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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. V, No. 31, 3rd Waxing of Nayon 1380 ME

www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Thursday, 17 May 2018



Vice President U Myint Swe addresses the 4th meeting of the national-level Central Committee for the Administration and Management of Natural Resources in coastal area. **PHOTO: MNA**

Coastal areas need balance between development and conservation

Vice President U Myint Swe has called for negotiation and cooperation between development and conservation groups when infrastructure is built in coastal areas and in other parts of the country.

He made the remark in his address at the fourth meeting of the national level Central Com-

mittee for the Administration and Management of Natural Resources in coastal areas held at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

"When we build infrastructures for sustainable development in coastal areas,

we should go through 'negotiation'", said Vice President U Myint Swe.

He also called for carrying out Environmental Impact Assessments on the country's coastal areas, which stretch up to 2,832 kilometers, abounding with important natural ecosystems in the environs of the

Indian Ocean, and to draw up plans based on the findings of the assessment.

The development work being carried out in coastal areas should be in conformity with the rules drawn for conservation of the coastal areas, he added.

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More than 4,900 acres returned to farmers in Sagaing Region

Confiscated land was relinquished and returned to its original owners at a ceremony yesterday in Kanbalu Sagaing Region, the third such event in recent weeks. A total of 4,932 acres of confiscated land was returned to 528 farmers, marking the third-highest return of confiscated land among all states and regions, said Vice President U Henry Van Thio, the Chairman of the Central Committee for Reviewing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands. The Vice President made these remarks in his opening speech at a ceremony in Kanbalu in Sagaing Region yesterday for returning land to its original owners.

The Vice President said departments, companies, and private businesses are allotted property and easement for their projects that involve building roads, infrastructure, and plantations, but the military for various reasons confiscated farmland, resulting in losses for the people. He said relevant organizations have been setting policies, conducting reviews, and returning the confiscated lands to their original owners. The Vice President said Deputy Ministers from the union level have formed four teams to scrutinize confiscated land and are conducting field reviews on the state and regional levels. He said the Union Government was working to establish contract farming for farmers to grow, package and trade their produce.

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Pyithu Hluttaw

Pyithu Hluttaw MPs to debate Mobile Payment System

By Aye Aye Thant
MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY

THE second Pyithu Hluttaw's eighth regular session held its third-day meeting at the Pyithu Hluttaw meeting hall yesterday, where U Sai Oo Kham of Hsen-wi constituency tabled a motion urging the Union Government to use the mobile payment system for the ministerial departments, the public, business enterprises and other relevant sectors.

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat announced the Hluttaw's decision to discuss the motion.

U Sai Oo Kham mentioned that using technology was an effective tool to enhance the country's social, education, healthcare and business sectors, besides improving its productivity sectors. "We can overcome difficulties rapidly, if we can apply the mobile payment



Pyithu Hluttaw is being convened in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

system and e-Government using ICT (information and communication technology), and can speed up the mechanism of the government and public

services at the same time. In this regard, technology plays a vital role to enhance clean government and good governance, and ensure transparency

and mastery of the respective fields. Mobile payments can reduce costs; gain the public's trust; provide better services; reduce malpractices; eliminate

bribery and corruption; reduce the troubles in keeping personal files, data and documents; increase transparency, openness and accountability; create social, education, healthcare and employment opportunities; and accelerate the state mechanism.

The use of the mobile payment system has many benefits and advantages such as creating job prospects and economic opportunities, promoting the economic development of the state, facilitating the socio-economic status of the people, and helping with poverty alleviation for people across the country. A Hluttaw representative supported the motion and Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat announced that the motion had been accepted for discussion.

The fourth-day meeting of the second Pyithu Hluttaw's eighth regular session will be continued on 17 May. ■

Amyotha Hluttaw

Amyotha Hluttaw discusses aquatic exports and use of alluvial land

U AUNG KYI NYUNT of Magway Constituency (4) raised a question asking about the Union Government's plan to remedy the trade sanction imposed on the country which greatly affects the export of aquatic products to Saudi Arabia, the US and the EU.

Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw replied that the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture in Saudi Arabia is temporarily halting imports of aquatic products from Myanmar, Viet Nam, Bangladesh and India starting from 1 April. The reason for this is due to an announcement from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in Saudi Arabia on 30 January claiming that aquatic imports from Southeast Asian countries carry two strains of diseases, one of them being the white tail disease. Saudi Arabia has referred to the quarterly aquatic animal disease report and has submitted a report to the OIE (World Organization for Animal Health).

The Deputy Minister also said they have contacted the Saudi Arabian Embassy to notify them that, according to the OIE report, the white tail disease only affects freshwater prawns



U Hla Kyaw. PHOTO: MNA



U Maung Maung Latt.



U Win Maung. PHOTO: MNA

and not any species of fish. They have requested the Embassy to review the sanctions to resume trade of aquatic products. He said they are preparing to invite representatives from the Saudi Arabian FDA to come and inspect the prawn farms and factories in Myanmar.

The Deputy Minister said the US had permitted the Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP) to Myanmar on 13 November 2016, but Myanmar has been exporting aquatic products to the US even before the GSP permit. The National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) halted imports of aquatic products due to the accidental killing or injuring of marine mammals, which violates

Myanmar has been implementing the National Residue Monitoring Plan (NRMP) since 2014 to export aquatic products to the EU.

the US Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The Deputy Minister said they have sent an email to the NMFS which explains Myanmar's protections in place for marine mammals and conservation efforts for aquatic resources.

The Deputy Minister also said Myanmar has been implementing the National Residue Monitoring Plan (NRMP) since 2014 to export aquatic products to the EU. He said they are upgrading technology to produce high-quality finished products for exporting and also working for aquatic resource conservation, food safety, and development of the fishing industry.

U Maung Maung Latt of Sagaing Constituency (9) raised a question asking whether construction of an embankment wall along the canal of Tawetchaung weir in Temu Township in Sagaing Region is approved.

Deputy Minister U Hla Kyaw replied that they have petitioned to the state government to include the re-fortification of the embankment wall that eroded in 2017. He said the estimated cost is Ks15 million, and approval for the re-fortification will depend on whether funds will be allotted.

U Win Maung of Magway Constituency (6) raised a question asking whether the land boundaries will be redrawn for alluvial land in accordance with either the India ground survey or military maps.

The Deputy Minister replied that agricultural land administration departments have been conducting ground surveys since 2012 in accordance with the Farmland Bylaw Article 108 and Article 109. He also said that dividing up alluvial land does not concern land boundaries and therefore a specific survey does not need to be carried out.

Afterwards, Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee member Daw Nwe Nwe Aung read the committee's report on the Forestry Bill sent with amendment from the Pyithu Hluttaw. Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than then asked MPs wishing to discuss the bill to register their name.—Aung Ye Thwin ■



Our country is still in poverty with necessities in every sector; which is why we need to carry on our struggle and work hard in all sectors. In the international arena, we are facing pressure, criticisms and misunderstandings. The challenges and difficulties our country and our people are facing today are many. Although every issue cannot be solved easily, we will have to make utmost efforts to solve these issues according to each priority sector.

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



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

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

More than 4,900 acres returned to farmers in Sagaing Region

FROM PAGE-1

By doing so, farmers will not need to sell their land for money, but can maintain their fields for generations to come he added.

The Vice President said that Myanmar used to be the top exporter of rice, but gradually became one of the lesser exporters. But in fiscal year 2017-2018, rice exports reached a record high of 3.58 million metric tons, the highest in 73 years. Fiscal year 2017-2018 saw exports from agricultural products reaching US\$3.08 billion, of which 37 per cent was from rice exports generating US\$1.14 billion.

The Vice President urged local residents to register their vacant and virgin land at their respective state or regional Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Committee. He said that if their lands were registered, when agricultural production becomes stable, their lands could be converted into farmland, according to Farmland Law.

The Vice President requested all officials involved in reviewing and scrutinizing confiscated land to have patience as resolving these issues could be complicated and take long periods of time. He then expressed his gratitude to the Ministry of Defence, Sagaing Region Government and regional ministries, on behalf of the Central Committee



Vice President U Henry Van Thio greets a farmer at the ceremony to return land to farmers in Sagaing Region held in Kanbalu yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

tee for Reviewing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands and urged the farmers to use the lands returned to them for their personal benefit, their region's benefit, and the nation's benefit.

Afterwards, Chairman of Sagaing Committee for Reviewing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands Sagaing Chief Min-

ister Dr. Myint Naing explained how they handled the process for returning the relinquished confiscated lands.

Next, the Chief Minister, Regional Hluttaw Speaker, and Regional Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Kan Zar Mone conferred the temporary farmland license

(form-3) to the local residents of Kanbalu District, Dabayin Township, Katha Township, and Taze Township.

Next, Deputy Ministers Rear-Admiral Myint Nwe, Maj-Gen Than Htut, and U Soe Aung and Permanent Secretary U Tin Myint of the Ministry of Home Affairs transferred 347.11 acres

of Kanbalu District farmlands, 1,186.13 acres of Monywa District farmlands, 1,692.44 acres of Katha District farmlands, and 1,935.04 acres of Shwebo District farmlands to their respective District Administrators.

Present at the ceremony were Sagaing Region Chief Minister Dr. Myint Naing, Regional Hluttaw Speaker U Than, Deputy Minister for Defence Rear-Admiral Myint Nwe, Deputy Minister for Border Affairs Maj-Gen Than Htut, Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Soe Aung, regional ministers, Permanent Secretaries, MPs, authorities from states, regions, districts, townships, ward, and village administrations, and the local residents.

