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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Diplomats and dignitaries sing song together with the audience at the Pandal outside the Yangon City Hall. **PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT**

Union minister, diplomats enjoy Thingyan Festival in Yangon

UNION Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin, diplomats and personnel from the UN agencies and their families participated in the Thingyan Festival in Yangon yesterday.

They arrived at the pandal of the Yangon City in downtown and were welcomed by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein and his wife Daw Khin Mi Mi Kywe, Speaker of Yangon Region Hluttaw U Tin Maung Tun, Deputy Speaker U Lin Naing Myint and members of the Yangon region cabinet.

They also visited the Splash Walk along the Maha Bandoola Garden Street.

Dato Paduka Haji Abdu'r Rahmani Bin Dato Paduka Haji Besir, patron of the Diplomatic Corps in Myanmar, sang "Lattee," a song depicting the traditional bonfire festival of the Shan ethnic people, to entertain the dignitaries and the audience.

The dignitaries also enjoyed the entertainment provided by prominent vocalists, including Nwe Yin Win and Haymar Nay Win, and the performance of traditional dance troupes.

Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein and his wife hosted a luncheon in honour of the visitors.

"Diplomats and personnel from UN agencies and INGOs (international non-governmental organisations) enjoyed the festival here for the third time since we took over office. We organised this programme to convey our happiness and friendship," said U Maung Maung Soe, mayor of Yangon City.— Zaw Gyi ■

State Counsellor to visit Viet Nam in near future

DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI, State Counsellor of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, will pay an official visit to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam in the near future at the invitation of His Excellency Mr. Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.— Myanmar News Agency ■

Displaced persons return to Taung Pyo Letwe reception centre

A FAMILY of five, who left home during the Maungtaw terrorist attacks last year, returned to Taung Pyo Letwe Reception Centre, Maungtaw District, in Rakhine State on 14 April.

The Rakhine State Immigration and National Registration and Citizenship Department has scrutinised the family members according to the 1982 Citizenship Law, checked whether they had actually lived in the country, and issued National Verification Cards (NVCs) to them after they were found eligible. Besides this, the Rakhine State Health Department carried out medical check-ups of each member of the family and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement has provided rice, mosquito nets, blankets, t-shirts, longyis for men and women, as well as kitchen utensils. SEE PAGE-6

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Dr. Win Myat Aye meets Bangladesh ministers

By Thura Zaw

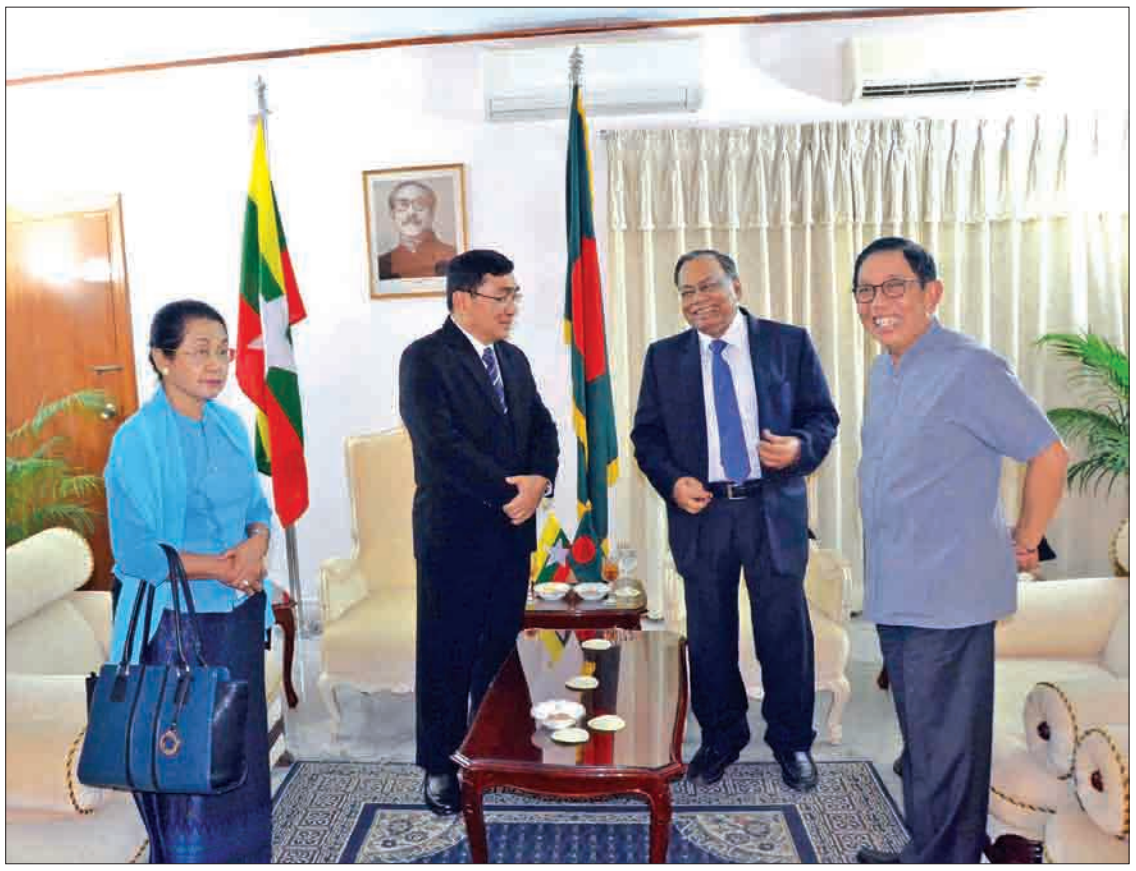
Dr. Win Myat Aye, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, spoke about the repatriation of displaced persons (DPs) with Bangladeshi Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP and Minister for Home Affairs Asaduzzaman Khan MP at the National Guest House in Dhaka on 12 April.

At the meeting, the Union Minister explained that Myanmar was ready for the repatriation process, and he had met with DPs in Cox's Bazar, who mentioned they were yet to receive the forms for the repatriation process. He told the Bangladesh ministers that the forms received by Myanmar for 8,032 individuals were not the physically arranged ones agreed upon by both countries. The DPs did not produce signed documents stating they were returning of their own free will, nor fingerprints and individual photographs in the documents sent to Myanmar, he stated.

The Union Minister said it was difficult for Myanmar to check and verify data owing to the lack of information. He said Myanmar had informed Bangladesh about these problems thrice, and so far, the Myanmar authorities have confirmed 675 individuals as having lived in the country before. He said the list had been sent to the Bangladesh authorities, but they have not responded yet.

The Union Minister said both countries have to work together for the repatriation of DPs settled in the border areas. As the handling of the border areas can cause misunderstandings, it is important for the relevant departments in both countries to discuss these issues transparently, he noted. He said Myanmar was working with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the development and resettlement projects in Rakhine State.

Later, Prof. Dr. Aung Tun Thet, Chief Coordinator of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine State (UERHD), explained in detail the repatriation process, development projects and the prospects for Rakhine State.



Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye (2nd from left), UEHRD Chief Coordinator Prof. Dr. Aung Tun Thet (Right) and Bangladeshi Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP (2nd from Right) are seen at the National Guest House in Dhaka. **PHOTO: MNA**

Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye and UEHRD Chief Coordinator Dr. Aung Tun Thet are seen together with personnel from UN agencies at Myanmar Embassy in Dhaka, Bangladesh. **PHOTO: MNA**

Dr. Win Myat Aye and Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali give the press conference at the National Guest House in Dhaka, Bangladesh. **PHOTO: MNA**

The Bangladesh Foreign Minister said they would send information about the DPs using the forms agreed upon by both countries as soon as possible.

The Bangladesh authorities will collaborate with Myanmar to handle the sensitive border area issues, he stated.

Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye and Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP then met the press and answered all the questions posed by the media.

Present at the meeting were UEHRD Chief Coordinator Prof. Dr. Aung Tun Thet, Myanmar Ambassador U Lwin Oo, Chairperson of Myanmar Women's Affair Federation Dr. Thet Thet Zin, Director-General of Department of Disasters Management Dr. Ko Ko Naing, and Director-General of International Organizations and Economic Department U Kyaw Moe Tun.

Later, the Union Minister visited the Myanmar Embassy in Dhaka and met responsible officials of the UN agencies and discussed the implementation of advice given by the Rakhine Advisory Commission on the development in Rakhine, Myanmar's readiness for repatriation, humanitarian aid provided in Rakhine State, the development efforts facilitated by the UEHRD, the construction of residential buildings, opening of vocational training classes, easy access to education and healthcare, and the planned closing of DP camps opened since 2012.

The Union Minister and the delegation had lunch at the Myanmar Embassy in Dhaka ■

Correction

Please read "displaced persons-DPs" instead of "Internally displaced persons-IDPs," in the news story "Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye meets IDPs in Bangladesh" and in its caption on page-2 of April 12 Issue of the Global New Light of Myanmar.— GNLM

> We will abolish the red tape that burdens the people and eradicate corruption and bribery that plagues all levels of society as we work to strengthen the moral fiber of our people. We will draw out from our past experiences as a civilian government overcoming various obstacles and hardships, as we work to the best of our ability for the immediate present and head towards the future of a democratic nation that respects human rights and is free from all stains of corruption.
>
> (Excerpt from the speech by President U Win Myint at the ceremony to take oath of office at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 30th March 2018)

> Collective strength is vital to build peace and stability which we need. We need to have mutual understanding and mutual respect as the basic foundation to bring to an end the armed conflicts which have existed for many years among the ethnic nationalities. We can make this foundation strong with our collective strength.
>
> (Excerpt from the speech by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the 2nd Anniversary of NLD Government on 1st April 2018)

Emperor of Japan sends congratulatory message to President U Win Myint

Akihito, Emperor of Japan, sent a congratulatory message to President U Win Myint.

