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‘We can cover news freely’

THE NEWS and Periodicals Enterprise led 18 journalists from the BBC, VOA, EPA, TV Asahi Nippon TV, Fuji TV, Central News Bureau, Frontier Myanmar, Irrawaddy, Myawady, MRTV, MITV, Myanmar News Agency, Myanmar Alin and Ky-aemon for a media visit to Sit-tway, Buthidaung, Maungtaw and Yathedaung in Rakhine State from 28 March to 1 April.

They were interviewed on their views and comments about the visit.

U Ye Naing, General Manager, News and Periodicals Enterprise, Ministry of Information

I led the media visit with 18 foreign and local media representatives from 28 March to 1 April. Although the media visit was planned for the areas where news is emerging, arrangements were made during the visit to expand the area in order to obtain additional news.

The visiting foreign and local media were able to observe freely the actual situation on the ground after the attack of 9 October 2016 as well as report about the latest situation on restoring law and order in the region. Instead of a one-sided report from a single media source, multiple media sources will report about the situation in Maungtaw area after this visit. The true situation will be known both locally as well as internationally.

U Sithu Aung Myint, Chief Editor, Central News Bureau

Before this visit, some of the journalists discussed with Ministry of Information on where and where they want to visit and how to collect news. The visit was



Journalists talk to local residents during their trip to a village in Maungtaw Township in northern Rakhine State. PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY

arranged according to this discussion and we were not shown around only to pre-selected places. Due to time constraints, some places were not visited while arrangements were made to visit new places we added on. We were able to cover news freely.

During our first visit, we saw burnt places that were deserted. We saw only a few people going about even in Maungtaw. Businesses were stopped. This time around, we saw quite a num-

ber of people who had returned to their villages. There are still some remaining to return but it is not as much as we thought. During our first visit we ask the Rakhine State Chief Minister and respective government (officials) whether people can return to their burnt down places. In this visit, we saw a number of people returning to their villages, rebuilding their home and properly resettling on lands that were cleared and leveled by a bulldozer. This

is a good sign. We are allowed to collect news freely. We also met with top officials and learnt about the situation on ground. State Counsellor Office and the Union Government decided to follow through on Kofi Annan's suggestion to reduce conflict through developing Rakhine State.

However, this process is facing difficulties in issuing NVC (National Verification Card). Due to administrative and security reason, only people with

proper identifications are given travel permits, allowed to conduct trade with Bangladesh and do shipping business by the government. Muslims in the region are reluctant to get this card and is not applying for it. But without this card, they could not do anything. Without resolving this issue the work of regional development tasks for the Rakhine State and reducing conflict would be difficult.

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သဒ္ဓါထက်သန် မြန်မာအားမန် ကမ္ဘောဇဘဏ်

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker meets ambassadors

PYITHU Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint received Mr. Jaroslav Doleček, Ambassador of the Czech Republic, and Mr. Scot Marciel, Ambassador of the United States, separately at the building of the Pyithu Hluttaw in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker and the Czech Republic Ambassador discussed matters relating to bilateral friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

At the meeting with the US Ambassador, the two sides discussed matters concerning the Myanmar's democratization process, and further strengthening the friendship and cooperation between Myanmar and the United States.

Also present at the meetings were Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw U T Khun Myat and officials of the Pyithu Hluttaw Office.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Speaker U Win Myint holds talks with Mr. Jaroslav Doleček, Ambassador of the Czech Republic. PHOTO: MNA

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Vietnamese ambassador

SENIOR General Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, received Mrs. Luan Thuy Duong, the ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, at Bayitnaung Guest House in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the meeting, they discussed several issues including international relations,

exchange of military trainees, friendly sports events, the future works of Mytel GSM Network, which was selected as the fourth operator of Myanmar, exchange of technology in the agricultural sector and promoting friendship and cooperation between the armed forces of the two countries.—*Myanmar News Agency*

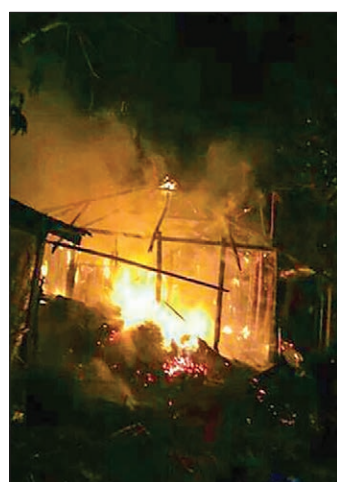


Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with Mrs. Luan Thuy Duong, the ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

House destroyed by fire in Phawteechaung Village, Maungtaw

A house in Phawteechaung village in Maungtaw Township in Rakhine State was destroyed by fire yesterday morning due to carelessness, authorities said.

The accidental fire was caused by a candle which spread fire quickly through the house, which had bamboo matting on the walls and which was roofed with thatch. The fire at the house owned by Zarhait started at 3:10am. The house owner was placed on file as a careless fire user at the Kyaingchaung Police Station.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Anti-corruption commission sues police sub-inspector in Singaing

An anti-corruption commission has found that Police Sub-Inspector Soe Moe Aung of Singaing Police Station in Mandalay Region demanded Ks200,000 from a man who had purchased two oxen to use on his farm.

The farmer made a complaint to the anti-corruption commission to take action against the

police sub-inspector.

In response, the anti-corruption commission investigated the case and confirmed that Sub-Inspector Soe Moe Aung had illegally asked for a bribe from the aggrieved party, who drove the cattle to Kywe Na Phar village with the recommendation letter of the administrator of

Meethwebote village, after purchasing the two oxen from Zaw Gyi and Kyauk Tan village on 4 February.

The police sub-inspector was sued under section 56 of the anti-corruption law, 2013 at the Supreme Court in Mandalay Region on Tuesday, according to the anti-corruption commission.

Talk on business for peace held at UMFCFI

Ko Moe

Talk on business for peace was held at the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry on April 4.

At the talk held for peace which is urgently needed in the country, U Tin Oo, patron of the National League for Democracy addressed, "People in the country need to be well endowed with education and intelligence. Moreover, we want to have deteriorating health sector resettled in the country. Another one we want to rebuild decreasing economy. We really want to gain genuine peace that is actually needed for the whole populace. In bringing about peace, entrepreneurs and business-persons play an important role, filling the blank in the peace process. The whole nation aspires to the nation-

wide peace as promptly as possible. Now that the whole economic world is joining the process, it will be effective more than ever."

As regards foreign countries, there are only one or two armed groups in bringing about peace whereas in Myanmar there are a large number of armed groups to be negotiated with, according to Dr Tin Myo Win, chairman of Peace Commission.

He added, "Peace and economy are co-related with each other. In a country, economy plays an important role. With the developing economy of the country, the remaining problems will decrease to some extent."

With a view to supporting peace process underway in the country, UMFCFI signed an agreement UNGC (United Nations Global Compact) in the

ceremony upgrading the participation of economic enterprises for the peace process, it has been learnt.

Professor Dr Aung Tun Thet said that signing of entrepreneurs can help the peace process, bringing about peace in working environment and protection of natural environment from destruction.

Dr Aung Tun Thet added, "As regards the peace process, the incumbent are meeting with success in some sectors with some weakness still in some places. Joining the peace process of the entrepreneurs is of great importance for the peace. We were greatly pleased to see them take part in it for the people to enjoy the fruits of the peace." According to Dr Aung Tun Thet, there are 300 entrepreneurs from Myanmar, who signed UNGC.

Three suspects arrested in Buthidaung Township

THREE men suspected of involvement in the murder of a village leader were arrested by security forces during an area clearance operation in Maungyeetaung village, Buthidaung Township on Monday.

The three men are believed to be involved in the murder of



The three suspects in Buthidaung Township. PHOTO: STATE COUNSELLOR OFFICE OF INFORMATION COMMITTEE

Zarmer Husein, a member of the village administrative committee in Maungyeetaung (1) ward, Buthidaung Township on 5 March.

A suspect identified as

Bawdia and two other men from Maungyeetaung Alae village were taken to Taung Bazaar police station. An investigation is ongoing.—*Myanmar News Agency*

TOGETHER WITH THE PEOPLE



Union Minister Dr Pe Myint clarifies holding the press conference on performance of governmental institutions in the first one-year period. PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY

Press conference on performance of legal system in the first year of a new government

A press conference on the performances of the country's legal system in the first one-year period of the new government was held at a meeting hall of the Ministry of Information yesterday, during which Union Supreme Court officials said the release of a new code of ethics for judges was imminent.