At today's ceremony, the No. 33 Light Infantry Division in Kanbalu Township returned more than 320 acres to 32 farmers; No. 929 Supply and Transport Battalion in Dabayin Township more than 70 acres to 26 farmers and a battalion for military security affairs in Katha District nearly two acres to three farmers. The Ministry of Defence has planned to return about 5,160 acres in total including more than 340 acres in Kanbalu District, more than 1,180 acres in Monywa District, nearly 1,700 acres in Katha District and more than 1,900 acres in Shwebo District to the State.— Myanmar News Agency



青島商品絲路行 (緬甸展) Qingdao Silk Road Commodity (Myanmar) Exhibition

Date: May 17-19, 2018

Venue: Myanmar Event Park (MEP)

တရုတ်ပြည်သူ့သမ္မတနိုင်ငံ Qingdao မြို့ ကုန်သွယ်မှုဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးရာဇဝန်ဆောင်မှုစင်တာမှ ဦးစီးကျင်းပသည့် Qingdao ကုန်စည်ပြပွဲ (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံခရီးစဉ်) ကို မေလ (၁၇) ရက်နေ့ နံနက် ၁၀ နာရီ မှ စတင်၍ Myanmar Event Park ၌ (၃) ရက်တာ ကြီးကျယ်ခမ်းနားစွာ ကျင်းပပြုလုပ်သွားမည် ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ယခုကုန်စည်ပြပွဲကို တရုတ်ပြည်သူ့သမ္မတနိုင်ငံ Qingdao မြို့ ကုန်သွယ်ရေးဌာန နှင့် မြန်မာနိုင်ငံစက်မှုလက်မှုကုန်သည်ကြီးများအသင်းတို့မှ ကူညီပံ့ပိုးပေးထားပါသည်။ တရုတ်နိုင်ငံ Qingdao မြို့ရှိ နာမည်ကျော်ကုမ္ပဏီကြီးများမှ ပါဝင်ပြသခြင်းဖြစ်ပြီး ပြပွဲခရီးယာမှာ စတုရန်းမီတာ (၁၀၀၀) ကျော် ကျယ်ဝန်းပါသည်။ ပြပွဲတွင် ဆောက်လုပ်ရေးကုန်ပစ္စည်းများနှင့် မီးပန်းမီးဆိုင်များ၊ စက်ယန္တရားများနှင့် လျှပ်စစ်ဓာတ်အားစက်ပစ္စည်းများ၊ ဒီဇင်သုံး လျှပ်စစ်ပစ္စည်းများနှင့် နည်းပညာဆိုင်ရာ လျှပ်စစ်ပစ္စည်းများ၊ ပရိဘောဂများနှင့် လူသုံးကုန်ပစ္စည်းများ၊ အဝတ်အထည်များ၊ လက်မှုပစ္စည်းများ အစရှိသည့် ပစ္စည်းအမျိုးမျိုးပါဝင်ပြီး ပြသသွားမည် ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

ပြပွဲ၏ အဓိကအစီအစဉ်အနေဖြင့် နှစ်ဦးနှစ်ဖက်လုပ်ငန်းရှင်များအကြား နီးစေ့လှပသောပူးပေါင်းဆောင်ရွက်မှုများ အကောင်အထည်ဖော်နိုင်စေရန် ရည်ရွယ်၍ " နာမည်ကျော်လုပ်ငန်းများ၏ မြို့တော် Qingdao နှင့် မျက်စက်ကုန်သွယ်မှု " ခေါင်းစဉ်ဖြင့် တကမ္ဘာလုံးဆိုင်ရာ ကုန်စည်မိတ်ဆက် ဆွေးနွေးပွဲကြီးကိုလည်း ထိုနေ့ နေ့လည် ၁၃ နာရီ ၌ Myanmar Event Park တွင် တပြိုင်တည်း ကျင်းပပြုလုပ်သွားမည် ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ အဆိုပါဆွေးနွေးပွဲကြီးတွင် အဓိကအားဖြင့် Qingdao Corporate Identity System၊ Qing Dao Foreign Trade Corporate ၊ China (Qindao) Cross-Border E-Commerce Comprehensive Pilot Area ၊ Corporate Strategy promotes global sharing of Qingdao business opportunities စသည့် အကြောင်းအရာများစွာကို ဆွေးနွေးပြောကြားမည် ဖြစ်သည်။ အဓိကခေါင်းစဉ်အနေဖြင့် Qingdao မြို့၏ စီးပွားရေးဖွံ့ဖြိုး တိုးတက်မှုနှင့် လုပ်ငန်းလည်ပတ်နိုင်ရေး တည်ဆောက်မှု အခြေအနေများကို မိတ်ဆက်ပြောကြားသွားမည် ဖြစ်ပြီး SINOTRUK QINGDAO HEAVY INDUSTRY CO.,LTD, QINGJIAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CO.,LTD., AUCMA HOME APPLIANCE CO.,LTD တို့မှ အထူးထုတ်ကုန်များကို မိတ်ဆက်ပြောကြားကာ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံနှင့် ပတ်သတ်ပြီး ရေးဆွဲထားသော လုပ်ငန်းစဉ်များကို ရှင်းလင်းပြောကြားသွားမည် ဖြစ်သည်။

အရပ်ကျ ညိုနိုင်းဝယ်ယူမှု အထူးဆွေးနွေးပွဲ ကိုတော့ အထက်ပါဆွေးနွေးပွဲအပြီးမှာ ဆက်လက်ပြုလုပ်သွားမည် ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ပါဝင်ဆွေးနွေးမည့် လုပ်ငန်းရှင်ကြီးများအနေဖြင့် မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ၏ ရှေးကွက်လိုအပ်ချက်ကို လိုက်၍ Qingdao ၏ ထူးခြားမှုများလည်း ပါဝင်ပြီး မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ၏ ကုန်ထုတ်လုပ်နိုင်စွမ်းအား၊ လူမှုဘဝလိုအပ်ချက်များနှင့်လည်း ကိုက်ညီစေမည့် လုပ်ငန်းကောင်းများကို မိတ်ဆက်ပြောကြားပြီး နှစ်ဦးနှစ်ဖက် ကုန်သွယ်ရေးလမ်းစဉ်ဆိုင်ရာ စေ့စပ်ညှိနှိုင်းဆွေးနွေးနိုင်မည့် အခွင့်အလမ်းများ ဖြစ်ပေါ်စေရန် ဖန်တီးသွားမည်ဖြစ်ပြီး အတူတကွ ပူးပေါင်းဆောင်ရွက်ရင်း နှစ်ဦးနှစ်ဖက်အကျိုးအမြတ်ရှိစေမည့် ပုံစံမျိုးကို အကောင်အထည်ဖော် ပေါက်လာစေရန် လုပ်ဆောင်သွားမည် ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

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GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.comPrinted and published at the **Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory** at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the **Global New Light of Myanmar Daily** under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.gnlmdaily@gmail.com
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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.

YBS buses run in downtown Yangon. **PHOTO: GNLM/PHOE KHWAR**

Five illegal migrants detained at Hlaing Wa checkpoint

Five illegal migrants, who crossed the Myanmar border via the Hlaing Wa checkpoint in Kawt Kayeik Township in Kayin State, were detained yesterday morning, according to police officials.

According to investigations, the illegal migrants, including three men, one woman and one child, were apprehended at the Hlaing Wa checkpoint, as they did not have any national identity cards. They were travelling in a vehicle from Myawady to Kawt Kayeik Minbya Township.

They had arrived in Minbu from Sittway in a tricycle taxi four years ago, and continued to travel to Myawady via Minbu-Yangon-Mawlamyaing Road. They had then proceeded to Maha Chai in Thailand four years ago.

They were detained at Hlaing Wa checkpoint, while they were on a bus enroute to Yangon via Myawady.—Soe Htet Aung (Kawt Kayeit) ■

Explosions damage trains, tracks in Mogaung Township

SEVERAL explosions damaged railroad tracks and at least one train in Kachin State earlier this week. There were no reported injuries, officials said.

An explosion occurred between the Mayan and Namti railway stations in Mogaung Township, Kachin State at 11:25 pm on 15 May, damaging the track and the Advanced Passenger Train (APT) running between Myitkyina and Hopin.

The No. 247 northbound train was forced to reduce its speed as it was crossing Bridge 662 between Htopu and Mogaung stations at 11:50 pm as the train operator discovered the damage on the railroad and the bridge.

The No. 247 train arrived at Mogaung Station at 12:15 am on 16 May and informed the situation to an officer of the Mogaung Station.

Following the report, officials inspected the damages.

Similarly, the No. 55 northbound train became stranded at Moehnyin Station

A section of the railway track is damaged after an explosion in Mogaung Township, Kachin State. **PHOTO: MNA**

en route from Mandalay to Myitkyina due to explosions that damaged the railroad tracks between Mayan and Htopu villages.

Local authorities transported more than 118 passengers by car to their destinations starting at 12 am.

Similarly, the No. 37 northbound train to Mandalay and the No. 57 northbound Myit-

ternational standards. Foreign companies are interested in investing in YBS. So far, three foreign companies have visited and discussed investing in YBS. They are from China and Malaysia. When foreign direct investment companies enter the country, the transport sector will be developed," said Dr. Maung Aung, secretary of the Yangon Region Transport Authority (YRTA).

Recently, YRTA upgraded the YBS bus stations. Passengers had complained about some of the YBS buses violating rules and regulations. Immediate action was taken when violent incidents were reported. Passengers have the right to complain to YRTA when they are faced with inconvenient situations, he added.—GNLM ■

sone-Mandalay train were also forced to stop at Hopin Station short of finishing their routes due to explosions on the tracks of the Myitkyina-Mandalay Railway.

The explosions were intentionally set, officials said. Stranded passengers from both trains were transported by car to Myitkyina.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Export value up by \$29m compared to last FY

DESPITE a decrease in revenue from three export groups, export earnings from 1 April to 5 May during the six-month transition period reached US\$992.7 million, up by \$29.4 million compared to the same period in the 2017-2018 fiscal year, according to the commerce ministry.

Agriculture, forestry and other export groups witnessed a slight decline in trade over a month.

Agro products, the second major component of Myanmar's exports, fetched 270.6 million.