In his message, Emperor Akihito says, "On the occasion of Your Excellency's assumption of the exalted office of the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I have great pleasure in sending You my heartfelt congratulations and sincere good wishes for the success and happiness of Your Excellency and for the prosperity of the people of Your country." ■

Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu inspects the bridge construction site on Ma Kyae Ngu-Kyauk Chun road in Gwa. **PHOTO: MNA**

Rakhine Chief Minister inspects Gwa Tsp's development works

Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu, along with state ministers, Hluttaw representatives and departmental officials, inspected the development works in Gwa Township yesterday.

The Chief Minister and his delegation inspected a (3 miles and 6 furlongs) part of Ma Kyae Ngu-Kyauk Chun road (9 miles and 6 furlongs), which was upgraded to a concrete road. The Chief Minister then gave instructions on road maintenance to meet the set standards and to ensure reliable use by the public.

The Chief Minister examined a bridge construction site on Ma Kyae Ngu-Kyauk Chun road, where Staff Officer Daw Tin Tin Nyo of the No. 8 bridge special team explained the construction process. The Kyauk Chun Bridge, which will connect Rakhine State and Ayeyawady Region, is 200 feet long and 24 feet wide and was allotted Ks800 million, as part of the budget of the Rural Development Department.

The delegation also inspected the completed five-mile laterite road between Pyartaik Village and Dani Village.

In the afternoon, the Chief Minister inspected the completed concrete roads developed by the Gwa Township Development Committee, U Ottama road segment 1, Gamone Myaing road and Yahaine Kwin-Yahaine Katoe road, and inspected the completed new buildings for Gwa Alae Village Basic Education Post Primary School, Yahaine Kwin Basic Education Primary School and a two-storeyed building of Yahaine Katoe Basic Education High School.—Tin Tun (IPRD) ■

Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor
PRESS RELEASE

(13th April 2018)

The Government of Myanmar expresses serious concern on the news regarding the application by the International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor to claim jurisdiction over the alleged deportation of the Muslims from Rakhine to Bangladesh.

Myanmar is not a party to the Rome Statute. The proposed claim for extension of jurisdiction may very well reap serious consequences and exceed the well enshrined principle that the ICC is a body which operates on behalf of, and with the consent of State Parties which have signed and ratified the Rome Statute. This consensual approach is underlined throughout the ICC Statute.

There is an important principle of law or legal maxim "Ubi lex voluit, dicit; ubi noluit, tacit" i.e. "if the law means something, it says it; if it does not mean something, it does not say it".

Nowhere in the ICC Charter does it say that the Court has jurisdiction over States which have not accepted that jurisdiction. Furthermore, the 1969 UN Vienna Convention on International Treaties states that no treaty can be imposed on a country that has not ratified it.

The extension of jurisdiction to non-parties may have a reverberating effect to all non-parties in the world and challenges long established legal principles such as legal certainty. What the Prosecutor is attempting to do is to override the principle of national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, in contrary to the principle enshrined in the UN Charter and recalled in the ICC Charter's Preamble.

Myanmar reiterates that it has not deported any individuals in the areas of concern and in fact has worked hard in collaboration with Bangladesh to repatriate those displaced from their homes. Several bilateral agreements have been signed such as the "Arrangement on Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State" dated 23 November 2017 between the Governments of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. All requirements for repatriation are in place.

Work is proceeding steadily on this front. The Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement has just visited Bangladesh to meet displaced persons-DPs and brief them on the development, resettlement process, food supply, housing projects, vocational training, easy access to education and healthcare in Rakhine State and that Myanmar is ready for repatriation.

Thingyan Water Festival in border town attracts Thingyan revellers

Chief Minister of Kayah State U L Phoung Sho celebrated the third day of Myanmar Traditional Thingyan Festival at a pandal in Mese, a border town in Kayah State yesterday morning.

The Chief Minister was joined by Auditor-General of Kayah State U Sai Kyaw Zan, departmental officials, Bawlake District Deputy Commissioner U Moe Htet, Mese Township Administrator U Myo Thant, staff families and local people. The Chief Minister and officials awarded cash to dance troupes that performed entertainments to Thingyan revelers.

Seven traditional dance troupes are taking part in a dancing contest marking Thingyan celebration in which first, second and third prize winning teams will be awarded on Atet Day, the fourth and last day of Myanmar's Traditional Thingyan Festival. Next, the Chief Minister donated offertories to the monks and elderly people.

Thingyan merrymakers from not only Myanmar but also Thailand are celebrating Thingyan water festival at water throwing pandals throughout Mese Town where they are offered to enjoy Satuditha.—Wut Yi (IPRD) ■

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Myanmar earns Ks12.5m from community-based tourism in Pa-O region this year

MYANMAR earned Ks12.5 million from community-based tourism projects in the Pa-O region, southern Shan State, during the past three months, according to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

The Pa-O region is rich in tourist attractions. The area has ancient structures, places of rest and relaxation, forests and mountains and other natural beauty. The tourism authorities implemented the eco-tourism plans to benefit the residents.

The community-based tourism projects were initiated in Hti Ne and Inn Ne villages since 2015. The Pa-O Region CBT Committee started receiving visitors under this programme the following year. The CBT project was also implemented in Loikhaw Village in 2017. The committee has taken on the responsibility of bringing customers to the village, hosting them at the community houses, serving food and beverages, and organising entertainment and community learning activities.

Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Ohn Maung (Centre) chats with Pa-O ethnic man as he visits a Pa-O ethnic village to assist in community-based tourism in Pago region. **PHOTO: MOHT**

According to official statistics, some 597 tourists visited the villages in 2016. The figure rose to 694 in 2017. The number of tourists who visited the villages this year reached 298.

The country earned Ks23.3 million from the CBT projects in 2016 and Ks28.3 million in 2017.

Myanmar received the social responsible tourism award for the Pa-O region at the ITB Berlin 2017, an international travel trade show held in City Cube Berlin, Germany, in March 2017.—GNLM ■

136 foreign enterprises invest in manufacturing sector last FY

THE manufacturing sector absorbed foreign direct investments (FDI) worth US$1.76 billion through 136 projects in the last fiscal year (FY).

The figure accounts for more than 30 per cent of the overall foreign investments made last FY. The real estate sector ranked second in the foreign investment sector line-up, attracting FDIs worth $1.26 billion.

Nearly $1 billion of the FDIs were brought into other services. Eight enterprises were given the green light to invest in the transport and communication sector, with an FDI of $902 million.

The hotel and tourism sector ranked fifth in the foreign investment line-up with five enterprises injecting capital worth $177 million.

The agriculture and power sectors got estimated capital of $135 million and $406 million, respectively. The livestock and fisheries sector also attracted seven enterprises with FDIs worth $27.6 million, while the industrial estate sector attained investments worth $34 million.

The Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) permitted 222 foreign projects from last April to March this year, with estimated investments worth $5.7 billion.

Singapore was the major investor last FY, followed by China. — Mon Mon ■

Electrical fire breaks out in Madaya Township

AN electrical fire broke out in a village in Madaya Township, Mandalay region, Sunday early morning, according to a police report.

No injuries were reported. The fire destroyed the two-storey general store owned by U Kyi Aye in Kyaukdada Village in Lamine Village-tract at some 1 a.m. on 15 April.

According to the investigation, overheated wires triggered the electrical fire. With the assistance of the local police and residents, firefighters successfully controlled the flame within 20 minutes.

The police are still investigating the case and action is being taken against the storekeeper under Section 285 of the Penal Code for negligence.—Soe Kyaw Thu Htwe (Madaya)■

30 injured in six-wheeler crash

SOME 30 people, including the driver, were injured when a vehicle turned turtle on Shwebo-Ayadaw-Monywa Road on the second day of the Thingyan New Year Water Festival, according to a police report.

According to investigators, a six-wheeler carrying some 40 young people, driven by Ye Naing, was heading to Monywa from Ayadaw Township when it overturned between milepost nos. 24/4 and 24/5 on the road near Khamyint Village in Ayadaw Township at 10 a.m. on 14 April.

The injured are being treated at a hospital nearby.

The police have charged the driver with reckless driving under the existing laws.—Myo Win Tun (Monywa) ■

Slight earthquake jolts near Yangon City

No immediate reports of damage or casualties are available following a slight of earthquake with the magnitude of 4.3 on the Richter Scale with its epicenter inside Myanmar, latitude 16.88°N, longitude 95.86°E, depth 13 kilometers about 19 miles west of Kaba-Aye seismological observatory was recorded at 04:58 am Myanmar Standard Time today, the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology announced.—MDN

Bamboo products being displayed for sale in a village in Yedashe Township. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

Export value of forest products down by over $35 million

THE export value of forest products at the end of the 2017-2018 financial year (FY) topped US$211 million, registering a decline of more than $35 million compared with the previous FY, the Commerce Ministry reported.

From last April through the end of this March, the country exported a wide variety of forest-based products, including bamboo and other non-wood products. The country's total earnings from the export of forest products included some $13.657 million in the public sector and $197 million in the private sector.

The export value of forest products was $247 million in the 2016-2017 FY.

According to the ministry, Myanmar's total bilateral exports with international traders reached $14.675 billion, including $5.05 billion via the government and $9.624 billion through the public sector.

Currently, domestically-produced bamboos and bamboo-based products are being exported mainly to Bangladesh, Pakistan, South Korea and Singapore.

This FY, the country exported agro products worth nearly $3.08 billion, animal products worth $60 million, marine products worth $697 million, minerals worth $1.779 billion, manufactured goods worth $6.794 billion and other products worth $2.05 billion.— Khine Khant

CPI declines slightly in March

THE consumer price index (CPI) recorded a slight decline of 0.12 per cent in March, compared with February, on account of the high prices of tobacco, liquor, food items, and costs in the transport and communication sectors.

The CPI slipped slightly in Kayin, Chin, Rakhine and Mon states; the Taninthayi, Mandalay , Ayeyawady and Sagaing regions; and Yangon city and Nay Pyi Taw in March. Kayah State, Magway Region and Shan State and the Yangon Region recorded a small increase in CPI, according to statistics recently released by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO), operating under the Ministry of Planning and Finance.

Next, the annual rate of inflation in March 2018, based on the 2012 survey, was recorded at 4.03 per cent, showing a slight decrease against February.

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

The year-on-year inflation rate was 5.42 per cent in March 2018 against March 2017.

