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Maungtaw investigators travel to Bangladeshi refugee camps

U Zaw Myint Pe, Secretary of Maungtaw Investigation Commission, and its members — U Tun Myat, Dr Aung Tun Thet, Dr. Daw Thet Thet Zin, U Nyunt Swe, and Daw Kyein Ngai Man — met with villagers from 18 March to 22 March in the Cox’s Bazaar refugee camp in Bangladesh in an effort to fulfil their mission for a complete and thorough investigation. Thousands of residents in northern Rakhine fled across the border to Bangladesh after insurgent attacks on border police outposts in October and November, 2016.

Meanwhile, remaining members of the commission went to the Maungtaw District for the fourth time to monitor the progress of coordination work done by the commission in the villages that were harmed in the wake of the attacks, return of displaced villagers to their locations and peace and stability of the area.

The aim of Maungtaw Investigation Commission is to submit suggestions, practical solutions, and assessments of the problems

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Members of the Maungtaw investigation commission hold talks with Bangladeshi authorities in Cox’s Bazaar, Bangladesh. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

China suspends bank account of MNDAA

The Union government welcomed China’s move to suspend the bank account used by an armed group fighting the troops of the Tatmadaw, in a move to prevent potential damage to diplomatic ties.

“Very constructive move from China, as the stability and peace in the border area is of common interest for both sides,” said U Zaw Htay, the spokesperson of the government of Myanmar.

The move comes a day af-

ter the meeting with the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and the Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar. At the meeting, the two sides discussed cooperation for peace, stability and security of the border between the two countries.

Following the attack by the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) on 6th March, which killed at least 30 civilians, State Counsellor Daw

“The stability and peace in the border area is of common interest for both sides.”

Aung San Suu Kyi, in her capacity as the chairperson of the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, strongly urged all the armed groups to abandon the armed attacks, say-

ing that the violence would bring about nothing but sorrow and suffering for the innocent local tribes and races. She urged them to join the dialogue for national peace and march together with the people on the path of peace with unified strong spirit on the basis of equality. Reuters has revealed that an ethnic rebel armed group fighting Myanmar forces near the Chinese border had been openly soliciting funds via China’s giant

state-owned lender Agricultural Bank Of China (AgBank). Over nearly two years, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) raised more than US\$500,000, deposited directly in an AgBank account or sent via two mobile payment services - Tencent Holdings’ WeChat Pay and Alipay, part of Ant Financial, which is affiliated with U.S.-listed Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba.

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သဒ္ဓါထက်သန် မြန်မာအားမာန် ကမ္ဘောဇဘဏ်

Weapons and ammunition seized near Yanlonekyaing



AIRGUNS and ammunitions from MNDAA armed groups were discovered near Yanlonekyaing in the Northeast of Shan State on Tuesday. Tatmadaw troops conducting clearance operations in Laukkai and surrounding areas discovered the arms in some buildings in the vicinity of Yanlonekyaing police station around 10 in the morning. The arms included one Airpore Airgun (telescope included), 188 different varieties of bullets including some .22 LR bullets, 4 types of cartridges, and 4 hand grenades.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Uncut jade stones auctioned by open tender bid system



Traders evaluate jade stones at the emporium in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

THE sales of jade lots and uncut jade stones in Myanmar currency, which is slated to kick off from 19 to 24 March, continued for the fourth day at Mani Yadana Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Myanmar jewelry merchants viewed the jade lots and put the price proposal forms for the jade lots to be sold by open tender bid system in tender boxes. The officials checked the price proposal forms for the 1,500 jade lots and announced the list of tender winners. Out of the 1,500 jade lots, the price proposal forms for Lot No (3,000) were put in tender boxes by the gems and jewelry merchants with the supervision of the central committee members and officials. It is learnt that the list of tender winners will announce tomorrow and Lot No (4,454) will be auctioned by open tender bid system.—*Myanmar News Agency*

P&G celebrates World Water Day in Myanmar

Procter & Gamble (P&G) and its international partners will celebrate the 25th anniversary of World Water Day in effort to do their part to help end the global water crisis.

Through the P&G Children's Safe Drinking Water (CSDW) Program, more than 15 countries will deploy campaigns designed to raise awareness to further CSDW's ability to bring clean drinking water to those who do not have access.

According to official figures from the Ministry of Health and Sports and the World Health Organization (WHO), around 20% of Myanmar children dying under the age of five die from diarrhea—twice as much as global average and around the same as



in Sub-Saharan Africa where water is often scarce. The global of the campaign is to raise funds to

contribute 750,000 days of clean drinking water through World Vision Myanmar.—*GNLM*

Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker meets DCAF delegation



U T Khun Myat holds talks with Dr. Albrecht Schnabel. PHOTO: MNA

THE Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw U T Khun Myat met with the head of the Asia-Pacific Unit for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) Dr. Albrecht Schnabel and party at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

Matters on providing as-

sistance by DCAF for ensuring security and rule of law in Myanmar's reform process, reviewing legal framework for security sector in parliament and giving assistance for parliamentary affairs were discussed in a frank and transparent manner.—*Myanmar News Agency*

China suspends bank account of MNDAA



A man walks past a branch of the Agricultural Bank of China in the town of Nansan, Yunnan province, China, March 12, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

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The account was suspended over the weekend, shortly after Reuters had sent AgBank a list of questions regarding the transactions, which compliance experts said could point to a weakness in controls aimed at stopping the global financial system from being used to fund terrorism or facilitate crime.

There is no evidence that Agbank, or other financial entities that handled transactions for the MNDAA, have broken Chinese law.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said she was not aware of the specifics about the decision on AgBank.

"We consistently persevere in not interfering in other countries internal affairs and respect the entirety of Myanmar's sovereign rights and territory. We will not allow any group or individual to use China's territory to undermine China-Myanmar relations and the border regions' stability," she said.

Earlier this month, insurgents from the predominantly ethnic Chinese MNDAA attacked government troops in northeastern Myanmar.

Some 20,000 people fled across the border to China to escape the fighting, prompting Beijing to call for a ceasefire.—*GNLM/Reuters contributed to this report*

Myanmar attains medium human development status

IN a 2016 report on Human Development of the United Nations, Myanmar's Human Development Index has moved up to rank 145 out of 188 countries, attaining medium human development status. The report was released by the UN Development Program yesterday at U Thant Hall in UNDP's office, with representative Miss Renata Dessallien and financial consultant Thomas Caren speaking at the press conference.

According to the report, Myanmar's Human Development Index (HDI) for 2016 reached 0.556, an increase from 0.536 in 2014 when it ranked 148 out of 188 countries.

However, Myanmar's HDI remains below the average for East Asia and Pacific (0.720). It was attributed to the fact that Myanmar is still performing below the average of Southeast Asia in such areas as maternal health and mortality rate for children under five years of age.

"We are pleased with the government and people of Myanmar for achieving to a medium level of human development," it was stated in the 2016 UNDP Report.

"The world is working for easy access to education, health and cleanliness for all with an additional focus on female em-

powerment and freedom from poverty. This increase in HDI is a sign that the world is heading in the right direction. This is a good predictor for Myanmar's pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," stated Helen Clark of the UNDP Chief Administration Office.

The HDI measures not only economic growth, but also the quality of growth in terms of human development and human wellbeing.

Myanmar's ability to achieve the SDGs is linked to its continued commitment to improve human development for its people, the report said.

Almost 1.5 billion people, between 1990-2015 worldwide, lived in multidimensional poverty-reflecting acute deprivations in health, education and standards of living, according to the report.

In the previous 25 years, 1.1 billion of the world's population have better levels of sanitation and 1.6 billion now have access to clean water. The worldwide mortality rate of children under 5 in the years between 1990-2016 has decreased by half. The report also stated medical cases concerning HIV, malaria and tuberculosis has also decreased significantly.—*Ye Khaung Nyunt*

Maungtaw investigators travel to Bangladeshi refugee camps

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that occurred after the attacks last year, in a report to the Union Government. Hence, the commission went to the refugee camps with great difficulty, seeking the cooperation of the Bangladesh Government and respective international organizations who had taken over the responsibilities of the refugee camps.

On 19 March, the commission met with Deputy Commissioner Mr MD Ali Hossain at the office of the Cox's Bazaar Deputy Commissioner. The meeting was attended by representatives of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

In the afternoon, commission members Dr Daw Thet Thet Zin and Daw Kyein Ngai Man questioned 17 women at the Kutupalong Refugee Camp, with U Zaw Myint Pe and other members investigating men separately.

On 20 March, commission members went to the Balukhali refugee camp, interrogating five men and three women separately, with some men investigated in a group under the arrangement of IOM. In the afternoon, they proceeded to Leda refugee camp, where they spoke to five women and three men according to arrangements made by the IOM.

On 21 March, the commission left for Dhaka, with commission members U Tun Myat and Dr Aung Tun Thet meeting with representatives of IOM & UNHCR separately.

On the morning of 22 March, the Secretary and members of the Maungtaw Investigation Commission left Bangladesh by air, arriving at the Yangon International Airport in the afternoon.

It is learnt that U Myo Myint Than, the Myanmar Ambassador to Bangladesh, and Embassy staff made advance arrangements for the Bangladesh trip.—*Myanmar News Agency*

State Counsellor receives Japanese delegation



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi holds talks with Mr. Tadashi Ogura. PHOTO: MNA

STATE Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received the delegation led by Mr. Tadashi Ogura, President of Noritake Co., Ltd. at the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

During the meeting, they discussed matters relating to the history and development of the porcelain industry in

Japan and investment opportunities in Myanmar. Present at the meeting was Japanese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Tateshi Higuchi.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Members of Parliament are lawmakers, not law breakers: Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker

MEMBERS of Parliament are required to follow rules and regulations, laws, and the constitution in working for regional development, the Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw told legislators in Mon State yesterday.

