

NATIONAL

VP U Myint Swe attends
Korean cultural event

PAGE-3



NATIONAL

UPDJC's work committees continue meetings for
Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong

PAGE-6

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Thursday, 28 June 2018

President U Win Myint receives outgoing Italian Ambassador



President U Win Myint shakes hands with outgoing Italian Ambassador Mr. Pier Giorgio Aliberti in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

President U Win Myint received outgoing Italian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Pier Giorgio Aliberti, who completed his tour of duty in Myanmar, at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

During the meeting, they cordially discussed

the promotion of bilateral relations and friendship between the two countries, the democratic transformation in Myanmar and the internal peace process and cooperation efforts for Myanmar archaeological sites to be recorded in the World Heritage List, as well as

the promotion of economic cooperation between the two countries.

Also present at the meeting were Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin, Deputy Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U Khin Maung Tin and other officials.—MNA ■

State Counsellor visits NRPC, UEHRD offices in Yangon



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meeting with members of the UEHRD (L to R) U Kyaw Myaing, Dr. Aung Tun Thet, Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe and U Toe Oung. **PHOTO: MNA**

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who is chairperson for both the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre-NRPC and the UEHRD, made a visit to both offices in Yangon yesterday morning.

At UEHRD she had a brief meeting with UEHRD committee

members namely Chief Coordinator Dr. Aung Tun Thet, U Toe Oung, recently appointed as advisor to the Chairperson and U Kyaw Myaing, Information and Communications Director. Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe from the Office of the State Counsellor also attended the

meeting.

They discussed important matters relating to the work of the UEHRD and information/communications issues. After this meeting, the State Counsellor met with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Peace Commission. —MNA ■

e-Government committees accomplish five out of nine tasks

THE e-Government Steering Committee has accomplished one of the five tasks set in the committee's first coordination meeting, said committee Chairman Vice President U Myint Swe.

The Vice President made the remark during his speech at the committee's second coordination meeting held at the Ministry of Transport and Communica-

tions in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Present at the meeting were e-Government Steering Committee members including Union Ministers, Union Attorney General, Union Auditor General, Chairman of the Union Civil Service Board, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairperson, Chief Ministers of all Regions and States, deputy ministers, Deputy Governor of

the Central Bank of Myanmar, Patron of Myanmar Computer Federation (MCF) U Thaung Tin, and other officials.

For the successful implementation of an e-Government system in Myanmar, the President's Office ordered the formation of the e-Government Steering Committee with executive order 14/2018 issued on 23 January 2018. The committee has set

five key objectives and is led by the State Counsellor and the Vice President and formed with 46 members, said the Vice President. Likewise, the e-Government Implementation Working Committee is also formed with five objectives and 45 members and led by the Union Minister for the Office of the Union Government.

SEE PAGE-3

INSIDE TODAY

NATIONAL

List of all eligible voters being compiled by Union Election Commission

PAGE-2

LOCAL NEWS

ICRC to provide more humanitarian aid to Rakhine State

PAGE-4



LOCAL NEWS

Dead dolphin to be displayed at Dolphin Conservation Gallery

PAGE-4



BUSINESS

High rice price leads to low demand from China

PAGE-5

NATIONAL

Myanmar people staying abroad donate to UEHRD project

PAGE-6

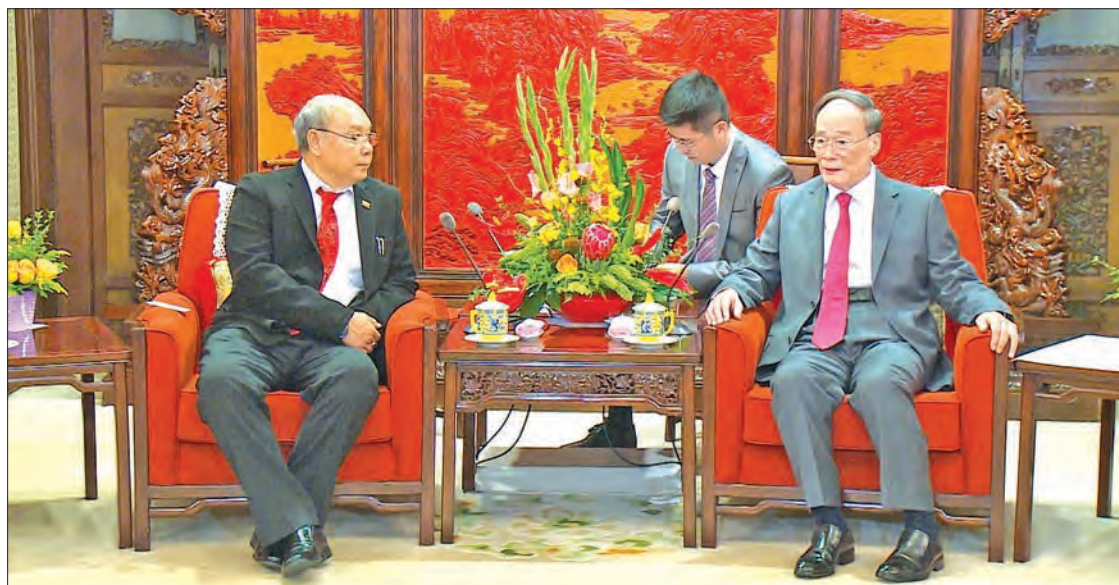
Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than meets Vice President of PRC, Chairman of NPC in Beijing

A visiting delegation led by Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than in Beijing, People's Republic of China, met Chinese Vice President Mr. Wang Qishan at 9.30 a.m. at Zhong Nan Hai Zi Guang Ge Hall in Beijing on 26 June.

During the meeting, they exchanged views and cordially discussed matters related to promoting bilateral trade by enhancing bilateral friendship, developing cooperation, an all-round strategic cooperation, and rendering assistance to the peace process in Myanmar.

Similarly, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than and delegation held talks with Chairman of National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee Mr. Li Zhanshu at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing at 4:30 p.m.

During the meeting, they exchanged views and discussed the establishment of a comprehensive all-round strategic cooperation between the two



Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than, left, meets with Vice President of the People's Republic of China Wang Qishan in Beijing yesterday. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

countries for long-standing amity and cooperation, cooperation between the two Hluttaws, enduring Pauk-Phaw relations between the two countries, striving to improve the spirit of good neighbourliness between the two countries, and China's support to the Myanmar peace process.

Also present at the meeting were Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee secretary Dr. Myat Nyanna Soe, Myanmar-China Inter-parliamentary Friendship Association members U Kin Shein and U Wai Sein Aung, Joint Committee on Inter-Parliamentary assembly member U Khun Thein Pe, Health, Sports

and Culture Committee member Naw Sa Mu Htoo, Local and Overseas Labour Affairs Committee member Daw San San Myint and officials from the Amyotha Hluttaw office.

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than and delegation visited the former royal palace situated in central Beijing

and observed the architectural art and designs. The former royal palace was declared a World Heritage Site in 1987 by UNESCO as the "Imperial Palace of the Ming and Qing Dynasties". The palace complex consists of 980 buildings.

It is one of the tourist destinations in Beijing, and it draws 10,000 to 80,000 visitors per day. They arrived at the National Museum at 11.30 a.m. and observed the artifacts in the museum.

Next, the Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker and delegation visited the Myanmar Embassy and met the staff of the embassy and their families. Myanmar Ambassador to China U Thit Lin Ohn and the embassy staff hosted a luncheon for the Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker and delegation. In the afternoon, they proceeded to the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, and the officials concerned explained the agricultural technology and nursery research.—Myanmar News Agency ■

National human rights commission report on Tamway protest arrests

Date: 27 June , 2018

1. The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission carried out an investigation into complaints against civilians allegedly involved with arrests of protestors and threats on reporters near Tamway Roundabout in Bahan Township on 12-5-2018 when police dispersed protestors who were demanding an end to war. The investigative body checked video records and photos, interrogated officials of the Myanmar Police Force and the General Administration Department, those who lodged complaints to the commission, and some of the alleged civilians who were involved in the incident.
2. According to the investigation, it was found that the protestors informed the authorities of their protest before the demonstration in accordance with the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law, but authorities concerned failed to negotiate with and explain to the protestors that the protest could not be allowed and failed to communicate this decision to the protestors. Authorities concerned, though they received information on a plan by another group to protest against the former group at the same place, failed to negotiate with them in an attempt to prevent the protest. Therefore, unnecessary consequences occurred.
3. In this incident, those who staged protests demanding to stop wars were filed under the Section 20 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law on 13-5-2018 and eight civilians who were allegedly involved in arresting the protestors were filed on 28-5-2018 by the Bahan Township Police Force and the case was brought to the Bahan Township Court. The police are also looking into the cases following the judgment handed down the Bahan Township Court in accordance with the Section 202 of the Criminal Procedure Case.
4. Media personnel are urged to follow the News Media Law and journalistic ethics and are suggested to use badges or markings identifying them as journalists when they cover events.

Myanmar National Human Rights Commission
(Unofficial Translation)

List of all eligible voters being compiled by Union Election Commission

1. The Union Election Commission has compiled a list of registered voters, inclusive of constituencies with no candidates, for the upcoming 3 November 2018 by-election by referring to the list of registered voters acquired during the 2015 General Elections.
2. The first list of registered voters will be put up in election commission offices in wards and villages for fourteen days from 9-7-2018 to 22-7-2018. Voters need to view the voters list so that we may have a complete and authentic registry.
3. Therefore, we request every citizen to review the voters list at their respective election commission office and use Form-3 to register yourself if you do not see your name in the list of voters; use Form-4 to report people who should not be registered in the list; use Form-4(C) to request amendments in the list. The forms can be acquired at the election commission offices (free of charge). After any and all additions, removals or amendments to the list, the final list of voters will be put up in respective election commission offices in October 2018 for fourteen days. Citizens can review and request additions, removals or amendments during that time as well.
4. We humbly request at least one person from every household to come review the list of voters in your respective election commission office so that we may have an accurate and comprehensive list of voters.