Exports of finished industrial goods earned the country \$409.2 million. Mineral exports brought in \$96.6 million. Fisheries exports hit \$65.3 million, while the export value of livestock was some \$20 million. Export of other miscellaneous products fetched \$113 million.

Myanmar exports its goods via sea and border trade gates. Export through the sea route was worth \$634 million, while \$358.6 million worth of export goods flowed into neighbouring countries via the border trade gates.—Mon Mon

Exports via sea trade show slight decline over a month

THE value of exports via sea over a month in the six-month transition period is down by US\$27 million compared to the 2017-2018 financial year.

Between 1 April and 5 May of the interim period for the 2018-2019 FY, sea trade was worth \$2 billion, while border trade was valued at \$1.83 billion during the same period last FY.

In border trade, the export value surpassed imports. External trade with foreign countries, both through the sea route and border trade, as of 5 May, reached \$2.68 billion, including

\$639 million in exports and \$1.44 billion in imports.

Agro products such as rice, pulses and corn, animal products, fisheries, forest products, minerals and finished industrial goods, among other items are shipped to foreign countries, while capital goods such as auto parts, vehicles, machines, steel, airplane parts; raw materials such as petroleum-based products and plastic raw materials; and consumer products, including pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and palm oil, are imported into the country.—Ko Khant

Flower growers face losses due to unstable market

LOCAL flower growers from Pyin Oo Lwin Township, Mandalay Region, are facing losses because of the unstable flower market, according to a report in the Myawady Daily yesterday.

"The cultivation cost of flowers is Ks27,000 per frame. Flowers are produced on a 3x30 feet area.

The planted area can cultivate 270 flowers and produce 30 bouquets. One bouquet is sold for Ks1,000. One planted area of flowers brings in Ks5,000 as profit. Some 2,400 planted areas can be cultivated on one acre and can earn a profit of Ks1.2 million. However, when we subtract the labour wages, there is no profit in hand," said a local flower grower from Pyin Oo Lwin Township.

Local farmers are still growing flowers because it is their family business. They also grow vegetables together with flowers, he added.

Since 2014, flowers from other countries have been entering the local market. Some 10,000 tonnes of flowers are entering the market from foreign countries without paying any tax. To stabilise the flower market, the local flower cultivators formed a Flower Producer and Exporter Association. The association has invited experts from the Netherlands and Norway to provide knowledge about cultivation methods to local growers. The association will buy flowers after fixing a price depending on their quality.—GNLM

Stock trading value on YSX increases 37.6 per cent

STOCK trading on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) is up 37.6 per cent after the matching times were increased to four from two per day, said U Min Thu, senior manager of YSX, at a press conference on 15 May.

However, its monthly trading is still on the decline compared to last year. Earlier, shares valued at Ks39 million were traded per day.

After increasing the matching times to four per day, Ks57 million worth of shares were traded. The situation is far from satisfactory, U Min Thu said.

Shares of five listed companies — First Myanmar Investment (FMI), Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings (MTSH), Myanmar Citizens Bank (MCB), First Private Bank (FPB) and TMH Telecom Public Co. Ltd (TMH) — are being traded on the YSX.

Last month's stock trading volume of the five listed companies on the YSX was some

153,166 shares, valued at Ks875 million, which showed a slight decline compared to the same period last year, according to the historical data of YSX online.

The YSX's stock trading was valued at Ks70.7 billion in 2016, whereas the value in 2017 dropped more than three times to Ks22.1 billion.

The stock trading is still lacklustre in 2018. The trading by the listed companies in February 2018 registered an all-time record low of Ks740 million, according to official figures.

Poor economic climate, low income and the lack of awareness about the stock market contributed to the steep drop in stock trading, said an official from YSX.

Officials from the YSX, under the guidance of the planning and finance ministry, are conducting awareness campaigns about the stock market in Yangon and other towns, in cooperation with securities companies to draw public interest. They are reportedly preparing for a Listing Promotion seminar next month.

Online stock trading gradually improved, following awareness campaigns by the securities companies. The Securities Exchange Commission of Myanmar granted approvals for online trading to the following securities companies — Myanmar Securities Exchange Centre Co., Ltd. (MSEC), KBZ Stirling Coleman Securities Co., Ltd. (KBZSC), CB Securities Ltd. (CBSC) and AYA Trust Securities Co., Ltd. (AYA Trust).

Investors, who are interested in trading online, need to sign up with the securities companies, in accordance with the trading rules.

They can then start online trading using the applications of the related securities companies.—Htet Myat



The Yangon Central Railway Station. PHOTO: GNLM/PHOE KHWAR

MR to offer Yangon Central Railway Comprehensive Development project in 2 months

MYANMA Railways will offer the contract to upgrade the Yangon Central Railway Comprehensive Development project to the tender winners within two months, according to a report in the Myawady Daily yesterday.

The project officials in charge, supervisors, Yangon City Development Committee officials and the engineers in charge of the companies measured the land area for the project.

Currently, MR is discussing offering the contract to contractors. After both the parties sign the contract, the project will be started. Moreover, MR is checking the land ownership document and measuring the land area for the premium payment.

The estimated cost of the project is \$2.5 billion.

This was MR's second attempt at calling for tenders, after an initial attempt in 2014 had

to be cancelled due to the lack of suitable applications.

MR made the second call for tenders in mid-2015. It received some 18 applicants from 14 countries. Among these, MR shortlisted 15 potential developers.

Singapore-based Oxley Holdings Limited, Myanmar Mindama Company and China-based Sino Great Wall Company were declared the tender winners.—GNLM

Amyotha Hluttaw deputy speaker receives officials from NDI



Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye Tha Aung meets with National Democratic Institute's officials in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

AMYOTHA Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye Tha Aung received a delegation led by Resident Senior Country Director Ans Zwerver and Senior

Legislative Strengthening Advisor Edmond Efendijia of the National Democratic Institute at the Amyotha Hluttaw building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday

afternoon. During the meeting, they discussed matters related to programmes supporting the Hluttaws.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Union Minister for Information receives officials from BBC media action

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint received a delegation led by Ed Pauker from BBC Media Action at Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting, they discussed the signing of a

new memorandum of understanding between Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV) and BBC Media Action and matters related to the Joint Peace Fund Programme series to be broadcast on MRTV.—Myanmar News Agency ■



Union Minister Dr Pe Myint holds talks with BBC media action delegation in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Deputy Minister for Information interviewed by ARD German TV

Ms Sandra Ratzow, bureau chief of South East Asia, Australia and New Zealand regions of ARD German Radio & TV, interviewed Deputy Minister of Information U Aung Hla Tun at his office in Nay Pyi Taw at 10 am yesterday.

She asked the progress of the repatriation process of those who had fled to Bangladesh and matters concerning the recent trip of the UN Security Council delegation to Myanmar.

In answering the questions, the Deputy Minister said that those who had fled had not been able to return as Bangladesh had not sent them back although Myanmar has done all it can to make the repatriation process ready. Nobody should take any political advantage for their own interest out of this issue, he said.

He requested Bangladesh, the international community and the international media to cooperate with Myanmar in order to make the repatriation process succeed as soon as possible



ARD German TV interviews Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

since Monsoon was just around the corner.

He also stressed the importance of the cooperation by the international community and media for Myanmar's smooth and successful transition to democracy.

He said some international media were very biased in reporting about Myanmar. They often over-sensationalize in reporting sensitive issues and try to set agendas.

Myanmar has been seriously affected by the unethical reports of some international

media since the international community tends to rely on the reports by the international media in adopting important policies on a country, he added.

He then explained the media trips to Maungdaw region to help journalists witness the real situation on the ground.

Founded in Germany in 1950, ARD German Radio and TV is the world's second largest public broadcaster with over 22,000 staff.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Coastal areas need balance between development and conservation

FROM PAGE-1

Local authorities and local people in the coastal areas are urged to cooperate with each other in carrying out environmental conservation to prevent damage to the ecosystems, which include mangrove forests, coral reefs and marine grasses.

The central committee was formed on 30 November 2016, with 19 members.

It made 23 resolutions related with conservation of coastal areas in its previous three meetings. Out of the 23 resolutions, eight have been implemented.

The country's mangrove resources are declining because of the proliferation of fish farms and because the mangrove trees are being used as firewood, according to environmentalists.

There are over 500,000 hectares of mangroves along the coast of Myanmar.

According to the 2014 census, half of the population of Myanmar are living in coastal

areas and depend on the coastal ecosystems which serve them in many ways through marine products and environmental services, said the Vice President.

"The lack of systematic management of coastal ecosystems can lead to deterioration of the ecosystem due to extra extraction of the natural resources and it would result in decreasing marine products and environmental services," said U Myint Swe.

The meeting was also attended by Union Ministers U Ohn Win, U Aung Thu, Joint Secretary-2 of the committee Director-General of the Fisheries Department U Khin Maung Maw, chief ministers of regions and states connected with coastal areas and other officials.

They discussed measures being taken for conservation of coastal areas, research, illegal fishing and conservation of mangrove forests in coastal areas.—Myanmar News Agency ■

UN chief throws weight behind EU to salvage Iran nuclear deal

BRUSSELS — The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday threw his weight behind the European Union (EU) in salvaging the landmark Iran nuclear deal.

"We fully support the efforts the European Union is making in order to rescue the JCPOA," said Guterres at a joint press conference with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in Brussels.

The visiting UN chief made the remarks following separate meetings with Juncker and the college of the European Commission.

Noting "for the first time in many decades the non-proliferation regimes...are put into question," Guterres lamented that "we have the cold war back".

To make matters worse, "there are not today the mechanisms that existed in the past cold war of dialogue, of contact, of control, to make sure that things would not spiral out of control by any kind of incident," Guterres said.

"It is absolutely essential to preserve two things: multilateral governance institutions and the rule of law in international relations," he proclaimed.