"The present time is a period of democracy transformation. We have been trying to establish a federal Union to let democracy flourish so that the country will be peaceful and developed, said U Win Myint, Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw.

"When there are democracy rights, there will be rule of law and then safety security for the people. As there is rule of law, the country will be in stability and have internal peace," he told Mon State's members of parliament at a meeting held at the State Hluttaw's Office in Mon State.

Members of Parliament are required to follow the restrictions, disciplines in the bylaw, and Hluttaw law when presenting the proposals or questioning. When making the law, it also required to amend those laws which need updating in accordance with time, reviewing the existing laws to be beneficial to the people and be the law for the benefit for the people.

Utilising legislative, executive and judicial power as separately as possible provides a system of checks and balances that must be worked out in accordance with rules and regulations, existing laws and the constitution. When making checks and balances, there will be serious attention not to be interfering beyond the restrictions, said the speaker.

"MPs are the legislators and



Speaker U Win Myint at Mon State Hluttaw. PHOTO: MNA

should be aware to not be law breakers and have the rights to negotiate with local authorities for the development of each constituency in accordance with the constitution."

In the fourth regular session of the second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw recently, the Hluttaw approved Union Tax Law 2017, Union Budget Bill 2017, and the National Planning Bill for 2017-2018. Members of Parliament should work for the development of each area in accordance with the enacted law.

When we want to establish a democratic country, we all must work together with trust, understanding, cooperation, forgiveness, and being patient and generous for the people and the nation.

In a democratic country, the Hluttaw is the basic foundation for democracy and the people possess the central power in a democratic country. Thus, all members of parliament always

make efforts to generate firmly the work process of Hluttaw.

We always pay attention to the ethnic unification and emphasise working for the right of the nationalities. We have formed State level organisations and union-level organisations by appointing ethnics in suitable positions.

U Win Myint said we are consistently working to merge the federal policy and democracy. Members of Parliament need cooperation to establish a democratic federal union which has the right for self administration and self legislation.

After his speech, Members of Parliament presented the local developmental process and works in the Hluttaw and the speaker answered questions from the MPs. The meeting was also attended by Mon State Hluttaw Speaker Daw Tin Ei, Amyotha Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw representatives.—*Myanmar News Agency*

LOCAL Business

Beach hotels double prices during Thingyan

The rates of hotels during Thingyan holiday went up 50 per cent, as local travelers flocked to beaches, according to an announcement on Jovago.com.mm. The price doubled from advanced bookings, according

to the website. The hotels at the beaches and Myeik and Dawei areas are fully booked, said Mr. Frans Mass, managing director of Jovago.com.mm.

Despite the high rates, 70 per cent of the hotels at the

country's most popular beaches — Chaung Thar, Ngwe Saung, Ngapali, Myeik, Dawei and Kawthaung — are booked.

It is usual that high occupancy rates during holidays result in an increase in price. This year,

the inbound tour is also highly demanded, said a tour operator.

Nevertheless, the hotel rates in Bagan, Inle, Taunggyi, Kalay, Toungoo remain steady, according to data from Jovago.—*Ko Khan*



File photo shows people swim and play at Ngwe Saung beach in Patheingyi, Ayeyawady Region. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH

43 YCDC-owned enterprises up for bidding for municipal lease

A total of 43 enterprises owned by Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) will be put out to tender for municipal lease at Yangon City Hall on 23rd March, said an official from Engineering Department (Buildings) under YCDC.

Those enterprises will be granted leases in the next fiscal year 2017-2018. The YCDC has called for bids with the tender rules so that the private businessmen can seek the rights for working those businesses: collection of vehicle entrance fees and public toilets at the markets, aquatic feedstuff business at Thway Say Lake and Hanthawady Golf Driving Range business, it is learnt.

Among the businesses are four from Pollution Control and Cleansing Department, two from Playground, Parks and Gardens Department and 37 from Markets Department.—200

Myanmar poised to ease foreign investment curbs

FACED with slowing foreign investment, Myanmar is poised to ease restrictions on direct investment from abroad, including in the oil and gas distribution sector as well as in the insurance segment.

“We will allow foreign investments in oil and gas retail distribution,” Union Planning and Finance Minister U Kyaw Win said last week. “We have planned to give permission to international companies to provide microfinance services and to have more freedom in insurance services.”

U Aung Naing Oo, secretary of the Myanmar Investment Commission, said foreign direct investment in the country has exceeded the expectation of \$6 billion in fis-

cal 2016 ending March 31, but the amount is a far cry from the previous year's record high of \$9.4 billion.

The MIC organized a meeting with representatives of more than 200 foreign and local businesses last Saturday at a hotel in Yangon, with U Kyaw Win, who also chairs the commission, urging the foreign business community to invest in Myanmar on a long-term and sustainable basis. Noting the government's investment law amendment last year, the minister said foreign companies “will get opportunities to invest in Myanmar under simple, easy and quick regulations.” The government will promptly address difficulties and unnecessary restrictions on inves-

tors, he added.

U Kyaw Win stressed that foreign investors will also get the chance to invest in new sectors where foreign investment was not allowed previously, including in infrastructure, supply chains, logistics, communication and transportation.

As the government has become more flexible toward guaranteeing foreign investment protection, the minister encouraged overseas investors to make investment with long-term plans. “According to our new law, we allow land leasing of up to 70 years. So, investors should consider making long-term investment in Myanmar in responsible and sustainable ways,” he said.—*Kyodo News*

Domestic gold price on the rise from high global gold price

THE domestic gold price is on an upward trend with the global gold price rising, according to the local gold market.

The domestic gold price had fallen under Ks 900,000 starting from 1st March and the price was on the decline until 10 March, with over Ks 880,000 per tical.

The global gold price jumped about 30 dollars on 15th March and remained on the rise until 20th March.

In keeping with the increase in global gold price, the domestic gold price raised its head up again with Ks 883,600 on 15th March and Ks 893,100 on 16th

March.

The domestic gold per tical fetched Ks 894,000 on 17th, Ks 895,700 on 18th, Ks 896,000 on 19th, Ks 898,100 on 20th, Ks 897,500 on 21th and Ks 901,500 on 22th March, according to the gold and jewellery shops.—*Mon Mon*

Microfinance Business Law under review

MICROFINANCE Business Law is being reviewed to be in line with the procedures of current microfinance businesses, said U Ko Ko Maung, the director of Financial Regulatory Department.

We will take measure in various sectors to realize whether Microfinance Business Law is to match the prevalence of proce-

dures in this industry, he added.

“The Microfinance Business Law was instituted in 2011. The organisation and members are liable to prosecution. However, filing a lawsuit among the members is rare. We allow them to lend people only after practical considerations of their financial status and background”, he said.—200

Trade value with ITC hit over K15billion as of 20th January

TRADE value with the Individual Trading Card (ITC) reached over Ks15.48 billion as of 10th March in the current fiscal year 2016-2017, according to the statistics of the Commerce Ministry.

Export value with the ITC was over Ks1.08 billion, whereas import value with ITC hit over Ks14.4 billion.

Myawady and Kan Pike Tee border trade camps have the largest trade value using the ITC. The border trade values with ITC as of 10th March in this FY were over Ks811million in Tamu, over Ks830million in Muse, over Ks8.91 billion in Myawady, Ks678million in Tachilek, over Ks27million in Lweje, over Ks2,168million in

Kan Pike Tee, over Ks381million in Kawthaung, over Ks674million in Reed, over Ks939million in Maw Taung and over Ks24million in Keng Tung and nearly Ks29million in Maese, it is learnt.

The Trade Department issued 292 cards from 21st Nov 2012 to 31st March 2013, 261 cards in 2013-2014 FY, 317 cards in 2014-2015 FY, 146 cards in 2015-2016 and 207 cards as of 10th March in this FY, according to an announcement released by the aforementioned ministry. A businessman can trade Ks3million a day with an ITC, and the trade department granted trade up to Ks15million a day, which amounted to a five-day-trade-value.—*Ko Khant*

Performances in One-Year Period

Ministry of Hotels and Tourism: moving forward with success all along the road

Article – Thun Wathan (Hotels & Tourism)

Photo – May Oo Moe (Hotels & Tourism)

THE hotels and tourism industry has generated lots of job opportunities for the nation and her people. It is a business with ripple effect that benefits everyone from the airlines to the vendors. It has many more advantages than the businesses that need exploitation of natural resources. Its success opens the direct income source not only for the nation but for all its citizens.

It is difficult to calculate the actual earnings of the hotels and tourism industry as the money spent by the tourists in a host country flows into the coffers of many different industries, regions and people. The countries that stand as world's tourism hot spots stand witness to the fact that the industry serves both the self-interest and majority interest in the

The government is also taking necessary measures to set up a new department — Tourism Development Department — to enable the country's tourism industry to stand abreast with its counterparts of the neighbouring and regional countries.

balanced ration in benefitting the people and the State.

The incumbent government was constantly promoting the hotel and tourism business during its first year in office. It reformed the Tourism Development Central Committee under the leadership of the vice-president (2). Thanks to the committee's guidance there is now greater cooperation between the government and the private sector.

The government is also taking necessary measures to set up a new department — Tourism Development Department — to enable the country's tourism industry to stand abreast with its counterparts of the neighbouring and regional countries, to discover and establish new destinations and to extend research programs.

