SMEs would not become developed if the own interests of few people are prioritized with the aim of protection national interest. —Translated by Wintlae Aung ■



Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko visits Mway Taw Kakku Pagoda (complex) in Kakku Village Tract, near Inle Lake yesterday. **PHOTO: SAI THAN KYAW (TAUNGGYI)**

Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko donates cash to Mway Taw Kakku Pagoda (complex)

UNION Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko donated cash to Mway Taw Kakku Pagoda (complex) in Kakku Village Tract, Kyauktalonegyi Town (near Inle Lake), yesterday morning. The cash donation was for the maintenance of the cluster of pagodas in the Mway Taw Kakku Pagoda (complex).

The pagodas in the complex

were damaged from natural disasters. Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko donated Ks2.5 million to the secretary of the pagoda trustee. Some 1,038 pagodas were damaged, while 399 have already been repaired. At least four are still under repair, while 160 still require the pagoda umbrellas to be hoisted above them. A total of 475 pagodas still have to

be repaired. Also present at the cash donation ceremony were Shan State Minister for Bamar Ethnic Affairs Dr. Aung Than Maung, the Director-General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Assistant Directors, the State Religious Affairs Director, the Mway Taw Kakku Pagoda trustee and other guests. — Sai Than Kyaw (Taunggyi) ■



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with Mr Lee Sang-hwa, Korean Ambassador to Myanmar in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Korean Ambassador to Myanmar

SENIOR GENERAL Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, received Korean Ambassador to Myanmar Lee Sang-hwa at Bayint Naung Guesthouse in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting, matters related to the status of the

peace process in Myanmar, cooperation between the armed forces of the two countries in defence matters, and cooperation for the development of Myanmar's agricultural sector and other economic sectors were discussed. — Myanmar News Agency ■

F-7 jet from Toungoo Air Base crashes during training

THE F-7 jet from Toungoo Air Base Headquarters crashed 3 miles to the west of the airfield after reaching an altitude of some 500 metres. It was conducting a training flight.

A search and rescue team from Toungoo Air Base found the remains of the aircraft between Kyunkone Village and North Ye Kyi Village near Taungoo. The pilot, Major Arkar Win, was able to eject from the plane and deploy an emergency parachute, after which he was taken to a military hospital in Toungoo for treatment of the wounds he



PHOTO: MNA

suffered while ejecting from the plane. However, he succumbed to the injuries shortly after be-

ing treated at the hospital. An investigation is being conducted into the crash. — MNA ■

Isolated to scattered rain or thundershowers expected in Bago, Taninthayi regions

Isolated to scattered rainfall or thundershowers are expected in the Bago and Taninthayi regions, as well as in Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Kayin and Mon states, as it is slightly cloudy over the North Bay and West Central Bay, and partly cloudy over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Ben-

gal, according to the Myanmar Daily weather report issued by the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology yesterday evening.

The forecast for Yangon, Mandalay and the neighbouring areas for today is isolated rain or thundershowers, and the degree of certainty is 100

per cent, while the forecast for Nay Pyi Taw and the neighbouring area for today is rainfall or thundershowers, and the degree of certainty is 100 per cent. Seas will be slight to moderate in Myanmar's waters. The wave height will be some 3-5 feet off and along Myanmar coast. — GNLM ■

New homes, support for Muslims

THE Maungtau Township administrator presented new houses, food and utensils to Muslim households in the Maungtau region Pantawpyin Village Tract, Ywathit Village, yesterday afternoon.

Some 22 Muslim households from this village were provided with new houses, necessary provisions such as rice, cooking oil, food, clothing, blankets, mosquito nets, kitchen utensils such as pots, cups and plates, and solar lamps in Ywathit Vil-

lage by Maungtau Township Administrator U Myint Khaing and a delegation. The village administrator and other families accepted the gifts.

Pantawpyin Village had been burnt in a terror incident. Later, the government cleared the land, and the Yangon Region government constructed 22 new houses. Each house has a sturdy fence around it, a bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, toilet and a hand-powered water pump. — Kyaw Thu Win, Aye Min Thu ■



PHOTO: KYAW THU WIN, AYE MIN THU

Yangon Investment Forum 2018 to be held in May

By May Thet Hnin

In a bid to boost foreign investments, the Yangon Investment Forum 2018 will be held on 9 May, said Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein.