Present at the press conference were Dr Pe Myint, Union Minister for Information, directors-general of the Union Supreme Court, responsible officials and local and foreign media.

Dr Pe Myint said the performances of ministries, major panels and regional and state cabinets have already been covered in state-run media, including TV broadcasts and daily newspaper articles.

"Our presentations are not sufficient enough. It is necessary for us to reply to questions raised. Today we are here meeting with the media to listen to criticisms and matters people want to point out. If there were some weak points and shortcomings in our statements, those present at the press conference can point out and enquire so that it will be more perfect. The aim of holding the press conference is to show that we have full responsibility and accountability. And, it is aimed at fulfilling the needs for our media-men to acquire more access to gather news and information", Dr Pe Myint said.

Part of the performance reviews focused on the country's legal system and its progress on judicial reform. An official for the Supreme Court of the Union revealed yesterday that updated code of ethics for judges was going to be announced in the near future.

"The Union Supreme Court will release a modern code of ethics for judges very soon", said U Ko Ko Naing, director-general of the office of the supreme court.

"A strategic plan on judicial affairs had been compiled together with internationally aligned organisations to be able to make judicial reforms. The plan is to be able to perform the working process, policies and objectives of the Union Supreme Court. In the one-year period, 2016, there were case call lists of supreme courts of regions and states, criminal case call lists, civil case call lists and formal notes on case call lists posted on the website of the office of Union Supreme Court. For doing so, the public can know when and which case is to be heard and decided. The Office of the Union Supreme Court has been distributing news and information on judicial courts through the Facebook page of the Public Relations Branch, with judicial news and information being distributed through facebook pages of supreme courts of regions and states."

U Ko Ko Naing said there are four different leaflets designed to increase the public's knowledge of the courts and the criminal justice system — criminal cases, civil cases, formal notes on justice and the court of justice for you. The leaflets have been distributed through courts of justice and continue to be distributed to a wider audience. In addition, U Ko Ko Naing said one-stop counters for court-related needs have been initiated.

"In 2016, counters for correspondence, bailiff information, investigations counter and a bar counter were collectively assembled. It has been found that those present at courts could perform

the routines at one place. Just after 2016, courts of justice were built with investigation counter, case reception counter, recreation lounges for witnesses, bar rooms, recreation centers for law officers and news media rooms separately." The systematic reorganization of how court cases are filed and handled was also revamped, a court official said.

"Arrangement of cases were made with a view to dealing with the cases promptly and rightfully. In doing so, pilot courts of justice have been designated. In 2015, the court of justice in Hlinethaya township, Taunggo district court of justice and Hpa-an township court of justice were designated as pilot courts of justices. Surveys of the clients at the courts were collected just prior to the management of the cases. A study on the assessment of the courts was performed. And a survey on closed cases were made in categories", said Daw Aye Aye Kyi Thet, director-general of Union Justice Supervision Office of the Union Supreme Court.

After collection of the surveys, training workshops, including legal procedure management, were given to judges and court employees. In 2016, Monywa District Court, Mawlamyine District Court, Patheingyi District Court, Chanayethazan Township Court, Magway Township Court were designated as extended forerunning courts.

Afterwards, officials answered questions raised by reporters, one of whom asked whether prejudice and bribery cases occurred among judges and court employees during the one-year term of the incumbent government and whether action was taken against them. To this, the Union Supreme Court

Director General U Ko Ko Naing explained that misconduct could be reported to either the Supreme Court or the Anti-Corruption Commission. The Supreme Court investigates departments and then follows up with interrogation of staff members while the Anti-Corruption Commission follows up on individual reports, he said.

Another question was asked concerning the National Strategic Plan's guidance for terming prolonged periods of investigations not as delaying of cases but rather conducting thorough investigations. The Union Supreme Court Deputy Director - General Daw Tin Nwe Soe replied that the three-year strategic plan for 2015-2017 is already in progress with the first step being relocating to forerunning courts, and then in 2015 procedures exceeded expectations while a survey for 2016 is still in progress and is expected to be ready for final report by June 2017.

The procedures for 2017 were issued in the one-year report for 2017 National Strategic Plan. The report can be viewed in the website of the Union Supreme Court, she said.

Daw Tin Nwe Soe also replied to a question asking about significant changes made during the one-year term of the government, saying there was successful construction of courts up to standards, access to information pertaining the courts, designation of areas where news agencies could collect information, uploading news on court procedures on websites and social media for mobile access, a decrease of unfinished court cases and a decrease of trial rescheduling.

On the question of whether bribery and corruption was

prevalent in the judicial sector, currently there are complaints submitted through the President's Office, State Counsellor's Office and various Hluttaw Committees. The complaints are reviewed first with actual complaints to the courts reviewed next, while cases requiring further submission of appeals cannot be taken action against. If complaints of corruption were reported or discovered through news networks, then investigations will be conducted with collaboration with the Anti-Corruption Commission and the code of ethics for judges is to be issued.

Director General U Ko Ko Naing stated court cases are contests between two sides, so there are complaints reported but they are not abolished and there are judges listed in the Anti-Corruption Commission's watch list.

The Director General replied to a comment stating there are insufficient amendments in the legal sector, stating that as the nature of the department goes, there are a plethora of complaints sent to them but corrections and amendments are slowly being made. He further stated complaints differ in points of views and conclusions. In this transparent age there should be freedom in reviewing and criticism of complaints.

A question was raised asking what the highest punishment for judges accepting bribery. To this, Director General U Ko Ko Naing replied there were complaints reported to the Anti-Corruption Commission. Through departmental investigations, dismissals were the only option. However a lawsuit can be opened at the concerned court if a fitting punishment is desired. —Min Min Zaw and Team

Sarus crane (*Grus antigone*) conservation continues in Ayeyawady Delta



Sarus cranes, the endangered species, are native to Myanmar. PHOTO: THANDAR

CONSERVATION efforts are being made by the Wildlife Conservation Society to protect the Sarus crane (*Grus antigone*), an endangered species of tall flying birds, said U Naing Lynn, a project coordinator of the WCS.

Two kinds of cranes, including the red-head and the black-head, can be found in Myanmar, particularly in Wakema, Maubin, Myaungmya and Pyapon townships in Ayeyawady Delta, Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary in Kachin State, Inlay area

in Southern Shan State, Moe-yungyi Wildlife Sanctuary in Bago Region and Rakhine State.

The country has a moderate population of cranes.

The WCS is putting forth continuous efforts to conserve the rare birds to prevent their decline.

"We need to carry out conservation works especially in Ayeyawady Delta to protect the birds from extinction," said U Naing Lynn, adding that the collaborative efforts have been

made in targets area by raising public awareness.

The working group also urges residents to actively participate in the programme and stop the hunting of cranes and destruction of their nests.

The Sarus crane is a native bird of Myanmar. The species lives mainly in wetlands such as canals, ponds, and marshes, even if the wetlands are near humans. They can be found in cultivated areas too, and also in high-altitude wetlands. —200

Wooden furniture selling well in Mandalay

DEMAND for furniture made from wood byproducts have been on the rise in Mandalay Region, according to local furniture makers and suppliers.

Different kinds of low-cost wooden handicrafts, especially chairs, tables and kitchen facilities, have sold well in the domestic market this year.

Based on the value of raw materials, the price of those wooden facilities will be worth between Ks5,500 and Ks16,000. Shelves are currently sold for Ks5,500 each, a reading table for Ks12,000, a cupboard for Ks16,000 and a dining table for Ks15,000.

Buyers normally purchase

those wooden facilities through mobile individual sellers as well as furniture shops. A few of them made special orders at the shops.

Furniture makers are operating their small-scale manufacturing businesses year round year in cooperation with each other. —Nway Nadi, Myit Nge

More than 1,000 traffic police to be deployed during Thingyan

MORE THAN 1,000 Yangon traffic police will be deployed during the Maha Thingyan Water Festival to be celebrated this month, according to a spokesperson of the Yangon Region Security and Law Enforcement Committee.

Under the arrangement of the committee, over 360 security members will be deployed at Yangon Mayor's Central Pavilion. Other security members are planned to be placed at Kandawgyi Lake, Inya Lake and Thardu Lake. To protect holidaymakers, life-saving facilities such as inflatable tube and boats will also be put at those destinations.

As part of its efforts to reduce road accidents during the Thingyan New Year Festival, the committee is now accelerating its public awareness programmes in townships across the



People celebrate Thingyan Water Festival in 2016 in Yangon. PHOTO: GNLM

city, aiming to share knowledge on traffic rules and regulations.