Rakhine State recorded the highest inflation rate of 8.24 per cent, as of March 2018, followed by Mandalay city with 7.26 per cent and Kachin State with 5.27 per cent. Chin State registered the lowest inflation rate at 2.09 per cent.

Yangon city recorded an inflation rate of 3.12 per cent, while in Nay Pyi Taw it was 3.49 per cent.

Previously, the inflation rate was evaluated based on the 2006 survey, but the base year was 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 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, trade and foreign currency control, according to the second five-year national development plan.— Ko Htet

Bilateral trade with Japan exceeds $1.5bn last FY

THE value of trade between Myanmar and its development donor Japan last fiscal year (FY) reached US$1.5 billion, according to figures released by the Commerce Ministry.

Myanmar's exports to Japan fetched $746 million, whereas imports were worth $812.6 million.

The bilateral trade value with Japan was worth some $2.03 billion in the 2016-2017 FY, $1.84 billion in the 2015-16 FY, $2.3 billion in the 2014-2015 FY, $1.8 billion in the 2013-2014 FY, $1.49 billion in the 2012-2013 FY and $822 million in the 2011-2012 FY.

Agro products, including rice and broken rice, various types of peas, soybeans, sesame seeds, ginger, fruits and apparel from the garment sector on cut-make-pack basis are exported to Japan, whereas machinery, garment raw materials, consumer products and electronic tools flowed into Myanmar.

Japan brought in foreign investments worth some $384 million into Myanmar during the last FY. Additionally, more than 45 Japanese companies invested in Thilawa so far, primarily in the manufacturing businesses.— Ko Htet

Capital goods imports down by $270 million

The import value of capital goods in the current fiscal year (FY) topped US$6.294 billion, registering a decline of $270 million compared with the same period last FY, according to the Commerce Ministry.

From last April to mid-March of this year, the private sector imported capital goods worth $5.567 billion from international traders, which saw a decline in value by $354 million, whereas the import of similar products by the public sector was valued at $727 million against last FY, registering an increase in value by $84 million.

According to the ministry's statistics, the country's total import value went up by $1.636 billion this FY, despite a decrease in the import of capital goods.

Before the end of the 2017-2018 FY, Myanmar imported intermediate goods worth $7.301 billion, while the value of consumer goods was $4.223 million. Over the past 350 days of this FY, the government sector's imports were worth $1.023 billion, while the private sector bought $16.795 billion worth of products from overseas traders.

Myanmar mainly trades with ASEAN members, the European Union member states, some island nations, Asian and African states, as well as a few western countries.

The overall value of trade between Myanmar and its international trade partners was $31.667 billion, including $13.848 billion in exports, as of 16 March.—Shwe Khine

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Immigration officers meeting the returnees to issue National Verification cards to them. **PHOTO: TIN SOE**

The members of a family which returned to Myanmar show their National Verification cards. **PHOTO: TIN SOE**

The returnees receive medical check-ups at the Taung Pyo Letwe Reception Centre. **PHOTO: TIN SOE**

Displaced persons return to Taung Pyo Letwe reception centre

FROM PAGE-1

Authorities, including Maungtaw District Deputy Administrator U Ye Htoo, Maungtaw Township Administrator U Myint Khaing, Border Guard Police Colonel Oakkar Ko, Director of the Maungdaw District Immigration and National Registration and Citizenship Department U Ko Ko Thaw and Deputy Director U Aung Win Oo assisted in the repatriation process.

Arrangements were made to provide accommodation to the returnees at the houses of their relatives in Maungtaw.

Authorities also enquired about the obstacles and the real situation of the displaced persons when they fled.The authorities will collect further information to aid them in the repatriation process.—Aung Kyaw Oo ■

Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint participates in Nay Pyi Taw Splash Walk

Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint joins the Nay Pyi Taw Splash Walk during the Thingyan Festival yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint attended the Nay Pyi Taw Splash Walk on the third day of the traditional Thingyan Festival (a-kyat-nei) yesterday. The event was held at Mingalar Shan-Kan, Yan Aung (2) Ward, Pyinmana Township in Nay Pyi Taw.

The Nay Pyi Taw Splash Walk began at 6 a.m. and was crowded with revellers at the central pandal, entertainment stages and mini pandals. The areas were busy with donors and revellers at food donation stalls (called satuditha) in Pyinmanna Township. —Soe Moe (IPRD) ■

Performers entertain the audience with dance at the riverside Thingyan festival. **PHOTO: MNA**

First ever riverside Thingyan festival along Chindwin River in Monywa

An opening ceremony for Thingyan water throwing pandals, was held on the bank of Chindwin River in Monywa, Sagaing Region on 13 April (Thingyan Akyo Nei), with an address by Regional Chief Minister Dr. Myint Naing. The Chindwin water festival, organized by Sagaing Regional Government on a grand scale was opened by the chief minister of Sagaing Region, regional cabinet ministers and the commander of North-west Command.—MDN ■

Revellers enjoy Thingyan Festival in three cities

Yangonites typically travel around the city on the back of a car and stop to dance and get soaked in front of a pandal with blasting music. **PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT**

Inya Lake's skyline is decorated with umbrellas for Thingyan Festival and the lake's pedestrian area is full of revellers lounging or taking a break from their Thingyan stroll. **PHOTO: YE HTUT**

Performers in traditional attire dance on stage at a pandal in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Nay Pyi Taw Thingyan sees more revellers walking the main routes through pandals raining festive water on them. **PHOTO: MNA**

Actress Tun Eaindra Bo entertains the Mandalay Thingyan. **PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG**

Foreign tourists partake in Mandalay Thingyan alongside local revellers. **PHOTO: MIN HETE AUNG**

16 APRIL 2018
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Beware of health hazards during Thingyan Festival

MYANMAR'S traditional New Year water festival, known as "Thingyan Festival", is celebrated during the time when the country experiences its hottest weather.

The brutal weather in mid-April is uncomfortable, and also potentially dangerous.

Revelling while getting wet for three to four days can make one sick.

Frequent changes in the body temperature from hot to cold cause cold and flu during the water festival.

Cold and flu commonly occur during the Thingyan water festival due to frequent changes in the body temperature from hot to cold, especially when ice-cold water is used.

> Meanwhile, overexposure to the sun and ultraviolet radiation can cause premature ageing and reduce the skin's immunity, making it more susceptible to skin cancers, such as basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma, a type of skin cancer that, when left untreated, can be fatal.

People should be aware of the diseases and risks that are common during the water festival.

Respiratory diseases, heat strokes, gastrointestinal diseases, skin diseases and conjunctivitis are common during the Thingyan Festival.

To keep the diseases away, people should take care of their personal hygiene and maintain cleanliness after playing with water during the Thingyan Festival.

People, especially children, with weak immune systems, may catch a common cold after staying wet for a long time, and it leads to respiratory diseases.

Moreover, breathing in droplets of contaminated water that contains germs or bacteria might cause pneumonia.

In hot weather, heat strokes or serious dehydration can occur, and it might lead to unconsciousness or even death. People lose body water through sweat, along with blood viscosity and salt levels in the body. The body needs water to stay hydrated. In this season, people must not drink contaminated water or eat uncooked food to avoid diarrhoea or dysentery.

Meanwhile, overexposure to the sun and ultraviolet radiation can cause premature ageing and reduce the skin's immunity, making it more susceptible to skin cancers, such as basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma, a type of skin cancer that, when left untreated, can be fatal.

Parents should ensure that their children consume food and drinks that are safe, clean and freshly cooked.

Especially, people with weak immune systems should avoid participating in water activities or going to crowded places.

According to dermatologists at skincare centres, the number of patients with sun-related skin conditions usually increases during this season as the temperature rises.

People are urged to use an umbrella when walking during the day, or wear a hat with a large brim.

Myanmar's traditional thanaka cosmetic paste can also provide a measure of protection against the sun.

Tagu, the auspicious month of Buddha Sasana guarded by Sakka Deva

Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja,
Sithu Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

LORD Gotama Buddha had predicted that his Sasana [Duration of his Dhamma Teachings] shall last for 5000 years. But after half of that predicted period was over, he assigned the remaining half 2500 years to the guardianship of Sakka Deva [Thunder God].

The first month of Myanmar Lunar Calendar, Tagu [April] is not only the month of New Year Festival [Thingyan] water throwing public festival but also it is the month that reminded the people of Buddha Sasana in the guardianship of Sakka Deva. The story runs as follows;

"On one auspicious day all deities of higher and lower orders suck as Lokapala devas [the guardian deities of the secular world] Sama devas and Sasana devas [the guardian deities of the spiritual world], all gathered at the Jetavana Vihara where living Gotama Buddha was residing. They all paid respect and homage to Lord Gotama Buddha where upon Lord Gotama Buddha uttered the following prediction and assignment."

"After half of the period of my Sasana 5000 years elapsed, the secular world would begin to deteriorate morally and spiritually. Controversies, conflicts and fightings leading to wars would dominate. My Sasana would gradually decline. Sangha Order could not maintain my Sasana alone. Assistance is needed". So I call upon Sakka Deva togather with other devas to look after my Sasana for the remaining half of the Period 2500 years".

Since then Sakka Deva took his duty of looking after Buddha Sasana from the beginning of the second half of the 5000 years period till now.

Our Thingyan legend rituals and ceremonies highlight the above story.

Yearly, the State- appointed "Calendar Board" composed of learned monks and laymen in astrology, astronomy, meteorology and Veda sciences works out the New Year Calendar. Board members are unpaid. But they receive pujas in the form of clothing and food ration. Twelve months of Myanmar Calendar are six 29 days months and six 30 days months. 29 day month begins with the month of Tagu [Apirl] followed by eleven months of 30 days and 29 days alternately, so the twelveth month Tabaung [March] has 30 days. Calendar Board marks the three seasons Summer, Rain and Winter, Buddhist Lent term, waxing, waning, Full moon and No moon days, auspicious days of Buddhism, prospects of cultivation, recommends type of crop to be grown, the prospect of harvest. The Board also forecasts economic and political situation not only of Myanmar but also of the world.