Union Election Commission
(Unofficial translation)

e-Government committees accomplish five out of nine tasks

FROM PAGE-1

The Vice President said the steering committee has completed one of the five tasks set at the end of the first coordination meeting, on 4 April, and emphasised the importance of setting a deadline to complete the remaining four tasks. He added that skills, investment and cooperation are the three requirements needed for successfully implementing the e-Government system, and that “the first steps have been taken in ensuring cooperation between all ministries.”

On the other hand, all four tasks set by the e-Government Implementation Work Committee at their first meeting have been completed, said the Vice President.

The Vice President said that on 12 June, the steering committee formed the e-ID System Working Committee, Control Subcommittee, Basic Infrastructure, System, Formation and Design Subcommittee, Purchasing and Public Private Partnership Subcommittee, Human Resource Development Subcommittee, Security Subcommittee, Guideline Subcommittee, Research and Development Subcommittee, and Information and International Cooperation Subcommittee.

The Vice President suggested that the working committees and subcommittees convene weekly or biweekly to swiftly implement their set objectives.

He suggested implemen-



Vice President U Myint Swe delivers the speech at the second coordination meeting of e-Government Steering Committee in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

tation of services with a “quick win” and public private partnership format after considerable research and asked for all committees and subcommittees to give monthly progress reports.

He called for cooperation for amending laws and bylaws concerning information technology and the e-ID system so that they are relevant to the present. He also said implementing Myanmar Unicode as the national standard in line with the International Standard Organization (ISO) is a top priority.

The Vice President also wanted a review of existing rules, regulations and protocols in current operations and a re-engineering of the sector so as to streamline the system.

He said effective plans can be drawn up from the 21 June

surveys and assessments conducted on IT and e-Government by union ministries, central offices, and Chief Information Officers from state and regions.

Long-term plans must be carried out simultaneously with short-term plans like the quick win service so that the public can observe concrete results.

Finally, the Vice President encouraged all members to discuss the committee’s structure and its objective as well as obstacles that can surface during the e-Government’s implementation.

Next, the steering committee’s Vice-Chair Union Minister U Thant Sin Maung explained the process of drafting the Cyber Law, drafting laws and bylaws for the e-ID system, the Myanmar Unicode system, cyber security and public private partnership.

Steering committee secretary Deputy Minister U Thar Oo presented the progress report of the tasks set during the committee’s first meeting.

This was followed by e-ID Working Committee Chairman Union Minister U Thein Swe and MCF Patron U Thaung Tin presenting their group’s progress reports.

Afterwards, Magway Region Chief Minister Dr. Aung Moe Nyo discussed human resource (HR) development for data centres and central control rooms in states and regions; Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe discussed HR development for e-government in universities and ministries; Union Civil Service Board Chairman Dr. Win Thein discussed e-learning centres and e-learning

lectures; Yangon Region Minister for Planning and Finance U Myint Thaung discussed Yangon Region’s e-Government implementation progress and data security; Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye discussed HR development; Union Auditor General U Maw Than discussed implementing the e-ID system; and Kayah State Chief Minister U L Phaung Sho discussed priorities to be set and possible obstacles in implementing the e-Government system. The Vice President and Union Minister U Thant Sin Maung replied to the discussions and gave suggestions where necessary.

The Vice President then delivered a closing speech and concluded the coordination meeting.—Myanmar News Agency■

Vice President U Myint Swe attends Korean cultural event

TO commemorate Myanmar’s 70 years of independence and to promote bilateral relations, the Republic of Korea (ROK) held a traditional cultural event at Myanmar International Convention Centre – II in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday evening. This event was attended by Vice President U Myint Swe and wife Daw Khin Thet Htay.

Also attending the event were Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice Senior General Soe Win and wife, Union Ministers Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, Dr. Pe Myint, Thura U Aung Ko, Dr. Than Myint, U Han Zaw, U Ohn Maung, U Kyaw Tin, Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) Maj-Gen Moe Myint Tun and Commander of



Vice President U Myint Swe and wife Daw Khin Thet Htay enjoy entertainment at the traditional cultural event at MICC-II in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

Nay Pyi Taw Command Maj-Gen Myint Maw and them wives, Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun and wife, Deputy Minister U Win Maw Tun, ROK Ambassador to

Myanmar Mr. Lee Sang-hwa, department heads and other invited guests.

Mr. Lee Sang-hwa delivered the opening speech at the event.

The night’s event was opened with a prayer for peace followed by various performances using traditional instruments such as the abak and drums of

different sizes. At the conclusion of the event, the Vice President posed for documentary photos with attendees.—Myanmar News Agency ■



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please be aware that your letter will be
edited.

The dead baby dolphin seen on the boat. PHOTO: WCS

Dead dolphin to be displayed at Dolphin Conservation Gallery

A LOCAL boat man found a baby dolphin on the banks between Sein Kyaung village and Ywar Thar Aye village, Madaya Township, Mandalay Region, on 26 June. However, the baby dolphin died during the rescue work by the local boat man.

The male baby dolphin was 3 feet and 3 inches in length and 1 feet and 11 inches in circumference. The baby dolphin was separated from his mother owing to heavy waves in Ayeyawady river. The local boat man found the baby dolphin between two villages. "Currently, we are planning to embalm the dead dolphin to display it at the dolphin conservation gallery in the Ayeyawady dolphin ship," said U Kyaw Hla Thein, in charge of the dolphin

programme, Wildlife Conservation Society.

"If the dolphin had been found on the banks, we would have had to keep it in small natural water. Then, we have to release it into natural water as soon as possible. Nowadays, local people understand that dolphins must be conserved. However, they have poor knowledge about the methods of dolphin conservation. Therefore, we have to provide knowledge about dolphin conservation to them," said U Han Win, one of the persons in charge at the Fisheries Department. According to February 2018 data, some 76 dolphins are living between Mandalay and Bahmo, while 69 dolphins were found in 2017.—Nyi Tu ■

ICRC to provide more humanitarian aid in Rakhine State

By Nyein Nyein

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) will speed up the process of providing humanitarian aid in Rakhine State.

ICRC has been providing humanitarian aid in Rakhine State since the conflict started in August 2017. It is now planning to distribute double the quantity of food that has been

provided in the areas, as it is difficult to procure food during the rainy season, according to ICRC.

ICRC chairman Peter Maurer reached Rakhine State on 26 June to observe the provision of humanitarian aid in the local area until 28 June.

Then, he will meet with the local villagers. He is also planning to meet the Rakhine State government, said an offi-

cial from ICRC.

"The ICRC chairman will observe the condition of assistance being provided in the Sittway, Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships.

The Red Cross activities team was formed with the Myanmar Red Cross Society and ICRC. The team will visit those areas that are being provided with humanitarian aid.

They will also observe the

condition of the mobile clinics", he added.

ICRC chairman has planned to meet President U Win Myint in Nay Pyi Taw. Also, he has plans to meet State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in Nay Pyi Taw. Later, he will proceed to visit the displaced persons camps in Bangladesh. ■

Man killed after 12-wheeled truck overturns in Nyaunglebin, Bago Region

A 12-WHEEL vehicle carrying 100 buffaloes overturned near Htaw Nat Village, Nyaunglebin Township, in the Bago Region on 27 June, leaving one man dead and one injured. Three buffaloes were also hurt.

According to an investigation, Pwa Lon May compa-

ny sent 100 buffaloes by five 12-wheeled vehicles from Yangon to Mandalay. Out of them, one vehicle carrying 20 buffaloes, driven by Myo Myint Aung, along with three conductors, identified as Nan Oo, Ei Soat and Pho La Pyae, overturned when the driver lost control of it.

Ei Soat was killed on the spot, while Pho La Pyae was injured. The driver and the third conductor managed to flee the scene.

Currently, the police have filed charges against both of them under section 338/304 of the Penal Code.—Nay Lin (Nyaunglebin) ■



Tachilek Airport temporarily closed due to flooding

THE Tachilek Airport in Tachilek, eastern Shan State, has been temporarily closed due to flooding, after heavy rains struck the area since yesterday night.

A runway was also submerged in floodwaters and the airport was to be closed till 3 pm yesterday. The closing period will depend on the weather condition, though. The floodwaters on the runway are being removed by the staff from the Department of Civil Aviation and airport security officials using water pumps. At present, the water level on the runway has dropped slightly.—Wai Yan Lin/MDN ■

High rice price leads to low demand from China

By May Thet Hnin

THE prevailing high price of rice has resulted in a decline in demand from China decreasing, with the market being cool.

“China cannot offer a high price and with the low demand, the supply too has been low. Merchants do not sell if they cannot bargain. They do not export if there is no profit,” said U Chan Thar Oo, vice chair of Muse rice depot.

It took about a month for the rice export volume to decline.

The price of rice produced in the Ayeyawady and Bago regions is rising, leading to low demand. Only the summer rice from the Shwebo, Mandalay and Magway regions is being sent to the Muse market.

Currently, it is not harvest time. Therefore, there is a shortage in the market. The inflow of rice to the Muse market has decreased considerably compared to the previous harvest season.

A total of 10,000 tons (2 million bags) were supplied to the Muse depot per day from November to February. Currently,



Workers carry bags of rice at the Botahtaung Jetty in Yangon on 7 June 2018. PHOTO: GNLM/PHOE KHWAH

only 2,000 tons of rice are being supplied at Muse gate per day.

Earlier, 50,000-60,000 rice bags flowed into the Bayint-

naung depot. Now, only 11,000 rice bags are seen at that depot, said U Than Oo, secretary at the depot.