The committee will provide traffic clearances services around water-throwing pandals

by supervising undisciplined vehicles. Actions will be taken against those who fail to abide by the rules announced by the city authorities. —200

Over 100 villages in Bago Region likely to face water shortages

MORE THAN 100 villages in four districts across Bago Region are predicted to face an acute shortage of water this month, according to Bago Region Rural Development Department.

According to the department, a total of 116 villages — 61 villages in Bago District, 20 villages in Taungoo District, 19 villages in Pyay District and 16 villages in Thayawady District — are estimated to experience water scarcity in April because of high summer temperatures.

The department revealed its plan to supply drinking water to those villages in partnership with local philanthropic organisations, said Daw Su Su Hlaing, head of the department.

Some villages in the region have faced a water crisis

since March. According to a small-scale survey, almost 30 villages — 15 villages in Bago District, five villages in Taungoo District and nine villages in Pyay District, suffered water shortage last month.

The department already demanded Ks5million budgets from the responsible department to distribute drinking water by motor vehicle this month to the water-stressed villages to alleviate the problem, she added.

The department urges its subordinate bodies to inspect the water situations in villages to supply water in time.

Water scarcity is among the main problems to be faced by many societies mainly in central arid zones, especially in summer. —Myitmakha News Agency

Himalaya Airlines to fly Yangon-Nepal route twice a week

HIMALAYA Airlines, a Nepal-China joint venture, plans to fly the Yangon-Nepal route twice a week starting in October of this year, according to a spokesperson of the Unique Asia Tourism Company.

Currently, Himalaya Airlines operates a flight from Yangon to Nepal every Friday, but now plan to run the flight on Mondays and Fridays. Based on the increasing number of passengers, the airline will expand its aviation services to Myanmar.

The airline launched commercial flight to Yangon on 24 February. The airline said the flights to Myanmar were part

of their initiative to strengthen direct connections with the approximately 300,000 people of Nepali origin residing here.

The direct flights will help boost the economy of both countries as well as the tourism industry, said Mr Vijay Shrestha, vice-president of Himalaya Airlines.

Transportation plays an essential part in tourism development of the country. Myanmar's tourism industry is in a period of exponential growth. According to the ministry's master plan (2013-2020) based on the country's conditions, tourist arrivals are estimated to hit 7.49 million by 2020. —200

Austrian gov't to grant development loans to Myanmar in three sectors

THE AUSTRIAN government has pledged to offer loans to Myanmar to implement development projects in three sectors—healthcare, security and environmental conservation, said Mr Gunther Sucher, the commercial counsellor at the Austrian Embassy.

The Austrian authorities plan to grant US\$5 million to carry out development programmes in those sectors in the initial stage, he said at a meeting with Myanmar entrepreneurs at the headquarter of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Depending on the results achieved in the first year of the development project, further monetary assistance will be

given to Myanmar government year by year, Mr Gunther Sucher added.

Austrian businesspersons are also interested to extend their investments in Myanmar, particularly in farming industry.

Provision of agricultural equipment as well as technical assistance to growers were discussed when the Austrian authorities met with responsible officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

According to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, Austria ranked 21st in the list of 49 foreign investors in Myanmar, with \$72.5 million investment from two projects. —200

LOCAL Business

Yangon Region gov't grants Ks2.2 billion loans to 98 SMEs in FY2016-17

Ko Moe

YANGON Region government granted more than Ks2.2 billion loans to 98 entrepreneurs operating small-and-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the commercial city in the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

This is part of the plan to develop SMEs across Yangon. Under the existing rules and regulations, the regional authorities provided finan-

cial aid to those businesspersons in the fields of food production, manufacturing, trading and services and other kinds of businesses, said Daw Nila Kyaw, regional minister for Electricity, Industry and Transportation. The city authorities offered loans obtained from the Japanese government to the target audiences through domestic banks including Myanmar Apex Bank, Ayeyawady Bank, Cooperative

Bank, Myanmar Citizens Bank, Kanbawza Bank and Small and Medium Industrial Development Bank.

The CB Bank gave loans worth Ks262.5 million to 15 entrepreneurs by using Credit Guarantee Insurance system, while three SME operators received Ks145 million development loans from Kanbawza Bank.

According to a survey, over 90 per cent of firms operating in the country are

small-and-medium sized enterprises. In Yangon, there are 1,470 small-scale firms and 186 medium-scale firms across the city. The regional government continues to provide not only financial assistance but technical support to the local firms, in collaboration with international bodies. In the 2014-2015 FY, the authorities granted Ks2 billion in loans funded by the Union government to 36 SMEs in Yangon Region.

Gold and Jewellery shops not to collect tax on purchase without directive

GOLD and jewellery shops which have still not received directives to impose taxes on gold purchases starting from 1st April will not collect the tax, according to the gold and jewellery shops.

"We heard the news of the tax levied on gold purchases but we have not still received direct guidance. The stamp duty is reportedly prepared for this. We will start to collect the tax when its stamp duty is available", said U Zaw Aung, the owner of Tate Sein gold and jewellery shop owner.

"We are not able to collect if there is no official issue to us", said the gold and jewellery shop owners.

"The township's In-

ternal Revenue Department should issue a directive about taxation on gold purchases. We cannot make anything about this without an official announcement. We will not collect taxes yet", said U Maw Maw, the general manager of Aung Thama-di gold shop.

According to the 2017 Tax Law, a one per cent tax will be levied on gold buyers, whereas the purchasers of platinum and highly purified gold foil have to pay five per cent, it is learnt.

The Myanmar pure gold price hit a high of about Ks906,000 per tical in March and the price in early April was about Ks899,000.—Myitmakha News Agency

Shwenatha low-cost apartment to sell in the end of April

SHWENATHA low-cost apartment complex developed in the incumbent government period will be available for sale at the end of this month.

This apartment was built in May 2016 in Ot-

tarathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, with 80 per cent of construction completed.

The apartment units will sell with the link of the Construction and Housing Development Bank (CHDB), with an estimate of

about Ks10million per unit.

The civil staff will be prioritised for Shwenatha housing, the very first low-cost apartment in Nay Pyi Taw, according to Urban and Housing Development Department. The housing

project includes 80 apartment units with two five-story buildings.

There is a plan to proceed to phase 2 and 3 for Shwenatha low-cost housing project with over 500 units.—Mon Mon

Vietnam Airlines AMAZING PRICES THROUGHOUT 2017

To Hanoi: From **260 USD** RT All-In
To Hanoi + 01 domestic city: From **350 USD** RT All-In

To Seoul/Pusan: From **430 USD** RT All-in
To Tokyo/Osaka/Nagoya/Fukuoka: From **450 USD** RT All-in

Yangon - Hanoi flight schedule from 26 March to 28 October 2017

Yangon - Hanoi	VN 956	Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun	19:10/21:40
Hanoi - Yangon	VN 957	Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun	16:45/18:10

Ticketing period starts from 01 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Airfares might be different depend on specific routings, seat availability, tax changes and agency service fees. Conditions applied.

For more information, please contact Vietnam Airlines authorized agencies or Vietnam Airlines Branch in Myanmar. Email: reservation.mm@vietnamairlines.com • Phone: (+95-1)255066, 255068, 255088
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Vietnam Airlines
REACH FURTHER

'We can cover news freely'

>> FROM PAGE 1

Daw Ei Ei Tin
(Foreign Correspondent)
Fuji TV

We can gather news freely and security was complete. We were able to cover news from both communities in the region. I was not there after the 9 October attacks so I don't know the situation at that time.

Now, I saw aids and supports provided by the government, regional organisations and NGOs. In Maungdaw area, there are many Muslim villages and a few Rakhine villages. With the resources Rakhine State had, it can be developed. A lot of jobs can be created. We pass through a village with many boats lying idle. This is bad for the boat owners as well people in the neighbourhood. They are having diverging thoughts. When asked to get NVC they are reluctant to do as they'll become a non-naturalized citizen. Some say there are intimidated from getting NVC. But without this, they could not work on the boats. This is an issue that the government need to take time and resolve. The international community is showing much interest in the problems in Rakhine.

U Han Htwe Aung, TV Asahi

I was in the December trip. This time, we have more freedom in getting news. We can stop the car anywhere we want and get news. The arrangement was very good. We can also interview freely. Empty burnt out places seen in the first trip were cleared with machineries (for resettlement). This is the difference between the two visits. Villagers are less tense. They are willing and talking to us more with much expectation. As a representative of a foreign media, I want to say that foreigners would also like to have a first-hand visit to the area. Once security is better, foreign personnel of foreign media should be allowed in. Then there'll be less international accusations. I'll be reporting the news as I've seen to my foreign news agency.