Community-based tourism

During its one-year period the government in office extended the community-based tourism in the villages of Pindaya and Ywangan townships of Danu region in Shan State, Loinwe Phayataung Yaseil Village-Tract and Sakar Village in Nyaungshwe Township, Majeegan Village in Sale Township, Magway Region, Hsawlaung Village in Kanpetlet Township, Chin State, Hsintaung Village in Thazi Township, Meiktila District, Mandalay Region, Kyaikthale Village-Tract in Twantay Township, Yangon Region, Zalon Mountain, and Khamoe, Nyaungthaya



Officials attending a meeting by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism to discuss on possible developments in the sector.

and Khopyin villages in Bamauk Township.

Of them three destinations — Majeegan Village in Sale Township Magway Region, Hsawlaung Village in Kanpetlet Township in Chin State, and Kyaikthale Village-Tract in Twantay Township, Yangon Region, have already opened to tourists. More places in regions and states with high potentials for community-based tourism will be discovered and established as new destinations, according to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

ASEAN Award

At the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2017 held at Marina Bay Sands Expo & Convention Centre in Singapore from 18 to 20 January this year, the ASEAN Secretariat

presented the ASEAN Community Based Tourism Award 2017 to Panpet and Taneela villages of Loikaw in Kayah State, Loikaw, Inni, Htinei and Kekku villages of PaO Self-Administered Zone in Shan State, and villages in Myaing Township, Magway Region, of Myanmar as an acknowledgement of her community-based tourism activities.

Tourism development of Taninthayi Region

“Taninthayi Region is a breathtaking place as its natural features including mountains, forests and lakes remained intact and its ecosystem is still healthy as it is a less developed area. Because of its possession of a large number of islets and islands it has much potential to become an

attractive tourist destination. So we are going to develop its tourism industry,” explained U Ohn Maung, Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism.

Hotels and Tourism Development Task Force was formed in Taninthayi Region on 2 January this year. Plans are under way to transform Kawthoung Airport into an international portal in coordination with the relevant ministries.

The airport extension project is aimed at improving the social standard of the local people of Taninthayi Region, generating new job opportunities, and introducing tourism business in unspoiled islands of Taninthayi Region without harming their natural environment.

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Tourists trying out local delicacies. Tourism contributes to the economy of local villages.



Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism poses for photo with the residents in Taninthayi Region.

PERFORMANCES IN ONE-YEAR PERIOD

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In realizing the sustainable development of the whole region, the task force is responsible for drafting a major project after designating the main centre of the destination where most suitable areas for development projects in Myeik archipelago, possible restricted areas for natural conservation, and areas where development undertakings can be carried out with limitation are defined, explained the Union minister.

International exhibitions

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism displayed the new destinations of Myanmar and facts and data in connection with the tourism business at international tourism exhibitions in the one-year period for further promotion of the industry in Myanmar.

The Ministry opened four booths at the Thailand Travel Fair 2016 held from 8 to 10 June last year in Chiang Nai, Thailand; and opened the grand Myanmar Pavilion where the Union minister participated in its tourism promotion activities, at JATA Tourism Expo 2016 in Tokyo, Japan, from 22 to 25 September last year.

The ministry also opened four booths at the tourism exhibition held by Asia-Pacific Travel Association-PATA held in Indonesia last year; three booths at ASEAN Tourism Forum 2017 held in Singapore from 18 to 20 January this year; and a 100-metre square pavilion at ITB Berlin held in Germany from 8 to 12 March this year. At ITB Berlin, Myanmar won the award "TO DO! 2017 - TO DO! International Contest Socially Responsible Tourism" for the

display of her community-based tourism villages in PaO Self-Administered Zone of Shan State.

Human resources improvement

The Hotels and Tourism Service is a business that directly gets in touch with the public. It opened hotels and tourism courses and other related courses for 61 times from April last year to February this year with the aim of facilitating relations between visitors and the locals, having awareness of the language and culture, and disseminating knowledge on dos and don'ts. Over 8200 persons completed the courses. It in cooperation with international organizations arranged domestic and foreign study tours and workshops, according to the ministry report.

42 hotels in a year

The ministry issued work permits for 42 hotels and guesthouses with a total of 1992 rooms during the period from April 2016 to February 2017. During the same period, the H&T Ministry also issued licenses for 112 hotels and guesthouses with a total of 5577 rooms 772 tourism services, 1842 transport services, and 825 tour guide services. It established an online service where application can be sent through the website <http://elicense.tourism.gov.mm> with much convenience. The ministry is also issuing temporary licenses to prevent the occurrence of delays in the work process.

Regional cooperation

As for the development of hotels and tourism industry in Myanmar, the Four Countries

One Destination Conference was held with the participation of four CLMV countries of the ASEAN in July last year. The conference served as the venue where the four countries exchanged and shared their experiences and knowledge on the industry, initiated market promotion activities in cooperation, and further cement friendly ties among them. Myanmar and Thailand signed the MoU on bilateral tourism cooperation at Myanmar-Thai Tourism Cooperation meeting held this year. The Japan-Myanmar friendship cherry planting ceremony was held in Nay Pyi Taw in January this year. At the ceremony 100 cherries of the total target of 1000 were planted, according to the ministry.

Myanmar hosted the First China-Myanmar Tourism Cooperation Forum in Nay Pyi Taw this March, and discussed promotion of the cooperation in cross-border tours between the two countries and development of tourism in towns along the Mekong River in both countries.

Finance for tourism promotion

H&T Ministry will apply various means for the emergence of standard hotels which are the infrastructure for sustainable development of the industry, the improvement of roads, the intellectual and technical advancement of the human resources, and the establishment of attractive tourism destinations. The means under consideration include the submission of the financial allowance from the Union Budget, the collection of necessary taxes, the provision of financial allowance based on the percentage of the industry's contribution to the nation's GDP, and the establishment of private trust funds. Of them the best possible means will be applied for the promotion of the industry, said the Union minister.

Till now the budget for the promotion of the industry is too small. Even in ASEAN member states, Viet Nam spent USD 5.24 million, the Philippines USD 10.4 million, Thailand USD 22.2 million, and Malaysia USD 89.8 million respectively.

Myanmar's current Tourism Promotion Budget is low when



The State Counsellor planting a cherry tree in Nay Pyi Taw. Hundreds of cherry trees were planted to mark good relations between Myanmar and Japan.

compared with her ASEAN counterparts. Only about USD 0.3 million was allowed for development of the hotels and tourism sector in the fiscal year 2017-2018.

During its one year period, the government in office launched activities that benefited the hotels and tourism industry. It is making coordination for the launching of Myanmar-Laos-Cambodia-Viet Nam cross-country tour next year and opened a night market at Kyauk-tainggwin grounds of Nyaung-shwe, famous for its Inlay Lake. Apart from its programs for the sustainability of Inlay Lake, the ministry has also set up the Email booking system. Additionally, it is seeking means that may improve the standard of joint-venture hotels, ensure success of their operations and increase income and profits of both the government and the private sector.

Delicacy

The hotels and tourism in-

dustry in fact is one of the services industries of the State, and at the same time it is the most delicate business of all. All efforts for the industry's development will be in vain amidst the lack of national peace and stability and nation's weak image, and in the presence of natural disasters and epidemics.

"We have promoted the hotels and tourism industry to the most possible extent within a one-year period. The government will seek and set up new destinations all along its remaining term. The ministry will move forward while disseminating knowledge, techniques, and language proficiency skills and amending the rules and regulations," promised Union Minister U Ohn Maung.

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is in a mission of turning Myanmar into a new popular tourist destination of the world while protecting the natural environment and ancient cultural heritages with all out efforts.

As for the development of hotels and tourism industry in Myanmar, the Four Countries One Destination Conference was held with the participation of four CLMV countries in July last year.



Performers and officials from the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism at the 2016 Thailand Travel Market.



A participant accepting a prize at the Hotels and Tourism training course in 2016.

China denies reports of building on disputed shoal

BEIJING — China's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday denied reports that China will begin preparatory work this year for an environmental monitoring station on disputed Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea.

China seized the shoal, which is northeast of the Spratly islands, in 2012 and denied access to Philippine fishermen. But after President Rodrigo Duterte visited China last year, it allowed them to return to the traditional fishing area.

Earlier this month, Xiao Jie, the mayor of what China calls Sansha City, said China planned to begin preparatory work this year to build environmental monitoring stations on a number of islands, including Scarborough Shoal.

Sansha City is the name China has given to an administrative base for the South China Sea islands and reefs it controls.

"China places great importance on the preservation of the South China Sea's ocean ecology, this is certain," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a daily news briefing.



Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying. PHOTO: XINHUA

"According to the relevant bodies in China, the reports you mention that touch upon building environmental monitoring stations on Scarborough Shoal are mistaken, these things are not true," she added.

"With regards to Scarborough Shoal, China's position is

consistent and clear. We place great importance on China-Philippines relations."

Xiao Jie's comments about the plans as quoted by the state-backed Hainan Daily had been amended to remove mention of the shoal in the paper's online version when checked by Reuters

on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, the Philippines formally asked China's embassy in Manila to explain news reports about building plans for Scarborough Shoal.

"We have sought clarification from China on reported plans on Scarborough Shoal," Charles Jose, foreign ministry spokesman, said in a text message sent to news organizations.

In a radio interview later, Jose said it is important for the Philippines to strengthen its defence and maritime domain awareness capabilities.

He said the Philippines should also step up cooperation with its allies and regional partners who share the country's position in maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea, resorting to peaceful settlement of disputes and adherence to rule of law.

"We should maintain the civilian nature so as not to escalate tensions," he said, reacting to some suggestions the Philippines deploy warships to Scarborough Shoal to assert Manila's claim on the rocky outcrop. —Reuters

Three French schoolchildren hurt in London attack

PARIS/RENNES, March 22 (Reuters)—Three French schoolchildren were hurt in the attack near London's parliament on Wednesday, French officials said.