There is also a Board of Thingyan Bulletine [Thingyan Sar] composed of Brahmin Priests or their descendants successively appointed by Myanmar Kings. This Board issues Thingyan Bulletine. The date and days of Thingyan Festival and Rituals. Usually Thingyan Days fall in the second week of April. Usually there are three days of Thingyan festival and ritual viz.

1. The day Sakka Deva descends to Earth for inspection
2. The Inspection day and
3. The Day Sakka Deva ascends [returns] to his Celestial Kingdom [Tavatimsa].

As assigned by Lord Gotama Buddha, Sakka Deva yearly comes down to human world on earth to inspect [check] if humans are behaving well according to the teachings of Lord Buddha. Such as Pancha Sila Five moral precepts (1) Abstain from killing (2) Abstain from stealing (3) Abstain from sexual misconduct (4) Abstain from telling lies and (5) Abstain' from taking intoxicants. Observance and practice of Four Brahmacariya namely (1) Metta [Loving kindness] (2) Karuna [Compassion] (3) Upekkha [Equanimity] and (4) Mudita [Appretiative Joy] in other's success.

Avoidance of all evil doings and actions, unwholesome deeds and constant doing of wholesome deeds. Meditation and telling beads for mental stability and equanimity.

Sakka Deva is accompanied by two other devas, Matali Deva, the Registras and Withugyone Deva is the Vehicle driver. Matali Deva keeps two Record Books. The Gold Book is to record the good people and the Book made of dog skin is to record bad people. Withugyone Deva drives the Vehicle on which Sakka Deva descends to the Earth -human world. Vehicles vary in accordance with the calculation of the Board-chariot, Elephant, Horse, Naga, Ogre, Garuda etc. what Sakka Deva carries in his hands also vary year to year water pot, torch of fire, weapon, or sprigs of Eugenia leaves. Water pot, sprigs of Eugenia sprigs are good, predicting peace and prosperity for the New Year. Torch of fire, weapons predict outbreaks of fire, rebellion and war for the coming year.

On doomesday, a Board of Devas presided by Sukka Deva judged and sent all those in the Gold Registran Book to deva kingdoms above and those in the dog skin Registran Book are cast down to hells below. The most notorious ones are immediately punished by Sukka Deva by killing with his Thunder Bolt.

Some years there are two days of inspection. So Thingyan Days last 4 days. The day after Sakka Deva returns or ascends to Tavatimsa is marked a New Year Day [though it may not be so on calendar]. The New Year Day is the Day of merit makings. Old year with its all evils is driven out by chanting Paritta [Protective Buddha Suttas] and beating doors, windows and domestic utensils and washing and cleaning. Younger members pay homage to elder members in the family. Elders give youngers blessings as well as some pocket money. Even pets at home receive special feed and treatment.

Thus we may rightly say Thingyan days in Tagu are Thagyar Sasana Akartaw Nay [သိကြားသာသနာ အခါတော်နေ]. Tagu the auspicious month of Buddha Sasana guarded by Sakka Deva.

The following is the loose translation of the song sung by a film actor and singer Khin Maung Yin "Thigyar Sasana".

Song Thigyar Sasana

Composer Shwe Taing Nyunt
Singer Film actor and vocalist Khin Maung Yin
Record No. BBR 1127
British Burma Film
Loose Translation of Song

Overture

Lord Buddha had left his prediction that the time is nearing for Buddha Sasana guarded by Sakka Deva [Thunder god].

It's better to keep and practice Four Brahma cariya and Five moral precepts [Pyinsa Sila].

Definitely believe that Sakka Deva with one thousand eyes, is watching human world.

First stanze All devas including Loka pala devas gather together to pay homage to Lord Buddha residing in Jetavana Vihara [Monastery].

Lord Buddha teaches Loka byuha [Bek strategy for good mundane life.]

For the sake of all living beings Lord Buddha left his Dhamma [Truth] to be guarded by Sakka deva assisted by one thousand Goman Rakhas [ogres] including Vesawun deva.

So with the weapon Warazein Thunder bolt the King above in the sky that is Sakka Deva is watching us.

Good people'll be saved, bad people'll be cast aside in line with Buddha's Dhamma.

Daily observe and practice Buddha's Dhamma.

Buddha Sasana guarded by Saka deva is nearing.

Second stanza

Pursue the right way of Buddha's teachings recorded in canonical texts [Tipitakas] with good will, always carry out wholesome deeds.

Then you are sure to be protected and helped by Devas.

The doers of unwholesome deeds will be taken to task without delay.

Thunder bolt, the weapon of Sakka deva in the celestial kingdom Tavatimsa, surely strikes the doers of unwholesome deeds without delay.

To keep the glory and light of Sasana Saka deva accompanied by Matali deva the Registrar and Vithakyone Deva the driver of Saka Deva's vehicle descends to human world on earth every year. They go round inspecting and examining every human being. Therefore avoid unwholesome deeds.

Third Stanza

Keep and observe Five moral Precepts Pancha Sila. Have a good mind. Jealousy is wrong till rosary. Respect Parents and Elders.

I, vocatist Khin Maung Yin urge you to avoid ten evil deeds.

Chorus.

သိကြားသာသနာ

-နေ-ရွှေတိုင်ညွှန်
-ဆို-ရွှဲရှင်မင်းသား အဆိုတော်ခင်မောင်ရင်
ဓာတ်ပြား BBR 1127 ဗြိတိသျှဘားမား ရုပ်ရှင် ဓာတ်ပြား
ခြေဆင်း

ဘဝါဘုရား အမိန့်တော်ထားသည်၊ သိကြားသာသနာရောက်ခိုန်နီးလျှင်၊ စတုဒ္ဒပဟူစိရိည်၊ ပဥသီဂိုဝဲ၊ တကယ်စွဲလို့ မြဲကြမှတော်လိမ့်မည်၊ စိတ်ချကာ ယုံယုံကြည်ကြည် မြတ်ဘိုးတော်သိကြားမင်းက စကျတစ်ထောင် ဆောင်ကာကြည့်နေမည်။

ပထမပိုဒ်

(သုံးလုပရမေရွှေဆင်းနဲညီ၊ မြတ်စွာဘုရားကိုဖူးမျှော်ကြသည်၊ လောကပါလ၊ နတ်များ စုံညီ၊ စေတဝန်ကျောင်းတော်၊ သောင်းသောင်းဖျဖျညီ)၂ လောကဇာတ်ဟာပါ၊ တရားကိုသာနာကြားတာသည်၊ ကျွန်ုတ်တစ်ထောင်၊ အစ္စေ့ကွန်းရပေတဲ့၊ ဝေသဇာသ၊ မကျန်ရ အမှန်ပ ရှိဦးနှီ၊ ဘဝါဘုရား၊ သတ္တဝါတွေသနား၊ သာသနာများ သိကြားကိုသာအပ်နှင်းခဲ့ပါသည်၊ ဝရဝိန်လက်နက်ဗိုးတဲ့ ထက်မြိုးဘုရ်ာ၊ အထင်ကရစောင့်နေသည်။

သံပြိုင် (ကောင်းသူကယ်တင်မည်၊ မကောင်းတဲ့သူမယ်ရှာမယ်တဲ့ ဘုရားတရားတော်နဲ့အညီ)၂ အလေ်ာပါများ၊ တော်ရာရှား၊ သေချာမှား ဒေသနာတရား၊ နေ့စဉ်ပွားမည်၊ သိကြားသာသနာရောက်ခိုန်နီးပါပြီ။

ဒုတိယပိုဒ်

ဘုရားဟောထားခဲသည်၊ ကျမ်းဂန်နဲအညီ၊ လမ်းမှန်ကျင့်မည်၊ ကောင်းမှုကုသိုလ်ပြုကာ၊ သေသေချာချာ၊ စေတနာသွင်းကြည်၊ နတ်မင်းများက ထင်ရှားစွာ ကူညီပါလိမ့်မည်။

မကောင်းမှုမျှတဲ့သူ၊ ခုနေ့အနေးယူလိမ့်မည်၊ မိုးကြိုးလက်နက်ဗိုးတဲ့၊ ဝေဃဿွာဘုံအာကာဆီ၊ သိကြားမင်းက၊ ထင်လင်း တကယ်ပစ်ခွင်းမည်။

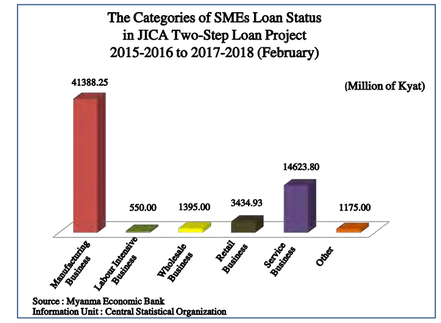
သာသနာရောင်ခြည်၊ မနွမ်းအောင်စောင့်ရှောက်မည်၊ မာတလိဒုံညီ၊ ဝိသကြံခေါ် ထိုနတ်သားတို့၊ တရားတော်ခွင့်အညီ၊ လှုပ်ယှက်လှည့်လည်၊ အမှုတွေကြည့်မည်၊ မတော်တာကိုအတည့် ရှောင်ရှားသင့်ပေပြီ။

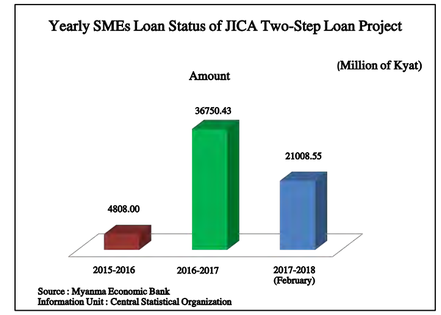
သံပြိုင် ကောင်းသူကယ်တင်မည်၊ -------- သိကြားသာသနာရောက်ခိုန်နီးပါပြီ

နောက်ဆုံးပိုဒ်

ပဥသီဂါးပါးကို လုံခြုံအောင်ထိန်းသိမ်းမည်၊ စိတ်ရင်းကောင်းဘို့လိုပါသည်၊ အဘိဇ္ဈာပွားရင်၊ မှားလိမ့်မည် သိကြားသာသနာနီးလို့၊ ပုတီးစိတ်ပါရသည်၊ ဘုံ ဒီအခါကြရင်၊ လူကြီးမိဘရှိသေရမည်၊ ဒုစရိုက်ဆယ်ပါးကို ရှောင်ရှားဘိုရာ၊ ခင်မောင်ရင်နီးဆော်သည်။

သံပြိုင် ကောင်းသူကယ်တင်မည်၊ -------- သိကြားသာသနာရောက်ခိုန်နီးပါပြီ





Anti-Narcotic Police statement on what to avoid during Thingyan

1. Vehicle drivers must avoid consuming alcohol or other intoxicating substances.
2. Everyone must avoid consuming all types of psychotropic drugs and sexually stimulating drugs and be on the lookout for potential tempters.
3. As responsible citizens, it is everyone's duty to report to the nearest police officers if you stumble upon any drug dealing or consumption. Please help keep the traditional Thingyan festival clean and safe.
4. Young people should partake in the festivities in a fun and responsible manner and avoid intoxication which may lead to adverse effects.
5. We wish to urge community elders, leaders, parents, guardians, and pavilion officials to cooperate and keep vigilance so that the Thingyan Festival may commence peacefully.