He made the announcement during the 16th regular meeting of Vice President U Myint Swe with Myanmar entrepreneurs last Monday at the office of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI).

“The Yangon region government receives enquiries from foreign investors, and some are heavy enterprises with many affiliated companies. We will focus on those enterprises within three years,” said U Phyo Min Thein.

The forum will provide information about customs regulations, tax relief or exemption. Also, existing investment sectors and other investment opportunities will be revealed.

“We will suggest new industrial zones and provide information on the labour market situation. The effort to enhance foreign investments is the first priority of the Yangon region government,” he noted.

The Myanmar Investment

Law and Myanmar Companies Law have been amended in the incumbent government's period. Moreover, the new Myanmar Investment Law will provide tax relief to investors depending on the developments made in the regions and states. Investors in remote areas can enjoy a tax break of seven years.

U Aung Naing Oo, director-general of Myanmar Investment Commission, said the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) will organise the investment forum.

Currently, 60 per cent of foreign investments are made in the Yangon region. Mandalay attracts 30 per cent of the investments. Other regions and states obtain only a small portion of the investments, according to statistics released by DICA.

There are more than 5,800 foreign enterprises in Myanmar, with capital mostly flowing into the manufacturing sector. This is followed by the real estate and other service sectors.

Investments worth US\$5,300 million were made in the country, as of a month prior to the end of the 2017-2018 fiscal year. Singapore is the largest investor in Myanmar.

72 villages may face water shortage in Mandalay

THE Mandalay Region Rural Development Department is planning to provide water to 72 villagers in 13 townships, which could face water shortage problems, said U Aye Min Naing, Assistant Director of the Rural Area Development Department.

Last year, the Mandalay Region Rural Development Department spent Ks7.2 million to provide water to 98 villages. This year, the department submitted a proposal to the union government on the budget for the local people.

“Previously, we dug for groundwater in some villages. However, the groundwater seems to have dried up. We will distribute water to the villages through fire engines, water container vehicles and private vehicles. This year, the Mandalay Region government

will dig water ponds,” said U Aye Min Naing.

The department has collected data of the villages that could face water shortage this year. These are six villages in Thabeikkyin Township, three villages in Kyaukse Township, seven villages in Tada-U Township, one village in Myitha Township, four villages in Meiktila Township, 10 villages in Ma Hlaing Township, three villages in Wundwin Township, 11 villages in Thazi Township, one village in Myingyan Township, five villages in Ngatogyi Township, nine villages in Pyawbwe Township, one village in Nyaung U Township and three villages in Kyaukpadaung Township. The Mandalay region government dug 43 water ponds by spending Ks352.6 million in the 2017-2018 fiscal year.—Khine Sat Wai



in
Picture

Unexpected thunderstorm hits Yangon

Residents clear havoc in Yangon after the Thunderstorms, lightning, isolated heavy rainfall, and gale-force winds hit the city. PHOTO: ZAW GYI (NEWS ON PAGE 1)

Rakhine Government receives US Senate Committee member, party

The Rakhine State Government received a US delegation, led by Charlotte B. Oldham-Moore, senior professional staff member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, at the State Government's office in Rakhine State yesterday afternoon.

At the meeting, they discussed matters related to the

resettlement of returnees, the status of preparation at the reception and transit centres for the returnees, international aid for reconstruction works, monthly information gathering trips by local and foreign media to Maungdaw region, the construction of houses for people in the IDP camps, and the aid provided by the United Nations

(UN) and the international non-governmental organisations (INGO) in the state.

During their visit to Rakhine State, the US delegation also met with representatives of political parties, officials from the UN and INGO, and Muslims in Thet Kal Pyin Village and Aung Mingalar Ward.—Tin Htun (IPRD) ■



The US delegation, led by Charlotte B. Oldham-Moore are seen at the meeting with Rakhine State Government in Sittway, Rakhine yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Israel cancelling deal with UN on African migrants: Netanyahu



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks to the press at the MP's Jerusalem office on 2 April, 2018. **PHOTO: AFP**

JERUSALEM — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday he was cancelling an agreement with the UN refugee agency on resettling thousands of African migrants after facing mounting pressure from his right-wing base.

Netanyahu had himself announced the agreement in a televised address on Monday afternoon, drawing immediate anger from right-wing politicians, including allies, and many of his traditional supporters.

He said in a late-night

Facebook post on Monday he was suspending the agreement that would have allowed thousands of the migrants to remain in Israel at least temporarily.