Currently, there is a short-

age of paddy in the markets of other towns besides Yangon. The paddy price has increased due to the high demand from local merchants. Meanwhile, exporters

are keeping an eye on the market since China does not offer a high price. Also, local merchants cannot send their rice to the Muse market at a low price, as they purchased the paddy at a high price. There is a mismatch between the local merchants and exporters. The rice price is up by Ks100-Ks300 per bag every day, U Than Oo noted.

Low quality rice will be shipped to Bangladesh next month. 80 per cent of the purchase order has been stockpiled.

The export rice prices range from Ks20,300 to Ks24,000 per bag, each weighing 108 pounds depending on the rice quality.

From 1 April to 8 June, 528,403 metric tons of rice and broken rice were exported, with an estimated value of US\$181 million.

The border trade saw over 278,557 metric tons of rice and broken rice worth \$99 million, whereas over 249,846 metric tonnes valued at \$81 million were shipped through the sea route, according to statistics from the commerce ministry. ■

Rice, broken rice exports bring in \$181 million over two months

Rice and broken rice exports between 1 April and 8 June were valued at US\$181 million, with the export volume being over 528,403 metric tons, according to statistics from the commerce ministry.

Over the past two months, over 401,987 metric tons of rice were exported to 36 foreign countries, while 126,416 metric tons of broken rice were sent to 14 foreign countries.

The border trade surpassed sea trade, performing 52.7 per cent of the total exports. Exports through border checkpoints earned an estimated \$99 million from exports of over 278,557 tons of rice and broken rice, whereas

sea trade saw an income of \$81.9 million from over 249,846 tons.

The main challenges in the rice industry are pedigreed seeds, high input costs, and high production and the lack of technology, high transaction costs and logistic problems, said an expert.

Rice is integral to Myanmar's agriculture products. 75 per cent of the production is for domestic consumption and the remainder is for exports. In the last 2017-2018 fiscal year, 3.6 million tons of rice and broken rice worth \$1.13 billion were exported to foreign countries.—Ko Htet ■

Government subsidy needed to enhance fishery export sector

By May Thet Hnin

The government's subsidy is of vital importance for the development of the fishery export sector, said U Win Kyaing, secretary of the Myanmar Fisheries Federation (MFF).

Associations under MFF held a discussion on the development of the fishery export sector on 25 June. The Yangon Region Fisheries Department has been requested to submit the matters previously discussed to the government at a meeting held on 26 June.

There are over 480,000 acres of fish and prawn farming lakes, mostly using traditional farming methods. Therefore, it is necessary to shift from traditional to advanced methods. To upgrade fishing methods, the existing fish and prawn farms need to be treated. Also, new projects are required to be developed. Accordingly, the entrepreneurs

want the government to contribute capital and technique and to grant business permits, said U Win Kyaing.

“The private sector's efforts solely cannot improve the fishery sector. The support and contribution of the union government and the regional governments are also crucial,” U Win Kyaing maintained.

Currently, the government should develop a scheme for entrepreneurs to get access to loan plans, he said.

Additionally, the amendment of farmland policies concerning the rights of property is required. To set up a fish farming zone, the government needs to tackle fundamental infrastructure such as electricity, water supply, and road transport.

Moreover, the Fisheries Department wants to request the government to provide the necessary technical assistance

in research and development matters and in obtaining more export markets, besides management under the existing law.

The MFF is drafting a national plan for the development of the fishery sector. This plan intends to increase the earnings by 30 per cent a year, and the MFF expects to earn US\$8 billion from the fishery export sector within seven years, said Daw Toe Nanda Tin, vice chair of the MFF.

The MFF will go on an overseas study tour to adopt advanced techniques and share them with those involved in the fisheries business. The MFF will also establish a laboratory that meets international criteria, she added.

In the last 2017-2018 fiscal year, Myanmar received \$717.7 million from fishery exports, and the export volume is still less compared to the neighbouring countries. ■

Trade Mark Ads

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UPDJC's work committees continue meetings for Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong

WORK committees of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee continued their meetings at Myanmar International Convention Centre II in Nay Pyi Taw to prepare for the third session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong.

The work committees discussed a wide range of issues related to the political, economic, social, and farmlands environmental sectors, as well as security.

"At least 10 points are expected to be discussed for consensus in the social sector," said Daw Zin Mar Aung, who is participating in the Social Sector Work Committee.

The Social Sector Work Committee mainly discussed equal rights for men and women, youth affairs and drug abuse problems, the culture and literature of ethnic minorities, points discussed during the national-level dialogues, the remaining points of the previous session of the peace conference, papers from the CSO



Members of the Security Sector Work Committee discussing the security sector in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

Forum and all Mon State national-level political dialogues, and sought a consensus.

The committee also reached an agreement on the role of women yesterday, according to Daw Zin Mar Aung.

In the farmlands sector, the participants discussed the issues

over which an agreement had not been reached yet at the previous session of the Union Peace Conference, said Khun Myint Tun.

The Farmlands and Environmental Work Committee also discussed papers related to the farmland and land resource utilisation policy from Mon na-

tional-level political dialogue, and from the Arakan Liberation Party. Besides this, papers from Kayin national-level political dialogue and the Chin National Front were submitted and read during the first day meeting of the committee on Tuesday.

One paper reviewed the

works of the government and another paper is related to farmland and submitted by the government, the Hluttaw and the Tatmadaw.

The group of signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement also submitted a paper to the committee during the first-day meeting of the committee.

The meetings were attended by members of the Secretariat of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee Lt-Gen (Ret) U Khin Zaw Oo, U Aung Soe, Maj-Gen Soe Naing Oo, U Zaw Htay, U Hla Maung Shwe, Pado Saw Tar Do Hmu, U Myo Win, U Sai Ngin, Saw Mra Yazar Lin, Khun Myint Tun, U Myint Soe, U Naing Ngan Lin, Sai Kyaw Nyunt, Min Kyaw Zeyar Oo and Tar Hla Pe, members of the joint committee, representatives of the government, the Hluttaw and the Tatmadaw, representatives of ethnic organisations and peace-makers.

The meetings will continue today.—Myo Myint, Myo Thu Hein (Myanmar News Agency) ■



MEB Managing Director U Yin Zaw Myo delivers the speech at the first workshop on technical cooperation for MEB and JFC in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Seminars on technical cooperation for MEB, JFC, held in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay, Yangon

WITH the aim of developing the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) sector and assisting in the usage of loan analysis in Myanmar, seminars on technical cooperation for Myanmar Economic Bank (MEB) and Policy Research Institute (PRI) and Japan Finance Cooperation (JFC) were held in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Mandalay, respectively.

The seminars on the technology cooperation scheme between MEB and PRI and JFC are being conducted since 2015.

During the seminars, they conducted lectures on the credit analysis method, business start-ups, and credit management at the seminar. The first work-

shop on technical cooperation for MEB, PRI and JFC was held from 11 to 12 June at the head office of MEB in Nay Pyi Taw, and 50 participants from MEB attended the seminar. Managing Director of MEB U Yin Zaw Myo, Chief Economist of Policy Research Institute (PRI) Ms. Akiyo Mitsumoto, and JFC Micro General Manager Mr. Yoshiharu Veno attended the seminar.

Similar seminars were also held from 14 to 15 June, and from 18 to 19 June at Hotel Marvel in Mandalay and at MEB (branch 1) in Yangon. There were 40 participants in Mandalay and 50 participants in Yangon.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Myanmars living abroad donate towards UEHRD

DONATIONS were made by Myanmar people staying abroad towards projects of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development (UEHRD) in Rakhine State.

On behalf of the Myanmar people who are staying abroad, Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin donated cash to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Re-

settlement yesterday afternoon. Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye received the cash, after which he gave out certificates of honour to the respective donors.

For the projects of UEHRD, 15,000 Australian dollars were donated by Myanmar families staying in Sydney, Australia; US\$3,900 was donated by a Myanmar staying in Jeddah, Saudi

Arabia; while \$11,000 was donated by the Myanmar Ambassador to the United States, officials from the Myanmar Embassy and Myanmar people staying in the US. \$250 was donated by Myanmar people staying in New York City, US, while Macau Myanmar Chamber of Commerce also donated \$6,350 for the education sector in Rakhine State and for other education needs.—Myanmar News Agency ■



Union Minister U Kyaw Tin presents cash donation to Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye. **PHOTO: MNA**

Information Minister: Movie studio in Nay Pyi Taw to benefit film industry

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint delivered a speech at the coordination meeting for constructing a movie studio in Nay Pyi Taw. The meeting was held at the Ministry of Information yesterday.

The meeting was attended by the 18 members of the Movie Studio Implementing Committee, with the union minister as chairperson.

The Union Minister said building the movie studio in Nay Pyi Taw will promote the film industry in Myanmar as well as develop Nay Pyi Taw's image. He said there are three sectors to this; artistic creativity, technical support in construction, and investment. He added the committee listens to the suggestions and ideas from artists, actors,



Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint addresses the coordination meeting for constructing a movie studio in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

actresses, producers, entrepreneurs, and international experts in implementing its objectives.

Next, committee secretary and Director-General of Infor-

mation and Public Relations Department (IPRD) U Ye Naing explained why Nay Pyi Taw was chosen for the site of a movie studio and gave a presentation

about the committee's objectives, results from meetings, and progress reports.

This was followed by Deputy Minister for Information U

Aung Hla Tun, Nay Pyi Taw Council Member U Aung Myin Tun, committee members and other attendants discussing relevant topics. The union minister then replied to the discussions.

An event will be held on 6 July to show film clips relating to the movie studio and its site location and to explain investment efforts. The event will take place at the IPRD's Film Promotion Sub-department grounds located at No. (50), Shwe Taung Kyar Street, Bahan Township, Yangon. Directors, producers, people involved with film and media industries and officials from the Myanmar Motion Picture Association and training schools, and all who are interested are invited to attend the event.—Myanmar News Agency ■

3,516 jade lots sold so far at 55th Myanma Gems Emporium

THE 55th Myanma Gems Emporium entered its eighth day yesterday at the Maniyadana Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw and fetched 892 million euros through the sale of 892 jade lots out of 1,151.