U Nyan Hlaing Lin
(Frontier Myanmar)

Everything was well arranged. We can cover news freely where ever we went. There were some difficulties on the first day, but everything was fine on the



U Ye Naing.

following days. There isn't much (economic) development but there is no conflict between the two communities now. Trust building and finding solution to the problems between the two communities is not seen yet. However, stopping the conflict is a progress. But there is still a lot to be done.

We were able to collect news freely. But the sources of the news were worried of reactions from the authorities. There are intimidations from within their own society too. Sadly a Tinmay villager (interviewed) was killed. This is hindering and causing difficulties for media in getting news. Government need to consider for the security of the news sources. As there are intimidations within the Muslim community, Government need to build trust and handle the matter with much care.



U Sithu Aung Myint.



Daw Kyu Kyu Thin.

ernment need to build trust and handle the matter with much care.

U Aung Thu Ra (BBC)

It was not good to conduct an interview in Buthidaung with government officials staying around on the first day. From the start of the Maungdaw trip on second day and afterward, it became better. We were able to get news freely. We can go to the villages and police were staying away from the interview. In gen-



U Nyein Chan Naing.

eral, it was a good media visit. After the event of 9 October, the current situation can be considered as stable. Authorities are also saying the same. People are still feeling insecure. All are still living in fear. Sign of dissatisfaction can also be seen.

The whole world needs to know what occurs here. This will happen if independent foreign media personnel (foreigners) are allowed to visit as we did. It will be very effective. The problem is also handled wrongly. People living in the country should comply with the country's law. But their problems should be helped by considering them as human being. They also need to comply with this country's law. The government needs to handle



U Han Htwe Aung.



Daw May Kha.

this effectively. Problem should not be hidden. Solution must be found through various methods.

Daw Sint Sint Aung,
Nippon TV

I came to find out what was done after the event of 9 October. We first visited Tinmay village in Buthidaung. Next, we visited 10 villages in Maungdaw. We also visited two locations where the event of 9 October happened. We were able to collect news



U Aung Thu Ra.

freely. Upon our request during the visit, arrangements were made to visit places that were not in the initial schedule. We saw a bulldozer clearing a 24 acre land in a Muslim village. We were told that this is to build and settle about 300 households. This is a good development.

This is my first visit to Buthidaung and Maungdaw area. It is an area with jungles and mountains so if there were event like 9 October, perpetrators can hide well. There are also a lot of fallow lands that can be developed for both communities. Even other ethnic nationals can also settle there. If job opportunities are created, this place can support more population. Which I think would be better.



U Htet Naing Zaw.



U Nyan Hlaing Lin.

Daw May Kha, Reporter,
VOA Yangon Bureau

I can gather news freely in this trip. Government is developing and resettling the burnt out places. I was also able to meet freely with both communities. Both communities are living in fear. Level of trust is also low with lots of worries. Government need to take some time in order to reduce these worries.

But proper processes must be drawn up and implemented. Although the

government is making the whole area safe and secure, personal and individual safety is still lacking. We ourselves as media personnel don't feel secure while gathering news in Maungdaw.

Authorities are doing this (providing security) with insufficient manpower. Government need to beef up security. Government said the two communities lived together for a long time and the unnecessary incidents happen because of instigation. I don't see one side in a very poor and desperate situation and the other side having advantage. Both are in a poor state of affair. Government need to take care of both.

U Htet Naing Zaw (Senior Reporter, Irrawaddy)

There were some difficulties during the interview in Tinmay village, Buthidaung township because the authorities were nearby. We were able to gather news freely in Maungdaw.

We can ask whatever we want and meet any group freely. This was arranged by Ministry of Information. The situation is becoming stable.

But there is lack of personal or individual security. Muslims as well as the Rakhine who were a

Rakhine nationals are a minority in the region and are living in fear so authorities need to provide security as well as improve their livelihood too.

U Htet Naing Zaw (Senior Reporter, Irrawaddy)

minority in the place were seen living in fear.

Government needs to do the NVC matter affectively in Muslim villages. The villagers need to be informed and educated about it. They need to be persuaded that having this card would entitle them to health and education care as well as freedom of travel. Health care, water and job opportunities need to be made available. Rakhine nationals are a minority in the region and are living in fear so authori-

ties need to provide security as well as improve their livelihood too.

Daw Kyu Kyu Thin
(Reporter, MITV)

Even though we were unable to know everything about the situation in the area, we were able to learn about the status of the returnees to the burnt out areas, status of issuing NVC and village development



Daw Ei Ei Tin.



Daw Sint Sint Aung.

matters conducted by the government. We are able to cover the news freely about 90 per cent of the time. 10 per cent is personal security. We don't have the courage to enter the villages bravely.

After the events of 9 October, people were living in fear. They were worried about security. Even though the region is developing again, it would be difficult to reach the condition before 2012. It would be better if we can have more time (days) in this trip.

U Nyein Chan Naing
(Photojournalist, European Press Agency)

We are freer than last time. We visited places we went the first time as well as to new places. There weren't changes in some places. But there were in some. In one village, machineries are preparing land to resettle people who were displaced by the violent attacks.

International media have much interest in this affair. Many were writing about this and it becomes big news. Some were true but some were rumors. Some reported news ending with a sentence that it could not be verified. Bigger and stronger media than us need to be invited and arranged to make a media visit like this. If the visit is as we did, there wouldn't be a problem and they would be safe too. Then they can see with their own eyes and judge accordingly.

South Korean software tycoon roars back into contention for president

SEOUL — South Korean software mogul Ahn Cheol-soo clinched his centrist People's Party nomination to run for president on Tuesday, roaring back into contention in the 9 May vote after abandoning his presidential ambitions in 2012.

Ahn, 55, has taken a tougher stance on national security than the liberal frontrunner for president, Moon Jae-in, who won his Democratic Party's nomination on Monday, saying there should be no mistake about the dangers presented by North Korea.

He has vowed to level the playing field for small business and conglomerates and provide equal opportunity for youth from all backgrounds to inject fresh breath into an economy showing signs of sputtering weighed by injustice and corruption.

Impeached former president Park Geun-hye was dismissed last month over a corruption scandal that has implicated some conglomerates and rocked the country for months.

"We need to elect a capa-

ble president who can revive the economy. We need a president who can accomplish strong and robust national security," Ahn said in his acceptance speech.

"The time for Ahn Cheol-soo is here and the time for Moon Jae-in is slipping away."

Ahn was a top contender for the 2012 presidential election but withdrew his candidacy and endorsed Moon in a bid to unite non-conservative voters against eventual winner Park.

Trained as a medical doctor, Ahn rose to national fame when AhnLab, a provider of computer antivirus software, became a household name.

Ahn entered politics in 2011 using his popularity to endorse an independent candidate as mayor of the capital, Seoul, then was elected to parliament two years later.

He sought to find a new way in South Korean politics long marred by ideological and regional division, founding the People's Party last year that emerged as a major political force in the parlia-



Ahn Cheol-soo celebrates after winning the nomination as a presidential candidate of the People's Party, during a national convention, in Daejeon, South Korea on 4 April, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

mentary election last year.

He initially struggled in the presidential race, triggered by the impeachment of Park, but has shot to second place in recent opinion polls, with 19 per cent support in a poll released on Friday.

Ahn has advocated a tough line against reclusive North Ko-

rea, which has been heavily sanctioned for missile and nuclear tests in breach of UN Security Council resolutions, even while keeping the door open to dialogue.

"He (North Korean leader Kim Jong Un) is a very dangerous person, isn't he? He has done things that are beyond our imagi-

ination to maintain his power," Ahn told a group of journalists last month.

"A summit between the South and the North should not be an end in itself ... (but) if it can be a tool to solve problems, we should consider it."

Ahn has said the deployment of the controversial US THAAD missile defence system must go ahead and South Korea must make greater efforts to convince the Chinese, which has reacted angrily to the move, that it is not aimed at them but only at countering the missile threat from North Korea.

If North Korea carried out any attacks on South Korean soil as it did in the 2010 bombing of an island in the South, Ahn said he would respond with a "surgical strike" against the North.

North and South Korea are technically still at war because their 1950-53 conflict ended in a truce, not a peace treaty. The North regularly threatens to destroy the South and its main ally, the United States. —Reuters

US navy aid unit told to leave Cambodia

PHNOM PENH — A US Navy aid unit has been told to leave Cambodia, the US embassy said, in a new sign of the Southeast Asian country loosening links with Washington as it strengthens ties with Beijing.