On Tuesday, he said the deal was being cancelled after having held discussions on it. "After having heard numerous comments on the agreement, I have examined the pros and cons and have decided to cancel the agreement," Netanyahu said in a statement. The agreement was designed to end the possibility of forced deportations of thousands of mi-

grants to Rwanda under a controversial plan put forward by Netanyahu in January. Under the agreement with the UN, a minimum of 16,250 migrants would have instead been resettled in Western nations.

In return, Israel would grant temporary residency to one migrant for each one resettled elsewhere. The presence of the primarily Sudanese and Eritrean migrants in Israel has become a key political issue. Netanyahu is already under heavy political pressure due to a string of graft probes.—AFP ■

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR

MANDALAY REGION GOVERNMENT MANDALAY CITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MANDALAY URBAN SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (MUSIP)

Invitation for Prequalification

Invitation for Prequalification No: MYWS/10.0 /01

Contract No: MYWS/10.0

Contract Title: New Water Treatment Plant and Associated Pipeline Work

1. Mandalay City Development Committee, Mandalay Urban Services Improvement Project, intends to implement a New Water Treatment Plant and Associated Pipeline Work under financing from Agency of French Development.
2. Mandalay City Development Committee now invites applicants to submit sealed prequalification documents for Design and Build of New Water Treatment Plant and Associated Pipeline Work to be constructed in Mandalay.
3. Bidding will be conducted through the International Competitive Bidding (ICB) procedures as specified in the AFD Procurement Guidelines. The bidding documents shall be addressed only to the prequalified eligible firms following the evaluation result of the prequalification.
4. Interested firms may obtain the prequalification documents (PQD) from Project Manager, Project Management Office (MUSIP), Mandalay City Development Committee, pmomusip@gmail.com during office hours 9:30 to 16:30hr at the address given below starting from 2nd April 2018.
5. Application for prequalification must be delivered to the address below on or before local time 16:00hr, 31st May 2018. Electronic application of prequalification will not be permitted. Late application will be rejected.
6. A site visit and prequalification meeting will be held tentatively from 10:00hr until 12:00hr on 27th April 2018, at Mandalay City Development Committee Meeting Hall.
7. The address referred to above paragraph 4 and 5 is:

Attention : Project Manager
Project Management Office (MUSIP)
26th street between 71st and 72nd street
Mandalay City Development Committee
The Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Telephone : +95 261631

Email : pmomusip@gmail.com

Britain to ban ivory sales

LONDON — Britain will ban sales of ivory in a bid to help preserve the world's dwindling elephant population, the government announced on Tuesday.

The ban covers ivory items of all ages, with an unlimited fine or five years in jail the maximum penalty for breaching the ban.

The decision, which must be approved by parliament, comes after a consultation in which 88 percent of the 70,000 respondents were in favour of such a ban.

"Ivory should never be seen as a commodity for financial gain or a status symbol, so we will introduce one of the world's toughest bans on ivory sales to protect elephants for future generations," Environment Secretary Michael Gove said.

"The ban on ivory sales we will bring into law will reaffirm the UK's global leadership on this critical issue, demonstrating our belief that the abhorrent ivory trade should become a thing of the past." Britain said the international illegal wildlife trade was estimated to be worth up to £17 billion (\$24 billion, 19.5 billion euros).

The number of elephants has declined by almost a third in the last decade and around 20,000 a year are still being slaughtered due to the



Britain said the international illegal wildlife trade was estimated to be worth up to £17 billion (\$24 billion, 19.5 billion euros). **PHOTO: AFP**

global demand for ivory, it added.

Commercial trade in raw ivory is already illegal in Britain. The incoming ban has some exemptions: items with less than 10 per cent ivory made prior to 1947; musical instruments with less than 20 per cent ivory made before 1975, and portrait miniatures painted on thin slivers of ivory and which are at least 100 years old. Commercial activities between accredited museums are also exempt, while exemption permits can be sought for items more than a century old assessed as being among the rarest of their type. The ban was welcomed by non-governmental organisations. Charlie Mayhew, chief executive of the Tusk Trust charity, said it was a "clear message to the world that the illegal wildlife trade will not be

tolerated and every effort will be made to halt the shocking decline in Africa's elephant population in recent years".