-Myanmar Police Force

Invitation to young writers for Sunday section

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

US, France, Britain launch new UN bid for Syria chemical weapons probe

Addressing the council, US Ambassador Nikki Haley, pictured, said the United States was confident that the military strikes had crippled Syria's chemical weapons programme. **PHOTO: AFP**

UNITED NATIONS (United States) — Hours after striking Syria, the United States, France and Britain on Saturday launched a new bid at the United Nations to investigate chemical weapons attacks in Syria.

The three allies circulated a joint draft resolution at the Security Council that also calls for unimpeded deliveries of humanitarian aid, enforcing a ceasefire and demands that Syria engage in UN-led peace talks, according to the text obtained by AFP.

The move signaled the West's resolve to return to diplomacy after a one-night military operation that hit sites Western officials said were linked to Syria's chemical weapons programme.

Among the contentious proposals, the draft resolution would establish an independent investigation of allegations of toxic gas attacks in Syria with the aim of identifying the perpetrators.

Russia in November used its veto three times to bury a previous UN-led inquiry which found that Syrian forces had dropped sarin on the town of Khan Sheikhun in April last year.

The measure would instruct the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to report within 30 days on whether Syria has fully disclosed its chemical weapons stockpile.

The West has accused Syria of failing to live up to its commitment to scrap its chemical weapons programme, under a 2013 deal reached between the United States and Russia.

On the humanitarian side, the measure demands medical evacuations and safe passage for aid convoys to be allowed to all areas.

The text calls for a ceasefire resolution adopted in February but which never materialized to finally take hold and "demands" that President Bashar al-Assad's government engage in peace talks "in good faith, constructively and without preconditions."

Several rounds of peace talks held under UN auspices in Geneva have failed to yield progress, deadlocked over demands that Assad make way for a political transition.

Getting Russia aboard

Negotiations on the draft resolution are set to begin on Monday, but diplomats said it remained unclear when the council would vote on the proposal.

Western diplomats said they were ready to allow time for negotiations to make every effort to bring Russia aboard.

Russia has used its veto 12 times at the Security Council to block action targeting its Syrian ally. The new diplomatic push came after a stormy Security Council meeting called by Russia, which branded the military action an "aggression" against Syria and sought condemnation.

That bid however failed, with only China and Bolivia voting alongside Russia to condemn the air strikes. Eight countries opposed condemnation while four abstained. Addressing the council, US Ambassador Nikki Haley said the United States was confident that the military strikes had crippled Syria's chemical weapons programme.

Haley warned that the United States was "locked and loaded," ready to strike again if any new chemical attack was carried out in Syria.

Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia accused the West of "hooliganism" and demanded that it "immediately end its actions against Syria and refrain from them in the future."

"You are not only placing yourselves above international law, but you are trying to re-write international law," Nebenzia said.

The United States, Britain and France launched air strikes in response to a suspected chemical attack in the rebel-held town of Douma a week ago that killed at least 40 people. The council has met five times this week on Syria amid repeated pleas from UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to end divisions over Syria.—AFP ■

France warns of 'new disaster' looming in Syria's Idlib

PARIS—French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian warned on Sunday that a new humanitarian disaster was looming in Syria, in the rebel-held region of Idlib, seen as the next possible target of the regime's fightback.

In an interview with Le Journal du Dimanche weekly a day after the US, Britain and France carried out strikes in Syria, Le Drian said: "There are 2 million people in Idlib now, including hundreds of thousands of Syrians evacuated from rebel towns recaptured by the regime."

"There is a risk of a new humanitarian disaster."

Held by an array of jihadists and rebels, Idlib province is the last in Syria largely beyond government control.

Speaking in Damascus this week, a senior Iranian official said he hoped Idlib would be the next area to be "liberated" by Iran ally President Bashar al-Assad, after the Syrian army's recapture of the Eastern Ghouta region near Damascus with Russian backing.

The scorched-earth battle for Eastern Ghouta wound up shortly after a suspected chemical attack killed over 40 people and which the West blamed on Assad's forces — allegations Assad and Russia flatly denied.

Le Drian said he hoped Saturday's strikes, aimed at punishing the regime over its alleged use of toxic gas, would convince Russia to pressure Assad into negotiations on ending the seven-year war.

"We hope that Russia understands...we must combine our efforts to promote a political process in Syria that favours an end to the crisis.

"France is ready to work towards this. Except that currently the one blocking the process is Bashar al-Assad himself. It's up to Russia to put pressure on him," he said.

Le Drian said the first step would be "to begin with a ceasefire which is really respected this time."

He was referring to a 30-day ceasefire called by the UN in February to facilitate the delivery of aid and medical evacuations, which was never really implemented.

On Saturday, the US, France and Britain on Saturday launched a new push at the UN for a ceasefire.

In a draft text seen by AFP they also called for a mechanism to probe chemical attacks — and also ascribe blame for them — and demanded that Syria engage in stalled UN-led peace talks.—AFP ■

Western countries should not label Russia as enemy — German president

BERLIN—German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier has pointed to the need to make sure there is no animosity between people in Western countries and Russia amid growing tensions in the world.

"We should not designate Russia in general, the country and its people, as an enemy," he said in an interview with the Bild am Sonntag newspaper published on Sunday.

Steinmeir noted that the Salisbury incident gave rise to concern. "On the other hand, we should be equally concerned about the rapidly growing alienation between Russia and the West, with the consequences going far beyond the scope of that incident," he stressed.

"Countering this dangerous alienation - that's the challenge and objective of responsible politicians," the German president stated. In his view, Europe should not reject criticism of Russia's actions. "However, we should not give up attempts to do so through direct dialogue," Steinmeier added—Tass ■

Israel says destroys tunnel from Gaza that crossed barrier

JERUSALEM — Israel's army said on Sunday it had destroyed a Hamas tunnel crossing from the Gaza Strip into its territory after more than two weeks of tension along the border of the Palestinian enclave.

Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman said it was the longest and deepest Gazan tunnel discovered by Israel.

The tunnel crossed into Israeli territory by several metres (yards) but did not yet have an exit point, military spokesman Jonathan Conricus told journalists.

Israel destroyed the tunnel —which it said connected to several others within Gaza and could have been used for attacks — by filling it with material to make it inoperative.

"We filled the tunnel with material that renders it useless for a very long period of time," Conricus said. Explosives were not used.

"According to our early assessments, this tunnel reaches kilometres, several kilometres, into the Gaza Strip."

The tunnel came from the area of Jabaliya in the northern Gaza Strip and was being dug in the direction of the Nahal Oz community in Israel, he said.

It was the fifth Gazan tunnel destroyed by Israel in recent months, Conricus said. Israel destroyed it over the course of the weekend.

The operation comes after protests along the Gaza border since 30 March that have led to clashes in which Israeli forces have killed 34 Palestinians and wounded hundreds of others.

Israel alleges Hamas is seeking to use the protests as cover to carry out violence and said the tunnel destroyed could have been used for that purpose, saying it comes from near an area where demonstrators have gathered.

Israel has faced criticism over its use of live fire along the Gaza border since March 30, while the European Union and UN chief Antonio Guterres have called for an independent investigation.—AFP ■

A picture taken with a fisheye lens on 18 January, 2018 from the Israeli side of the border with the Gaza Strip shows a tunnel that Israel says was dug by the Islamic Jihad group leading from the Palestinian enclave into Israel. **PHOTO: AFP**

Syrian soldiers inspect the wreckage of a building described as part of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) compound in the Barzeh district, north of Damascus, on 14 April, 2018. **PHOTO: AFP**

Chemical inspectors to begin work in Syria's Douma

DAMASCUS (Syria) — Inspectors from the OPCW chemical watchdog will begin their investigation Sunday at the site of an alleged chemical attack near Damascus, a senior official said.

"The fact-funding team arrived in Damascus on Saturday and is due to go to Douma on Sunday," Deputy Foreign Minister Ayman Soussan told AFP.

A delegation of experts from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, based in The Hague, is tasked with investigating an April 7 attack on Douma, just east of Damascus.

Western powers say chemical substances, most likely chlorine and sarin, were used in the attack and killed at least 40 civilians.

The alleged attack, which Damascus and its Russian ally have denied ever happened, prompted an unprecedented wave of missile strikes by the United States, France and Britain on Saturday. Soussan reiterated a pledge by the Syrian government that the chemical experts would be allow to investigate unimpeded.

"We will ensure they can work professionally, objectively, impartially and free of any pressure," he said.—AFP ■

An image grab taken from a video released by the Syrian civil defence in Douma shows unidentified volunteers giving aid to children at a hospital following an alleged on 7 April, 2018 chemical attack on the rebel-held town. **PHOTO: AFP**

At destroyed Syria lab, workers deny producing toxic weapons

DAMASCUS —Plastic gloves and face masks lay scattered in the rubble of a Syrian research lab destroyed by Western strikes on Saturday, where an official denied the centre was developing chemical weapons.