The three students from the Concarneau Lycee in Brittany, western France, were on a school trip there, a foreign ministry spokesman said in a statement. The statement did not say how serious the injuries were. A total of 90 students from the school were in London, about a dozen of which were in the area of the attack, an official at the school told Reuters.

"As the centre of London was hit by a cowardly attack, France assures the British people of its solidarity," the foreign ministry statement said, adding that French authorities were in contact with their British counterparts. A report in Le Telegramme newspaper cited a fellow student who was at the scene of what British police have described as a terrorist incident, saying the three were hit by a car that was involved whilst walking on Westminster Bridge. One of them landed on the hood of the car, the Telegramme said. —Reuters



Members of the emergency services take an injured person away on a stretcher after an incident on Westminster Bridge in London, Britain March 22, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS/EDDIE KEOGH

Viet Nam detains two bloggers for anti-state propaganda

HANOI — Viet Nam has detained two bloggers for posting anti-state comments, which the Communist-ruled country said should serve as a warning to others spreading dissent.

Bui Hieu Vo, 55, known as "Hieu Bui" on Facebook, and Phan Kim Khanh, 24, were detained for investigation of "propaganda against the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam", the government said on its Facebook

page on Wednesday.

Despite sweeping reforms in Viet Nam's economy and increasing openness towards social change, the Communist Party retains tight media censorship and zero tolerance for criticism.

The government said Vo posted "fabricated, distorted and defamed information" against the government and incited the use of petrol bombs and acid to attack leaders of the Communist

Party, the state and the police.

Khanh managed two blogs, three Facebook pages and two YouTube channels to post "fabricated and distorted" information against Viet Nam, the government statement said.

Neither Vo nor Khanh was available for comment.

Viet Nam last week also called on all companies doing business in the country to stop advertising on YouTube, Face-

book and other social media until they had found a way to halt the publication of "toxic" anti-government information.

The government said both bloggers worked with the United States-based Viet Tan, or Viet Nam Reform Party, which Hanoi has declared a terrorist group, and that any Vietnamese found to be involved with it would be regarded as co-conspirators and punished. —Reuters

N Korea fails in attempted missile launch

TOKYO/SEOUL — North Korea attempted to launch a missile on Wednesday morning but failed, according to authorities in several countries including South Korea and the United States.

The South Korean Defence Ministry said North Korea appeared to have unsuccessfully tried to launch one missile, adding that it is still determining the type.

A US Pacific Command spokesman said the US military detected a launch attempt, with the missile appearing to have exploded seconds after launch. According to a Japanese government source, the Defence Ministry is analyzing the possibility the missile may have been an intermediate-range Musudan, potentially capable of reaching targets in Japan. The source said the launch is thought to have taken place at an area near Wonsan in east North Korea at around 7 am.

North Korea launched six Musudans between April and June last year from an area near Wonsan, with all but one exploding in



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un provides field guidance at the construction site of Ryomyong Street in this undated picture provided by KCNA in Pyongyang, on 16 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

midair. While refraining from confirming whether Japan had detected a missile launch or attempt, the Japanese government said there is no immediate threat to the country's security.

"We have no confirmation of missiles headed toward this

country," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a regular press conference. The launch attempt came after US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson discussed the threat from North Korea with his counterparts in Japan, South Korea and China last week.

In South Korea, Tillerson said the US policy of "strategic patience" toward North Korea has ended, and it is exploring possible new responses to the threat.

The Associated Press reported Tuesday that the US military expected another North Korean

missile launch "in the next several days," citing several US defence officials. The officials said the United States has increased surveillance over North Korea and has seen a missile launcher moving as well as construction of VIP seating in the eastern coastal city of Wonsan, according to the AP.

North Korea launched four missiles in Japan's direction on 6 March, three of which landed in the exclusive economic zone around Japanese waters. Those missiles, fired from an area near Tongchang-ri in northwest North Korea, are thought to have been of the Scud-Extended Range variety, which has a maximum range of 1,000 kilometres. Last year saw North Korea conduct two nuclear tests and more than 20 ballistic missile tests.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un claimed in a New Year's address that the country is ready to test-fire an intercontinental ballistic missile, which could reach targets on the US mainland. —Kyodo News

Opinion

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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

Interrelation of 3 Pillars of Sovereignty

Khin Maung Oo

THIS phrase is being heard here and there almost every day. Here, we need to construe the meaning of sovereignty carefully. Dictionaries define it as complete power to govern a country and as the state of being a country with freedom to govern itself. By seeing this, it is quite clear that a country regardless of its size should not be influenced by any of the world powers. In other words, the 3 pillars of sovereignty—legislative, executive and judiciary pillars need to be strengthened to the extent that there cannot be found any weakness. Once one pillar is broken the other two will be ruined. Hence, all countries write their respective constitutions to use as the guiding principles in ruling their countries. Even the advanced countries that abound with experienced legislative scholars in writing constitutions cannot make a perfect constitution in

one time. To meet the demands of the changing times, countries are required to amend the necessary parts of the constitution, if ever. If a disease is not cured in time, it will claim only the life of the patient. But, if a constitution needs to be amended or modified but remains unchanged, it will claim many lives.

Today, in our civilized world, countries are connecting with each other in various spheres such as the economy, politics, health, education and so on. They are trying to build up a peaceful world, sharing knowledge, experiences and technology. Yet, in some places of our world there are still arguments, disputes, conflicts and battles. Superficially speaking, we may consider that opportunists and ultra-opportunists are creating these undesirable situations. Partly, it is right. On careful analysis however, these violent situations such as greed,

anger and ignorance are the main scourges. We were born into the world with empty hands and we must leave the world in the same way. We use our own efforts to gain wealth and fame, but some triumphs, gains and successes went to the wrong places, selfish plans and mischievous deeds. In these events, some became preys of above-said opportunists. Thus, anger causes responses which may turn into revenge. In fact, all are going round in a vicious circle of greed, anger and ignorance.

We all are responsible to make our homes, communities, our society, our country and our world a pleasant to live in. To do so, we are required to keep ours unharmed by subversive elements from inside and outside. For successful management of all the affairs, we must have, if not even a flawless then at least the least flawed constitution. Whenever there appears

a need to amend, we must modify our constitution. Failing that, destructive elements and ultra-opportunists will exploit the weak points of those constitutions. For example, if a breast-cancer patient whose breast must be removed in time for life refuses to undergo medical operation, she must be said to have committed suicide. Likewise, if we refuse to amend or modify our constitution with some weak points, we will automatically become culprits or villains of history who destroy our nation and our future.

Contrariwise, we have an opportunity to have ourselves named as nation-builders. If we will willingly to take part in the campaign for saving the nation, our national brethren will no longer be displaced from their homes and we, the whole populace can live in peace under the protection of the law. I would not like you to be reluctant to decide what to do now.

Solving the Water Crises

Khin Maung Myint

A few days ago, I had written an article in anticipation of the water shortage problems that could be faced during the summer. In that article I cited the examples of water management in Thailand, as to how they solved those problems with various long term plans. In doing so I am not pointlessly praising the Thais, but because I believed that as we are lagging behind others in the region, we have to try and catch up as quickly as possible. To do so, copying the good examples of those who had proven successful is the fastest and easiest way to do it.

When considering ways and means to develop the country, most of our people have the tendency to always look at Singapore as a good model. I agree that Singapore is undoubtedly the most developed in the region, but there is no similarity between us. It's alright to set Singapore as a targeted goal to beat, but not as an example to copy. Thus if we want to copy from others we should look for in countries that have similar conditions as ours'. In doing so, we should look to our closest neighbours first. Thus,

Thailand would be the best model for us where developments are concerned, especially in the rural developments. As our two countries lie abreast to one another, with similar geographical features, weather conditions and also both being agricultural countries, we are almost identical.

In my previous article: "Are we prepared to meet the water shortages?", I had pointed out the woes of water shortages that our people had to face every year during the summers. Water shortages do not affect only the humans but also the other living things, including trees and plants. Thus, I had clearly pointed out that water is the most essential element for human and animal consumptions and for the agricultural purposes too.

In developing a country it should be an all-round development. Buildings and infrastructures are not the only sectors where development is necessary. The greening of the cities, towns and villages, rehabilitation of the depleted forests and promotion of agricultures are also equally important. So it's quite clear that just providing water for human consumptions only, will not be

enough to solve the water shortage problems. Thus long term solutions such as more dams, diversion weirs and water pumping stations to pump water from lakes, rivers, streams and creeks should be constructed. Water treatment stations to treat water from such places should be also constructed where needed, to make the water safe for consumptions.

In the same issue of the GNLM, where the above article was mentioned, there was a very heartening piece of news. It was about the provision of Kyat two millions each, to nearly 150 villages in 15 townships in the Mandalay Region to solve the acute water shortage problems that could be faced in the coming few days. That was a very thoughtful move as the townships listed are the worst affected by the severe droughts every summer. However, that move will only solve the domestic household water shortage problems. Thus a master plan for the long term water sufficiency for multi-purposes should be formulated and implemented instead of the piecemeal projects.

The Myanmar's generosity and noble deeds of donations to others in times of need are much

praiseworthy and appreciable, and such things are rarely seen in other countries. I applaud and thank them for their noble deeds, but we shouldn't be relying on them every year to solve the water crises. I would like to emphasize that water shortage is a major issue and provisions of water for human consumptions only, in times of need through donations, is not a solution but an emergency relief. The authorities and departments concerned should make necessary plans for long term water sufficiency, not only for human consumptions but for multi-purposes.

For that matter, we also shouldn't rely much on the rain waters. With the climate change causing unprecedented droughts all over the world, it is not a reliable source that is shrouded in uncertainty. Furthermore, our dry central zone usually receive very little or negligible amount of rainfalls annually and as they come too late in those areas---only in mid-May or early June---we should not place too much dependence on them.