World Wildlife Fund chief executive Tanya Steele said around 55 African elephants were being killed for their ivory every day. "If we want to stop the poaching of this majestic animal, we need global action," she added.

"We hope the UK will continue to press countries where the biggest ivory markets are, most of which are in Asia, to shut down their trade too." Matthew Hatchwell, conservation director at the Zoological Society of London, said: "No one in the UK today would dream of wearing a tiger-skin coat. Thanks to this move, in a few years' time we believe the same will be true for the trade in ivory." —AFP ■

India withdraws controversial 'fake news' order after backlash

NEW DELHI — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday reversed an order to punish journalists found guilty of reporting "fake news", after an outcry over a perceived government crackdown on the press.

The media sanctions, issued late Monday, stated that the government would withdraw the official accreditation of any journalist responsible for repeated reporting of "fake news".

India is the latest government to act against what it calls "fake news". Malaysia is passing a law allowing for up to six years in jail for publishing allegedly misleading information.

The government said it needed to curb the spread of misinformation in the media. But Modi's

office rescinded the directive just hours later amid allegations India's vibrant press was being muzzled.

"PIB (Press Information Bureau) Press release titled 'Guidelines for Accreditation of Journalists amended to regulate Fake News' issued on 2 April 2018 stands withdrawn," the information and broadcasting ministry said in a statement on Tuesday.

Under the withdrawn guidelines from the ministry, a first offence would have led to a six-month suspension of government accreditation.

A second case would attract a year's suspension followed by a permanent withdrawal for a third offence.

About 2,000 journalists with leading Indian media have a Press Information Bureau card from the in-



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has withdrawn an order clamping down on "fake news". **PHOTO: AFP**

formation ministry, which eases access to government departments and ministries.

The Indian Express newspaper in a front-page headline on Tuesday said,

"In the name of fake news, govt frames rules to blacklist journalists."

"Move comes in election year," it added.

Several journalists and activists, while ac-

knowledging the problem of fake news, criticised the government intervention.

Audrey Truschke, assistant professor of South Asian history at Rutgers University in the United

States, called the sanctions "a shocking and unacceptable attack" on freedom of the press in India.

"It's not about #fake-news. Rather, it's about controlling a notably vibrant press that often sheds light where those in power would prefer darkness," Truschke posted on Twitter.

"Accreditation is not essential to the practice of free journalism but to me this debate is Trumpian in its othering of the media as enemy," Barkha Dutt, a veteran Indian journalist and editor of the Mojo digital news platform, told AFP.

"I don't deny that fake news is a hugely valid concern and the media should take steps to weed it out," she said, adding self-regulating industry bodies, not the government, should decide penalties.—AFP ■

New standards for journalists to fight fake news

PARIS, France — Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and leading broadcasters launched a drive against fake news on Tuesday with a new set of trust and transparency standards for journalists.

The Journalism Trust Initiative (JTI), which hopes to be able to certify outlets and news sources with high standards of ethical norms and independence, is being backed by Agence-France Presse, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and the Global Editors Network.

RSF head Christophe Deloire said the idea was that search engines and social media platforms would give preferential treatment in their algorithms to media outlets that met the standards.

He hopes that it will lead to the setting up of a "trusted media label" in a world increasingly assaulted by fake news.

The drive with the

EBU, the world's top alliance of public broadcasters, aims to set news standards from individual bloggers to large international media groups.

"In the new public arena in which false information circulates faster than real news, the defence of journalism requires reversing this trend by giving a real advantage to all those who reliably produce news and information, whatever their status," Deloire said.

"We have devised a self-regulatory mechanism based on a global analysis of the news and information, one that makes it possible to combine ethical with economic concerns.—AFP ■

"Confirmation of Date of Birth"

The Date of Birth of Ma Ya Min Thu, daughter of U Mya Thein, holding national citizenship scrutiny card No.7/Tha-Wa-Ta (N) 105677 is 7 July 1982.

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V CAPE FLORES VOY. NO. (084N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V CAPE FLORES VOY. NO. (084N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 4-4-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA SHIPPING LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V SOUL OF LUCK VOY. NO. ()

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SOUL OF LUCK VOY. NO. () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 4-4-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V SHAHR E KORD VOY. NO. (ISC1082E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SHAHR E KORD VOY. NO. (ISC1082E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 4-4-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S LAND & SEA LOGISTICS

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V MCC SHANGHAI VOY. NO. ()

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MCC SHANGHAI VOY. NO. () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 4-4-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

'Ready Player One' more-than-ready atop box office

LOS ANGELES — Steven Spielberg's high-octane futuristic homage to films of the 1980s, "Ready Player One," debuted in top spot at the North American Easter Weekend box office, industry data showed on Monday.