US, British and French strikes slammed into a series of targets around Damascus that the Western countries said were linked to the Syrian government's chemical weapons programme.

One multi-storey complex, in the capital's northern district of Barzeh, had been completely reduced to rubble, AFP's correspondents saw during a government-sponsored tour on Saturday.

Its roof had been punched down and several walls appeared on the verge of collapse.

Even hours after the strikes wrapped up, plumes of smoke wafted lazily up from the building and a burning smell still hung in the air.

"The building had three storeys: a basement, ground floor, and second floor," said Said Said, an engineer who identified himself as head of the centre's paint and plastics department.

"It had labs and departments that were unfortunately completely destroyed, with all their equipment and furniture. Thank God, no one was here," he told AFP.

The bombardment, including both cruise missiles and air-to-surface strikes, hit Syria around 4:00 am on Saturday (0100 GMT), jolting people awake in the capital's nearby residential neighbourhoods. Syrian state news agency SANA reported several missiles hit a research centre in Barzeh, "destroying a building that included scientific labs and a training centre".

'Children's toys'

The site, according to Western powers, was part of the Syrian government's "chemical weapons infrastructure."

But Said told AFP only non-lethal research and development was under way at the centre.

"As we work in civilian pharmaceutical and chemical research, we did not expect that we would be hit," he said.—AFP

British PM faces backlash for bypassing MPs on Syria

UNITED KINGDOM—British Prime Minister Theresa May faced a backlash from the domestic opposition after launching military strikes on Syria without consulting parliament.

As the Conservative leader explained her rationale for the air strikes, opposition parties claimed the attacks were legally dubious, risked escalating conflict and should have been approved by lawmakers.

The shadow of the 2003 invasion of Iraq still lingers in the corridors of Britain's parliament, when MPs backed then-prime minister Tony Blair in joining US military action.

"Bombs won't save lives or bring about peace," said Jeremy Corbyn, the veteran leftist leader of the main opposition Labour Party.

"This legally questionable action risks escalating further... an already devastating conflict.

"Theresa May should have sought parliamentary approval, not trailed after Donald Trump."

Corbyn has written to May seeking assurance that there would be no further bombing raids and urged the government to negotiate a pause in the Syrian civil war.

The British, US and French bombings on Saturday followed an alleged chemical weapons attack on the rebel-held town of Douma on 7 April.

May's government has insisted the punitive strikes were legal, releasing a statement that said they were aimed at alleviating the "extreme humanitarian suffering" of the Syrian people by reducing the chemical weapons capabilities of President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

Prime Minister Theresa May. **PHOTO: AFP**

"The UK is permitted under international law, on an exceptional basis, to take measures in order to alleviate overwhelming humanitarian suffering," the statement said.

It added that it believed the Syrian government had committed a "war crime and a crime against humanity" with chemical weapons use and that attempts to find a unified international approach through the United Nations had been blocked by Damascus-ally Moscow.

May will face questions from MPs on Monday, when parliament reconvenes after a break.

Stop the War, a pacifist coalition once chaired by Corbyn, has called a demonstration outside the British parliament on Monday to protest against the strikes.

The group said it "strongly condemned" the action and accused May of "sanctioning killing" at Trump's behest.

'Dangerous escalation'

Deploying the armed forces is a prerogative power, meaning the prime minister can launch action without backing from MPs.

But after the Conservatives entered office in 2010, the government suggested that since the 2003 vote on Iraq, a convention had emerged that MPs should have a say, except in cases of emergency.

British MPs voted against taking military action against Damascus in 2013, in what was widely viewed as an assertion of parliamentary sovereignty on the use of force.

David Cameron, who was prime minister in 2013, tweeted on Saturday: "As we have seen in the past, inaction has its consequences".

Lawmakers backed action in Iraq in 2014, and again in Syria in 2015, strictly limiting strikes in both countries to targets of the Islamic State jihadist group.

Four British Tornado jets fired Storm Shadow missiles at a Syrian military base suspected of holding chemical weapons components. The strikes at 0100 GMT were 15 miles (24 kilometres) west of Homs.

Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said Syria's use of chemical weapons could not be tolerated but questioned whether the strikes would halt their use or contribute to ending the civil war.

"This action risks not just further escalating the civil war in Syria but also a dangerous escalation of international tensions," said the leader of the left-wing Scottish National Party, the third-biggest force in the British parliament.

Both Syria and Russia have denied all responsibility for the alleged chemical attacks. —AFP ■

Canada's Trudeau defends controversial pipeline project

PARIS—Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Sunday defended his government's backing of a controversial pipeline project, saying the world could not afford to choose between the environment and the economy.

In an interview with French business daily Les Echos ahead of a visit to Paris, Trudeau acknowledged that environmentalists were "concerned" by the Trans Mountain pipeline.

But he said, "Canadians and people around the world know that we cannot choose between what is good for the environment and good for the economy."

"You have to do both at the same time, and above all, you have to fund the transition towards reduced use of fossil fuels."

On Thursday, the Liberal premier cut short a visit to Peru to try defuse a threatened constitutional crisis over expanding a 1,150-kilometre (715-mile) pipeline to move 890,000 barrels of oil per day from landlocked Alberta's oil sands to the Pacific coast.

Opponents of the pipeline point to the risk of oil spills at sea and say it flouts Trudeau's commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

"We cannot change everything in our economies overnight," Trudeau said.

"It's clear that people on the left and ecologists are concerned but there are also people on the right who do not like the idea of a carbon tax."—AFP ■

Brazil AG files racism suit against far-right presidential candidate

BRASÍLIA — Brazil's top prosecutor has filed a complaint against far-right firebrand and presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro for "racism" against Afro-Brazilians, indigenous peoples, refugees, women and members of the LGBT community.

The formal complaint, filed on Friday by the attorney general's office, will now head to the Supreme Court.

Should the court find him guilty of racism before October's presidential election, Bolsonaro could be barred from the vote. The ex-army captain has been polling a distant second behind Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, Brazil's recently-jailed ex-president.

However, the slow pace of Brazil's judicial system was likely to weigh in the 63-year-old's favor, according to the JOTA news website, which specializes in legal matters.

If convicted he could face a prison sentence of between one and three years, said the attorney general's office which has also asked he be fined a minimum of $117,500 (95,000 euros) for "collective moral damages."

Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro is a far-right former army captain who has praised torture and the country's two-decade military dictatorship. **PHOTO: AFP**

Bolsonaro, a veteran right-wing congressman who has praised the use of torture as well as Brazil's two-decade-long military dictatorship, has denounced the lawsuit as an "unfounded attack."

Bolsonaro has run a campaign heavily focused on his tough-guy approach to law and order, and has worked hard to capitalize on the widespread dislike of Lula.

At an event in Rio's Hebraica Club in April 2017, Bolsonaro "used expressions of a discriminatory nature, inciting hatred," the complaint said, citing remarks about women, homosexuals and the descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves, known as quilombolas, whom he spoke about "as if they were animals."

In response, Bolsonaro's spokesman decried the "unfounded attacks" aimed at generating "sensationalist news" by smearing "the greatest political phenomenon Brazil has seen in recent years."

Bolsonaro will have "no difficulty in showing in court that he is not racist," the spokesman said.

In 2017, Bolsonaro was ordered to pay damages to leftwing deputy Maria do Rosario for saying he wouldn't rape her because she was "ugly" and "not worth it."—AFP ■

Belief Clinton would win election 'factor' in email probe: Comey

WASHINGTON—Former FBI chief James Comey said his belief that Hillary Clinton would be elected president in 2016 "was a factor" in his handling of the probe into her misuse of a private email server while she was secretary of state.

Comey, who was fired by Trump last year, told ABC that a desire to ensure Clinton's victory was seen as legitimate played a role in his decision to announce the bureau would reopen the investigation, made 11 days before the election.—AFP ■

China FM visits Japan for talks on N Korea, regional issues

TOKYO—Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was due in Tokyo on Sunday for a visit seen as a sign of a gradual thaw between the Asian rivals, amid flurries of diplomacy over North Korea.

Shortly after his arrival, Wang will meet his Japanese counterpart Taro Kono with their talks expected to touch on key subjects such as economic relations, territorial disputes in the East China Sea, and ways to push North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons, Japanese officials have said.

Kono met Wang in China in January when he became the first Japanese foreign minister to visit the country in nearly two years.

Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Kono (R) and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi (L) arrive for their meeting in Tokyo. **PHOTO: AFP**

"I hope that we will be able to discuss what Japan and China can work together on in the international arena, not just bilateral issues," Kono told reporters on Friday.

"Of course, the North Korean issue will surely come up in the meeting," he said.

The visit by Wang, a veteran Japan handler who had served as an ambassador to Tokyo, comes as the world's second and third largest economies attempt to ease tension, caused by longstanding disputes over maritime claims and Japan's wartime legacy.

His visit is also seen as paving a way towards Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's wish to host Chinese Premier Li Keqiang next month for a trilateral summit including South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

Such a meeting, Tokyo hopes, would lead to a long awaited exchange of state visits between Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Tokyo also hopes to expand its exchanges with China to stay relevant in increasing international efforts to engage with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. China has demonstrated its significant influence over its reclusive ally with Xi hosting Kim and his wife in Beijing.

South Korea's Moon and US President Donald Trump are also preparing for separate, direct talks with Kim, leaving Abe to continue asserting a "maximum pressure" campaign against the North.

Abe, who is due to meet with Trump in Florida on Tuesday to discuss North Korea, may also meet with Wang. Wang, who will be in Tokyo until Tuesday, will also participate in the fourth China-Japan High-level Economic Dialogue.—AFP ■

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V AS SOPHIA VOY. NO. ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V AS SOPHIA VOY. NO. ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 17-4-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T/BSW 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 SIMA PERFECT VOY. NO. (037N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SIMA PERFECT VOY. NO. (037N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 18-4-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of AWPT 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 LINE

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V TOVE MAERSK VOY. NO. ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V TOVE MAERSK VOY. NO. ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 17-4-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T/MIP 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 ARCA VOY. NO. ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V ARCA VOY. NO. ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 18-4-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T/TMT 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 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 18-4-2018 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

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V SHAMIM VOY. NO. ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SHAMIM VOY. NO. ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 18-4-2018 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 LAND AND SEA SHIPPING LINE

Phone No: 2301185

Bon Jovi, Nina Simone enter Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

CLEVELAND—Bon Jovi, the Moody Blues, Dire Straits, the Cars, Nina Simone and Sister Rosetta Tharpe joined music royalty on Saturday as they were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Richie Sambora, the original guitarist for arena-packing rockers Bon Jovi reunited with the band for a rousing set at the Public Auditorium in Cleveland that included hits "You Give Love a Bad Name and "It's My Life."