Guterres lavished praise on the EU for its role in upholding multilateral regime, vowing that the UN would lend support to the EU to create conditions for a world "in which peace, secu-



European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker (R) meets with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in Brussels, Belgium, on 16 May 2018. PHOTO: XINHUA

rity, sustainable development and climate action are in the front line of its activities and our common cooperation."

Juncker, for his part, reiterated the EU's resolve to keep the Iran deal alive "because of primary importance for maintaining peace in the region, and also for peace in the whole world."

US President Donald Trump declared on 8 May in a televised speech that the United States would withdraw from the deal, a landmark agreement signed in July 2015 by Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council — Britain, China,

France, Russia and the United States — plus the European Union (EU) and Germany.

Trump claimed that the deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), had failed to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons or supporting terrorism in the region. Under the deal, Iran agreed to freeze its nuclear programs in return for the lifting of most international sanctions.

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, Iran has so far complied with all of the conditions established under the deal. —Xinhua ■

Merkel defends German military spending goals

BERLIN — German Chancellor Angela Merkel defended plans by her federal government to increase defense spending in Germany on Wednesday. Speaking during ongoing budgetary consultations in the federal parliament (Bundestag), Merkel hit back at opposition criticism of a scheduled rise in military funding from 38.5 billion euros (45.5 billion US dollars) in 2018 to 41.5 billion euros in 2019.

"This is not a matter of participating in an arms race, but simply ensuring the availability of adequate equipment," the chancellor said, referring to long-standing complaints by the government's official armed forces commissioner.

Following widespread reports of the poor state of the German armed forces, Berlin has a responsibility to provide soldiers with a "much broader range of material and equipment" to ensure they can fulfill their international missions.

Defense spending is currently the second largest item on the German government's 2018 budget, but trails far behind planned labor market and social expenditure (139 billion euros). The appropriate level of military funds has become the subject of heated discussion in the govern-

ing grand coalition, with defense minister Ursula von der Leyen demanding a further increase to at least 1.5 per cent of annual gross domestic product (GDP) or around 60 billion euros.

Finance minister Olaf Scholz has so far rebuffed such calls by his cabinet colleague, arguing that higher spending does not automatically translate to a better defense strategy.

Even though Germany is set to continue to fall significantly short of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) defense spending target of 2.0 per cent of GDP, Merkel emphasized on Wednesday that Germany's commitment to responsibilities it shoulders as part of the military alliance remained a priority for Berlin.

"One country alone cannot guarantee security," Merkel told delegates in the federal parliament.

While reiterating earlier criticism of US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Iran nuclear accord, Merkel however argued that close transatlantic relations in this context retained value regardless of recent disagreements between the European Union (EU) and the Trump administration. —Xinhua ■

Japan enacts law to promote women's participation in politics

TOKYO — Japan's Diet enacted a law Wednesday to promote women's participation in politics amid efforts by the government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to address the low political representation of women in Japan.

But it is unclear whether the legislation will immediately boost the number of female politicians and narrow the disparity between men and women, as it is non-binding legislation and does not penalize its violators.

The new law urges political parties engaging in national and local elections to "make



Seiko Noda (front), women's empowerment minister, bows after parliament approves a law to promote women's participation in politics. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

efforts" to set numeral targets for women candidates among other steps.

According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a Geneva-based organization of national parliaments, women accounted for only 10.1 per cent of lawmakers in the House of Representatives, ranking Japan at 158th of among countries.

While the government has been aiming to raise the proportion of women candidates in national elections to 30 per cent by 2020, the figure stood at 17.7 per cent in the lower house election last October.

Among the 19 ministers of

the current Cabinet, there are only two women — internal affairs minister Seiko Noda and Justice Minister Yoko Kamikawa.

Women's representation is equally low in Japan's local assemblies.

Protests over sexual harassment have been held in Japan following the resignation of Junichi Fukuda as vice finance minister for allegedly making sexually suggestive comments to a TV reporter.

Finance Minister Taro Aso also drew criticism for saying the former top ministry official may have been entrapped. —Kyodo News ■

Hostile attitude towards Myanmar will not contribute to peace and harmony

WHILE we are trying to solve the issues of Rakhine State in good faith through bilateral cooperation, it is most regrettable that instead of fulfilling its commitment for repatriation of the displaced persons as agreed upon in the bilateral agreements, the Bangladesh side has been deliberately making excuses to stall the repatriation process.

Bangladesh has been distorting the facts and telling the world that Myanmar is not willing to accept the return of the displaced persons. Bangladesh is altering the truth and vilifying the government and the people of Myanmar to solicit international condemnation and to exert maximum political pressure on Myanmar. We need full and sincere cooperation of the Government of Bangladesh if the repatriation process is to be successful.

When it comes to human rights abuses and violations, we should not forget the fact that the current humanitarian problem was the result of Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) terrorist attacks on 30 border guard posts in northern Rakhine. The root cause of the latest crisis and the brutal killings and atrocities committed by the terrorists on innocent ethnic Hindus, Rakhine Buddhists and other minority tribes was conveniently ignored by the western media.

We are seriously concerned that Bangladesh is unwittingly allowing extremism to rear its ugly head in this part of the region. ARSA is already having a foothold in the camps, and soon it will become a stronghold of terrorism and extremism. Recently, on 9 May, a group of four to six terrorists reportedly entered one of the refugee camps in Balukali and dragged 46-year-old Mohamed Faisal Ulhaq out of the camp and stabbed him to death. It was reported that he was advocating for return of IDPs to Rakhine among fellow displaced people in the camp. We will continue to implement the recommendations

of the Kofi Annan Report to the fullest extent possible in line with the situation on the ground to bring long-term peace, harmony and development to the people of Rakhine.

The international community, including the United Nations, should work together to create an environment conducive to restoring peace, harmony and development for all people in Rakhine State. Hate narratives that promote deep rooted mistrust should and must stop.

Bangladesh should cooperate fully with Myanmar in sincerity in the implementation of the bilateral agreement for repatriation of displaced persons. We are confident that we will be able to solve the present humanitarian problem and long-term peace and development of Rakhine State if Myanmar and Bangladesh work hand in hand with the spirit of mutual respect, genuine desire to help the displaced persons and the spirit of good neighborliness.

Plastic wastes

The plastic wastes are becoming not only nuisances, but also eyesores everywhere in the world and our country is no exception. As a matter of fact, our country may be amongst the worst, which are affected by the plastic wastes. Indiscriminately littered plastic grocery bags, empty plastic bottles, plastic packings, disposable plastic cups, plastic food wrappings and styrofoam food packings, etc, are common sights in Myanmar. They are so common that no one seems to mind them as though they are being accepted as part of our way of life.

Anywhere one goes in Yangon, they are bound to see the shamelessly littered plastic wastes clogging the drains, abandoned by the roadsides, piling up in the back lanes in the residential wards, lying all over the public parks, market places, schools and everywhere else.

Today, many countries in the world, including countries in the region are busy trying to get rid of the plastic wastes by every means. First they introduced the recycling process, then, by substituting the plastic bags with biodegradable plastics and materials such as banana, lotus and other broad tree leaves and paper. Many countries built incinerators to burn the unrecyclable plastic wastes and garbage, while electricity is also being produced as a byproduct during the process. Plastic wastes are now being recycled into asphalt concretes to pave roads in some countries. Some countries had baned the use of plastic grocery bags altogether.

Take Taiwan as an example

One good example is that of Taiwan. Their garbage disposal and collection system is very efficient. They don't keep garbage bins or litter boxes along roads or streets in full view of the public like in our country. They are to be found only inside shopping malls and public places like the train stations, airports, bus terminals, boat terminals, public parks and other such similar places. However, those who had been to Taiwan were surprised to find that their cities are spotlessly clean, but there are no garbage bins or litter boxes in full view.

So, how did they do that? Here, credit must be given to the efficient management of garbage disposal and collection systems. Their garbage management system got the admiration of even people from Singapore, a country many Myanmar referred to as a model to base our development schemes on.

As I had never been to Taiwan, I'll be citing a very interesting documentary, televised by the Channel News Asia (CNA) of Singapore. In fact, I had mentioned that documentary in one of my articles about 2 years back, but as it was too good an example that we should copy, please allow me to repeat it again.

The CNA reporter was having trouble in Taipei, capital of Taiwan as he couldn't find any garbage bin or litter box to dispose his empty plastic cup. He asked a passerby and was told that they can be found only in shops, department stores and public places like the train stations, bus terminals and boat terminals.

The reporter was surprised by that answer, but was awed by the cleanliness of the city, which was totally free of any litter. He queried how the residents dispose their garbage if there are no garbage pits or bins in the roads and streets. He found out that the garbage collecting trucks would come every night at 7 PM and park at specified places to receive the garbage directly from the residents.

Curiosity had the reporter waiting at one such place just before 7 PM. There already were people, both men, women and youths in their teens, queuing up with garbage bags in hand. The bags were of three different colours. Exactly at the appointed hour, a garbage truck arrived. The workers placed three

Let's do away with the plastics

By Khin Maung Myint



Photo credit to U Hla Myint

large fibreglass barrels of three different colours. One responsible person from the truck explained to the reporter that the bags had to be disposed in the barrel with the same colour, which was overseen by the crew of the garbage truck. When one barrel was filled up, it was covered with a lid and lifted onto the truck with a lifting gear and a new one of the same colour was placed. According to the documentary, the three different colours of the barrels and the garbage bags were to differentiate different types of wastes—one was for kitchen wastes, another for recyclable wastes: such as plastics bottles, containers and packagings and glass bottles and the last one for unrecyclable plastics and other materials to be destroyed.

When the truck left, the reporter and his camera crew went along. The first stop was at the animal breeding farm run by the department responsible for the garbage management. There the kitchen wastes, which were generally leftover foods were unloaded and dumped into giant blenders to be process into animal feeds. The second stop was at the incinerator where the wastes to be destroyed were unloaded. A power generating station was

incorporated with the incinerator. The final stop was at the recycling plant. Nothing was wasted.