The film about a teenage gamer, who finds himself inside an addictive virtual reality world in the year 2045, scored \$41.8 million in its opening weekend, industry tracker Exhibitor Relations said.

Starring Tye Sheridan as the gamer Wade Watts, the all-star support cast features Olivia Cooke, Ben Mendelsohn, TJ Miller and Simon Pegg.

Reviewers have framed "Ready Player One" — in which Wade encounters 1980s pop culture icons including Freddy Krueger — as something of a cinematic autobiography for Spielberg, the veteran director of a number of successes including



Veteran director/producer Steven Spielberg at the Hollywood world premiere of his sci-fi epic "Ready Player One". **PHOTO: AFP**

"ET" and "Jaws."

Another newcomer, Lionsgate thriller "Tyler Perry's Acrimony," displaced Marvel's box office juggernaut "Black Panther" at number two, with \$17.2 million

in receipts over the three-day weekend. The film stars Tarezi P. Henson as a vengeful wife. At third place, "Black Panther" pulled in \$11.5 million, bringing its cumulative total to \$650.9 million

in the US and Canada.

The Marvel smash hit, starring Chadwick Boseman, Michael B Jordan and Lupita Nyong'o, had already overtaken "The Avengers" (2012) as the highest-grossing superhero film in US history.

Telling the story of Wakanda's King T'Challa, "Black Panther" was also the first film since "Avatar" (2009) to notch five consecutive top spots, and is the fifth-highest grossing movie ever in the United States.

Low-budget faith-based drama "I Can Only Imagine," fell to fourth place, earning \$10.4 million.

Made for a modest \$7 million, the movie stars J Michael Finley as the lead singer of a popular Christian band. Dennis Quaid and Cloris Leachman also star.

Dropping from first to fifth place was smash-'em up sequel "Pacific Rim: Uprising," which

has attracted mixed reviews and gained a measly \$9.4 million after a massive 67 percent drop on its first weekend earnings.

Set 10 years after "Pacific Rim" (2013), "Uprising" follows a new generation of pilots of the first film's giant "Jaeger" military mechanoids fending off enormous Kaiju monsters aiming to end humanity.

The Universal movie centers on "Star Wars" sensation John Boyega as Jake Pentecost, son of Idris Elba's character Stacker, who died to save the world in the first film.

Rounding out the top 10 were:

"Sherlock Gnomes" (\$7 million)

"Tomb Raider" (\$4.9 million)

"A Wrinkle in Time" (\$4.8 million)

"Love, Simon" (\$4.8 million)

"Paul, Apostle of Christ" (\$3.5 million)—AFP ■

Designer Van Assche to take over as Berluti's creative director

PARIS — Designer Kris Van Assche on Tuesday took the reins at Berluti, vowing to complete the transformation of the top-end cobbler into a major luxury men's label.

The Belgian creator, who left Dior Homme a fortnight ago after 11 years in charge, steps into the shoes of Colombian Haider Ackermann, who parted company with the French brand on Friday after only three seasons.

But Van Assche has big ambitions for the label which under its CEO Antoine Arnault has morphed from an elite shoe-

maker that shod artist Andy Warhol and a fair smattering of European royalty into a luxury men's fashion label.

"Antoine Arnault spoke to me of his ambitions for Berluti and it is with great pleasure that I accept this new challenge which fits perfectly with my own will and vision," Van Assche said as his appointment was announced.

"I have always wanted to build bridges between the savoir-faire, the heritage of a house and my clear-cut contemporary vision," the 41-year-old added.

Van Assche will not show

his first men's collection in Paris for the brand until January 2019, reflecting the major rethinking that is likely to go on.

Arnault, the son of French luxury goods tycoon Bernard Arnault, said: "I have known him for several years, have always admired his work at Dior Homme and I am looking forward to working with him."

The men's arm of the LVMH group to which Berluti belongs has seen dramatic change in recent weeks with the departure of Ackermann, Hedi Slimane arriving as artistic director of Celine and British designer Kim Jones leaving Louis Vuitton for Dior Homme and being replaced by DJ, designer and Off-White founder Virgil Abloh.