The departure of the US Navy Mobile Construction Battalion — known as the Seabees — meant the cancellation of 20 planned projects, including at schools and hospitals, the embassy said on its Facebook page on Monday.

"Last week, the Royal Government of Cambodia notified the Embassy of its decision to postpone indefinitely the Seabees programme," the embassy said. "We are sad to see the Seabees go, but proud of their accomplishments over the last nine years."

Cambodian defence ministry spokesman Chhum Soheat said he was unaware of such a decision.

Cambodia has gone further than other Southeast Asian nations in courting China and the shift away from Washington has continued under US President Donald Trump, despite Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen's professed admiration for him.

Relations have been strained by US criticism of a legal change that made it easier for the government to ban political parties and by renewed Cambodian demands for the

cancellation of \$500 million in debts dating from the war era of the 1970s.

In January, Cambodia suspended joint military exercises that were due to have been held in June. Cambodia said it was because it would be too busy with elections then and rejected any connection to China.

Last year, Beijing held a joint naval drill with Cambodia for the first time. Cambodia's armed forces have benefited from Chinese training and equipment including jeeps, rocket launchers and helicopters.

Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has boasted of his new friendship with China despite a longstanding territorial dispute.

Thailand's military junta has increased purchases of Chinese hardware, including a further 10 tanks approved by the cabinet on Tuesday.

The reduction in military links with Cambodia would be a setback for US strategy in the region but Hun Sen could also end up losing out, said Carl Thayer, professor at the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defense Force Academy.

"His anti-US actions will only increase Cambodia's dependency on China," he said. —Reuters

Abe tells Putin of sympathy, solidarity after Russia blast

TOKYO — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday of his condemnation of a suspected terrorist attack in Russia and stressed Japan's solidarity with Moscow.

In a telephone call, the leaders told each other of their desire to work together in defeating terrorism, Abe said.

"I told (Putin) that terrorism is unforgivable, no matter the reason, and I resolutely condemn it," Abe said.

The prime minister expressed his condolences over the dead and his sympathy with those injured in an explosion in the subway system in St. Petersburg on Monday that killed 14 people.

Russian authorities believe

the blast is a terrorist attack, according to local media.

"I expressed (to Putin) our solidarity with the Russian people as they face this difficult time," he said.

Abe said he told Putin that Japan will work with Russia and the rest of the international community to eradicate terrorism, and the Russian leader responded that he wants to work with Japan for that goal.

Earlier Tuesday, the government's top spokesman said it has not received any information suggesting Japanese nationals are among the casualties.

"We are doing our utmost to confirm the safety of Japanese nationals," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a press conference. —Kyodo News



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe speaks to reporters at his office in Tokyo on 4 April 4, 2017. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

China, ASEAN make progress on framework deal on disputed sea, Philippines says

MANILA — China and Southeast Asian countries have made progress in talks on a code of conduct for the disputed South China Sea, the Philippine acting foreign minister said on Tuesday.

China claims almost the entire waterway, through which about \$5 trillion in sea-borne goods pass every year. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Viet Nam also have claims.

"We have made good progress on coming up with a framework for a code of conduct with China," Philippine Acting Foreign Minister Enrique Manalo said, adding the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASE-

AN) and China were more than halfway through identifying the contents.

"From a scale of 1-10, we are at the upper level. Remember, we were starting from zero in January. There have been a number of elements agreed and we would definitely have a framework on which to embark a serious negotiation on a code of conduct."

Negotiators from China and ASEAN have met in Indonesia and Cambodia in the last two months to try to come up with a final draft, which could be approved ahead of the August meeting by Southeast Asian foreign ministers in Manila.

Manalo also said Manila

would hold talks with Beijing next month to tackle "issues of concern regarding the South China Sea", including China's militarisation of several manmade islands in the Spratly Islands.

The bilateral mechanism is one of two dialogues held by China with claimant states. The other is with Viet Nam. The United States, the Philippines and Viet Nam have protested against China's militarisation of the Spratlys.

US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping are expected to discuss Chinese ambitions in the South China Sea when they meet on Thursday and Friday at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida. —Reuters

Opinion

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Keep emotions of both communities tightly reined in

Tha Sein

MYANMAR is experiencing the same phenomenon that other nations have experienced. As transitions are always bumpy, the country is going through a particularly bumpy moment in its transition. The country might appear to be first on the firing line, with ethnic conflicts although significant inroads have been made in resolving its domestic problems. What an experience it has been! Myanmar has learned more, seen more, and enjoyed more than it ever could have imagined.

It is a historic success that Myanmar has achieved to date with its peaceful, stable and

sustainable transition to a democratic form of government. We had free, fair, peaceful and orderly elections in November 2015, and continued and sustained dialogues on the national peace and reconciliation processes between the government and armed ethnic groups. It is the right thing to do to ensure that all the people see rewards from the process of democratization.

But there remains a long road ahead for the government and the people, and much work still needs to be done due to extremely complex challenges we face in the

political, social, economic and national security areas. Some of the greatest challenges we still face include the refusal of some armed ethnic groups to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement-NCA.

These armed groups have continued to actively resist the national peace and reconciliation processes that the majority has agreed to.

Meanwhile, new models of collaborative and inclusive governance are required for the country to successfully address the simmering communal tensions in the Rakhine State which drew public disquiet. The circumstances have

been far from ideal for social cohesion which requires a careful and well thought out response. This is a reflection of the importance of mutual trust and understanding among communities within the Rakhine state.

It takes time to right the wrongs of decades. Taking into account a combination of factors such as security and the rule of law, the stakeholders should abide by and promote the social norms for equity and fairness, and allow the traditions of honesty and generosity to come to life again and keep emotions of both communities tightly reined in.

A Visit to the Moeyumgyi Wet-land Wildlife Sanctuary

Dr. Saw Mra Aung

WHEN we got to the Nyaung-nha-bin Junction just outside Thaukgyan, it was well over 9 am. But as we had had nothing since waking-up, we had to fill our stomach hastily with Mohinkha(Rice noodles with gravy) at a shabby, roadside food-stall flooded with passengers. Looking eastwards after the breakfast, I saw the deep-yellow coloured morning sun entangled amongst the branches of the trees lining the Yangon-Bago High Way. Although we had been scheduled to visit the well-known pagodas in Bago, most members of our team, bewitched during the breakfast by the open sky and the vast landscape fresh from the cool night, changed mind and averted our attention to the Moe-yum-gyi Wetland Wildlife Sanctuary on the border between Waw and Bago townships to indulge ourselves in nature. So after the breakfast, we had to veer from the Yangon-Bago High-way and followed the Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw High-way.

When we started on our trip along the Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw High-way after passing the toll-gate, it started to drizzle but ceased soon, unaware. Coolness was still hanging heavy in the air, providing a promise of rain again. Everything lay silent in the glow of the rising sun partly hidden behind the banks of clouds ranging across the sky. On the road, we saw nothing but a few vehicles passing by few and far between. On both sides were wide fields fringed with villages at the far end. Since the harvest-time was over, most fields were full of stubbles, a few irrigated fields with beds of seasonal vegetables. Now and then, organic plantations were

found. Some fields were dotted with fowl-farms on lakes. Clumps of trees were seen standing lonely and some cows grazing in the wide fields. Thatch-roofed huts were often seen at the centre of the plantations. Some wooded lands not far from the road were fenced with bamboo-lengths or barbed wire. We often saw police out-posts by the road-side and meditation centres on the edge of the hills hanging over the forested areas standing well back from the road. The road ahead was snaking up and down the hills until it disappeared from our view.

When we came to the 17th mile-stone, a colossal seated Buddha image towering above the wooded land a little distance on the right of the road came suddenly into our view. The arched gateway to it read "Shwe Pyi Aye Phayagyi" meaning "Gigantic Buddha Image of Peaceful Golden Country". The Buddha image with sylvan forests in the background cast a spell on nature-lovers like us. So we turned round into the concrete path off the main road, which led to the Buddha image. After following the path winding through groves of trees growing thickly for five minutes, our car came to the platform of the Buddha image. There was a statue of a large celestial snake (Naga) with its hood raised, twisted around by many smaller snakes down the platform. A row of food-stalls was seen by the side of the snake statue. Around the 144-foot high seated Buddha Image on the terrace were found two statues of celestial snakes in the form of human, a small seated marble image and a statue of Ven. Upagutta, all of which were housed in separate pavilions. Moreover, a stone-pillar with the statues of four

standing celestial kings in the manner of paying homage around its base was also found on the platform. In fact, the seated Buddha image facing east was the front side of a nine-storeyed building. To feast our eyes on the beautiful scenery near-by, we went up to the sixth floor, which commanded the surroundings areas below. We saw around the precincts deep green dense forests stretching some miles and a pagoda-crowned hill beyond the forests, a medley of red roofs of monasteries half hidden among the thick-foliaged trees to the south-east. I was convinced by the vast areas of the deep green trees below that there would be large aquifers in the rock-formations at the depth of a few feet beneath the wooded lands and a great variety of animals would live in wild there and that some areas of our country, like that, still remain untouched and unexplored, thus bringing about its sustainable development. I noticed that, with the sun higher, the precinct was busier with pilgrims. Before we departed from the Buddha image, I approached some members of the trusteeship committee and enquired about the history of it. But none knew anything about it. But I thought that its history might be intertwined with a popular local legend. We left it at 10:30 am.