The latest move by the Taiwanese authorities was to ban plastic grocery bags, plastic drinking straws and some utensils made of plastics. For that matter it is learnt that more and more counties are studying ways and means to reduce the reliance on the plastic bags, containers and packagings, as they are the main polluters. In some countries, shopping malls and other vendors are required to charge the customers for the plastic shopping bags to discourage the reliance on them.

Dangers of plastics

In our country it would be necessary to introduce plastic waste managements. In doing so, the first step should be to educate the people of the dangers of the plastics. Plastic is very much a staple in the world today but it's definitely not a perfect product. There are a large amount of toxins within many plastics, including bisphenol A (BPA), which may cause cancer in humans. Most of the people in our country are not aware of the harms they can inflict. At least they should be knowledgeable of these

health hazards. Here are 7 dangers of plastic and how they can negatively affect our health:-

- Chemicals in plastic disfigure genitals,
- Plastic increases the risk of childhood asthma,
- Chemicals in plastic kill female libido,
- Plastic is destroying our waterways
- Plastic has infiltrated food,
- Plastic destroys hormonal balance,
- You simply can't trust the plastic industry.

What is plastic pollution?

Plastic pollution is the accumulation of plastic products in the environment that adversely affects wildlife, wildlife habitats, or humans. Plastics that act as pollutants are categorized into micro-, meso-, or macro debris, based on size. Plastics are inexpensive and durable, and as a result levels of plastic production by humans are high. However, the chemical structure of most plastics renders them resistant to many natural processes of degradation and as a result they are slow to degrade. Together, these two factors have led to a high prominence of plastic pollution in the environment.

Plastic pollution can afflict land, waterways and oceans. Living organisms, particularly marine animals, can be harmed either by mechanical effects, such as entanglement in plastic objects or problems related to ingestion of plastic waste, or through exposure to chemicals within plastics that interfere with their physiology. Humans are also affected by plastic pollution, such as through disruption of various hormonal mechanisms. Here, I would like to mention some salient facts and figures about plastic waste :-

- 80% of plastic waste in the ocean comes from land-based sources,
- The items most commonly found on beaches are single-use plastics, such as: grocery bags, food packaging, bottles and utensils,
- 40% of plastic produced each year becomes single-use packaging.

Conclusion

The despicable littering in our country should be blamed on the deep-rooted bad habits or behaviours of our people and also on the authorities. There are many who want to dispose the litters properly into garbage bins or litter boxes, but no adequate facilities or arrangements are provided for decades in the past. That led to the bad habits or behaviours of many people becoming deep-rooted and reckless littering becomes a way of life. Also, when the present garbage bin system was first introduced a few years back, I noticed that they were not adequate enough. Also, the locations chosen were mainly on the busy roads, but none inside the residential wards where the population is more dense.

Lastly, I would like to mention that, to prevent littering and pollutions, proper managements and garbage disposal methods should be introduced. More incinerators should be constructed, because if incineration of non-recyclable plastics is performed with high-efficiency energy recovery; less CO2 would be released than by disposing plastic waste in landfills. Banning of the use of plastic utensils, especially the thin shopping bags, plastic and styrofoam food containers would also contribute to the reductions of CO2. To date, about 75 countries in the world have taken actions to reduce the consumption of plastic bags. At the same time the public should be educated about the adverse consequences of the plastics. I am sure, all these undertakings would aid in the creation of a plastic pollution free environment and at the same time keep the climate change at bay.

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Appointment of Ambassador agreed

The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the appointment of Mr. Basil Vasilică Constantinescu as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Romania to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Basil Vasilică Constantinescu was born on 2 May 1969 in Târgoviste, Romania. He obtained a Bachelor degree from the University of Bucharest in 1994. He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania in 1997 and had served in various capacities at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Romanian Embassy in Indonesia, EU Delegation to Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam and ASEAN and European Union Mission to ASEAN till August 2017. He also served as a Visiting Professor on Theory of International Relations at the University of Bucharest and Diplomatic Academy of Romania from 2003 to 2006. Since October 2017, he has been serving as Ambassador of Romania to the People's Republic of China and Mongolia. He can speak Thai, Indonesian, French and Chinese languages.

He is married, with two daughters. ■

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Heads of Service Organizations confirmed and appointed

1. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has confirmed the appointment of U Thein Htay Oo, Director-General, Education and Training Department, under the Ministry of Border Affairs on the expiry of the one-year probationary period.
2. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed U Thuang Kyaing, Deputy Director-General (Administration), Department of Marine Administration under the Ministry of Transport and Communications as Director-General of the same department on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Rain or thundershowers expected over many regions today

Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Upper Sagaing, Yangon, Ayeyarwady and Taninthayi regions, Kachin northern Shan, Chin, Kayin and Mon states and isolated in the remaining regins and states today, with 80 per cent degree of certainty, according to the forecast of the weather bureau.

The Meteorology and Hydrology Department has warned people to be alert to the possibility of thunderstorms, lightning, isolated heavy rainfall, gale-force winds and hailstones caused by dense cumulus clouds in April and May.

In Myanmar, between April 2017 and March 2018, 109 lightning strikes were reported around the country, killing 111 people and injuring 39.

Generally, thunderstorms mostly occur in April and May in Myanmar. But, this year has seen early untimely weather patterns across the country, according to the weather bureau.

Weather is partly cloudy to cloudy over the North and South Bay and a few cloud over the Andaman Sea elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal today. —GNLM ■



PHOTO:TASS

Putin calls to prepare S-500 missile system for mass production

SOCHI — Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday further efforts are needed to improve anti-precision warfare tools and called to prepare S-500 missile systems for mass production.

“One of the key tasks is to improve anti-precision warfare means. It is necessary to develop and build up technological groundwork in the area of air defense, to continue modernization of Pantsir systems, to finish the development and preparations for mass production of the S-500 newest systems capable of hitting targets at super-high altitudes, including near-the-earth space,” he said at a meeting with Russia’s top brass and executives of defence-sector enterprises.

The meeting with Armed Forces commanders and defence industry executives was attended by acting Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, Chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimov, Deputy

Defence Minister Yuri Borisov and other officials.

Putin also called for continuing modernization of the strategic nuclear forces and rearming 14 regiments with Yars intercontinental ballistic missile systems before the end of December.

“Strategic nuclear forces have key significance for defense and security,” he said. “Pursuant to provisions of the state program for armaments, we’ll continue replacement of the outdated Topol missile complexes with the newest Yars systems and will put them on the tables of equipment at fourteen missile regiments.”

The Russian president also said that Russia’s nuclear triad will be boosted with modernized Tu-95MS and Tu-160 strategic bombers, carrying advanced X-101 and X-102 strategic cruise missiles. He added that the construction of five Borey-class strategic nuclear submarines must continue on schedule.

“In recent years, we have been doing a lot to boost the armed forces,” Putin said. “Their structure and numbers have been optimized, snap checks are being carried out regularly in all military branches, military units receive new weapons and equipment on a regular basis.”

The Russian leader added that this year Russia rolled out advanced weapons systems, unmatched by foreign rivals.

“We know that they are at various degrees of completion. We will keep an eye on those issues,” Putin said.

While delivering his State of the Nation Address to the Federal Assembly, Putin announced the development and tests of new strategic weapons, including the Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile, the Kinzhal hypersonic complex, a nuclear cruise missile, as well as an underwater drone capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear weapons.—Tass ■

Ecuador spied on Assange at London embassy

LONDON — Ecuador spied on WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange at its London embassy where he has been living since 2012, initially to support him but things changed after he hacked the mission’s computers, the Guardian reported on Wednesday (May 16).

The newspaper said Ecuador employed an international security company and undercover agents to monitor his visitors, embassy staff and even the British

police at the embassy in London’s luxury Knightsbridge area.

It estimated the budget spent on the operation, referred to initially as “Operation Guest” and later “Operation Hotel” at US\$5.0 million (4.2 million euros). The snooping was initially intended to protect Assange from the risk of being taken away by British police but later became a full-blown spying operation. The operation had the support of then Ecuadorian

president Rafael Correa, the paper reported, adding that it has since been wound down under the country’s new leader Lenin Moreno who took power last year. The security team recorded Assange’s daily activities and his interactions with embassy staff and visitors, including fellow hackers, activists and lawyers. They stayed in a rented flat near the embassy at a cost of £2,800 (US\$3,772) a month, the paper said.—AFP ■

Tick tock: Study links body clock to mood disorders

LONDON — Messing with the natural rhythm of one’s internal clock may boost the risk of developing mood problems ranging from garden-variety loneliness to severe depression and bipolar disorder, researchers said on Wednesday.

The largest study of its kind, involving more than 91,000 people, also linked interference with the body’s “circadian rhythm” to a decline in cognitive functions such as memory and attention span.

The brain’s hard-wired circadian timekeeper governs day-night cycles, influencing sleep patterns, the release of hormones and even body temperature.

Earlier research had suggested that disrupting these rhythms can adversely affect mental health, but was inconclusive: most data was self-reported, participant groups were small, and potentially data-skewing factors were not ruled out.

For the new study, an international team led by University of Glasgow psychologist Laura Lyall analysed data — taken from the UK Biobank, one of the most complete long-term health surveys ever done — on 91,105 people aged 37 to 73.

The volunteers wore accelerometers that measured patterns of rest and activity and had this record compared to their mental history, also taken from the UK Biobank.

Individuals with a history of disrupting their body’s natural rhythm — working night shifts, for example, or suffering repeated jetlag — also tended to have a higher lifetime risk of mood disorders, feelings of unhappiness, and cognitive prob-

lems, the researchers found. **‘Owls’ and ‘Larks’**

The results held true even when the potential impact of factors such as old age, unhealthy lifestyle, obesity, and childhood trauma were taken into account, they reported in *The Lancet Psychiatry*, a medical journal.