R&B-infused progressive rockers the Moody Blues took the stage to perform "Your Wildest Dreams," while New Wave pop songwriters the Cars played "Just What I Needed."

Soul legend Nina Simone and Sister Rosetta Tharpe, the gospel inspiration for early rockers, both of whom were posthumously inducted, and British rockers Dire Straits rounded out the 2018 Hall of Fame class.

Rockers Bon Jovi reunited with original guitarist Richie Sambora for a rousing set at the Public Auditorium in Cleveland. **PHOTO: AFP**

The shrine to rock culture surveyed some 1,000 historians and music industry players to select the new inductees.

Bon Jovi, the hard rockers from New Jersey led by namesake Jon Bon Jovi, came out on top in a survey that drew 6.8 million fans, whose preferences were taken into account to give an extra vote to five acts.

With a string of quickly memorable hits such as "Livin' on a Prayer" and "Wanted Dead or Alive," Bon Jovi became kings in the 1980s, packing arenas on their exhaustive tours full of pyrotechnics.

Simone, who won induction on her first nomination, was widely considered one of the most influential singers of the 20th century who brought the sensibilities of classical music to gospel and jazz.

Raised in segregated North Carolina, Simone became a passionate advocate for racial equality, with her best-known song perhaps the civil rights anthem "To Be Young, Gifted and Black." She died in self-exile in France in 2003.

Tharpe, who died in 1973, was chosen for her early influence on rock.

With her confident stage presence and distortion on her guitar, Tharpe took gospel music to new audiences in the 1930s and 1940s, helping set the stage for rock 'n' roll after World War II.

Dire Straits, led by Mark Knopfler, emerged from Britain's so-called pub rock scene of the 1970s, which emphasized blues roots and no-frills musicianship in an era of angry punks and flamboyant glam bands.

In its citation, the Hall of Fame credited the London band with its revival of Americana, saying, "Dire Straits dragged rock kicking and screaming back to its gritty, country roots using beefy guitar licks and bluesy vocals."—AFP ■

Controversy builds over German rappers accused of anti-Semitism

BERLIN—Outrage has grown in Germany after a rap duo accused of anti-Semitism over lyrics comparing themselves to Auschwitz prisoners was awarded a music prize on Holocaust Remembrance Day. German rappers Kollegah and Farid Bang reference the Nazi death camp in their song "0815", saying their bodies are "more defined than an Auschwitz prisoner". Despite the controversy which followed, on Thursday they won the Echo Music Award's Hip-Hop/Urban prize after selling more than 200,000 copies of their album "Young, Brutal and Handsome 3".

German rappers Kollegah and Farid Bang perform during the 2018 Echo Music Awards ceremony in Berlin on Thursday. **PHOTO: AFP**

Also on Thursday, Israel marked Yom HaShoah, its Holocaust Remembrance Day, dedicated to the six million Jews killed by the Nazis during World War II.

Both rappers have said they reject all anti-Semitism, and Kollegah has offered free "lifetime" tickets to the duo's Jewish fans.

But the lyrics have sparked a heated debate in Germany, which is still haunted by lingering memories of Nazi crimes.

Germany's Justice Minister Heiko Maas said such "anti-Semitic provocations" were "simply repugnant".

"It is shameful that this prize was awarded on Holocaust Remembrance Day."

Ronald Lauder, head of the World Jewish Congress group, told the Bild newspaper: "In Germany, you now get rewarded for despising women, glorifying violence and mocking Auschwitz victims?"

A spokesman for Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial told Bild that "the use of terminology or images out of their historical context is memory-based violence".

"That musical industry officials reward such comments under the cover of art and freedom of expression is scandalous," said Josef Schuster, the head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. Before the rappers won the Echo prize, the International Auschwitz Committee said their presence at the awards ceremony was a "slap in the face for Holocaust survivors".—AFP ■

Suspect charged in France over Kardashian gunpoint robbery

PARIS—A French court charged an eleventh suspect Friday over the gunpoint robbery of US reality TV star Kim Kardashian in Paris in 2016, a source involved in the investigation told AFP.

The 28-year-old man has been charged with armed robbery, criminal conspiracy and holding Kardashian against her will, the source said.

Ten people had already been charged over the 2 October, 2016 robbery at a luxury residence where Kardashian was staying during Paris Fashion Week.

Five men tied her up, gagged her and locked her in a bathroom, before making off with jewels worth nine million euros ($10.6 million), including her four-million-euro diamond engagement ring.

The robbery was the biggest of an individual in France in the past 20 years. One of the robbers fleeing the scene on a bicycle dropped a diamond-encrusted cross worth 30,000 euros, which was found by a passer-by a few hours later.

It remains the only piece to be recovered from the heist.—AFP ■

The robbery of US reality TV star Kim Kardashian was the biggest of an individual in France in the past 20 years. **PHOTO: AFP**

'Godfather' of gambling: Macau magnate Stanley Ho

HONG KONG—Macau gambling tycoon Stanley Ho, who has announced his retirement from his flagship company SJM, made his riches by transforming neighbouring Macau from a sleepy Portuguese outpost into the world's biggest casino hub.

Known as the "godfather" of Macau casinos, 96-year-old Ho was instrumental in turning the city on China's southern coast into a gambling boomtown, with gaming revenue surpassing Las Vegas.

Ho is the great-nephew of one of Asia's first tycoons, Robert Hotung, among Hong Kong's wealthiest individuals at the turn of the 20th century and an influential Eurasian businessman and philanthropist.

Ho made his fortune smuggling luxury goods into China from Macau during World War II, before securing the only gaming licence in the then-Portuguese colony in 1962.

A flamboyant entrepreneur, Ho first married in 1942 but subsequently had three other partners, one of whom is a lawmaker in Macau. It is unclear whether or not he married all the women he called wives.

He has said that he had never wagered a bet, even as his casinos continued to rake in billions in revenues annually. The keen ballroom dancer cultivated a playboy lifestyle, fathering at least 17 children, one of whom, Lawrence, runs rival casino and hotel operator Melco International in Macau.

The billionaire monopolised Macau's gaming industry until 2002, when the government introduced foreign investors, sparking a boom which saw casino takings contribute around 80 percent of the city's annual revenue.

But his casino-hotel business took a dive after Chinese President Xi Jinping launched a high-profile corruption crackdown in 2014 which triggered a dramatic decline in high-rollers in the city. Ho's hotel giant Sociedade de Jogos de Macau Holdings (SJM) saw its net profit for 2014 drop 13 per cent and saw an even steeper profits fall of 63 per cent for 2015. Profits continued to decline in 2016, which saw a 6 per cent decrease from the year before, and continued to fall by the half-year point of 2017.

The lower profits were compounded when his nephew Alan Ho, executive director for the company's Hotel Lisboa, was caught along with 96 sex workers in 2015 after police broke up a prostitution ring. He spent 14 months in jail. SJM Holdings is trying to lure back visitors with the sprawling new Grand Lisboa Palace complex, which will feature Versace and Lagerfeld hotels, reportedly due to open in 2019 in a bid to diversify from gambling and attract more mass-market tourists.

Ho has been keeping a low profile after a serious fall in 2009 at the age of 87 which left him requiring brain surgery.—AFP■

Known as the "godfather" of Macau casinos, 96-year-old Stanley Ho was instrumental in turning Macau, a city on China's southern coast, into a gambling boomtown, with gaming revenue surpassing Las Vegas. **PHOTO: AFP**

Musical time travel: recreating Mozart-era pianos in Czech wood

DIVISOV, Czech Republic—The sign on the old sunlit house reads "Machine Factory" but now handiwork reigns in this workshop where replicas of fortepianos once played by the world's greatest musical geniuses are created.

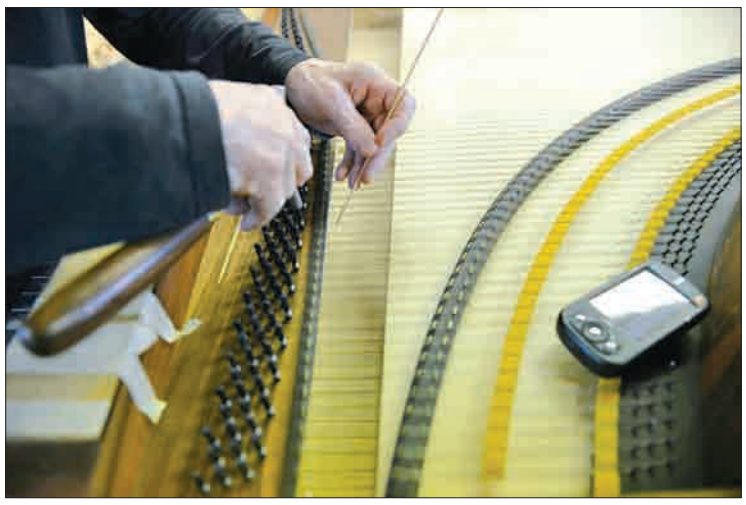
Since 1998, more than 200 copies of pianos played by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Joseph Haydn or Frederic Chopin have left the house in the village of Divisov, some 40 kilometres (25 miles) southeast of the Czech capital, Prague.

"Authenticity. There can be no other purpose in replicating these instruments," says their builder Paul McNulty, a 64-year-old American of Irish descent, whose small round glasses liken him to John Lennon. "I want to raise no eyebrows if the original builder walks past my instrument," he adds with a chuckle.

Italian Bartolomeo Cristofori invented the piano around 1700, and fortepianos were made until the 19th century, serving a number of Classicist and Romantic composers. They were then replaced by the heavier modern piano with a metal frame.