The emporium began on 24 June and a total of 3,516 jade lots out of 4,600 have already been sold out and fetched a total of 251.959 million euros.

Over 4,200 local and foreign merchants attended yesterday's emporium, officials said, and merchants put their tender forms with submitted prices into a tender box after they had selected the jade that they wanted to purchase from the total of 1,150 jade lots from lot numbers 4,601 to 5,750. The jade lots will be put on sale on 28 June through the open tender system.

The list of tender winners will be announced on the afternoon of 28 June. A total of 1,045 jade lots from lot numbers 5,751 to 6,795 will be put on sale on 29 June through the open tender



Gem merchants checking quality of jade stones at 55th Myanma Gems Emporium in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: KHIN MAUNG WIN**

system. Jade with a floor price of 4,000 euros and above were put on sale and 973 jade lots from lot numbers 1 to 1,150 were sold for 38.530 million euros on 24 June, while 833 jade lots from lot numbers 1151 to 2300 were sold for 74.122 million euros on 25 June and 818 jade lots from jade lot numbers 2301 to 3450 were sold for 86.866 million euros.

Similarly, 341 pearl lots out of 360 were sold for 2.598 million euros and 69 gem lots out of 336 were sold for 1.378 million euros through an open tender system.

With the aim of improving the gems and jewelry market in Myanmar, the emporium will continue till 29 June.—Maw Si (Myanmar News Agency) ■

ICRC President visits Buthidaung, Maungtaw

MR. PETER MAURER, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), met people from Rakhine, Hindu and Muslim communities in Buthidaung and Maungtaw, Rakhine State, yesterday.

Following his visits to Maungtaw and Budhidaung, Mr. Peter Maurer exchanged views with the Maungtaw District Deputy Commissioner and discussed future cooperation, said the ICRC President. He will meet civil society organisations and the Rakhine State Chief Minister. At the meeting with reporters, the ICRC President

said the international committee will provide assistance to all needy people without bias, in accordance with the committee's unbiased policy. He stressed the need to fulfil the requirements of the people who were affected by terrorist attacks.

Among the services he said would be provided were education, healthcare, safe drinking water supply and development of the people. "Therefore, the situation needs to return to normalcy, and the ICRC is carrying out work to ensure stability in the state," he said.—Aung Thura, Nay Win Tun ■



ICRC President Mr. Peter Maurer meets with Maungtaw District Deputy Commissioner U Ye Htut. **PHOTO: KHIN MAUNG WIN**

Local, foreign Media delegation visits Buthidaung, Maungtaw

A media delegation comprising local and foreign journalists arrived in Sittway yesterday to report on the situation in Maungtaw, Rakhine State.

A total of 18 journalists will visit villages in Maungtaw and report on the peace and stability, security, development and repatriation issues there. The delegation in-

cludes journalists from Kyodo, Xinhua, CNA, Wall Street Journal, RFA, BBC, AP, AFP, Frontier Myanmar, MIR, NPE, MRTV and MITV.—Han Lin Naing ■



PHOTO: TIN TUN

Speed up works for returning confiscated farmland

THE commitment to swiftly return confiscated land to farmers in accordance with the law is the one of the priorities of the Union Government.

Confiscated lands all over the country should be returned to owners, according to the policy.

If it is not possible to release the land, compensation and reparations will be given to the owners.

Works should be conducted effectively to release back the land under the name of the rightful owners.

To achieve the objective, the relevant state/region governments are to conduct the works effectively and truthfully.

To speed up the works, the central committee also needs to consider the comments and opinions of the state/region governments and decide matters expeditiously.

Necessary actions should be taken against those who are hindering or obstructing the review, release, return by the relevant committees and utilisation by the rightful owners of the confiscated/ released/returned land.

farmers, the state formed the Central Committee for Reviewing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands in 2016.

During the two-year period of the incumbent government, there were weaknesses in reviewing and assessing complaints, and delays in returning the confiscated land back to the original owners. In some cases, the government released some land, but the farmers didn't receive it. In some cases, it is found that land ownership disputes and squatter issues caused delays, even though the ministries concerned had abandoned the farmland.

Necessary actions should be taken against those who are hindering or obstructing the review, release, return by the relevant committees and utilisation by the rightful owners of the confiscated/released/returned land.

Chief ministers who are the chairmen of the Nay Pyi Taw and state/region committees need to effectively push towards achieving more progress.

At the same time, the district, township, ward and village-tract committees have the duty and responsibility to comprehensively study and understand the set policies and work processes and conduct it accordingly.

All should follow the policies laid out and conduct matters accordingly.

We must quit Smoking

By Maung Khine Mar(Ah Htet Min Hla)

ON this planet, each and every country is working hard for the eradication of smoking, and the scheme has become an important national duty as the dreadful habits take another step into illegal drug abuse, threatening the health of human beings.

Humans have been smoking for thousands of years, and it is believed that the addiction started around 5000 BC. In fact, it can be said that "Drug abuse starts from cigarette", and the pattern is so simple that smoking cigarette is like a gateway to illegal drug use.

Many people across the world have an ardent desire to smoke tobacco rolled into a small cylindrical shape, resulting in the emergence of the tobacco industry selling cigarettes and cigars. The American tobacco industry has been spending 9.5 billion dollars in promoting its sales.

History of Cigarettes

Researchers revealed that tobacco was found in the American Continent in BC 6000 and that the consumption of tobacco started in BC 1.

When Christopher Columbus reached the Bahamas Island in 1492, he witnessed that the islanders were smoking a certain kind of leaves much similar to tobacco. As he himself had preferred the taste of tobacco, he brought the plants to Europe when he returned home.

In another research paper, a Spanish doctor, named Francisco Hernandez, went to Mexico as a diplomatic envoy, and carried back home some tobacco plants to Europe.

The French Ambassador to Portugal, Jean Nicot de Villemain, presented the tobacco plant to Queen Catherine as a means of treating a painful migraine. The chemical content in the tobacco has been named 'nicotine' in honor of the ambassador who brought in the plants, it was learnt.

The tobacco leaves endure for one cycle of seasons. The tobacco plant has been classified as wild (Nicotiana Rustica) and normal (Nicotiana Tabacum).

Normal plants are taller in height and cultivated in more than one hundred countries. China is the largest grower of tobacco plants.

Between 1664 and 1666, England had utilized tobacco in the prevention and treatment of the infectious disease plague.

Around 10 AD, Portugal and England started the culture of rolling tobacco in a piece of paper,

turning it into a cigarette for smoking. The word 'cigarette' was created by France.

The first cigarette factory was established in Havana, Cuba, in 1853. 'Camel' is an American brand of cigarettes, currently owned and manufactured by the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company in the United States and by Japan Tobacco outside of the United States. Most current Camel cigarettes contain a blend of Turkish and Virginia tobacco. Later, the industry became worldwide.

Smoking was first introduced in Myanmar in Myanmar Era (ME) 991, during the reign of King Thar Lun. Later in ME 1128, King Sin Phyu Shin conquered Dwarawaddy, and then emulated the smoking habit of the Thai people using banana leaves. Cigarettes first entered Myanmar after the First World War and the smoking habit spread in the country after the Second World War. Virginia plants cultivation scheme started in Myanmar in 1955.



Smoking habits

According to the 5 April 2017 issue of Lancet Health report that is based on 2800 research papers and health information, a total of 933 million people are smoking on this planet. The 2010 WHO report mentioned that a total of 1.2 billion people are using tobacco, and it is likely that 1.6 billion people might be engaged in smoking in 2020.

In Myanmar, 26 per cent of people are smokers; among them 44 per cent are males and 8 per cent are females, according to the 2014 statistics. Consuming betel with tobacco, or smokeless tobacco consumption accounted for 43 per cent, with 62 per cent males and 24 per cent females. Alarmingly, 63 per cent of cigarette and cheroot buyers are under 18 years youth, and that one student out of three is smoking at home. Three students out of ten are seen smoking at restricted areas.

Negative impact of smoking

Smoke from cigarettes releases 4000 dreadful chemicals and among them 60 elements are

cancer-causing carcinogens.

When a cigarette is being smoked or burned out, it releases 85.95 Centigrade of heat. Small particles of smoke enters the lung and congests the respiratory track. Cigarettes also release deadly tar and nicotine.

In a cigarette, there are three poisonous chemicals, such as (1) nicotine, (2) carbon monoxide, and (3) tar. It also includes lethal chemicals such as formaldehyde, ammonia, and benzene.

Smoking brings in diseases such as lung cancer, heart disorder, and Buerger's disease (thromboangiitis obliterans).

On the part of the male folks, smoking reduces their libido, leading to dissatisfaction in sex life. On the part of the pregnant women folks, either direct smoking or passive smoking causes troubles such as that of miscarriage, conceiving outside the uterus, still birth, insufficient birth weight, and birth defects.

Either direct smoking or passive smoking may cause various diseases to mothers such as coronary vascular disease, respiratory tract disease, and various types of cancers, including dental problems for the baby.

Each year, six million people die due to smoking related diseases, according to the 2014 WHO report. Among them 0.6 million people die due to passive smoking.

Tobacco spelled destruction to life by killing 100 million people in the 20th Century and is prepared to kill 1000 million people in the 21st Century.

On 11 September 2017, the State Counsellor sent an awareness raising message to the media to remind the public to refrain from smoking and consuming betel nuts. The State Counsellor expounded that the non communicable diseases are in parallel with communicable diseases that bring in danger to the people in the developing countries, hence making a heavier burden to the health sector. The State Counsellor added that 59



Office of the President Drug Abuse Reporting Department "Safely report on drug use and abuse"

1. The President's Office has formed the "**Drug Abuse Reporting Department**" with executive order (187/2018) on 22-6-2018 so that the public may provide information relating to abuse of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, without fear of repercussions or threat to personal safety.
2. Anyone with information that can assist in preventing the dangers of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances can contact the department's telephone, fax or email, shown below, during working hours.