The study cannot say conclusively that body clock disturbances are what caused the mental risk, instead of the other way round.

But the findings “reinforce the idea that mood disorders are associated with disturbed circadian rhythms,” said Lyall.

Measurements of people’s rest-work cycles could be a useful tool for flagging and treating people at risk of major depression or bipolar disorders, the researchers concluded.

One limitation of the study was the average age of the trial participants — 62.

“Seventy-five percent of [mental] disorders start before the age of 24 years,” said University of Oxford researcher Aiden Doherty, commenting on the paper.

“The circadian system undergoes developmental changes during adolescence, which is also a common time for the onset of mood disorders,” he added.

Humans have been shown to be either “owls” or “larks”, corresponding to so-called genetic “chronotypes” that determine whether we function better at night or during the day.

Last year, the Nobel Prize for medicine was awarded to three US scientists who pioneered our understanding of how the circadian clock ticks.—AFP ■



Messing with the natural rhythm of one’s internal clock may boost the risk of developing mood problems ranging from garden-variety loneliness to severe depression and bipolar disorder, researchers say. **PHOTO: AFP**

Taliban 'retreat' as US, Afghan forces hold western city

HERAT, Afghanistan: Afghan commandos and the US air force have driven the Taliban to the outskirts of Farah, officials said on Wednesday (May 16), after a day-long battle to prevent the insurgents from seizing control of the western provincial capital.

The US carried out more drone strikes overnight and the Afghan army is still clearing the city, Afghan and NATO officials said. Shops, offices and schools remain closed, with residents frightened to leave home after hours of heavy fighting.

A NATO spokesman warned there could be more fighting on Wednesday.

"The Taliban have retreated from the city and positioned their forces in the outskirts," provincial council member Dadullah Qani told AFP from Farah on Wednesday.

Fighting continued late into the night, he said. "The city is still closed as people are in fear."

With internet and mobile networks patchy, casualty figures were difficult to verify. On Tuesday, the defence ministry said four soldiers and "dozens" of insurgents had been killed.



Afghan commandos and the US air force have driven the Taliban to the outskirts of the western provincial capital of Farah, officials said Wednesday. **PHOTO: AFP**

Reinforcements including special forces were rushed in from Herat and Kandahar as the fighting began late Monday.

Aref Rezaee, a spokesman for the Afghan army's 207th Corps, said that with their help the Taliban were forced from the city at around midnight, some 24 hours after residents told AFP the initial assault began.

"We have started a clearing

operation. (NATO'S) RS (Resolute Support mission) forces are also deployed in Farah airport. They were involved in providing air support," he said.

A Resolute Support spokesman said the fighting had been "subdued" overnight but was likely to pick up again on Wednesday.

"We conduct(ed) a number of additional drone strikes

throughout the night and continue to enable the (Afghan military), who remain squarely in the lead," Lt Col Martin O'Donnell told AFP.

"The 207th Corps commander is leading operations on the ground and the city remains in government control."

There had been reports that the militants were hiding in homes, meaning that the

clearing operation was likely to be slow.

People remained fearful. "I want to open my shop today but they have planted land mines in some parts of the city," Abdul Samad said.

Afghan forces, their numbers sapped by killings and desertions, have been struggling to hold back the resurgent militant group since the withdrawal of NATO combat forces at the end of 2014.

The assault on Farah is the latest in a series of attempts by the Taliban to capture urban centres. Kunduz, Afghanistan's fifth largest city, fell briefly to the insurgents in 2015.

Farah province, a remote poppy-growing region that borders Iran, has been the scene of intense fighting in recent years, and there have long been fears that the city of Farah is vulnerable.

The Taliban, along with the Islamic State group, have also stepped up their attacks in the capital Kabul, which the UN says has in recent years become one of the country's deadliest places for civilians.—AFP ■

Regime retakes full control of central Syria as rebels evacuate

RASTAN (Syria) — The Syrian government retook full control of central Syria on Wednesday as rebels and their relatives were evacuated from final pockets of territory still outside the regime's grasp, an AFP correspondent reported.

The evacuations from areas straddling the boundary between Homs and Hama provinces came under a deal between rebel factions and the government. Hundreds of people gathered in the centre of the town of Rastan in Homs province to welcome the return of government security forces and attend a flag-raising ceremony on the main square. Nearby towns and villages in the areas of Talbiseh and Al-Hula were also evacuated, the official SANA news agency and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor reported. "The last convoy of terrorists and their families exits northern Homs province and southern Hama province," SANA reported.



Syrians board buses prior to being evacuated from the rebel-held town of Rastan on 7 May, 2018, after rebels and civilians were granted safe passage to a rebel-held part of Aleppo province under a deal with the government. **PHOTO: AFP**

7The armed factions, which the government systematically refers to as "terrorists", were transferred to Idlib province, which still largely escapes regime control. A total of 34,500 people — armed men and their families — were transferred out of the area as part of the deal, according to the Britain-based

Observatory. "As of today, there is not one gunman left, no weapons left in the whole of Homs province," the province's governor, Talal Barazai, told AFP in Rastan. Pockets of jihadists from the Islamic State group are however still thought to be active on the province's scarcely-populated far eastern edge. The governor

vowed that the Damascus-Hama highway would reopen "in the coming days". With Iranian and Russian support, the Syrian government has reconquered swathes of territory it lost following the outbreak of the conflict in 2011. Government and allied forces have almost finished retaking areas around the capital Damascus that had been held by jihadist and Islamist groups for year. They have yet to seize back a small pocket still controlled by IS in southern Damascus, as well as a large part of the southern Daraa province and much of Idlib, in the northwest. A large part of northern and eastern Syria is controlled by US-backed Kurdish forces who also fought against IS but want a level of autonomy that the regime refuses.

More than half of Syria 20-million-plus pre-war population has been displaced by the seven-year-old conflict, which the Observatory says has killed more than 350,000 people.—AFP ■

Kuwait inks 23.8 mln USD loan deal to finance Kenya's highway project

KUWAIT CITY — The state Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) has signed on Tuesday a loan agreement worth 7 million Kuwaiti dinars (23.8 million US dollars) with Kenya to finance a major highway in the African country. The loan, the sixth of its kind to Kenya, was in line with Kuwait's initiative during the Arab-African summit in November 2013, KFAED said in a statement on Wednesday.

Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah decided to provide 1 billion dollars of easy loans to development projects in Africa in five years at the summit.

The fund said the 156-km-long highway project would support economic and social development in northeastern Kenya, as well as improving transport efficiency between the country and its neighbors.—Xinhua ■

North Korea threatens to cancel US summit

SEOUL — North Korea threatened on Wednesday to cancel the forthcoming summit between leader Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump if Washington seeks to push Pyongyang into unilaterally giving up its nuclear arsenal.

It also cancelled high-level talks due Wednesday with Seoul over the Max Thunder joint military exercises being held between the United States and South Korea, denouncing the drills as a “rude and wicked provocation”.

It is a sudden and dramatic return to the rhetoric of the past by Pyongyang, after months of rapid diplomatic rapprochement on the peninsula.

“If the US is trying to drive us into a corner to force our unilateral nuclear abandonment, we will

no longer be interested in such dialogue,” first vice foreign minister Kim Kye Gwan said in a statement carried by state media.

In that case, he added, Pyongyang would have to “reconsider” its participation at the summit, due in Singapore on 12 June.

The North’s arsenal is expected to be at the top of the agenda of the historic talks, but Pyongyang has long insisted it needs the weapons to defend itself against invasion by the US.

Washington is pressing for its complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation. But so far the North has not given any public indication of what concessions it is offering, beyond euphemistic commitments to denuclearisation of the “Korean peninsula”.

Pyongyang had “made clear on several occasions



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump are due to meet in Singapore on 12 June, but Pyongyang has thrown the meeting into doubt. **PHOTO: AFP**

that precondition for denuclearisation is to put an end to anti-DPRK hostile policy and nuclear threats and blackmail of the United States”, minister Kim said.

In the past, Pyong-

yang has demanded the withdrawal of the US troops stationed in the South to protect it from its neighbour, and an end to Washington’s nuclear umbrella over its security ally.

The minister also

blasted US National Security Advisor John Bolton’s talk of a “Libyan model” for North Korean denuclearisation.

It was a “sinister move to impose on our dignified state the destiny of Libya

or Iraq”, he said. “I cannot suppress indignation at such moves of the US, and harbour doubt about the US sincerity.”

The North has long said it needs nuclear weapons to protect itself against a US invasion. After giving up his atomic programme, Libyan leader Moamer Khadafi was killed in an uprising backed by NATO bombing.

Minister Kim also dismissed offers by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo — who has visited Pyongyang twice in recent weeks, coming back the second time with three released US detainees — for US economic aid if the North denuclearises. “We have never had any expectation of US support in carrying out our economic construction and will not at all make such a deal in future,” Kim said.—AFP ■

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

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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.

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Indonesia hit by another attack after deadly suicide bombings

REKANBARU, Riau province, Indonesia — Four men were shot and killed as they staged an attack on a police headquarters that left one officer dead and two wounded, Indonesian authorities said on 16 Wednesday May, after a wave of deadly suicide bombings claimed by the Islamic State group.

The latest assault in Pekanbaru on the island of Sumatra saw a group ram a minivan into a gate at the station and then attack officers with samurai swords, according to the country's national police.

It was not clear if Wednesday's incident was linked to the earlier attacks which saw two families who knew each other and belonged to the same religious study group stage suicide bombings at churches and a police station in Surabaya, Indonesia's second biggest city.

The attacks have put Indonesia on edge as the world's biggest Muslim majority country starts the holy fasting month of



Indonesian policemen examine a car used by attackers outside the police headquarter in Pekanbaru, Riau following attacks on 16 May, 2018. **PHOTO: AFP**

Ramadan from Thursday.