McNulty first studied guitar, then switched to piano tuning before embarking on his career as a fortepiano builder at a Boston workshop.

"I got my degree and I went to this man and I said, 'I'll work for you for one dollar per hour'. He couldn't say no. He showed me how to sharpen the blade and some osmosis happened," says McNulty.



Paul McNulty says authenticity is the reason for replicating fortepianos —to give their players the chance to play Mozart on a copy of a Mozart-era instrument . **PHOTO: AFP**

His entire house is packed with copies of pianos originally made by Johann Andreas Stein, Jean-Louis Boisselot or Mozart's piano builder Anton Walter.

McNulty himself produces between 10 and 15 pianos a year, spending 800 to 6,000 hours on each of the instruments, whose prices start at 30,000 euros ($37,000) apiece, lifetime warranty included.

- 'Detective work' -

McNulty moved to the Czech Republic in 1995 via the Netherlands, in search of quality spruce logs for his instruments.

"The Schwarzenberg forest in the Czech Sumava (mountains) is the original source" of wood for fortepiano makers in Vienna and elsewhere, says McNulty, who recently received Czech citizenship.

"I get the tree and I saw it up into eighths and they sit out in the garden for five or 10 years and then I slice it up on a saw into soundboard pieces," he told AFP.

Besides the soundboard wood, McNulty uses iron strings, not steel, and the hammer heads are covered with the skin of hair sheep, an old breed with shorter hair than the thick wool of their modern cousins.

"I don't use (modern) sheep because sheep have been bred out of resemblance to the sheep of the 18th century. They have more wool now so the skin texture has changed," he says.—AFP■

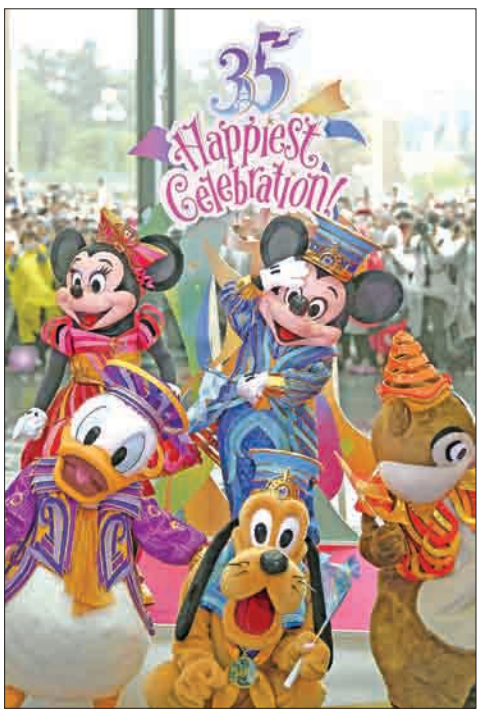
Tokyo Disneyland marks 35th anniv. with reopened popular attraction

CHIBA, Japan—Tokyo Disneyland marked its 35th anniversary on Sunday with the reopening of renovated popular attraction "It's a Small World."

The operator, Oriental Land Co, held a ceremony with Mickey Mouse and his Disney friends at the theme park, which first opened to the public on 15 April, 1983. "We would like to create the next Disneyland with everyone for a new dream," Toshio Kagami, chairman of Oriental Land, said at the ceremony.

The park plans to run special anniversary event "Tokyo Disney Resort 35th 'Happiest Celebration!'" through 25 March next year with the new parade "Dreaming Up!" to celebrate the anniversary. Oriental Land also plans to open a new area inspired by the "Beauty and the Beast" film by 2020.

Ryoichi Miyauchi, operating officer in charge of corporate planning, told reporters the company is considering expanding one of the two parks.



Mickey Mouse and other Disney characters celebrate the 35th anniversary of Tokyo Disneyland in Urayasu, east of Tokyo on 15 April, 2018. **PHOTO: KYODO**

"Whenever I come here, I feel like I'm spellbound. I hope (the park) will keep creating new pleasures," said Yu Kuroki, 34, who visited the park with her family. Tokyo Disneyland and its adjacent Tokyo Disney Sea, which opened in 2001, had attracted a combined 720 million customers as of the end of March.—Kyodo News■

Man City on verge of title after bouncing back at Spurs, Salah hits 40

LONDON — Manchester City moved to within touching distance of a fifth English league title after bouncing back from a bitterly disappointing week to beat Tottenham Hotspur 3-1 at Wembley on Saturday.

Defeat for Spurs handed Chelsea a glimmer of hope in the fight for Champions League places after they came from 2-0 down to beat Southampton 3-2, but Liverpool strengthened their position in the top four as Mohamed Salah scored his 40th goal of the season in a routine 3-0 win over Bournemouth.

City blew the chance to seal the title by losing 3-2 at home to local rivals Manchester United last weekend, and were then dumped out the Champions League at the quarter-final stage 5-1 on aggregate by Liverpool in midweek.

However, Pep Guardiola's men showed why they have been compared with the all-time great teams of the Premier League era by inflicting Spurs' first league defeat since the sides last met at the Etihad in December.

"I said after 10-15 minutes we will be champions," said Guardiola of his side's fast start. "After what happened and how the people reacted, these guys are fantastic. They are awesome, they are incredible.

"What they lived in the last week was so unfair but they deserve (to win the league) and now we have a match ball. We had the first one against United, we could not do it and now we have another one against Swansea with our 60,000 people and we are going to try to be champion."

City host Swansea next Sunday but could even be confirmed as champions as early as Sunday if United lose at home to rock bottom West Brom.

Gabriel Jesus raced in behind an unsettled Spurs defence to drill home the opener on 22 minutes and Ilkay Gundogan slotted home the second from the penalty spot three minutes later as Hugo Lloris wiped out Raheem Sterling, although replays suggested the contact took place outside the area.

Just like against United last weekend when a 2-0 half-time lead disappeared in 16 minutes, City threatened to let another promising position slip away when Christian Eriksen brought Spurs back into the game just before the break with a bit of fortune when Aymeric Laporte's clearance ricocheted off the Dane and past the helpless Ederson.

However, this time there was no second-half collapse as City should have ran out even more convincing winners.

Jesus and Sterling passed up huge chances to add to their lead before Sterling -- who also missed two great opportunities when City were 2-0 up on United last weekend -- finally found the roof of the net after Lloris parried another Jesus effort.

Salah has the 'wow' factor

City's Champions League conquerors moved ever closer to sealing their place in the competition next season as Liverpool cruised past Bournemouth with Salah again taking centre stage.

"What a number. Wow!" exclaimed manager Jurgen Klopp on hearing Salah is the first Liverpool player since Ian Rush 31 years ago to score 40 in a season.

"Mo knows what this means and the way we play suits him," added Klopp. "For him, for the boys, it's fantastic and today he certainly didn't look like he doesn't want to score in the next few games."

All of Liverpool's prolific front three were on target as Sadio Mane and Roberto Firmino struck either side of Salah's deft header to take their combined tally for the season to 82.

Chelsea kept their faint hopes of Champions League football next season alive by closing to within seven points of Spurs with a stunning eight-minute fightback to deepen Southampton's predicament in the bottom three.—AFP ■

Salah scored his 40th goal of the season, 30 of which have come in the Premier League. **PHOTO: AFP**

Johnson seeks ATP US Clay crown repeat against Sandgren

LOS ANGELES—Defending champion Steve Johnson outlasted fellow American Taylor Fritz 7-5, 6-7 (4/7), 6-2 on Saturday to reach the ATP US Clay Court Championships final.

The US sixth seed will play for his third ATP title and second in a row on Houston clay against American eighth seed Tennys Sandgren, who made a stunning run to the Australian Open quarter-finals in January.

Eighth-seeded Sandgren, ranked five spots behind Johnson at 56th, advanced to his first ATP final by downing Croatia's 39-year-old Ivo Karlovic 7-6 (7/2), 7-6 (7/4). Johnson, whose ATP titles came in 2016 at Nottingham and Houston last year, broke Fritz to claim the first set in 50 minutes, but dropped four of the last five points in the tie-breaker to force a third set, which Johnson dominated to book his first match against Sandgren.

Steve Johnson. **PHOTO: AFP**

Fritz had beaten Johnson en route to his only ATP final in 2016 at Memphis.

Sandgren broke Karlovic to level at 4-4 in the opening set, denied the Croatian on a break chance in the ninth game and then dominated the tie-breaker, scoring five of the last six points.

Sandgren broke for a 2-1 edge in the second set but Karlovic broke back to level at 3-3, setting up the final tie-break. Sandgren took his lone point off Karlovic's serve for a 5-3 lead, then held twice on his next serves for the 97-minute triumph.

With a victory, 88th-ranked Karlovic would have become the oldest ATP finalist since Ken Rosewall won the 1977 Hong Kong title at age 43.

Karlovic settled for being the oldest ATP semi-finalist since Jimmy Connors in 1993 at San Francisco.—AFP ■

'Emotional' Nehwal grabs badminton gold in all-India thriller

GOLD COAST — Saina Nehwal made up for her disappointing Rio Olympics as she defeated fellow Indian and rival PV Sindhu to win her second Commonwealth Games badminton singles gold on Sunday.

In a tense final, the Delhi 2010 champion staged a second-game comeback against Sindhu, the Olympic silver-medallist, to grasp a thrilling victory 21-18, 23-21.

Former world number one Nehwal, 28, a poster girl of Indian sport, used her greater experience to peg back the 22-year-old Sindhu and the decisive moment came at 18-18 in the second game when a mammoth rally went Nehwal's way.

Both players were left hunched over gasping for breath as the Gold Coast crowd rose to its feet in applause.

Nehwal, the London Olympic bronze medallist, had heavy strapping on her right shin and revealed afterwards she had been playing through pain throughout the competition.

"It was a very pressurised tournament, a lot of top competition from the Malaysians, it was a very challenging tournament," said Nehwal, ranked 12 in the world to Sindhu's three. Asked how this gold ranked to the one she won on home soil eight years ago, Nehwal said: "Much more tough because the pressure is always there when you already have gold, so there is a lot more expectation.—AFP