Contact Info

Telephone - 067-590200
Fax - 067-590233
Email - antinarcotics@presidentoffice.gov.mm

EARTHQUAKE NEWS

(Issued at 19:45 hour M.S.T)

A moderate earthquake of magnitude (5.0) Richter Scale with its epicenter inside Myanmar latitude 19.68°N, longitude 96.18°E, depth (10) kilometers about (7) miles south-southeast of Nay Pyi Taw seismological observatory was recorded at (19)hr (32)min (32)sec M.S.T on 27th June, 2018.—MNA

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Wednesday 27th June, 2018)

BAY INFERENCE: Monsoon is moderate over the Andaman Sea and South Bay and moderate to strong elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 28th JUNE, 2018: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Naypyitaw, Lower Sagaing, Mandalay and Magway Regions, fairly widespread in Northern Shan State and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with isolated heavy falls in Rakhine State. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Squalls with moderate to rough seas are likely at times Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Rakhine Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (30-35)m.p.h. Sea will be moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (7 - 9) feet in Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama and off and along Rakhine Coasts and about (4 - 7) feet in off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Moderate monsoon.

FORECAST FOR NAYPYITAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28th JUNE, 2018: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28th JUNE, 2018: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28th JUNE, 2018: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

Translated by UMT (HK)

US, Chinese defence chiefs talk cooperation despite tensions

BEIJING — US Defence Secretary James Mattis met his Chinese counterpart in Beijing on Wednesday, aiming to find areas of cooperation despite a mounting military rivalry between the two superpowers.

On his first ever visit to China, the Pentagon chief was greeted at the headquarters of the People's Liberation Army by an honour guard and marching band playing the US and Chinese anthems.

In opening remarks, Defence Minister Wei Fenghe called the visit critical "to increase the strategic trust between our countries."

He said Mattis' words "carry weight in both the military and political circles back in the United States."

Mattis replied that military relations were crucial to the broader relationship between the two countries and he hoped the discussions would involve "very open and honest dialogue".

Mattis was expected to meet President Xi Jinping late Wednesday after talks with other senior officials. His four-day trip to Asia will include visits to regional allies Seoul and Tokyo.

His first meeting with Wei, who became defence minister earlier this year, comes under a cloud of festering tensions over China's placement of advanced weapons systems on built-up islets in the South China Sea, a projection of force that has



US Defence Secretary James Mattis (R) told his Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe (L) that military relations were crucial to the broader relationship between the two countries. **PHOTO: AFP**

challenged decades of the US Navy's preeminent presence in the strategically important region.

That, along with rising Chinese pressure on US ally Taiwan, and deepening trade and technology disputes, have elevated the strains between Washington and Beijing to new levels.

Showing the US displeasure with China's recent show of force in the South China Sea — in which it landed long-range bombers on disputed islands claimed by Beijing — last month Mattis disinvited the Chinese from an exercise of some two dozen Pacific Rim navies. And

earlier this month, at a security conference in Singapore, Mattis slammed the Chinese militarisation of its Southeast Asia outposts, noting that Xi promised US president Barack Obama three years ago that Beijing would not weaponise the islets. China's purpose was "intimidation and coercion," Mattis said at the time.

Beijing argues that the islands are Chinese territory and says it has the right to install military facilities to protect its sovereignty.

No official agreements are expected out of the visit, with the Pentagon chief saying he wants to take a measure of his

counterparts to assess their long-term strategic intentions.

He also will discuss Chinese cooperation in pressuring North Korea to agree to a denuclearisation programme, currently being negotiated between Washington and Pyongyang.

Mattis toned down his rhetoric ahead of the visit, saying he does not want to "poison" the atmosphere ahead of talks with Xi, Wei and others.

"I think the way to address issues between our two nations is to first establish a transparent strategic dialogue: how do the Chinese see the relationship with us developing, how we see it developing," he said.—AFP ■

WORLD BRIEFS

Global opium and cocaine production at record highs: UN report

VIENNA (Austria) — Global production of cocaine and opium, stemming largely from Colombia and Afghanistan respectively, has hit record levels, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said on Tuesday in its annual report.

The production of opium rose by 65 percent from 2016 to 2017 to reach 10,500 tons, while global cocaine manufacture in 2016 reached an estimated 1,410 tons, the agency said.—AFP ■

Mt Shimmoe in southwestern Japan erupts again

MIYAZAKI, (Japan) — Mt Shimmoe on the southwestern Japan main island of Kyushu erupted on Wednesday following a similar eruption last Friday, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

The 1,421-metre volcano straddling Kagoshima and Miyazaki prefectures erupted at 3:34 pm, spewing ash and smoke up to 2,200 metres in the air, according to the weather agency. The agency warned of the risk of flying rocks within 3 kilometres from the crater, and of a pyroclastic flow within 2 kilometres of the crater.—Kyodo News ■

Heatwave hits Britain as temperatures set to soar

LONDON — Temperatures have soared to 30 degrees Celsius in parts of Britain and will continue to soar later this week as a heatwave intensifies, forecasters have said.

Temperature reached 30.6 degrees Celsius on Tuesday in Porthmadog in North Wales, beating Monday's 30.1 degrees Celsius in Hampton, southwest London. The Met Office has issued a level two heatwave alert, saying dry and sunny weather will lead to temperatures gradually trending upwards during the coming week—Xinhua ■

Japan to cooperate for Thailand joining TPP free trade talks

BANGKOK — The foreign ministers of Japan and Thailand agreed on Wednesday to step up cooperation for Bangkok to join talks on participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade framework.

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono and his counterpart Don Pramudwinai also discussed deeper economic cooperation and regional issues such as

North Korea's denuclearization, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said.

During the meeting, Kono was quoted as saying Japan welcomes Thailand's intention to join the 11-member TPP and is willing to cooperate with Bangkok.

Following the abrupt withdrawal of the United States, the remaining members signed a

revised TPP in March, now called the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

At least six members of the pact need to ratify it before it can take effect. Japan's parliament is still deliberating relevant legislation necessary to complete its domestic procedures.

On North Korea, Kono explained Japan's policy to urge

North Korea to abandon all weapons of mass destruction and missiles of all ranges in a "complete, verifiable and irreversible" way and sought Thailand's support for resolving the issue of Japanese nationals abducted by the North decades ago.

Kono is on the final leg of his Asian tour that has taken him to Bhutan and Indonesia.—Kyodo News ■

British bomb-maker convicted of London terror plot

LONDON — A British plumber who made bombs in Afghanistan was found guilty on Tuesday of planning an attack in London last year, as well as making explosives for the Taliban.

Khalid Ali, 28, from north London, was dramatically arrested by armed police on a street in Westminster in April 2017 with three blades tucked into his clothes.

He was moments from launching an attack on police, politicians or the military, London's Old Bailey court heard during his trial this month.

Prosecutor Brian Altman told jurors that Ali, who had returned to Britain from Afghanistan in late 2016, planned a "deadly terror attack at the very heart of this country's democracy".

The jury deliberated for three days before finding him guilty of preparing terrorist acts in the UK and of two charges of possessing explosive substances with intent to endanger life abroad.

Ali gave no reaction in court as he was convicted. He will be sentenced next month.

Metropolitan Police deputy assistant commissioner Dean Haydon said he was "an incredibly dangerous individual".

He had returned from a training camp in Afghanistan "with a determination to kill," added Haydon.

In police interviews, Ali said he wanted to deliver a



British police detaining Khalid Mohammed Omar Ali near the Houses of Parliament in central London last year. He was found guilty on Tuesday of plotting a knife attack on MPs and police. **PHOTO: AFP**

"message" to British authorities.

"Jihad is what we do. We are mujahideen," he told officers.

During his trial the court heard Ali admitted involvement in making explosives in Afghanistan, even bragging he detonated more than 300 devices.

Giving evidence, he claimed he had been held captive by the Taliban and forced to make bombs.

Ali's family in Edmonton,

north London, had reported him missing in June 2011.

He eventually resurfaced at the British Consulate in Turkey more than five years later, claiming he had lost his passport.

In November 2016, he was stopped at Heathrow Airport, interviewed by police and his fingerprints and DNA samples were taken.

The FBI in the United States subsequently matched his fingerprints to caches of

explosives recovered by Afghan forces in 2012, and Ali was placed under surveillance in Britain.

The Old Bailey heard he was seen conducting reconnaissance at various sites around London in March and April last year, before making several purchases of knives.

Police moved in to arrest Ali on 27 April not far from Prime Minister Theresa May's Downing Street office. —AFP ■

Albania refuses to host EU migrant centres

BERLIN (Germany) — Albania on Wednesday rejected any talk of hosting a centre for migrants seeking to enter the European Union, saying that people must not be treated like "toxic waste".

As part of their plan to curb new arrivals, EU leaders are hoping to establish sites outside the bloc to process asylum applications.

As Albania lies next to Greece and just across the Adriatic from Italy, the non-EU state had been floated as a possible location for such asylum centres.

But Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama rejected the idea in an interview with Germany's *Bild* daily.

"We will never accept such EU refugee camps," he said, adding that it was a "dangerous solution to turn Albania into a breakwater for Europe's refugees". Such centres mean "dumping desperate people somewhere like toxic waste that no one wants," Rama added. The Albanian leader also told Brussels that Tirana would not be bought by EU membership talks to accept such centres. "The refugee crisis must be dealt with regardless of the current situation of our membership bid," he added. Rama's refusal came a day after the EU agreed to open negotiations next June for Tirana to join the bloc.