If I may voice my opinion, I would like to suggest that considerations should be made to implement pumping stations along

the main rivers and their tributaries and construct far-reaching canal systems to provide water in the dry central zones. As I had traveled up and down the Ayeyawady River many a times during my career days some forty years ago, I had seen few pumping stations in those areas and noticed the landscapes in their neighbourhoods being covered with lush green vegetations. So, I presume that method would be the best solution instead of constructing expensive dams or reservoirs.

The above mentioned suggestions are just my wishful thinkings, as I am just a layman who don't belong to that profession, so they may not be as efficient as I thought they would. Thus I will leave it to the professionals and experts in those fields to come up with some sort of viable plans to solve the annual water crises, in the whole country once and for all. They will take time, so I would also like to urge the people to be understanding and patient while the projects are being implemented. Even Thailand is still striving to overcome the water shortage problems today with all the works already done.

Indawgyi lake to be preserved

A MUSEUM which will include a lecture hall will be built in Lon Ton village behind Indawgyi lake during the next fiscal year to help preserve Indawgyi lake and wildlife sanctuary, which is located in Mohnyin township in Kachin state, with the assistance of Spree World Biosphere Reserve from Germany and Fauna & Flora International (FFI), said U Ngwe Lwin, the project manager from FFI.

The designation of Indawgyi lake as a Ramsar site will help maintain the services and benefits that the site provides for over 50,000 people from 39 villages and the environment.

The main problems are illegal gold digging, illegal farm extensions, felling trees on a commercial scale, hunting, and extreme fishing," said U Maung Win, an administrator of Indaw-

gyi lake and wildlife sanctuary.

"Illegal gold prospecting along the Khaungton creek has made for silt deposits on the bed of the lake. Sediments have caused the degradation of the lake.

In order to mitigate the damages caused by sedimental deposits, six experts from Germany arrived here to conduct a field inspection trip," he added.—*Salai Mang Ngai*



Birds soar near a visitor boat in Indawgyi lake in Mohnyin, Kachin State, which is to be preserved. PHOTO: MNA

Vaccination to prevent cervical cancer to be administered in 2019

THE ministry of health and sports has planned to administer vaccinations to prevent cervical cancer caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) beginning in 2019, according to the infectious diseases prevention and control division under the ministry of health and sports.

The ministry plans to implement this vaccination programme so that cervical cancer can be

prevented as part of 2017-2021 National Health project.

The ministry will provide the vaccines against cervical cancer to girls between 9 and 13-years of age. They will also monitor whether women develop cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer, the most common form of cancer in Myanmar, is caused by a virus called HPV that is usually transmitted

by sexual intercourse.

Vaccination is one of the preventive measures against HPV, an infectious disease.

Diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and chronic respiratory diseases are noninfectious diseases.

More people die of non-infectious disease rather than infectious diseases.—200

Increasing gate fees can decrease tourist arrival

THE number of trekking tourists to Pindaya town could decrease if the entry fees are increased to US\$5, said U Zaw Htay Aung, chairman of the Myanmar Hotelier Association (Taunggyi Zone).

The Danu Self-administered Zone planned to increase Pindaya gate fees beginning in April. Authorities said that they will increase the gate fees to raise funds for the development of the region.

"Pindaya does not have many places to visit. But the visitors have to pay Ks3,000 to visit the Pindaya cave. Some tourists visit Pindaya for trekking only. Now, the number of tourists could decrease if they have to pay US\$ 5 for gate fees," said U Zaw Htay Aung.

The increase has not been officially announced yet, but officials said they will start to collect the new gate fees starting 1 April.

Most of the Danu ethnic people live in the southern part of Shan State. According to the 2008 constitution, the government designated Danu as a Self-administered Zone because it has more than 100,000 ethnic people. Ywangan is also an SAR.

There are 130 villages in Pindaya township and 90 villages in Ywar Ngan township.—*Min Min*



The rare Tapir is seen at Kawthoung Forestry Dept. PHOTO: MNA

Rare Species of Tapir Handed Over:

COLONEL Naing Tin Nwe, tactical operations commander, handed over an endangered species of tapir to U Tin Tun, deputy director of the Kawthoung district forestry department on Wednesday morning at Aung Thu Ra Hall, Kawthoung military area.

While clearing ground for cultivation, U Soe Htike, a farmer of Ayemya Tharyar village, Khamaukkyi, Kawthoung District on March 13 found an animal assumed to be a tapir and its young. The mother tapir ran away out of fear, leaving her off-

spring. U Soe Htike handed over the baby tapir to the nearby tactical operation command of Kawthoung on March 18. The tapir is a large, herbivorous mammal similar to a pig.

The male tapir is 32 inches long, 18 inches high and 23 inches wide, with black-and-white striped skin similar to a tiger.

The district forestry department of Kawthoung district will keep it temporarily and will hand it over to Nay Pyi Taw zoological garden, it is learnt.—*Kyaw Soe (Kawthoung)*

Crime NEWS

Two trains collide in Kanbalu township

TWO trains on the Mandalay-Myitkyina railroad collided head-on near Leik Htoo village, Kanbalu township, Sagaing region on Wednesday.

The No. 42 down train en route to Mandalay from Myitkyina crashed with the No. 41 up train between mileposts 493/1 and 493/2, on the Manda-

lay-Myitkyina railroad.

An official from Myanmar Railways said that although the No. 41 up train had to stop in Kanbalu Railway station, it did not stop and went on at high speed only to crash with the No. 42 down train.

The accident damaged both locomotives.—*MNA*



A head-on collision on Mandalay-Myitkyina railroad. PHOTO:MNA

Thailand shows interest in purchasing Russian armoured vehicles

LANGKAWI (Malaysia), — Thailand is showing interest in Russian-made armoured vehicles, the director for international cooperation and regional policy at Russia's defence industry conglomerate Rostec told reporters on Wednesday.

"I do not rule out the possibility of cooperation in the field of armoured vehicles, since Thailand is showing considerable interest in it," said Viktor Kladov who heads the joint delegation of Rostec and state arms exporter Rosoboronexport at the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA-2017) in Malaysia.

According to Kladov, Thailand is also interested in other Russian equipment, specifically, air defence systems, the Mil Mi-17 helicopters, the Yakovlev Yak-130, the Sukhoi Su-30 and

the Beriev Be-200 aircraft.

Therefore, the situation is changing, he added. "There are some psychological barriers in Thailand, as some of the military were trained in US academies. However, the country is currently showing considerable interest in Russian equipment, since it is not only as good as US-made but also cheaper and more reliable," he stressed.

Russia is successfully fulfilling the contract to supply three Sukhoi Superjet SSJ-100 aircraft to Thailand's Defence Ministry:

"To date, two aircraft have been delivered. The third one will be delivered in accordance with the contract. The planes are intended for transportation of the country's top officials," Viktor Kladov has noted.

He added that some Thai airlines are also showing interest in purchasing

the Superjet planes. "The issue is being discussed with the Thai side," Kladov said.

Reports of new deal on Mi-7 helicopters

The contract to supply another batch of Russian Mil Mi-17V-5 helicopters to Thailand could be signed at an early date, a source in the Russian Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation informed TASS.

Russian Air Force: best warplanes, helicopters and airlifters

"Negotiations on the delivery of the Mi-17V-5 military transport helicopters to the Kingdom of Thailand are in the final stage. The draft contract has been agreed on, and we hope to sign it in the near future," he said.

The source added that no talks are underway with Thailand regarding potential contracts on other types of weapons. "This



Thailand is also interested in other kinds of equipment — in particular, the air defence systems. PHOTO: TASS

being said, we are ready for a constructive dialogue and for presenting some modern samples of our military equipment to our partners," he noted.

The Royal Thai Armed Forces purchased Russia's

Mi-17V-5 helicopters in the past. Some media reports said that Bangkok is satisfied with their operational experience. In light of this, Thai representatives expressed willingness to purchase a few more of them.

The Mi-8MTV-5/Mi-17V-5 helicopters are intended for transporting both manpower and cargo. They can be used during rescue operations and are also capable of carrying armaments.—TASS

South Korea, US conduct air power exercise involving B-1B bomber

SEOUL — South Korea and the United States on Wednesday conducted a joint air power exercise in South Korean air space involving a US B-1B bomber in a show of force prompted by North Korea's increasing

military threats, according to South Korea's Defence Ministry.

"By conducting the exercise, the South Korean and US air forces intend to demonstrate a powerful deterrent against North Ko-

rea's nuclear and missile threats," the ministry said in a statement.

The B-1B is a supersonic, swept-wing, four-engine heavy strategic bomber capable of carrying "the largest payload of both guided

and unguided munitions in the entire United States Air Force inventory," according to FighterSweep.com.

The bomber took off from Andersen air base in Guam and conducted a joint exercise with F-15 fighter

aircraft from Japan's Air Self-Defence Force in Japan's air defence identification zone before flying onto South Korea, the US military said. "Bilateral cooperation with bomber aircraft, especially in the face of se-

curity challenges in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region, is an outstanding demonstration of the US's commitment to our allies," Maj Ryan Simpson, Pacific Air Force bomber operations chief, said in a statement.—Kyodo News

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Japan commissions another helicopter-carrying destroyer

YOKOHAMA — The Maritime Self-Defence Force commissioned another helicopter-carrying destroyer on Wednesday, whose size is on a par with Japan's largest postwar naval vessel, Izumo, that went into service in 2015.

The 19,500-ton Kaga, which is one of the four "aircraft-carrier like" destroyers equipped with a large flight deck, will be used for surveillance activi-

ties as Japan keeps a watchful eye on China's growing maritime assertiveness.