A few minutes after we had got back to the high-way, I saw some workers giving a coat of asphalt to the existing concrete road. I thought that when Nay Pyi Taw, whose Myanmar rendering is "The Royal Capital or The Seat of Government," was recognized officially in 2006, the Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw High Way had to be built hurriedly in time, giving the road an inferior quality. Due to excess of the speed-limit of the cars and



the inferior quality of the road, car accidents occurred frequently. At the sight of the workers paving the road, I let out a sigh of relief, with the thought that the road, which earned its notoriety as "The Road of No Return", due to the high toll rate caused by the car accidents on it, would be upgraded soon. I thought that as the Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw-Mandalay High Way officially opened in November 2010 could offer a quicker access between Lower Myanmar and Upper Myanmar, it should be upgraded as quickly as possible, for the safety of the people who travelled daily along it.

As we were farther and farther away from Yangon, the scenes around us became more and more countrified and pleasant. Now and then, hills with a small pagoda at their top with a shady tree behind and the blue sky and ranges of gray mountains rolling in the distant background swung into view. Roofed stair-causes were seen leading up to the top of the hills. It seemed to me that the twinkling of bells from the pagodas was heard. I had a feeling of

religious awe as if in the precincts of a monastery or a meditation centre. These pagoda-crowned hills suggest that the Myanmar is a peace-loving people who take shelter in the loving-kindness of the Compassionate Buddha. At some spots, the road passed by steep hill-sides resembling freshly-cut slices of bread, where some horizontally stratified rocks were found embedded in the rock matrix. In some places, the gullies on the roadside dropped away gradually to a considerable depth as far as a place where another chain of thinly-wooded hills rose again abruptly. We often saw a few villagers plodding along the tracks through wooded lands on the roadsides to the neighbouring villages. Micro-wave towers were occasionally seen standing tall above the trees growing on hills. At a certain place, we saw the National Power Grid running east-west through far-off hills. We also espied hay-stacks in some harvested fields. Often, we saw some cattle lumbering down the grassy moors lining the road.

To be continued

New car parking system to start in Yangon

Ko Htwe

A mechanical car parking system which takes up a small amount of space but can accommodate up to 15 cars will be introduced in Yangon.

The Shin Ye Htut Group, a local company, and the Watahan Company, a Japanese corporation, demonstrated the mechanical car parking system yesterday at a workshop in Mingalardon Township in Yangon.

"To assemble the Mechanical Car Parking System as you see today, we had sent Myanmar experts to Japan for three months. We want the car parking system to be changed systematically in Yangon in the democratic government," said U Ye Htut, Chairman of Shin Ye Htut Company.

The two companies, merged as Shin Watahan, established a workshop after they imported the required machinery and technology from Japan to be able to pro-

duce not only a Mechanical Car Parking System but also a Relocation Car Parking System.

The workshop has drawn interest since November 2016, when it was established. In the initial stage, the company imports all the necessary tools and assembles the Mechanical Car Parking System with Japan and Myanmar experts.

"At present, all the parts are imported. Later, we plan to produce the iron beam in Myanmar that can reduce the price," said U Ye Htut, adding that they plan to transform the current workshop into a huge factory.

According to the company, the Mechanical Car Parking System is being used mostly in condominium buildings in Japan. The new company starts its market in Myanmar and then expands into South East Asia. The next market is going to be set up in Thailand.

"I saw many cars parked on

the streets in Yangon. It is dangerous. I want all cars to be in parking places. I want Myanmar to make the regulations for it. I wish Myanmar to implement the systematic car parking system," said Mr Yoshiharu Okabe, Managing Director of Shin Watahan Company, who pointed out Yangon would need to quickly implement the car parking system to ease heavy traffic.

Mr Yoshiharu Okabe said the company has plans to share the technology with Myanmar as it is started from very detailed work and is now an easy system initiated in Japan.

The Mechanical Car Parking System comes in different sizes to be able to set up in different unoccupied areas and can be handled easily without affecting the environment. It currently costs US\$7,000 but will cost only US\$5,000 if assembled in Myanmar. Maintenance costs are US\$10 per month.



Experts from Shin Watahan pose for a photo in front of the demonstrative mechanical car parking system. Photo: Ko Htwe

As deluges threaten crops, Bangladesh's hill farmers shift tactics

Rafiqul Islam

FOR a long time, slash and burn agriculture was a way of life for Funghkal Bawn.

Like other farmers from the ethnic Bawn community, in the Chittagong Hill Tract area of Bangladesh, he used to clear a new strip of land every season on the slopes near his village of Farukpara. On it he grew a single crop such as paddy rice, pineapple, ginger or turmeric.

But two years ago, a flash flood triggered by torrential rains damaged his entire crop of rice, leaving him short of food and money to buy new seeds.

The setback forced Bawn to rethink his traditional method of farming and find a more sustainable way to grow crops, to hedge against the growing likelihood of extreme weather.

Now Bawn sows a mixture of traditional crops and other plants on the hill slopes, to minimise his losses if any natural disaster hits his crop land again.

Other farmers are following his lead to help improve their resilience against the worsening

impacts of climate change.

"I started mixed cultivation of crops, including pineapple, ginger, mango and coffee together," Bawn told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

He sows and harvests the crops at different times. If one is damaged by floods or erratic rainfall, there is a chance that another will survive, and he will

earn more money selling the cash crop.

Another farmer, Nu Ang Bawn, intends to plant coffee and mango saplings on her hill slopes from next season.

"Now I sow only ginger and pineapple on my land. But I want to start mixed crops cultivation from next season to get more benefit from farming," she added.

The rainfall pattern shifts in South Asia as a result of climate change, the hill tract area can expect monsoons to bring more intense rain over shorter periods.

be able to sell that one instead, he explained.

Ten of the 22 families in Farukpara's Bawn community are now practising similar mixed cultivation.

Zarmoy Bawn, one of Funghkal's neighbours, said that along with traditional crops he has planted coffee saplings on his land. He hopes that once the trees start fruiting, he will be able to

MORE HEAVY RAIN

Weather services and climate experts say the frequency of heavy rain is increasing in South Asia, including Bangladesh, while lighter rainfall is becoming less common.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), situated in Bangladesh's south-east and bordering India and Myanmar, are the country's only largely hilly region, with

slopes prone to problems in heavy rain.

A 2014 study by the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology found that rainfall has been increasing in recent decades, both during and before the annual monsoon. In 2007, the Chittagong region received 480 mm (19 inches) of rain in a single day, leading to flooding and landslides that killed more than 100 people.

Malik Fida A. Khan, deputy executive director of the Dhaka-based Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services, a think-tank, said that as the rainfall pattern shifts in South Asia as a result of climate change, the hill tract area can expect monsoons to bring more intense rain over shorter periods.

This could lead to massive soil erosion and flash floods, he said.

Reducing the use of traditional shifting cultivation – which can lead to the removal of trees or plants that help hold soil and trap water on slopes – could help reduce risks, and not just in the

hills, he said.

"As a result of soil erosion due to shifting cultivation, the streams, rivers and tributaries are rapidly silted up, resulting in flash floods in the CHT region," said Abdul Mannan, a programme officer for the Arannayk Foundation, a joint initiative of the Bangladeshi and U.S. governments that works on forest conservation and biodiversity in Bangladesh.

Mohammad Quadrat-E-Ghana, a director of Bangladesh's Department of Agriculture Extension (Horticulture), said there is great potential for growing fruit and other new crops to replace shifting cultivation in the hill tracts.

The agriculture department has opened 15 fruit tree centres in three hill districts, distributing high-quality saplings to farmers to encourage them to change their farming practices, cut soil erosion and slow land degradation.