It spells another setback for European leaders hoping to agree a deal to curb migrants from entering the bloc, a challenge expected to dominate an EU summit opening in Brussels Thursday. —AFP ■

Bahrain says Gulf allies to boost financial support

DUBAI, (United Arab Emirates) — Bahrain said on Wednesday that its Gulf allies are to unveil a new support package to shore up its finances, which have been strained by seven years of persistent civil unrest.

The kingdom's central bank intervened on Tuesday to defend the value of the dinar, promising to maintain its peg to the dollar against pressure on spot markets, London-based Capital Economics said.

Investor confidence has been hit by the kingdom's difficulties in

finding new creditors to finance its large budget deficit.

"The kingdom of Bahrain along with its sisters Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait will announce a programme to support the stability of the financial situation in Bahrain," Finance Minister Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa told the official BNA news agency.

Sheikh Ahmed gave no timeframe for the new cash injection. Bahrain's wealthy neighbours are still disbursing \$10 billion in fi-

nancial support they pledged to Bahrain in 2016.

The Gulf states sent police and troops to the kingdom in 2011 to help its Sunni rulers to crush month-long protests led by its Shiite majority for a constitutional monarchy with an elected prime minister.

The ruling Al-Khalifa family has since outlawed the main opposition groups and jailed dozens of their leaders, but sporadic unrest has continued, sapping the economy.

Even before the oil price

collapse of 2014, Bahrain was running up large annual budget deficits, swelling the national debt to around \$31 billion, or 89 percent of gross domestic product, the International Monetary Fund said in a March report.

The kingdom posted a deficit of close to \$5 billion last year and is projecting a shortfall of \$3.5 billion in 2018.

Bahrain is currently a minor oil producer with output of some 200,000 barrels per day. But in April it announced the discovery of more than 80 billion barrels of

shale oil which it hopes to start pumping in 2023 in a major fillip for public finances.

In the meantime, the IMF has called on the authorities to tighten their belt by cutting subsidies and introducing new taxes, something they have been loath to do for fear of fanning unrest in the Gulf's poorest economy.

"A credibly large policy package — comprising both revenue and expenditure measures, while protecting the most vulnerable — is urgently needed," the IMF said in its March report. —AFP ■

Trump hails Supreme Court's backing of travel ban on Muslim-majority countries

WASHINGTON — US Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled President Donald Trump's travel ban on several Muslim-majority countries is lawful, which Trump hailed as "a tremendous victory" and "moment of profound vindication."

In a 5-4 opinion, the court found that Trump's executive order on the immigration restriction fell "squarely within the scope of Presidential authority under the INA (the Immigration and Nationality Act)".

"The [order] is expressly premised on legitimate purposes: preventing entry of nationals who cannot be adequately vetted and inducing other nations to improve their practices," Chief

Justice John Roberts wrote in the majority opinion.

"The text says nothing about religion," Roberts wrote, rejecting claims that the ban was motivated by religious hostility.

"The president lawfully exercised that discretion based on his findings — following a world-wide, multi-agency review — that entry of the covered aliens would be detrimental to the national interest," Roberts wrote.

Justices Anthony Kennedy, Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch joined Roberts in the majority, with liberal Justices Stephen Breyer, Elena Kagan, Sonia Sotomayor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg dissenting.

"Today's Supreme Court

ruling is a tremendous victory for the American People and the Constitution. The Supreme Court has upheld the clear authority of the President to defend the national security of the United States," Trump said in a White House statement.

"This ruling is also a moment of profound vindication following months of hysterical commentary from the media and Democratic politicians who refuse to do what it takes to secure our border and our country," the president said.

However, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) on Tuesday slammed the Supreme Court ruling, saying that history will judge the decision harshly.

"This is not the first time the Court has been wrong, or has allowed official racism and xenophobia to continue rather than standing up to it. History has its eyes on us — and will judge today's decision harshly," the ACLU tweeted.

The case has been central to the White House immigration policy, presenting a key test of Trump's campaign promise to restrict immigration and secure US borders.

Trump has signed three versions of executive orders on immigration restrictions targeting several Muslim-majority countries. The initial order, signed one week after he took office in January last year, led to days of nationwide protests and chaos at airports across the country.

The third version of Trump's travel ban barred nearly all travelers from five mainly Muslim countries, namely Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. It also adds a ban on travelers from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and government officials from Venezuela.

The lower federal courts had ruled that all three versions either violate federal law or are unconstitutional, excluding restrictions on travelers from the DPRK and government officials from Venezuela. —Xinhua ■

Over 50,000 observers to monitor Cambodia's July national election

PHNOM PENH — More than 50,000 national and international observers will monitor a national election in Cambodia next month, according to a National Election Committee (NEC) statement on Wednesday.

"As of 26 June, the NEC has recognized more than 50,000 national and international observers from 82 associations, non-governmental organizations, and institutions," the statement said, adding that the foreign observers included those from Myanmar, China and Singapore.

The NEC is considering recognizing other 800 local and foreign observers, according to the statement.

The registration deadline for national observers will be on 18 July and that for the international observers will be on 25 July.

The Southeast Asian country is scheduled to hold the national election for the 125-seat parliament on 29 July.

NEC said that 20 political parties will contest in the election, which will see some 8.3 million people cast their ballots. —Xinhua ■



Protesters outside the supreme court in the wake of Tuesday's ruling. The White House said the court had 'upheld the clear authority of the president'. PHOTO: AFP

Malaysia police seize up to \$270 mil. in cash, valuables from ex-PM

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysian police estimated on Wednesday that they have seized up to 1.1 billion ringgit (\$270 million) worth of cash and valuables, including jewelry and designer handbags, from various premises linked to former Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

"Total value of all items seized will be touching 900 million ringgit to 1.1 billion ringgit," Commercial Crime Investigation Department chief Amar Singh told a press conference, while calling the amount "just too huge."

"This is the biggest seizure in Malaysian history," he said.

The police, who are investigating Najib for money laundering in connection with the controversial state fund 1Malaysia

Development Berhad, raided six premises in mid-May after his National Front coalition's shock defeat in a general election.

With help from dozens of experts, it took the police over a month to evaluate the seized items, most of which were found at Pavilion Residences, a luxury condominium complex in the heart of Kuala Lumpur's entertainment and shopping district.

On one of three residences there, police seized 72 suitcases, of which 35 contained cash and the 37 others contained jewelry and branded watches. They also seized 284 boxes with designer handbags including exclusive Hermes Birkin bags.

Two other residences in the same complex, occupied by Najib's son and daughter, were also

searched, as were his private residence in the fringe of the city centre and his former office and official residence in Putrajaya, the federal administrative capital.

Cash in 26 different currencies found in the 35 bags from Pavilion Residences and from Najib's private residence totaled 116.7 million ringgit, Singh said.

The police, with the assistance of 22 central bank officers and six counting machines, took three days to tabulate the massive sum.

As for the remaining 37 bags, 25 contained gold items, six bags contained expensive watches and three were stashed with 234 designer sunglasses, including those made by Versace, Gucci and Cartier.

The 25 bags of gold, Amar said included 12,000 items like necklaces, earrings, brooches and even tiaras.

Experts were called in to authenticate and value those items. He said based on the material cost alone, excluding workmanship, design and other ancillary costs involved, the jewelry is worth 442 million ringgit.

The experts estimated the retail price of the jewelry at 660 million to 880 million ringgit.

The single most expensive piece is a yellow gold and white diamond necklace worth 6.4 million ringgit, Amar said.

Of the 567 designer handbags confiscated from the various premises, the 272 pieces of Hermes handbags were valued at 51.3 million ringgit, while the

others, including Chanel, Versace and custom-made, ultra luxury Bijan handbags, have yet to be evaluated.

On the six bags containing 423 luxury watches, Amar said they were valued at 78 million ringgit. The most expensive is a Rolex Paul Newman Daytona estimated to be worth 3.5 million ringgit.

Amar expected Najib and his wife Rosmah Mansor to be called up for questioning soon, but he dismissed speculation that the former prime minister would be arrested anytime soon.

In the meantime, he said, police are verifying the origin of the items, which Najib previously said were mostly gifts made to his wife and daughter. —Kyodo News

Rainfall hampers rescue for children stuck in Thai cave

MAE SAI, (Thailand) — Rescuers struggled to drain a flooded cave in Thailand on Wednesday where 12 children and their football coach have been trapped for days, as monks chanted prayers for the boys. The young football team, aged between 11 and 16, have been stuck in the Tham Luang cave in northern Thailand since Saturday night after monsoon rains blocked the main entrance. Hundreds of rescue workers worked overnight to install high-pressure water pumps to reduce flooding in the cave, but it was a losing battle as rains continued to fall in the area near the Laos and Myanmar borders in northern Chiang Rai province.

“Today’s work is much harder, we are trying hard to drain water by pumping out but the water level is still rising,” provincial governor Narongsak Osotanakorn told reporters.

Conditions in the cave also proved tough for the



Thai soldiers carry hose deep into the Tham Luang cave to pump out water at the Khun Nam Nang Non Forest Park in Chiang Rai on 27 June, 2018 during a rescue operation for a missing children’s football team and their coach. **PHOTO: AFP**

200 rescuers dispatched into the tunnels to find the boys. “The water inside the cave is very murky, and there’s not much oxygen,” Narongsak said. The governor said three foreign cave-diving experts would arrive Wednesday evening to aid the harrowing search that pressed into its fifth

day on Wednesday.

Around 1,000 people had been mobilised for the rescue efforts, including air and ground teams and divers. The Army also dispatched special operation troops to aid the rescue.

Thailand’s Navy SEAL unit said on their Facebook page that water levels rose

15 centimetres (six inches) overnight and that a third chamber of the complex cave network — believed to be several kilometres long — was now flooded.