The government has taken the position that Japan cannot possess an offensive aircraft carrier due to its war-renouncing Constitution. The new vessel, to belong to the MSDF's Escort Flotilla Four based in Kure, Hiroshima Prefecture, will also engage in international peace missions and disaster relief operations, according

to the MSDF.

The 248-metre-long Kaga is the same size as the Izumo destroyer and can carry up to 14 helicopters. But it is more difficult to detect it by radar, according to the MSDF. The MSDF also have two 13,500-ton flat-topped destroyers — Hyuga and Ise.

At a ceremony held Wednesday morning in Yokohama, the new ship was handed over to the De-

fence Ministry from Japan Marine United Corp which built the vessel.

"The security environment surrounding our country is becoming tougher. The Kaga can play an important role," Parliamentary Vice Defence Minister Takayuki Kobayashi said at the ceremony.

The construction cost for the vessel was about 120 billion yen (\$1.1 billion). The vessel can also carry the Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft, which takes off and lands like a helicopter but cruises like a plane.

Meanwhile, the aging 5,200-ton destroyer Kurama retired the same day after being in service for about 36 years.

The ship engaged in information gathering for the MSDF's refueling mission that began in 2001 in the Indian Ocean in support of US-led antiterrorism operations in and around Afghanistan.

A ceremony to mark its retirement was held the same day at the Sasebo naval base in Nagasaki, southwestern Japan.—Kyodo News



Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force's (JMSDF) latest Izumo-class helicopter carrier DDH-184 Kaga (R) is seen next to JMSDF's helicopter carrier Izumo in Yokohama, Japan on 22 March 2017. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

PERFORMANCES IN ONE-YEAR PERIOD

Rice basket is on right track



Fishermen in the early hours of the morning setting about their work on the Ayeyawady River, the rice basket of Myanmar for its major contribution to agriculture. PHOTO: MNA

Nyi Nyi Swe

AYEYAWADY Region, rice basket of Myanmar, which was struck by the Cyclone Nargis in 2008, has recovered the right track to development with mushrooming industries apart from its agriculture.

According to the statistics, per capita output of goods and services in the Ayeyawady Region reached about K1.4 million in the 2016-2017 fiscal year and it is estimated that the output can reach more than K1.5 million in 2017-2018 FY.

Investment Sector

There are 21 investments with K190 billion by Myanmar nationals and 20 foreign investments with US\$370 million in the garment and services sectors in Ayeyawady Region.

For the development of Small and Medium Enterprises, rice mills and salt mills in the region have been provided with technical assistance. The Ayeyawady Region Government issued SME member cards to 700 SMEs and assisted 70 business persons to get loans from the CB Bank through the CGI system.

Meanwhile, with the arrangements of the Ayeyawady Region Government, about 360 private industries have registered and boilers and power supply system at more than 2,300 mills and workshops were inspected for worksite safety, according to the Industrial Supervision and Inspection Department.

Three industrial zones

Establishment of industrial zones are underway in Pathein, Maubin and Nyaungdon in Ayeyawady Region.

“When these industrial zones are booming, people from Ayeyawady Region working in foreign countries will come back home and get jobs,” said Mahn Jonny, Ayeyawady Region

Chief Minister.

The government is also trying to build a port in the coastal area of the Ayeyawady Delta.

In Ayeyawady Region, more than 3.7 million acres are put under paddy in the rainy season while 1.3 million acres in summer, making up more than 28 per cent of the total acres of rice in the country.

Distribution of more than 1.6 million baskets of certified seeds to farmers in 26 townships last year can be seen as one of the achievements of the Ayeyawady Region. That is outcome of the cooperation of the farmers and experts of the Agriculture Department.

Agriculture Department, joining hands with the Korea

International Cooperation Agency-KOICA, is implementing model village projects in 10 villages in Pathein and Kangyidaunt townships.

Timely disbursement of more than K480 billion last fiscal year

Success in agricultural sector is depending on quality seeds and inputs. The Ay-

eyawady Region Government disbursed more than K480 billion to farmers in the 2016-2017 fiscal year, with more than K160 billion increase compared to the previous fiscal year.

Besides, the government has issued the certificate land ownership to more than 4.1 million acres.

The government gave more than ks2.2 billion to farmers

as a compensation for grabbing their land when it built Pathein-Kyangin Railroad, Hinthada-Zalun Railroad and Satsan-Htawpaing-Amar road. The government has also returned 6760 acres of farmland to the owners after the projects last year.

Summer paddy and winter crops

Preventive measures against erosion along the Ayeyawady River was accomplished in the one-year period of the government, benefitting Myanaung, Hinthada, Zalun, Ingapu, Danubyu, Nyaungdon and Maubin in the region and preventing more than 300,000 acres of farmland from flooding.

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The Ayeyawady Region Government issued SME member cards to 700 SMEs and assisted 70 business persons to get loans from the CB Bank through the CGI system.



Chief Minister Mahn Johnny presents compensation for farm land to a farmer. PHOTO: MNA



Paddy fields growing after the Cyclone devastated the area. PHOTO: MNA



Statues of national races are erected in downtown Pathein. PHOTO: MNA

PERFORMANCES IN ONE-YEAR PERIOD



Firefighters conduct five drill. PHOTO: MNA



Diggers clearing a channel and banks from debris. PHOTO: MNA



Fishermen after a good haul. The Ayeyawady River supports the people both in agriculture and aquaculture. PHOTO: MNA

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More than 262 creeks and drains were dredged and 24 reservoirs were renovated.

Kyungyaung Dam would irrigate paddy field in Kyangin and Myanaung in coming summer. Meanwhile, in cooperation with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, Ayeyawady Region Government has implemented the drinking water supply project and would start to supply water to wards in Pyapon this month," said Chief Minister Mahn Jonny.

Power supply with Solar Power System

More than 460 villages which had not got access to the national grid were provided with power supply through the solar power system.

The Ayeyawady Region Government has assisted more than 460 villages, 340 schools, 78 rural clinics, 401 religious edifices and more than 2,300 lampposts to install solar panels in the one-year period.

At the same time, the government has extended installation of cables linking with the national grid and built sub-power stations and the electrification plan.

In the communication sector, 274 mobile communications stations were constructed in six districts in Ayeyawady Region boosting mobile connectivity from 65 to 85 per cent enabling communication with faraway districts such as Pyinsalu, Ngayotekaung, Gawringyi islands and Shwetaungyan Bawmi.

A total of 361 schools for primary and secondary students and 26 university entrance exam centers were successfully opened, while 3,300 primary school teachers and 440 Education staff members have been appointed.

In the 2016-2017 academic year scholarships have been awarded to 145 middle school and high school students and 1,900 stipends for education were awarded to primary, middle and high school students. Furthermore, 305,000 dozen of exercise books and 190,000 school uniforms were given to the students, while the Pathein Education University was able to raise around 2,300 educators.

In the Ayeyawady Region, 3 Chief District Health departments, 4 station hospitals, 7 suburban health centers, 51 suburban health sub centers were established, while a total of 606,

medical practitioners and nurses were appointed. A team led by Specialists conducted field visits and attended to 25,000 patients. Ks 1,780 million were supported to the citizens to buy needed medicine and Ks 4,400 million were donated to the hospitals.

In the 2016-2017 academic scholarships have been awarded to 145 middle school and high school students and 1,900 stipends for education.

Employment opportunities

Job opportunities became available after 209 out of 1,777 fish farms were sold at base price to 204 groups of fishermen. In the aquaculture business over 630,000 viss of freshwater fish and 328,000 viss of saltwater fish came about as a result of

increased production at 1.5 per cent and 0.66 per cent respectively.

The establishment of a livestock farm within the four townships cost a sum of Ks 120 million from the budget enabling distribution of 875 pigs, 1,400 ducks and 807 chickens.

Increased livestock breeding

Over 500 cattle were successfully bred, which is an increase of 150 cattle from the previous year. Over 14 tonnes of grass seeds and 1,000 sacks of stalks worth Ks 20 million were distributed to 16 townships affected by floods and vaccination for hoof and tongue diseases in ruminants were administered to 4,000 cattle in 11 villages.

Over 450000 tourists

Two modern hotels and 4 guest house with 178 rooms in total were constructed in Pathein, Ngwesaung, Chaungtha, Pyapon and Myat Mawtinson. More than 450,000 local and foreign visitors visited Ayeyawady Region last year increasing at 69 per cent in compared to the number previous year. Ayeyawady Region earned more than K13billion and US\$1,660,000 last year from the tourism sector.

Regarding response to disasters, Ayeyawady Region Government provided housing materials and aid worth more than K300 million to 29,000 households.

So far, 55 cyclone shelters have been constructed in 17 townships. As an emergency stockpile, food and housing materials are stored for 5,000 households in Pathein, Hinthada, Myaungmya, Pyapon and Labutta districts.

As part of efforts for raising disaster awareness, Ayeyawady Region Government has also conducted trainings, talks and drills and practised alarm system with the use of modern equipment.

Meanwhile, infrastructures such as roads and bridges are being built and upgraded in rural areas to promote the socio economy of the people in the areas.

"Road Department has spent more than K60 billion so far on building roads and bridges in the rural areas and efforts are being made to supply electricity to rural areas," said the Ayeyawady Region Chief Minister.

"We are working at our best in the interest of the people," he said.



A sub-power station to provide electricity as part of the electrification plan. PHOTO: MNA



Workers at a garment factory. Employment has increased in recent years. PHOTO: MNA



An Airspace Systems Intercepter autonomous aerial drone sits on its mobile launchpad and command center during a product demonstration in Castro Valley, California on 6 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Drone-catchers emerge on a new aerial frontier

SAN LEANDRO, (Calif.), — The enemy drone whined in the distance. The Intercepter, a drone-hunting machine from Silicon Valley startup Airspace Systems, slinked off its launch pad and dashed away in hot pursuit. The hunter twisted through the air to avoid trees, homed in on its target, fired a Kevlar net to capture it, and then carried the rogue drone back to its base like a bald eagle with a kill.