This week's bloody violence is putting pressure on lawmakers to pass a stalled security law that would give police more power to take pre-emptive action against people suspected of planning terror attacks.

Indonesia — which is set to host the Asian Games in just three months and an IMF-World Bank meeting in Bali in October — has long struggled with Islamist militancy, including the 2002

Bali bombings that killed over 200 people — mostly foreign tourists — in the country's worst-ever terror attack.

On Wednesday, police said they shot dead four of the attackers at the Sumatra police station and later arrested another who had fled.

Indonesian media said one attacker may have had a bomb strapped to his body but police did not immediately confirm the reports.

No group has yet

taken responsibility for Wednesday's attack.

'Better organized'

Indonesia's security forces have arrested hundreds of militants during a sustained crackdown that smashed some networks, and most recent attacks have been low-level and targeted domestic security forces.

Last year, a suicide bombing at a bus station in Jakarta killed three police officers.

But on Sunday, a fam-

ily of six — including girls aged nine and 12 — staged suicide bombings of three churches during morning services in Surabaya, killing 13.

All six bombers were killed, including the mother who was Indonesia's first known female suicide bomber.

The next day, members of another family blew themselves up at a police station in the city, wounding 10.

The coordinated church attack was a sign local extremist groups were becoming more proficient, and stirs concerns about an uptick in extremism as hundreds of Indonesians who flocked to fight alongside Islamic State in the Middle East return home.

"They were better organized...and suggest a higher level of capacity than what we have seen in recent years," said Sidney Jones, director of Jakarta-based Institute of Policy Analysis for Conflict.

The church bombing family were in the same

religious study group as the two other families linked to the attacks, police said.

"They had the same teacher and they regularly met for Koran recital every week," said East Java police chief Machfud Arifin, adding that police were pursuing the teacher for questioning.

The families have been linked to the local chapter of Indonesian extremist network Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), which police said was behind the attacks.

The radical group supports Islamic State, whose ambitions have been reined in after losing most of the land it once occupied in Iraq and Syria.

Police have said the church and earlier police station attacks were motivated by the arrest of JAD leaders, including jailed radical Aman Abdurrahman.

They followed a deadly prison riot staged by Islamist prisoners at a high-security jail near Jakarta last week.—AFP ■

US blocks call for independent Gaza inquiry at UN: diplomats

UNITED NATIONS — The United States on Monday blocked the adoption of a UN Security Council statement that would have called for an independent probe of deadly violence on the Israel-Gaza border, according to diplomats.

The violence on the Israel-Gaza border erupted as the new US embassy in Jerusalem was opened.

"The Security Council expresses its outrage and sorrow at the killing of Palestinian civilians exercising their right to peaceful protest," read a draft of the statement, a copy of which was seen by AFP.

"The Security Council calls for an independent and transparent investigation into these actions

to ensure accountability," read the text.

In the bloodiest day in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since a 2014 Gaza war, at least 55 Palestinians were killed in the clashes and more than 2,400 Palestinians wounded.

They erupted before Israeli officials and a White House delegation including President Donald Trump's daughter Ivanka formally opened the embassy in Jerusalem, and the bloodshed continued throughout the day. The dead included eight children under the age of 16, according to the Palestinian envoy to the United Nations. The Gazan health ministry provided the overall death and injury toll. —AFP ■

Invitation to Kayah Investment Forum

1. To promote investment in Kayah State more effectively, Kayah State Investment Forum to be held on 26th May, 2018 in State Hall, Loikaw, Kayah State which is jointly organized by Kayah State Government, Kayah State Investment Committee and Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.
2. At the Forum, senior officials from concerned ministries and representatives from private sector will join as speakers and panelists that will cover investment opportunities in Agriculture Sector, Hotel and Tourism Sector and Mining Sector in Kayah State.
3. For more information, please contact the following addresses;

Kayah State Investment Committee
State Government Office,
Daw U Khu Quarter, Loikaw.
Phone: 083-240184
kayahinvestmentforum1@gmail.com

Myanmar Investment Commission
Directorate of Investment and
Company Administration.
No.1, Thitsar Road, Yankin, Yangon.
Phone: 01-658132, Fax: 01-658143
kayahinvestmentforum2@gmail.com



Johnny Depp . PHOTO: AFP

Johnny Depp 'keen to star' in J M Coetzee adaptation

PARIS — Johnny Depp may be about to work with the acclaimed Colombian director Ciro Guerra, whose new film "Birds of Passage" is one of the hits of the Cannes film festival.

The "Pirates of the Caribbean" star has "reached out" to Ciras, a hot arthouse talent who won a rake of awards for "The Embrace of the Serpent", Screen magazine reported on Monday.

Depp will "possibly" star in Ciras' next film based on a novel by South African Nobel laureate J M Coetzee, which already features Mark Rylance and Robert Pattinson, it added.

Shooting on Guerra's first English-language feature, based on Coetzee's own adaptation of his breakthrough 1980 novel "Waiting for the Barbarians", is scheduled to begin in autumn in Morocco.

It will tell the story of a magistrate in a colonial town who is accused of consorting with the enemies of a fictional empire, modelled on apartheid South

Africa.

Publishers Penguin included the book in its Great Books of the 20th Century series.

Depp, who is set to play villain Gellert Grindelwald in the upcoming Harry Potter spin-off "Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald", would feature alongside "Twilight" star Pattinson, who got his first big break in "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire", according to Screen.

Once Hollywood's highest paid actor, Depp has seen his stock slip in the past few years, dragged down by a messy divorce from actress Amber Heard replete with domestic abuse allegations.

Angry Harry Potter fans had called for his lead role in "Fantastic Beasts" to be recast over the allegations, but author J K Rowling and director David Yates stood by their choice.

Heard withdrew the claims after the pair reached an out-of-court divorce settlement. —AFP ■

Priyanka Chopra's next Marathi production titled 'Paani'

MUMBAI — Priyanka Chopra on 15 May, announced her fourth production venture in Marathi language, titled "Paani".

The 35-year-old actor, who is backing the film under her production banner Purple Pebble Pictures, took to Twitter to share the news.

The film, to be directed Adinath Kothare, is based on a "true story" and explores the contemporary water crisis.

"This is what I had envisioned when starting @PurplePebblePic... A platform for good stories and new talent. #Paani is special because it's based on a true story and deals with a very topical issue.

"Welcome aboard @adinathkothare and team... Let's create something special to-



Priyanka Chopra . PHOTO: PTI

gether! #Marathi," Priyanka tweeted.

The production house also shared that the shooting of the movie is expected to begin soon.

"We're happy to share that our fourth Marathi project, 'Paani', will begin shooting soon! It's an inspirational tale based

on a true story, directed by @adinathkothare. Stay tuned..." the tweet read.

They also shared a motion poster of the film. Priyanka has earlier produced National Award-winning "Ventilator", "Kay Re Rascalaa" and "Fire-brand" in Marathi.—PTI ■

'Some Like It Hot' headed to Broadway in 2020

LOS ANGELES — A musical adaptation of Marilyn Monroe's film "Some Like It Hot" will bow out on Broadway in 2020.

The show, based on Billy Wilder's 1959 comedy, will feature a score by Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman, Variety reported.

The iconic film's stage interpretation is headed to the Broadway more than six decades after the movie's release.

"Some Like It Hot" show will be directed and choreographed by Casey Nicholaw,

who also led Broadway version of "Mean Girls".

Playwright Matthew Lopez has adapted the script for theatre. The play comes from The Shubert Organization and will be produced by Craig Zadan and Neil Meron, who acquired the rights to the iconic movie from MGM.

"We are grateful to MGM for allowing us to tackle the challenge of translating the film's singular energy and magic to the stage," Zadan, Meron, Philip J Smith and Robert E Wankel

said on behalf of the Shubert Organization in a statement.

Jonathan Glickman, president of MGM's motion picture group and head of live stage theatrical productions added, "Some Like It Hot" is one of the crown jewels of MGM's library. Craig,

Neil and the Shubert Organization have assembled a world-class creative team and we can't wait to see it on Broadway." The film also starred Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis. —PTI ■

Jane Fonda would work with Tarantino 'in a blue minute'

CANNES — Veteran actress Jane Fonda says she would agree to work with filmmaker Quentin Tarantino without wasting any time.

The 80-year-old star, who was paired as guests with Michael Madsen on L'Oreal's Worth It stage on Cannes' Croisette, asked the "Kill Bill" star to put in a "good word" for her.

According to Variety, asked if Fonda would work with the director, she replied, "Yeah, in a blue minute I'd work with Quentin. Not a director like Quentin - I'd like to work with Quentin."

She also asked Madsen if he could introduce her to Tarantino, with whom he has worked in four

of films - including director's debut "Reservoir Dogs", "Kill Bill - Vol 1 and 2" and "The Hateful

Eight".

"Would you put in a good word for me? Oh my God, I'll bring

you to a party tonight if you'll get me into a Tarantino film," the Hollywood veteran asked.

To this Madsen quickly replied, "As long as we're in it together."

Fonda, who dubbed herself a feminist activist first then an actor, did not address Uma Thurman's charges of abuse on the "Kill Bill" sets that she was subjected to by Tarantino.

Madsen, however, alluded to them and talked about the post Harvey Weinstein sexual harassment scandal. Weinstein was Tarantino's longtime producer.

The actor said like many others, he also knew about the producer's misconduct and he

agrees with the current change in the current as he is "all for equality".

"I think that it's good that there is a tremendous awareness now of some bad behaviour and things that were considered to be normal and 'Well, that's just the way he is' attitude.

"I would never say that I didn't know about it because I did, but the thing is, who are you going to talk to about it? Are you going to call CBS and tell them? It became a fear much more for the girls than for the men because we would just go, 'Oh those dumb broads,' but it's an egotistical male ideal and there's two sides to the story..." he said.—PTI ■



Veteran actor Jane Fonda . PHOTO: PTI

Two Sherpas break Everest summit records

KATHMANDU — Two Nepali Sherpas broke their own world records for the most Everest summits by a man and a woman Wednesday, reaching the world's highest peak for a 22nd and ninth time respectively.