Van Assche added a punkish street style influence to Dior's fine tailoring, and Berluti said he will be in charge of its shoes, leather goods and accessories as well as ready-to-wear collections.

He is another product of the famous Antwerp fashion school in Belgium which gave wings to the talent of Martin Margiela, Dries Van Noten, Anne Demeulemeester and several other top creators.—AFP ■

I'm back: Arnold Schwarzenegger after open-heart surgery



Veteran action star Arnold Schwarzenegger. **PHOTO: PTI**

LOS ANGELES — Veteran action star Arnold Schwarzenegger has announced he is "back" after open-heart surgery.

The 70-year-old former governor of California took to Twitter to inform his fans about his health.

"It's true: I'm back! I went to sleep expecting to wake up with a small incision and woke up with a big one — but guess what? I woke up, and that's something to be thankful for. Thank you to the doctors and nurses. And I'm truly filled with gratitude for all of the kind messages," Schwarzenegger tweeted.

His spokesperson, Daniel

Ketchell, said on Twitter on Friday that Schwarzenegger "underwent a planned procedure to replace a pulmonic valve that was originally replaced due to a congenital heart defect in 1997." He said Schwarzenegger's pulmonic valve was "successfully replaced" and that the star "is currently recovering from the surgery and is in stable condition".

The spokesperson also said that "steroids have nothing to do with this."

Schwarzenegger, a former Mr Universe and Mr Olympia, had acknowledged using steroids when he was a bodybuilder.—PTI ■



Kris Van Assche left Dior Homme after 11 years at the head of the French menswear label. **PHOTO: AFP**

Los Angeles museum celebrates the art of the selfie

LOS ANGELES — There's an art to taking the perfect selfie — from the angle, to the focus, cropping out that pesky outstretched arm and above all, the smile.

In a celebration of self-portraits in the social media age Tommy Honton and Tair Mamedov are set to open the Museum of Selfies in Los Angeles this Sunday — an interactive exhibition exploring the history and cultural phenomenon of snapping a photo of yourself.

And for those who think if a moment wasn't photographed, it might as well have not happened — the good news is that at the Museum of Selfies, selfies are compulsory.

Event planner Lori Nguyen, 45, said she doesn't take selfies very often because "I'm not, like, super young."

But another visitor, Nina Crowe, said she takes "one a day."

Neither missed the chance to snap several at the Museum of Selfies, including at an exhibit mimicking the rooftop of Los Angeles' tallest building.

In reality there's a backdrop photograph of the "ground below" printed on a small platform, from which sprouts a tube that looks like the building's antenna complete with a red signaling



Visitors snap a self-portrait featuring a work by Darel Carey at the Museum of Selfies. PHOTO: AFP

beacon. Add a selfie stick, an "I'm afraid of heights" grimace and a click — and the result is very realistic. The exhibition begins with mirrors, perhaps the most basic kind of selfie. But Honton and Mamedov view the concept as something more than just a simple photo. "The selfies have a surprisingly rich history, and go back as far as people have been making art," Honton explains.

"Rembrandt did hundreds of self-portraits, Albrecht Durer five, Van Gogh dozens. I mean they did their portraits too, what's the difference?" he said.

"Yes, artistic technique and scale is one thing, but in reality, if cell phones and cameras had existed, everyone would have taken them." Another selfie museum opened in the Philippines in 2015, but there's no sign it stayed open. Meanwhile in Glendale, a Los Angeles suburb, the exhibition is just the latest in the city's stream of quirky museums focusing on everything from rabbits and death to neon and velvet.

'Selfie magnet'

The show is full of fun facts about the trend: women take pictures of themselves more than

men, for example. In Sao Paulo, 65.4 per cent of selfies are taken by women — in New York, 61.6 per cent. In Moscow, the divide is even more extreme, at 82 per cent.

There aren't statistics for Los Angeles, but Ally Bertik admits she is a frequent selfie-snapper.

"It shows off my good side. And I get to show people like 'hey, this is where I am, maybe you guys should check it out too, this is what I'm doing.' It's just a fun way to like spread you know what I'm doing, show people where I'm at," she explained.

Wandering through the

museum, guests will be able to pose with Colette Miller's "Angel Wings" and a work by Darel Carey, who creates multi-dimensional rooms using plastic tape — a concept the museum describes as a "selfie magnet."