Airspace is among some 70 companies working on counter-drone systems as small consumer and commercial drones proliferate. But unlike others, it aims to catch drones instead of disabling them or shooting them down.

A demonstration at Airspace headquarters in San Leandro, California, showed a compact aircraft just a few feet wide, yet capable of sophisticated, autonomous navigation and accurate tar-

geting of a drone in motion.

It is still early days in the drone-defence business. Security professionals both public and private worry about dangerous drones at military sites, airports, data centres, and public venues like baseball stadiums. But counter-measures carry risk, too.

For example, the US Air Force recently tested experimental shotgun shells for shooting down drones. But if the drone carries a payload like a bomb or chemical weapon, it could still fall on its target.

Jamming the radio signals to the drone does not always work, either. Drones differ from “remote-controlled” aircraft because they can fly to pre-set coordinates autonomously. The fastest drones can reach 150 miles per hour (240 km), too quick for human pilots flying another drone to catch.

The technical challenge

of safely stopping a dangerous drone appealed to Guy Bar-Nahum, one of the inventors of the Apple iPod and the engineering brains behind Airspace Systems.

“We are creating a very primitive brain of an insect, a dragonfly,” Bar-Nahum said. “It wakes up, sees the world and doesn’t really know where it is. But it has goals to capture the other drone, and it’s planning a path in the world and knows how to move through the world.”

The Intercepter must pack computing power and sophisticated software into that tiny drone brain. Unlike the emerging driverless car, it has to understand its environment without the benefit of an internet connection to a massive mapping database.

“My background is in physics, and it’s all about modeling the world” with math, Bar-Nahum said. “What we do in this low-

ly startup that looks to be a normal, military ‘take ‘em down’ kind of company is build machines that can model the world.”

The business model is challenging too. Currently, only law enforcement officials have the authority to interfere with another drone’s flight. Regulations also require a certified pilot to stand ready to intervene in any commercial drone flight and keep a line-of-sight view of the aircraft.

Thus Airspace Systems will not be selling its aircraft, but rather leasing a system, complete with operators and a mobile command center, to customers.

The New York Mets have an interest in using the system to protect Citi Field in New York City, according to Sterling VC, the venture capital arm of Sterling Equities, which owns the stadium and also invested in Airspace.—Reuters

Russia ready to continue work on 5th generation fighter with India

LANGKAWI (Malaysia) — Russia is prepared to push ahead with efforts to develop the Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA) in collaboration with India, the director for international cooperation and regional policy at Russia’s defence industry conglomerate Rostec told reporters on Wednesday.

“We are awaiting the Indian side’s decision on the FGFA project. We are fulfilling our obligations

and are prepared to continue work,” said Viktor Klodov who heads the joint delegation of Rostec and state arms exporter Rosoboronexport at the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA-2017) in Malaysia.

Yuri Slyusar, President of Russia’s United Aircraft Corporation, earlier said that Russia was honoring all its commitments concerning the development of the FGFA fighter.—TASS

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Dated 23rd March 2017

kmma@kcyangon.com

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Corner of Mahabandoola Road and Thein Phyu Road,

Botahtaung Township, Yangon,

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Dated 23rd March 2017

kmma@kcyangon.com

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

MV DAWEI STAR VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV DAWEI STAR VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 23.3.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

MV SENTOSA STAR VOY. NO (1704)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SENTOSA STAR VOY. NO (1704) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 23.3.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of B.S.W 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 BLPL SHIPPING LINE**

Phone No: 2301185



Wyclef Jean arrives at the 42nd American Music Awards in Los Angeles, California on 23 November, 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

Wyclef Jean says 'treated like criminal' in LA handcuffing incident

LOS ANGELES — Grammy award-winning hip hop artist Wyclef Jean said he was handcuffed and “treated like a criminal” when he was briefly detained on Tuesday by law enforcement officers in Los Angeles as they investigated a robbery.

In tweets and video of the incident posted to his Instagram and Twitter feed, the Haitian-born former Fugees singer said he appeared to have been the victim of “another case of mistaken identity” and threatened to sue.

“I was treated like a criminal until other police showed up and pointed out they had wrong person,” Jean, 47, wrote on Twitter.

“I am sure no father wants his sons or daughters to see him

in Handcuffs especially if he is innocent,” he added.

Jean blamed the Los Angeles Police Department for the incident, which occurred around 1 am PDT (0800 GMT), but in fact it involved sheriff’s deputies, the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department said.

The sheriff’s department told NBC in Los Angeles that Jean was briefly detained while deputies were looking for a suspect matching his description who had carried out an armed robbery at a gas station in West Hollywood.

The singer was placed in handcuffs and released without charge when it was determined he was not the suspect, a spokesman told NBC.—Reuters

Singer Jason Derulo discusses acting ambitions at ‘Swalla’ launch

LOS ANGELES — Hip hop artist Jason Derulo has big ambitions to break into movies and television but when it comes to auditions, the singer said they are not his thing. Speaking at the launch of his latest music video for his song “Swalla,” Derulo, 27, said he wanted to find on-screen roles that appealed to him and “build a team” to bring the projects to life.

“Me going out on auditions and stuff like that, I don’t think that’s my kind of fit,” Derulo told Reuters TV.

“The role has to be perfect for me, the storyline has to be perfect for what I’m trying to portray first and maybe it’s not the lead



Singer Jason Derulo. PHOTO: REUTERS

first, maybe it is the lead first, it just really depends on what story I choose.”

Derulo has dabbled in television with small roles in hip hop saga “Empire” and the reboot of

buddy-cop action series “Lethal Weapon.”

“Swalla,” featuring rappers Nicki Minaj and Ty Dolla \$ign, is the first single from Derulo’s upcoming untitled fifth studio album, expected later this year.

The “Swalla” music video features dancers on vibrant sets, and has registered more than 6 million views on YouTube since its Friday release.

“My videos allow my music to be visual and people are really drawn to my videos and I’ve got a lot of views because of YouTube,” Derulo said.—Reuters



Swedish singer Zara Larsson performs during the Bambi 2016 media awards ceremony in Berlin, Germany on 17 November, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Swedish singer Zara Larsson seeks to build US fan base

NEW YORK — Swedish pop star Zara Larsson may have racked up more than 1 billion streams on music service Spotify within a few days of her new album’s release, but the 19-year-old knows she still has some work to do in the United States. Her second album, “So Good,” came out on Friday. It is the first international release for Larsson, who is already a star in Sweden.

“It feels so good to have my record out - that I can actually go here and tell people, ‘Check out my album’ and stuff,” Larsson said in an interview on Monday.

“But it’s definitely difficult because it’s so big — it’s really, really big,” she said, referring to the American market.

Larsson gained fame in her home country at the age of 10, when she won the Swedish talent show “Talang” in 2008. Last month, she was named artist of

the year at the Grammis Awards, Sweden’s equivalent of the Grammy Awards.

Larsson said she tried to accomplish a couple of things on her new, 15-song album.

“My kind of picture for it was just to create a really good collection of pop songs,” she said. “It’s fun, it’s positive, it’s uplifting and empowering.”

Larsson also likes to add her voice on social media to discuss politics and women’s rights.

“I just grew up in an environment that allowed me to really question everything all the time,” she said. “I was always the one who was like, ‘Is it really that way, is it really?’”

The singer will tour North America with British electronic music group Clean Bandit from April to May before heading to Europe, where she will perform at several festivals.—Reuters

Spice Girl Mel B files for divorce from husband of nearly ten years

LOS ANGELES — Spice Girl Melanie ‘Mel B’ Brown filed for divorce from her husband after nearly 10 years of marriage, citing irreconcilable differences.

Court papers filed in Los Angeles Superior Court on Monday show that British pop star Brown, 41, and husband Stephen Belafonte, a TV producer, have been separated since December.

Brown requested joint legal and physical custody of the couple’s daughter, five-year-old Madison Brown Belafonte.

Representatives for Brown did not immediately respond to



British actress and singer Melanie Brown also known as Mel B arrives at the Creative Arts Emmys in Los Angeles, California, US on 10 September, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Reuters for comment and efforts to reach Belafonte were unsuccessful.

Brown, best known as Scary Spice in 1990s British

pop group Spice Girls, married Belafonte in June 2007.

Brown has two other children from previous relationships.—Reuters

Stolen Van Gogh paintings back in Amsterdam after 14 years

AMSTERDAM — Two paintings by Vincent Van Gogh were unveiled, barely damaged, at an Amsterdam museum on Tuesday, 14 years after they were stolen in a mafia heist.

The works, 1882's "View of the Sea at Scheveningen" and the 1884 "Congregation Leave the Reformed Church in Nuenen", are from a period that was crucial to the post-impressionist master's development as a painter.

"They are back," said Van Gogh museum director Axel Rueger ahead of the unveiling of the paintings, each valued by investigators on their recovery by Italian police six months ago at 50 million euros (\$53.97 million).

"I never thought I'd be able to say these words."

The works were discovered deep in the heart of Italy last September

behind a false wall in a villa that prosecutors said belonged to Raffaele Imperiale, who is accused of running an international cocaine trafficking ring.

The sea view, showing a single wave-tossed ship just offshore under a brooding Dutch sky, is important to the museum as its only work from the painter's period in The Hague, where he studied.

The other canvas depicts the church in the southern province of Brabant where Van Gogh's father was minister.

After his father died, Van Gogh added black-clad mourning figures to the painting in tribute.