Soldiers carried large hoses to attach to eight water pumps that were shipped in to drain rising flood waters. Monks

in bright orange robes led chants alongside distraught relatives who clung to hope the boys would be rescued soon. “I hope that today with the help from all teams he will be saved. I’m certain in my heart,” Pean Kamlue, the mother of a 16-year-old boy in the cave, told AFP.

‘High hopes’

The dramatic rescue operations have captivated the country and prompted emotional outpourings on social media and from the country’s top leaders and royal family members.

Officials found three new openings on Tuesday, but only one was accessible and they planned to shuttle rescuers and food in through the hole by air.

But heavy fog and strong winds grounded five helicopters that were on standby in the area.

The young football team, called the “Boars”, and their 25-year-old coach are familiar to the area and

know the cave well, officials said. They went into the cave after football practice on Saturday and a mother of one of the players alerted authorities when her son did not come home.

Bicycles, shoes and backpacks belonging to the footballers were found near the cave’s entrance, and divers said they discovered footprints and handprints inside one of the chambers on Monday. A sign at the site’s entrance warns visitors not to enter the cave during the rainy season from July to November. Forecasters said light rains would continue to fall on Wednesday, though downpours were not expected to be as heavy as they were overnight. Thailand’s Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan said on Wednesday he was optimistic the boys would be saved soon. “I have high hopes that we will find those 13 people because so many days have passed,” he told reporters.—AFP ■

Singapore may send back unvaccinated foreign travellers

SINGAPORE — Singapore may start turning back foreign visitors who do not have required vaccinations, authorities said, in a bid to protect the tightly-controlled country from infectious diseases.

The country of 5.6 million people is a popular tourist destination, with 17.4 million visitors arriving in 2017. But its small

size and openness have sometimes left it vulnerable, and it was hit hard by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003. Travellers are currently only required to be vaccinated against yellow fever, in line with international regulations.

Authorities could require vaccinations against more diseases in future,

depending on the health situation at the time.

At the moment, visitors who have not been vaccinated can enter but on condition they get the vaccine, and they may be put in isolation or under surveillance.

However proposed legislative changes, which were published on Tuesday by the health minis-

try, would give authorities power to turn back unvaccinated non-citizens to the country they came from. The move is aimed at safeguarding the city-state from diseases like bird flu, ebola and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, said the ministry.

“As a major global trade and travel hub, it is imperative that we remain

vigilant to public health threats... by protecting the community against new and emerging infectious diseases,” it said.

The SARS outbreak in 2003 killed 33 people in Singapore, inflicted major losses on the economy and hit the number of international visitors.

The ministry offered assurances that any new

powers “will be exercised judiciously” and that travellers arriving in Singapore while unwell would not be turned away. As well as having the discretion to deny entry to unvaccinated foreign visitors, the proposed amendments would also enhance infectious disease surveillance and strengthen controls within the country.—AFP ■

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V THANLWIN STAR VOY.NO. (034 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V THANLWIN STAR VOY.NO. (034 N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28-6-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V ANAN BHUM VOY.NO. (220 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V ANAN BHUM VOY.NO. (220 N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28-6-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of 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 NEW GOLDEN SEA
LINES.

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V IAL 001 VOY.NO. (001 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V IAL 001 VOY. NO. (001 N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28-6-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of HPT 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 INTERASIA LINES.

Phone No: 2301185

Toxic Fan Culture: A 'Star Wars' Story

LOS ANGELES — As much as they are about lightsabers, hyperspace and the eternal struggle of good versus evil, the recent installments in the "Star Wars" saga have also been about rebutting conventional wisdom on who can lead a movie.

Releases like "Rogue One" and "The Last Jedi" made a fortune giving women and characters of color like Rey (Daisy Ridley) and Finn (black actor John Boyega) screen time alongside the traditional male, white heroes of the series. But the inclusive Disney era ushered in by 2015's "The Force Awakens" has its own Dark Side — the vile online behavior of a vocal minority offended that their sacred cow is being stolen. "It would be unfair and too general to say that 'Star Wars' has a fandom problem. What it has is a white male fandom problem," said film writer Kayleigh Donaldson. This toxic subset of devotees — overlapping with elements of the far-right and the misogynist "incel" men's movement — are angry that the new films are no longer targeted solely at them.

Amid the vitriol about untrammelled political correctness, it is worth noting that "Star Wars" still lacks gender parity and, even in the Disney era, has a long way to go before it can be a paragon of inclusiveness.

The most female-friendly release, "The Last Jedi," features women during less than half of the running time while men get two-thirds of the dialogue in "The Force Awakens." "Yet this



"The Last Jedi" stars Kelly Marie Tran, John Boyega and Daisy Ridley — shown at the Star Wars Celebration in April 2017 in Orlando, Florida — have been the targets of abuse by male, white fans of the blockbuster space saga. **PHOTO: AFP**

is enough... for these toxic fans to cry propaganda and claim 'their Star Wars' is over," added Donaldson, in an essay for the SyfyWire entertainment website. "The mere inclusion of women and people of color is enough for them to cry foul and claim they're 'taking over' the franchise."

Sacrilege

"The Last Jedi," in particular, is accused of destroying the legacy of "Star Wars" by tearing up a carefully-constructed, decades-old mythology and promoting liberal identity politics.

While Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker) and Adam Driver (Kylo Ren) have avoided the slings and arrows, Kelly Marie Tran, an American cast member

with Vietnamese roots, has been mercilessly attacked. Tran, who plays mechanic Rose Tico, wiped her Instagram account earlier this month after prolonged sexist and racist abuse by a legion of trolls. Her page on the Wookieepedia "Star Wars" reference site was edited to change her name to "Ching Chong Wing Tong" and she was described as "stupid, autistic and retarded."

Hamill has come to Tran's defence, tweeting a picture of the two of them and writing: "What's not to love? #GetALifeNerds."

The movie's amiable, patient director Rian Johnson has faced death threats and endless abuse from those who seem to see him as more of an existential threat than Darth Vader. A petition de-

manding the removal of "The Last Jedi" from the "Star Wars" canon has attracted 107,000 signatures while another asking for a personal apology from Johnson passed 10,000 on Monday.

This is a movie that critics loved, and its lowly 46 per cent audience score on Rotten Tomatoes appears to have been artificially depressed by bots unleashed to game the system.

Mockery

It's not just "The Last Jedi" that has roused the mob.

Ridley deleted her Instagram after being hazed following the release of "The Force Awakens" and sought therapy to cope with the stress.

Her co-star Boyega has been

fielding accusations of committing sacrilege since fans found out there was going to be a black Stormtrooper in the "Star Wars" universe. The toxic fan culture surrounding "Star Wars" actually pre-dates the perceived political correctness of Disney, which bought Lucasfilm for \$4 billion in 2012. Child star Jake Lloyd and actor Hayden Christensen — both white and male — drifted out of Hollywood after relentless mockery for their performances in "Star Wars" creator George Lucas's prequel series.

Meanwhile, the people who hung Lucas out to dry for ruining their childhoods are part of the same movement clamoring now for him to save "Star Wars" from Disney. While the trolls may not have come suddenly out of a clear blue sky, the toxicity of their obsession has been intensified by the megaphone of Twitter.

But it's not time just yet to despair and beat a retreat to the solitude of Luke Skywalker's ocean-bound sanctuary on Ahch-To, says David Opie of online lifestyle magazine Highsnobiety.

"Instead of fighting what we hate, the best way to win is by 'saving what we love,'" he wrote, borrowing the powerful words of Rose in "The Last Jedi."

"Nothing captures the Rebel spirit more than celebrating the things that matter to us most and treating others with respect. As long as we keep doing that, the Dark Side of the Star Wars fandom will forever be kept at bay."—AFP ■

Rebel Wilson ordered to pay back \$3 mln plus interest

SYDNEY — Hollywood actress Rebel Wilson was ordered to return almost \$3.1 million with interest to an Australian publisher on Wednesday after a defamation payout was slashed on appeal.

The "Pitch Perfect" star was awarded Aus\$4.5 million (\$3.3 million) in damages against Bauer Media last September over articles claiming she lied about her age and background to further her career.

It was the largest defamation win in Australian legal history and Bauer appealed, arguing the size of the settlement set a dangerous precedent and there were

errors of law in the judgement.

The Victorian Court of Appeal agreed and cut the payout to just Aus\$600,000 earlier this month in a decision the actress called "absolutely flippant".

Bauer had already handed over the money and the Court of Appeal on Wednesday ordered Wilson to repay nearly Aus\$4.2 million, including costs and more than Aus\$60,000 in interest.

The star did not dispute that the money needed to be returned, but argued the interest should be charged at the prevailing Reserve Bank cash rate of 1.5 per cent, rather than the two percent

sought by Bauer.

The appeal court disagreed and ordered interest be paid at the higher rate.

Wilson vowed after the initial judgement to give any payout to charity and the Australian film industry. It is not clear whether she has already done so.

She had claimed a series of articles in Woman's Day, Australian Women's Weekly and OK Magazine in 2015 had portrayed her as a serial liar and damaged her reputation.

The Sydney-born actress told the trial she was sacked from DreamWorks animated feature



Wilson has been ordered to return most of the payout from what was the largest defamation payout in Australian legal history. **PHOTO: AFP**

films "Trolls" and "Kung Fu Panda 3" following the stories.

But the Court of Appeal said there was no basis for her to receive financial damages for the potential loss of roles.

It found that the previous judge had relied on evidence from Wilson and two Hollywood agents to draw the conclusion that she had lost job opportunities.—AFP ■

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing concludes Thailand goodwill visit

ON the invitation of the Royal Thai Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief Gen. Tarnchaiyan Srisuwan, a delegation led by Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla paid a goodwill visit to Thailand and went to the Wat Chaimongkol and the Wat Luang Phor Aee temples in Pattaya yesterday morning. They paid respect to Prapanyarattana Porn and Wat Luang Phor Aee, and donated offertories.