He said about 60 percent of farmers living in the hill areas had already started making changes in how they grow crops.—Reuters

Assessing climate risk in Myanmar: summary for policymakers and planners

THIS brief aims to help decision-makers across sectors in Myanmar incorporate climate change risks into planning and investment decisions by summarising key messages from a detailed technical analysis of climate change in Myanmar that is released alongside this report.

Specifically, this brief provides climate risk information. It highlights how climate change will affect key sectors, provides

on-the-ground examples of how climate risk information is being used by the Myanmar Climate Change Alliance (MCCA) to support local planning, and supports a flexible adaptation approach, providing a range of possible future climates in Myanmar.

The study finds that many interventions will be required to address the risks identified in this brief and associated longer technical report. In general, deci-

sion-makers and planners in Myanmar should do the following:

- Change practices in specific sectors, e.g. crop choices, planting patterns, and water-use efficiency for agriculture;
- Strengthen infrastructure, including the use of ecosystem-based adaptation approaches such as mangrove forests to help protect communities from frequent

floods;

- Protect forests and other ecosystems that provide services that help build climate resilience for people, such as safeguarding clean drinking water and preventing erosion;
- Assess conservation strategies to support adaptation for ecosystems and biodiversity (e.g. wildlife corridors to upland or inland areas);

- Develop disaster preparedness and response strategies to cope with increasing heat stresses, changes in the hydrological cycle, and extreme events.

Source(s): Columbia University United Nations Human Settlements Programme - Myanmar (UN-HABITAT Myanmar) World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF)

St Petersburg metro blast suspect likely born in central Asia

BISHKEK/ST PETERSBURG, Russia — A blast in a St Petersburg train carriage on Monday that killed 11 people and wounded 45 was probably carried out by a Russian citizen born in Kyrgyzstan, authorities from the predominantly Muslim central Asian state said on Tuesday.

The explosion was a suspected suicide bombing by a perpetrator with ties to radical Islamists, Russia's Interfax news agency cited a law enforcement source as saying late on Monday. A spokesman for the Kyrgyz GKNB security service identified the suspect as Akbarzhon Jalilov, born in the city of Osh in 1995, but provided no other details.

Russia has been on particular alert against attacks

on its soil in reprisal for its military intervention in Syria, where Moscow's forces have been supporting troops loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The Islamic State group has repeatedly threatened revenge attacks.

If it is confirmed that the bomber was linked to radical Islamists, some sections of Russian society could see it as proof that Moscow's decision to intervene in Syria has made civilians into targets.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Kyrgyzstan, a former Soviet republic of six million, is a close political ally of Moscow and hosts a Russian military airbase.

Late on Monday, Russian President Vladimir

Putin visited the site of the blast, which made a huge hole in the side of a carriage and blew off the door, with metal wreckage strewn across the platform.

Passengers were seen hammering at the windows of one closed carriage after the train had pulled into the Sennaya Ploshad station at around 2:40 pm (1140 GMT).

Russian TV said many had suffered lacerations from glass shards and metal, the force of the explosion amplified by the confines of the carriage and the tunnel.

St Petersburg television showed footage of the corpse of a bearded man they said was the perpetrator. The man resembled footage of a man captured on closed circuit television

who Russian media said was a suspect.

Officials said they were treating the blast as an act of terrorism, but there was no official confirmation of any link to Islamist radicals.

The National Anti-Terrorist Committee said an explosive device had been found at another station, hidden in a fire extinguisher, but had been defused.

Authorities closed all St Petersburg metro stations. The Moscow metro said it was taking unspecified additional security measures in case of an attack there.

The blast raised security fears beyond Russian frontiers. France, which has itself suffered a series of attacks, announced additional security measures in Paris.—*Reuters*



Russian president Vladimir Putin puts flowers down outside Tekhnologicheskii Institut metro station in St Petersburg, Russia on 3 April 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

US Senate battle over Trump Supreme Court pick gathers steam

WASHINGTON — The US Senate fight over President Donald Trump's Supreme Court nominee, Neil Gorsuch, begins moving on Tuesday to its decisive phase as Democrats seek to block a final vote and Republicans vow to ensure the conservative judge's confirmation.

Democrats amassed enough support on Monday to block a straightforward Senate confirmation vote, but Republicans threatened to change long-standing Senate rules to force a final vote by the end of the week, a move known as

the "nuclear option."

Senate confirmation of Gorsuch, 49, an appeals court judge would restore the nine-seat high court's conservative majority, fulfilling one of Trump's top campaign promises. The vacancy was created by the February 2016 death of conservative Justice Antonin Scalia.

The Senate's Republican leaders insist Gorsuch will be confirmed on the Senate floor on Friday regardless of what the Democrats do. Republicans hold a 52-48 Senate majority.

The Senate Judiciary

Committee voted 11-9 on Monday along party lines to send Gorsuch's nomination to the full Senate.

The extreme partisan divisions in the chamber illustrate the difficulties Trump faces in pushing through his agenda even though his fellow Republicans control the White House and Congress.

The procedural hurdle backed by Democrats, called a filibuster, requires a super-majority of 60 votes in the 100-seat Senate to allow a confirmation vote.

The process leading to the showdown is likely

to begin on Tuesday when Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell sets the clock ticking on the Senate floor debate on the nomination. The Senate would then vote on Thursday on whether to limit the debate.

Under Senate rules, if at least 41 Democrats vote against ending the debate, no final vote on the nomination is possible. In the face of the filibuster, McConnell would be expected to force through the rule change, leading to a final vote on Friday evening to confirm Gorsuch by a simple majority.—*Reuters*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Scott: Vucic's victory a commitment to prosperous Serbia

BELGRADE — US Ambassador to Serbia Kyle Scott said on Monday he saw PM Aleksandar Vucic's victory in the presidential elections as the voters' commitment to the policy pursued to date and to a prosperous future for Serbia. Scott said this during a conversation with Vucic, whom he also congratulated on the election victory.—*Tanjug*

Russian investigators say have found metro bomb suspect's body parts

MOSCOW — Russia's state investigative committee said on Tuesday that the deadly St Petersburg metro blast was caused by a bomb that had possibly been detonated by a man whose body parts were found in one of the train carriages.

"It has been ascertained that an explosive device could have been detonated by a man, fragments of whose body were found in the third carriage of the train," the committee, which has sweeping powers, said in a statement. "The man has been identified but his identity will not be disclosed for now in the interests of the investigation," the statement added.—*Reuters*

France reinforces Paris public transport security after Russia blast

PARIS — France is increasing security at public transport locations in Paris after an explosion killed at least nine people in a St Petersburg metro tunnel on Monday, the interior ministry said.

"Following the events in the St Petersburg metro, and as a precautionary measure, Interior Minister Matthias Fekl has decided to redeploy security means in public transport across the Paris region," the ministry said in a statement. "Amid an extremely high terrorism threat, the government continues to take measures to protect the French people."—*Reuters*

Man suspected in cyber-bullying case may be extradited to Canada — Dutch court

AMSTERDAM — The Dutch Supreme Court ruled on Tuesday that a man suspected of involvement in the cyber-bullying case of Amanda Todd may be extradited to Canada.

Aydin Coban, 38, denies involvement in Todd's case. Todd sparked an international debate over cyber-bullying when she posted a YouTube video detailing her online harassment by an unknown tormenter. She committed suicide in 2012 at age 15.—*Reuters*

Observatory says 58 killed in suspected chemical attack in Syria, military source denies

BEIRUT — A suspected chemical attack by Syrian government or Russian jets killed at least 58 people, including 11 children, in the rebel-held northwestern province of Idlib on Tuesday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a British-based war monitor, said.

A Syrian military source denied that government forces used any such weapons, saying the army "does not and has not" used chemical weapons "not in the past and not in the future".—*Reuters*

Putin, Merkel and Hollande discuss anti-terrorism data exchange — Kremlin

MOSCOW — The leaders of Russia, Germany and France agreed in a phone call on Tuesday to speed up the exchange of data aimed at fighting terrorism, the Kremlin said.

They spoke following Monday's deadly bomb attack on a metro train in Russia's second-largest city of St Petersburg which killed 14 people and wounded 50.—*Reuters*

Iraq reopens hot springs spa amid Mosul war chaos

HAMMAM AL-ALIL, Iraq—ome Iraqis in this town get massages in a spa or take muddy baths and relax in the morning sun on the banks of the Tigris. Others beg for food or rise at dawn to queue for water.

Hammam al-Alil, a town south of Mosul once famous throughout Iraq for its healing hot waters, is back in business after a US-backed offensive retook the area from Islamic State militants and authorities reopened its spa.

This oasis of leisure now coexists, however, with camps housing more than 30,000 of the people displaced in the region by the campaign to dislodge Islamic State from Mosul, its the last major city stronghold in Iraq.