There are pieces by Brazil's Rob Vital, German-Canadian Joseph Nowak, Italy's Michele Durrizzi — and a copy of the Russian government's recommendations for taking a selfie safely, created following several accidents and as many as 12 selfie-related deaths in the country.

Also featured is David Slater's controversial monkey selfie — which became embroiled in a legal battle over who has the copyright to photos taken by monkeys using his camera. In a corner, meanwhile, are three statues resembling Michelangelo's "David" — painted blue with a pink cell phone — and a Game of Thrones-esque throne created using selfie sticks. You just "can't avoid" taking a selfie there, says Mamedov, a Russian actor who arrived in the US four years ago.

The Museum of Selfies will be open in Glendale initially for two months. Its founders are open to extending its LA run and taking the exhibition to other places around the US, if not the world.—AFP ■

Very rare Qing Dynasty bowl sells for \$30.4 million

HONG KONG — An extremely rare Qing Dynasty bowl made for the Chinese emperor Kangxi fetched US\$30.4 million (HK\$239 million) at auction on Tuesday, Sotheby's said.

The bowl, just under six inches (14.7 cm) in diameter, is decorated with falangcai — painted enamels combining Chinese and Western techniques — and flowers, including daffodils which are not typically depicted on Chinese porcelain.

The bowl, said to have been used by the emperor in the early 18th century, was sold within five minutes to an unnamed phone bidder from the "Greater China" region, said chairman of Sotheby's Asia Nicolas Chow.

"This is the absolute finest example to exist. There are only three examples altogether that use this beautiful pink (background)," Chow said.

The bowl was created in an imperial workshop within Beijing's Forbidden City by a small



Nicolas Chow, deputy chairman of Sotheby's Asia, holds an extremely rare Qing Dynasty bowl — one of only three known to exist — during a media preview. It sold for US\$30.4 million. PHOTO: AFP

team of craftsmen, with the help of Jesuits from Europe who had brought new techniques and materials, according to Sotheby's.

Hong Kong's auction houses have seen frenzied bidding among Asian buyers in recent

years, with sales of diamonds, handbags and ancient ceramics shattering world records.

Last year a 1,000-year-old bowl from China's Song Dynasty sold for US\$37.7 million, a record for Chinese ceramics.—AFP ■

Tokyo Disneyland, DisneySea visitors show 1st rise in 3 years

TOKYO — The number of visitors to Tokyo Disneyland and Tokyo DisneySea amusement parks increased for the first time in three years in the fiscal year that ended on 31 March, helped by new attractions and special events, operator Oriental Land Co said on Monday.

The number of visitors grew 0.3 per cent from a year before to 30.10 million, according to the company, which hopes to step up efforts to attract more customers in the current fiscal year that marks the 35th anniversary since the opening of Tokyo Disneyland.

The operator attributed the rise to a new indoor attraction at Tokyo DisneySea that features popular fish characters from the movies "Finding Nemo" and "Finding Dory," which opened in May last year, and special events organized in the summer.

A Christmas event to light up the Cinderella Castle at Tokyo Disneyland with projection map-



The Christmas parade begins as part of the special event called, "Christmas Fantasy," at Tokyo Disneyland on 7 November, 2017. The event will run through 25 December. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

ping technology was also popular, the company said. Tokyo Disneyland, located in Urayasu, Chiba Prefecture, near Tokyo, opened in April 1983. Tokyo DisneySea opened next to it in September 2001.—Kyodo News ■

Eager Pacquiao 'can't wait' to take Matthyse world title

MANILA — Manny Pacquiao said on Tuesday he "can't wait" for a crack at another world title as Lucas Matthyse's promoter confirmed the Argentine will stake his belt against the Filipino in Kuala Lumpur in July.

Promoter Oscar De La Hoya announced on Twitter in the US that the contest was now confirmed.

"Signed, sealed, and delivered: Proud to officially announce that WBA welterweight world champion @MatthyseLucas will put his title on the line against @mannypacquiao in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 14 Saturday night July (US time)," De La Hoya said on Monday.

Pacquiao then went onto his on his Twitter, Instagram and Facebook accounts to respond.

"It's on! Can't wait to challenge Lucas Matthyse for another world title on 15 July in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia — 14 July US time," said Pacquiao.

Both announcements misspelled Malaysia.