"The children are safely returned now and they really are safe," said Rueger, after pulling back a screen to show the paintings encased behind a thick glass frame.

"They will remain



The canvas 'View of the Sea at Scheveningen', one of the two recovered paintings by Vincent van Gogh which were stolen from the Van Gogh Museum in 2002, is pictured at the van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, Netherlands, on 21 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

here for many generations to come."

Italian investigators

believe Imperiale is living in Dubai and running a construction business

there. The arrests of 11 members of his alleged ring last January, includ-

ing one man who turned state's witness, led investigators to the paintings.

They vanished in 2002 after thieves climbed a ladder on to the museum roof and broke into the building in a heist that took only four minutes. They escaped by sliding down a rope.

The sea view suffered minor damage when it was ripped from its frame, losing a piece of backing paper from the bottom-left corner.

It was a "miracle" the paintings suffered no further harm over the following 14 years, Rueger said.

Several major items were uncovered in last September's raid, including a private plane.

One investigator noticed an unusual-looking wall, behind which the paintings were found wrapped in cloth. —Reuters

mitv Myanmar International Programme Schedule

(23-3-2017 07:00am ~ 24-3-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	A bike Ride in pursuit of Mural Art (Ep-1)
07:45	Am	Five-Star Ocean Liners in Myanmar Waters
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Super Traditional Fencing Form (Ep-3)
08:43	Am	Myanmar Railways City Circular Train
08:54	Am	Parents' Day
09:03	Am	News
09:25	Am	"Myanmar's Traditions and Culture" Myanmar Pottery
09:48	Am	Creative Collage Artist: Zwe Yan Nang
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Pole Star for the Blind
10:55	Am	Hip-Hop and Design

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	Travelogue: A Tour in Korea (Ep-II)
07:41	Pm	A Star for Great Achievement
07:51	Pm	A Nun's Creation in Fruit Carving
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Tapestry - A Unique Combination Of Painting and Craftsmanship
08:45	Pm	Beach Food Delivery
08:54	Pm	Kayah

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm)-Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am)-Wednesday Repeat(07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) -Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

(For Detailed Schedule – www.myanmaritv.com/schedule)

'Sesame Street' to welcome first autistic Muppet

NEW YORK — Long-running children's television show "Sesame Street" is welcoming a new kid to the block — a Muppet with autism called Julia.

A redhead who loves to sing and remembers the words to lots of songs, Julia will debut on the show for preschoolers on April 10 after a five-year outreach effort to families and experts on autism, Sesame Workshop said on Monday.

"For years, families of children with autism have asked us to address the issue," Dr Jeanette Betancourt, senior vice president of US social impact at the nonprofit Sesame Workshop, said in a statement.

One in 68 Ameri-

can children is currently diagnosed with autism, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an increase of some 119 per cent since 2000.

Autism is a developmental disorder present from early childhood, characterized by difficulty in communicating and forming relationships with other people and in using language and abstract concepts

Stacey Gordon, the puppeteer who will perform the role of Julia, and Christine Ferraro who wrote her part, both have family members who are on the autism spectrum.

"It's important for kids

without autism to see what autism can look like," Gordon told the CBS show "60 Minutes" in a preview on Sunday.

"Had my son's friends been exposed to his behaviours through something that they had seen on TV before they experienced them in the classroom, they might not have been frightened. They might not have been worried when he cried. They would have known that he plays in a different way and that that's okay," she added.

The show will see Julia interact with favourite characters like Big Bird and Elmo but sometimes get overexcited, or flap her hands.

The character will be supported with books and videos in both Spanish and English on the sesame-street.org website and costumed character visits to community events.

Since its launch in 1969, "Sesame Street" has tackled issues such as divorce, disability, race and death alongside its role in teaching very young children to read, count and learn colours.

"Sesame Street" is seen in either the United States on PBS and HBO, or local TV versions in more than 150 nations and has won multiple awards for its educational content and its message of inclusion. —Reuters

Fireworks, burning sculptures wrap up Spain's Fallas festival

VALENCIA, Spain — Fireworks and the burning of colourful puppet-like sculptures wrapped up Valencia's Fallas festival on Sunday night after nearly week-long festivities in the Spanish Mediterranean city. Each year, residents make "ninots", or dolls, from paper mache for the celebrations, which commemorate Saint Joseph, the patron saint of carpenters, and are said to have evolved from pagan rituals marking the end of winter.

The sculptures are put on display beforehand, with the public voting to save their preferred figure from the flames.—Reuters



Figures of a Fallas monument are burning during the finale of the Fallas festival, which welcomes spring and commemorates Saint Joseph's Day, in Valencia early, on 20 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Ferguson urges Manchester United to aim for Europa League glory

LONDON — Manchester United should focus on winning the Europa League this season, which would bring the club a trophy they have never won and secure qualification for next season's Champions League, former manager Alex Ferguson has said.

United are fifth in the Premier League and sit four points behind fourth-placed Liverpool, though they have two games in hand on the Merseyside club.

A top-four finish would ensure Champions League qualification but Ferguson, who was in charge at Old Trafford for some 27 years, believes United have a great opportunity to qualify by winning Europe's second-tier club competition.

"The thing is, we've never won the Europa League," he told ESPN. "We've never won UEFA Cup, what it used to be. And we've got a great draw. I'm not saying it's a certainty, but

they've got a great chance.

"It's still a European trophy. And if you win it, you get into the Champions League. The incentive is greater to do that."

English clubs have failed to win a European title since Chelsea's Champions League win in 2012.

Ferguson, who won two Champions League trophies and a Cup Winners' Cup at United, said success on the European front is cyclical.

"In the '70s, Ajax and Bayern Munich; '80s, Liverpool; '90s Italy, AC Milan. And then England had a great spell," the 75-year-old Scot added.

"At the moment, the cycle is with the Spanish teams. And they're best, that's why they're winning it.

United visit Belgian outfit Anderlecht in the first leg of their Europa League quarter-final on 13 April before hosting the return a week later.—Reuters



Sir Alex Ferguson. PHOTO: REUTERS

CHICAGO FIRE SIGN SCHWEINSTEIGER FROM MANCHESTER UNITED

CHICAGO — Manchester United's German midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger has signed a one-year deal to join Chicago Fire, the Major League Soccer club announced on Tuesday.

The 32-year-old World Cup winner, who joined United at the start of last season, has ended a difficult spell under coach Jose Mourinho, having fallen out of favour since the Portuguese arrived at the club at the start of the current campaign.

"I am sad to leave so many friends at Manchester United," Schweinsteiger told the club website (www.manutd.com).

"But I am grateful to the club for allowing me the chance to take up the challenge at Chicago Fire.

"I have enjoyed working with the manager, the players and staff

here and wish them all the best in the future. But I have to reserve special thanks to the United fans — whose support has been a very special part of my time in Manchester."

Fire's general manager Nelson Rodriguez believes the club are getting a proven winner in the former Germany midfielder, who must pass a medical and get a visa before joining.

"This is a historic moment for our club," Rodriguez said on the official Fire website (www.chicago-fire.com).

"Bastian's talents, attitude, and character will be a perfect complement to our squad as we continue building a championship programme."— Reuters



Manchester United's Bastian Schweinsteiger. PHOTO: REUTERS

Hard work, tough decisions will improve Southgate's England

LONDON — Gareth Southgate is determined to ensure England have a successful 2018 World Cup campaign but knows that "challenging conversations" are needed to help the side move on from recent setbacks at major competitions.

Southgate, who was part of the last England side to reach the semi-finals of a major tournament at Euro 96, has urged his players to learn from high-profile defeats, including the shock loss to Iceland at last year's European Championship in France.

"That (World Cup) has to be the ultimate aim because then that drives your behaviour," Southgate told the reporters ahead of

Wednesday's friendly against Germany in Dortmund.

"The tournaments haven't gone so well recently. I'm part of that... I've been involved in tournaments as a player, so it's not all down to these guys.

"It will be a lot of hard work and it might need some more challenging conversations and difficult decisions on my part but that is why we are in elite sport."

The former Middlesbrough boss has praised Manchester United striker Marcus Rashford ahead of this week's internationals, suggesting England are now producing young players with world class potential.



England manager Gareth Southgate. PHOTO: REUTERS

"I know there has been a lot of talk about Germany and their system but I think ours is starting to produce a different type of player," he added.

"I thought Marcus was excellent in the game against Chelsea (a 1-0 FA Cup loss) last week.

"He makes powerful runs in behind defenders and you can ask (Chelsea defender) Gary Cahill how much of a problem that is." Following the friendly in Dortmund, UEFA Group F leaders England face Lithuania in a World Cup qualifier at Wembley on Sunday.—Reuters

Ireland must be ready to shut down Bale, says Keane

DUBLIN — Ireland assistant coach Roy Keane has urged his side to relish the challenge of facing Wales forward Gareth Bale, while making sure the Real Madrid man has no room in which to operate in their World Cup qualifier on Friday.

"Bale is a world class player," Martin O'Neill's assistant told reporters, adding that players of Bale's ability always found a way to make an impact in a game.

"Players and coaches have tried to come up with a plan (to stop him) before, but top players figure it out and affect the game anyway.

"You want to play with the best and against the best, and we'll have a chance on Friday because Bale is up there with some of the top players in the world."

Bale, who was instrumental in Wales' surprise run to Euro 2016 semi-finals in France, has netted four goals so far in the World Cup qualifying campaign.

"The basic advice to any player... is to get to him (Bale) as quick as you can, don't let him get his head up like he does at Real Madrid," Keane added.

"Don't give him space in behind because the boy can run. Tackle him. Hit him... fairly."

Group D leaders Ireland, who have two-point lead over second-placed Serbia, can extend their advantage over the third-placed Welsh side to seven points with a win in Dublin.— Reuters