Kami Rita Sherpa, a professional guide, and Lhakpa Sherpa, who works in a supermarket in Connecticut, reached the summit from opposite sides of the 8,848 metre (29,030 feet) mountain.

Kami Rita, 48, was one of six sherpas who took seven clients to the summit from the Nepali side, Mingma Sherpa of Seven Summit Treks, who organised the expedition, told AFP.

A guide for more than two decades, he broke the previous record of 21 summits that he shared with two other Sherpas.

Kami Rita first reached the top of Everest in 1994 when working for a commercial expedition.

"I did not start climbing to

set a world record," he told AFP last month before setting out for the mountain. "It wasn't for any competition."

Lhakpa Sherpa, 44, reached the peak for a ninth time via the northern, Tibetan route, her brother Mingma Gelu Sherpa said.

The US-based Lhakpa has repeatedly broken her own record for the most Everest summits by a woman. The next most accomplished female Everest climber is American Melissa Sue Arnot, who has reached the top six times.

The daughter of a yak herder, Lhakpa worked as a porter and kitchen hand on trekking and mountaineering expeditions, before becoming a climber herself.

She moved to the United States 16 years ago and says she plans to continue climbing, while keeping her job in the supermarket.

"I keep going to encourage



This year's narrow window of good May weather has seen records broken on Mount Everest. **PHOTO: AFP**

other Nepali women to climb," the 44-year-old told AFP last month.

The twin records come on the heels of Australian Steve Plain becoming the fastest person to summit the highest mountains on all seven continents.

He completed the seven climbs in 177 days — nine days quicker than the previous record — after reaching the top of Everest Monday. Hundreds of climbers are on Everest attempting

to reach the summit during the narrow window of good weather in May. But the mountain is also highlighting its risks.

A Sherpa guide has been missing on Everest's southern side in Nepal since Monday, said Mingma of Seven Summits.

"They are searching for him on the way down," he said of the team that has just summited.

On the Tibet side a team was forced to retreat from just

below the summit when at least 11 of their bottled oxygen systems failed. "Multiple teams using the same device have experienced similar oxygen system failures. There are no reported injuries," Alpenglows Expeditions said in a statement.

Climbers use supplementary oxygen to combat altitude sickness. Air at the top of Everest contains less than a third of the oxygen at sea level.—AFP ■

Kyoto vegetables served at Vatican Museums for promotion

VATICAN CITY — Vegetables grown in Kyoto were served at a banquet Monday in the Vatican Museums to about 300 guests including cardinals and ambassadors to promote Japanese dishes.

Dishes using ingredients such as "Kujo-Negi" scallion, "Kamo-Nasu" eggplant and "Manganji-Togarashi" pepper prepared by Yoji Satake, lead chef at the 300-year-old Kyoto cuisine restau-

rant Takeshigero, were served at the event organized by the Kyoto unit of the Japan Agricultural Cooperatives group.

The menu also included wagyu beef and Uji green tea from Kyoto, and a tea ceremony serving matcha was also held before the banquet.

"We've brought traditional Kyo-yasai (Kyoto vegetables), which were grown with great

care. We will promote the culture, agriculture and cuisine of Kyoto," JA Group Kyoto Chairman Yasuhiro Nakagawa said.

The group has hosted similar banquets featuring Kyoto vegetables at famous sites around the world including the Palace of Versailles in the suburbs of Paris and the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, Turkey —Kyodo News ■



The Kyoto unit of the Japan Agricultural Cooperatives group sponsors a banquet at the Vatican Museum in Vatican City on 14 May, 2018, inviting cardinals and ambassadors to promote Japanese food and Kyoto-grown vegetables. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Chinese volunteers emerge from virtual moon base

BEIJING — A group of Chinese volunteers has emerged from 110 days of isolation in a virtual "lunar lab", state media reported Tuesday, as the country pursues its ambition to put people on the moon.

The official Xinhua news service streamed images on its website of the would-be astronauts emerging from their temporary home, a self-contained environment simulating conditions which future explorers will face on the moon's surface.

In the video, students wearing masks and blue tennis shirts emerge from the pod carrying baskets of fruit and vegetables, including carrots and strawberries, grown inside the module.

It was the group's second stay in the 160-square-metre (1,720-square-foot) "Yuegong-1" — Lunar Palace — on the campus of Beihang University, following a 60-day sojourn earlier.

In between, a second group of four students spent 200 consecutive days in the

facility.

The volunteers lived in the sealed lab to simulate a long-term space mission with no input from the outside world.

The facility treats human waste with a bio-fermentation process, and volunteers grew experimental crops and vegetables with the help of food and waste byproducts.

The "Lunar Palace" has two plant cultivation modules and an accommodation cabin: 42 square metres containing four sleeping cubicles, a common room, a bathroom, a waste-treatment room and a room for raising animals.

A successful 105-day trial was conducted in 2014.

China does not expect to land its first astronauts on the moon for at least another decade.

But the project seeks to help it prepare explorers for longer stays on the surface. China is pouring billions into its military-run space programme, with hopes of having a crewed outpost by 2022. —AFP ■

A win in 2nd AFC Zonal Semi-Finals is not enough for Yangon United to go Finals

EVEN though Yangon United won 3-2 over the Philippines' football club Ceres Negros in the AFC Cup 2018 zonal semi-finals at Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon yesterday, the Myanmar team did not advance because the Philippines team had a higher goals total.

In the first leg of the tourney, Ceres Negros beat Yangon United by a score of 4-2. Combined with last night's results, the team from the Philippines scored one more goal than the team from Myanmar, resulting in an end to the tournament for Yangon United.

In yesterday's match, goals for Yangon were scored by its star players Kosuke Yamazaki, Aee Soe and Sekou Sylla, while the goals for the team from the Philippines were scored by Manuel Ott and Bienvenido Marañón.

Both teams played hard right from the start, resulting in the opening goal for Yangon in the first minute of play with a strong kick into the net by Yangon's attacker Kosuke Yamazaki.



Yangon United's Kosuke attempts to pass the opponents in yesterday's AFC Cup 2018 zonal semi-finals at Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon. **PHOTO: KO ZAY (MFF)**

Ceres came back with an attack, and at 8 minutes, Manuel Otta equalised for his team.

With the game tied, the

match heated up, with both teams attacking back and forth.

Just before the end of the first half, Sylla made a nice pass

to teammate Ikechukwu Emmanuel, but Emmanuel could not convert and the scoring chance was gone.

At halftime, the score remained knotted at 1-1.

At the 46-minute mark of the second half, Sylla appeared ready to make a brilliant score, but the keeper came out and palmed the ball away. Mg Mg Lwin was able to control the ball that had bounced back from the keeper, but Mg Mg Lwin's kick went over the post.

At the 58-minute mark there was one more chance for Yangon when Mg Mg Lwin made a supporting pass to Kyaw Zin Oo, who was in goal area. Kyaw Zin Oo attempted to head the ball into the goal, but the attempt was not strong enough to score.

Cere Negros made the go-ahead goal at 78 minutes by its star Marañón.

Again, Yangon United equalized when substitute Aee Soe kicked the ball into the net when it bounced back from the left post at the 83-minute mark.

Yangon's third goal was scored by Sylla on a penalty shot.

Despite the win, the tournament is over for Yangon United.—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

Hart set to miss out on youthful England World Cup squad

LONDON — England manager Gareth Southgate will name his 23-man World Cup squad on Wednesday with some experienced figures such as goalkeeper Joe Hart expected to miss out.

The BBC and Sky Sports reported on Tuesday that 75-times capped Hart won't be included among Southgate's three goalkeepers after a poor season on loan at West Ham from Manchester City.

Hart, who has been England's first choice goalkeeper for the last three major tournaments, was backed by Southgate after being deemed surplus to requirements by Pep Guardiola at City as the 31-year-old remained first choice during England's un-

beaten qualifying campaign.

However, Hart started only half of West Ham's Premier League games this season and conceded 39 goals in his 19 league appearances.

Hart's omission means the experienced trio of Jordan Pickford, Jack Butland and the uncapped Nick Pope will be Southgate's options between the sticks.

Pickford has also yet to feature in a competitive international, whilst Butland's only two competitive starts came in qualifying dead rubbers against Lithuania in 2015 and 2017.

Jack Wilshere is also set to miss out despite an impressive end to the season with Arsenal.

Wilshere was initially in-

cluded in Southgate's squad for March's friendlies against the Netherlands and Italy, but was forced to pull out with a knee injury that cost him the opportunity to make his case.

Liverpool's Adam Lallana is in contention despite an injury-ravaged season. Lallana made his latest comeback in Sunday's 4-0 win over Brighton, but made just one Premier League start all season. In defence, Phil Jones's return to form and fitness for Manchester United could see him see off club team-mate Chris Smalling and Chelsea captain Gary Cahill for a place alongside Southgate's preferred centre-back duo of John Stone and Harry Maguire.—AFP ■

AFC Football Coaching Certificate course concluded in Yangon

A conclusion ceremony of an Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Grade (C) certifying course was held at the head quarter of Myanmar Football Federation in Yangon on Tuesday.

The ceremony was attended by the General Secretary of the Myanmar Football Federation U Ko Ko Thein and officials, Technical Director U Tin Myint Aung and attendees.

The AFC 'C' Coaching Certificate course aims at training coaches and developing their basic techniques and skills in football said an official.

It is designed to teach the coaches to organise, direct and conduct basic coaching practices targeting especially young players, he added.

The course lasts about 2 weeks and requires a minimum of 85 hours of study time for both the practical and theoretical sessions.

In the final examination, students will be assessed on their practical coaching abilities, knowledge of the laws of the game, in addition to learning and understanding of the theory contents of football.—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■