Manny Pacquiao has not fought since he was defeated on points by Australia's Jeff Horn last July, a loss that cost the Philippine icon his World Boxing Organization crown. **PHOTO: AFP**

The De La Hoya announcement appeared to clear lingering doubts about the contest taking place since the Filipino icon, winner of an unprecedent-

ed eight world titles in different weight divisions, first announced the contest last month.

Pacquiao, 39, had said the fight against Matthyse would

take place on 24 June.

Pacquiao, an elected senator in the Philippines, has not fought in the ring since being defeated on points by Austral-

ia's Jeff Horn in Brisbane last July, a loss that cost the Filipino star his World Boxing Organization crown.

The 35-year-old Matthyse, who has 39 wins including 36 by knockout against four defeats, won the vacant World Boxing Association belt after beating Thailand's Teerachai Sithmorseng in January.

"This is going to be a tough fight. Matthyse is also a knockout artist," Pacquiao had said last month. "I'm the underdog in this fight but I'm used to it. It serves as a big motivation for me to train and fight hard to win the crown," he added.

Pacquiao has 59 wins to his name including 38 KOs against seven defeats and two draws. His last victory inside the distance was back in 2009.

Meanwhile the Pacquiao camp announced Tuesday that Wednesday's joint press conference with De La Hoya and Matthyse in Manila to announce the fight had been moved back a week tentatively to April 11. No venue has been set.—AFP ■

Coordination meeting held for organising youth football festival, competition in Shan State

A coordination meeting for organising a youth football festival and competition in Shan State was held on Monday at the Shan State Government's office.

Present at the meeting were Shan State Chief Minister Dr. Linn Htut, State Social Welfare Minister Dr. Myo Htun, Development Minister U Sai Son Hsai, Myanmar National League (MNL) CEO U Soe Moe Kyaw, MPT JO's southern Shan State Manager U Myo Htun, Myanmar Football Federation's grassroots in-charge U Phone Nyunt Ko, MNL Project Manager U Theik San Tun, MNL Operation Manager U Aung Aung Myo, Physical Education Department Director U Htan Aik and officials, Shan United FC General Manager U Khin Maung Htun, Taunggyi Football Federation's officials, and veteran footballers and officials.

In his speech, Dr. Linn Htut expressed gratefulness on behalf of the Shan State government to the football federation, which explained its plan for the youth football event.

He noted that the MNL played an important role in the careers of Myanmar footballers and expressed delight at organising the youth football festival and competition.

MNL CEO U Soe Moe Kyaw, with the use of PowerPoint slides, explained in detail plans for the MFF-MPT Grassroots Football Festival 2018 and MPT U-14 Football Tournament 2018 that will be held in the states and regions of Myanmar, while State Social Welfare Minister Dr. Myo Htun and Development Minister U Sai Son Hsai discussed the festival.

Finally, Dr. Linn Htut concluded the meeting with a speech. —GNLM

Messi to return as Barca host Roma in Champions League last eight

BARCELONA — Lionel Messi is expected back for Wednesday's Champions League quarter-final first leg against Roma and for Barcelona his return cannot come soon enough.

Messi's latest rescue-act on Saturday, when he came off the bench to inspire a remarkable fightback against Sevilla, has regurgitated the question of Barca's dependency on their number 10.

It is difficult to quantify Messi's brilliance. He would be missed by any team in the world, not least Argentina, who were thrashed 6-1 by Spain last week with the injured forward watching on from the stands.

But for Ernesto Valverde, there is an urgency to the issue because if Messi is not at his blistering best, perhaps feels his hamstring ache, or is somehow contained by Roma's defence, his side must find another way through.

"We're up against the very best in Messi," Roma forward Stephan El Shaarawy said.



Lionel Messi **PHOTO: AFP**

"Every time he gets on the ball, he can make something happen. That's why we'll have to try to act accordingly and restrict his influence as much as possible."

Messi has been left out of the starting line-up for five La Liga and Champions League games this year. Barca have won two and drawn three of them, the last, against Sevilla, about to be a defeat before he scored an 89th-minute equaliser.

In the Copa del Rey, Messi was rested for the last 16 first leg against Celta Vigo, a 1-1 draw, then played in the second, hitting two goals in a 5-0 win.

"No we are not worried about it," Valverde said, when asked on Saturday about a possible over-reliance.

"With or without Messi all the matches are different, it's just how it is. What can we do?" —AFP ■