They also visited the Sea Turtle Conservation Centre of the Royal Thai Navy and observed the captive-rearing and release of turtle hatchlings and the care of sick or injured turtles. Then they set free turtles

into the sea and offered cash donations to the Royal Thai Navy. The goodwill delegation led by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing left U-Tapao International Airport in Pattaya yesterday afternoon.

Upon arrival at Nay Pyi Taw Airport, the Senior General and party were welcomed back by Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win and wife, Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) General Mya Tun Oo and wife, senior military officers from the Commander-in-Chief's Office, the Nay Pyi Taw Command Commander and officials.— Myanmar News Agency ■



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing welcomed back by Vice Senior General Soe Win at the Nay Pyi Taw Airport yesterday. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

Last straw for McDonald's, Burger King in Mumbai plastic ban

MUMBAI — Burger King, McDonald's and Starbucks are among dozens of companies fined for violating a new ban on single-use plastics in India's commercial capital Mumbai, an official said on Tuesday.

The rules, in force since Saturday, prohibit the use of disposable plastic items such as bags, cutlery, cups and bottles under a certain size.

Businesses and residents face fines of between 5,000 rupees (\$73) for a first-time offence to 25,000 rupees (\$367) or even three months in jail for repeat offending.

Some 250 officials, wearing blue uniforms and dubbed Mumbai's "anti-plastic squad", have been deployed to carry out inspections of restaurants and shops across the teeming coastal city of 20 million. Nidhi Choudhari, a deputy municipal commissioner in charge of enforcing the ban, said 660,000 rupees (\$9,684) in fines had been collected during the first three days. She said 132 premises had been issued with penalties including outlets of Burger King, McDonald's and Starbucks.

A branch of Godrej Nature's Basket, a high-end Indian super-

market, had also been penalized, Choudhari added.

"All were fined for using banned plastic straws and disposable cutlery etc," she told AFP.

Starbucks India and Hardcastle Restaurants, which runs the McDonald's franchise in Mumbai, were not immediately available for comment.

Authorities hope the ban will help clean up Mumbai's beaches and streets, which like other cities in India are awash with vast mountains of plastic rubbish.

Plastic has also been blamed for blocking drains and contributing to flooding during the city's

four-month-long summer monsoon. Authorities first announced the ban — which covers the whole of Maharashtra state, of which Mumbai is the capital — three months ago to allow businesses to prepare.

The majority of India's 29 states have a full or partial ban on single-use plastics but the law is rarely enforced.

Choudhari said more than 8,000 businesses had been searched in Mumbai alone and at least 700 kilogrammes (1,500 pounds) of plastic seized.

Small traders, however, have claimed that the crackdown threatens their livelihoods. Retailers associations say a confusion over what is and isn't allowed has led small grocery stores to remain closed for fear of being fined.

The Plastic Bags Manufacturers Association of India estimates that 300,000 people employed in the industry could lose their jobs. The United Nations warned earlier this month that the world could be awash with 12 billion tonnes of plastic trash by the middle of the century if use is maintained at current levels. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently pledged to make India, which was the host of this year's International Environment Day, free of single-use plastic by 2022.—AFP ■

Robotics Barbie aims to inspire young scientists

LOS ANGELES — An inspirational new version of Barbie will encourage young girls to embark on careers in engineering and the sciences, the iconic doll's manufacturer Mattel said on Tuesday.

Barbie, who first hit the shelves in 1959, prides herself on trying out jobs where women aren't strongly represented, to add to her more traditional skill set of dancing with Ken and looking fabulous. The company has announced a "Career of the year" Barbie who just happens to be a robotics engineer — a job that in real-life is occupied almost nine times out of ten by men.

Kids aren't just supposed to play make-believe with the newest Barbie, however, as Mattel has partnered with games platform Tynker to provide owners with online coding experiences.

"For almost 60 years, Barbie has exposed girls to roles where women are underrepresented to show them that they can be anything," Lisa McKnight, Mattel's senior vice president for Barbie, said in statement. "By playing with Robotics Engineer Barbie on and offline, we are giving girls a new platform for play in their imaginary world and teaching them important skills for their real world."—AFP ■



Burger King, McDonald's and Starbucks are among dozens of companies fined for violating a new ban on single-use plastics in India's commercial capital Mumbai. **PHOTO: AFP**

Yangon's footballers selected for Myanmar U-19 team

SIX youth footballers from Yangon United have been chosen for U-19 Myanmar national football team which is going to participate in AFF U-19 Championship 2018 in Indonesia from 1 to 14 July according to the Yangon United FC.

The selected players are Nyein Chan Aung, Naing Ko Ko and Hlwan Moe Oo, Goal Keeper Thura Kyaw, Goal Keeper Khant Kyaw Oo and Tay Zaw Lin from U-19 and U-21 Yangon United.

Myanmar National (U-19) Team will leave for Indonesia in 29 June for the 2018 AFF U-18 Championship according to the Myanmar Football Federation.

Myanmar team will play against Timor Leste on 2 July, Cambodia on 6 July, Brunei on 8 July and Malaysia on 10 July respectively.—Lynn Thit(Tgi) ■

Messi suffered more than ever to reach World Cup last 16

SAINT PETERSBURG — Lionel Messi admitted to having survived the most nerve-wracking 90 minutes of his career as Marcus Rojo's stunning finish four minutes kept his and Argentina's World Cup hopes alive with a 2-1 win over Nigeria to reach the last 16.

Messi's first goal of the tournament got the two-time winners off to a perfect start in Saint Petersburg, but Victor Moses's 51st minute penalty had Jorge Sampaoli's men heading for a humiliating group stage exit until Rojo's late intervention.

"I don't remember such suffering," said Messi when asked if it was the most tense match of his career.

"It was due to the situation and what we were playing for."

Rojo had escaped conceding a second Nigerian penalty after a controversial VAR review before he thundered home Gabriel Mercado's cross to send the under-fire Sampaoli running down the sidelines amid wild scenes of celebration.

"After the penalty we got a

little nervous and worried about not getting through," said Sampaoli. "We were obviously delighted at the end. The players played with their heart, they are rebels, they have achieved a very important victory looking to the future."

Messi missed a penalty in a 1-1 draw with Iceland and was largely bypassed in a 3-0 thrashing by Croatia that saw calls for Sampaoli to be sacked before their final group game.

However, Argentina avoided the abyss by the skin of their teeth to fight another day against the highly-fancied French in Kazan on Saturday.

Sampaoli made five changes from the Croatia game, and his plan to use Ever Banega to help free up Messi worked to perfection early on.

The Sevilla playmaker's brilliant pass over the top of the Nigerian defence picked out Messi's run perfectly and, after cushioning the ball on his thigh, he erased the frustrations of his World Cup so far with an arrowed right-foot finish into the far corner.

"We need to make passes



Argentina's forward Lionel Messi (L) shoots score as he is marked by Nigeria's defender Kenneth Omeruo (R) during the Russia 2018 World Cup Group D football match between Nigeria and Argentina at the Saint Petersburg Stadium in Saint Petersburg on 26 June, 2018. **PHOTO: AFP**

to Leo so he can create chances," added Sampaoli. "If not we suffer, we know we have the best player in the world and we have to benefit from that."

"It is for that reason I said the Croatia match was our fault not his."

Messi liberated

Croatia captain Luka Modric claimed his side "cut off Messi" in Nizhny Novgorod five nights ago, but he was back to close to his Barcelona best at the heart

of all Argentina's best moves in a positive first 45 minutes.

Higuain just could not flick the ball beyond the onrushing Francis Uzoho from a defence splitting pass before Uzoho then tipped a Messi free-kick onto the post. Argentina were rocked at the start of the second period, though, when Turkish referee Cuneyt Cakir pointed to the spot when Javier Mascherano tangled with Oghenekaro Etebo at a corner.—AFP ■

Germany crash out of World Cup after shock loss to South Korea

KAZAN (RUSSIA)—Defending champions Germany crashed out of the World Cup on Wednesday after losing 2-0 to South Korea, while Sweden beat Mexico 3-0 in the final Group F games.

Kim Young Gwon and Son Heung Min scored stoppage-time goals to condemn the Germans,

ranked No. 1 in the world, to their first ever group-stage exit at a World Cup.

Mats Hummels missed a great chance to put Germany 1-0 up in the dying stages, sending a free header wide, and the four-time World Cup winners finished bottom of their group.

It is the fourth time in five World Cups that the holders have been knocked out in the group stage, Germany following in the footsteps of France (2002), Italy (2010) and Spain (2014).

The late drama in Kazan sparked scenes of joy and relief among Mexico fans in Ekaterinburg, as their side would have been eliminated if Germany had won, despite winning their first two games.

Sweden's win — courtesy of Ludwig Augustinsson's volley, a penalty from Andreas Granqvist and an own goal by Edson Alvarez — extinguished South Korea's dim hopes of reaching the knockout stage, but they exit the tournament in high spirits after recording a famous win.

Sweden finished top of Group F and will play the runner-up of Group E in the round of 16, while Mexico finished second and will play the Group E winner.—Kyodo News ■



South Korean players celebrate their first goal during the second half of a World Cup Group F match against Germany in Kazan, Russia, on June 27, 2018. South Korea won 2-0. **PHOTO KYODO NEWS**

 FIFA WORLD CUP RUSSIA 2018		
20:30 MST (28.6.2018)		
Japan		Poland
20:30 MST (28.6.2018)		
Senegal		Colombia
00:30 MST (29.6.2018)		
Panama		Tunisia
00:30 MST (29.6.2018)		
England		Belgium
World Cup 2018 Results		
Nigeria	1 - 2	Argentina
Iceland	1 - 2	Croatia
Korea Republic	2 - 0	Germany
Mexico	0 - 3	Sweden