"I come here three times a week," said 47-year old Ali Qader, a retired soldier, after showering with water from a natural spring. "It's refreshing and good for your skin."

Residents have been flocking back since Islamic State was expelled from the town in early November, ending the days when bathers had to wear a tunic covering them from knee to navel as part of the Sunni Muslim movement's strict modesty code.

"If you had only swimwear, Daesh (Islamic State) would whip you," said Wael Abdullah, 12, before diving into a pool.

"The hisbah came checking that everyone had the right



Iraqis swim at a sulfur pond at Hammam al-Alil city south of Mosul, Iraq on 3 April, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

dress," he said, referring to the religious police that monitored everything from men's beards to women's veils.

Across the street is an indoor pool where locals and soldiers taking a day off from the front get a soapy massage.

The spa used to be magnet for wellness tourists and rheumatism patients but had passed its heyday even before the Islamist militants arrived in 2014.

"We used to have visitors from Baghdad, the south and even the Gulf, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia," said Latif Mohammed, who was hired to help run the spa for 10,000 Iraqi dinars (\$8.58) a day. "It was built in the '80s but needs refurbishing."

The elegant hotels at the spa are now shuttered or bombed out because Islamic State fighters used to live there. A machine gun nest at the entrance shatters any

sense of normality.

On Monday, the spa opened only at noon due to rumours of an Islamic State attack, said a federal police officer.

Upgrading the baths is probably the last priority for officials who, just 2 km (1.25 miles) away, also have to run one of the biggest camps for people fleeing the battle of Mosul.

Every five minutes or so, a bus pulls into Hammam al-Al-

il with more new arrivals. Up to 5,000 people come every day from the district or across the frontlines around Mosul, around 30 km (19 miles) to the north. The United Nations said on Tuesday the total number of displaced since the offensive began in October had exceeded 300,000 and camps for them are being expanded to take in even more people expected to flee the fighting in and around Mosul's densely populated old city.

With tents packed sometimes with two families in one some spend their first night in a mass tent or outside. Many are in state of shock.

"We left at 1 am to avoid Daesh snipers walking to the army checkpoint and arrived here in the evening," said 20-year old Omar Abdullah, who came with 20 family and fiends.

"We didn't get a place in Hammam al-Alil so we went to a mosque where the preacher took us to his apartment. Now we'll try another camp," he said.

While there's plenty of hot water at the spa, women in the tent city rise early to queue for the water truck that comes once a day.

"We have some 200 spa visitors everyday, locals, soldiers," said Mohammed, the spa worker. "There are also displaced people but many can't afford the 1,000 dinars entrance fee."—Reuters

MERS causes new Saudi hospital outbreak — WHO

GENEVA — Ten people have caught the MERS coronavirus after an outbreak in a haemodialysis unit in a hospital in Saudi Arabia, the World Health Organization said on Tuesday, without giving details of how the virus was able to spread within the hospital.

The potentially fatal Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) is thought to be carried by camels and comes from the same family as the coronavirus that caused China's deadly Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003.

Since MERS emerged in September 2012, 1,935 cases have been confirmed and there have been at least 690 related deaths, WHO said.

The latest outbreak, at Wadi al-Dawasir in Riyadh province, began at the end of February, when a 32-year-old woman and a 31-year-old man showed symptoms. They were hospitalised in the first few days of March, and both were confirmed to have MERS on 4 March.

Contact tracing found eight symptomatic and two asymptomatic cases. Two of those infected were health workers, WHO said.

None of the patients in the outbreak has yet died, WHO said, although MERS generally kills about 36 per cent of sufferers.

Most of the known human-to-human transmission has occurred in health care settings, and the WHO has said hospitals and medical workers should take stringent precautions as a standard measure to stop the disease spreading.

WHO Director-General Margaret Chan has previously criticised Saudi Arabia for allowing MERS to spread in its hospitals, but recently WHO has been reluctant to name and shame Saudi Arabia, the source of the vast majority of cases.

"The infection control measures and the monitoring in hospitals has to be stepped up, but also worldwide, because as we had cases last year and the year before of individual travellers reaching other countries and then spreading it from there," WHO spokesman Christian Lindmeier said in Geneva. Last year the failure to spot MERS in a patient in a vascular surgery ward in Saudi Arabia led to more than 49 other people being exposed to the disease.—Reuters

S Africa's Zuma defends cabinet reshuffle, union calls for him to quit

JOHANNESBURG — President Jacob Zuma said South Africa's fiscal policies will not change and that people should remain calm after its credit rating was cut to junk following a political reshuffle that he defended as bringing new blood into the cabinet.

But moments later, the ANC-allied Cosatu, South Africa's largest trade union, said Zuma must step down after his change of finance ministers triggered the credit rating downgrade.

In his first public remarks about Thursday's midnight reshuffle, Zuma on Tuesday also urged his cabinet to reach out and reassure international investors following the dismissal of former finance minister Pravin Gordhan.

Gordhan's sacking has outraged opponents and some political allies of Zuma, undermining his authority as president, and threatens to split the African National Congress (ANC) that has governed South Africa since the end of apartheid.

"With regards to the finance portfolio, we reiterate that while the political leadership has changed, government's overall policy orientation remains the same as derived from the governing party, the African National



President Jacob Zuma.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Congress," Zuma said.

"We expect the changes to add renewed energy into Cabinet and the executive as a whole," he said referring to the cabinet reshuffle, which he said had added "many young ministers".

The departure of Gordhan, a totem of policymaking stability for many foreign investors whom Zuma thanked on Tuesday for his service, has rocked the rand currency and other local assets.

His sacking and that of former deputy finance minister Mcebisi Jonas were also cited by Standard & Poor's as a reason for its cut in South Africa's credit rating on Monday to BB+, below investment-grade and implying higher

borrowing costs.

The rand, which fell as much as 1.9 per cent at the start of trading on Tuesday, trimmed some losses to trade 0.2 per cent lower after Cosatu called on Zuma to step down. The volatile currency weakened again to trade 0.5 per cent lower.

Thanking Gordhan and Jonas, Zuma said his government remains committed to measured fiscal consolidation that stabilises rising public debt, but would also aim to radically transform the economy to include the black majority.

"We thus remain firm in our call that the economy needs to include the black majority in the ownership and control," he said.

Zuma urged calm, saying public disagreements within the government "demoralise our people and create confusion". This was a "serious weakness and we shall attend to it within renewed vigour", he added. But Cosatu said it no longer believed in Zuma's ability to lead the party and the country, and that it wanted to restructure its alliance with the ANC.

After S&P announced its rating cut, rival Moody's said it was reviewing the Baa2 credit rating it assigns South Africa, two notches above junk, a process that could take 30 to 90 days.—Reuters

Brazil interested in purchasing air defence missile systems from Russia

RIO DE JANEIRO — Brazil is still interested in the purchase of Russia's air defence missile and artillery systems Pantsir-S1, the deputy chief of the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation, Anatoly Punchuk, has told TASS.

"The latest talks with the Brazilian delegation on this subject took place at the international military-technical forum Army-2016. The Brazilian partners say this theme remains on their agenda. We do hope for a positive outcome," said Punchuk, who leads Russia's delegation at the international arms show LAAD-2017.

"The Brazilian military has repeatedly visited the system's manufacturer and saw Pantsir-S1 in action at Russian firing range. Foreign specialists were able

to see for themselves the effectiveness of Russia's system. All targets were hit at the maximum distance," Punchuk said.

According to earlier reports, Brazil's Defence Ministry had plans for acquiring 12 Pantsir-S1 systems installed on a chassis provided by Germany's Rheinmetall to create three batteries. In the meantime, the European company MBDA declared plans to pool efforts with Brazil's Avibras to develop a medium range air defence system AV-MMA, the Pantsir-S1's likely rival. Brazil has conducted talks on acquiring Russia's air defence systems since 2013. Originally, the signing of the contract was scheduled for 2015. In May 2016 the then head of Russia's Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooper-



Pantsir-S1 missile systems. Russia has completed the delivery of Igla-S shoulder-fired air defence missile systems to Brazil. PHOTO: TASS

ation Aleksandr Fomin said that Russia was prepared to deliver Pantsir systems to Brazil but the contract had not been signed yet due to internal problems in that country. Pantsir-S1 is capable of hitting air, surface and naval targets at altitudes of up to 15 kilometres. The effective range of its artil-

lery component is four kilometres. The rate of fire of the 30 mm anti-aircraft gun is 5,000 rounds per minute.

Igla-S shoulder-fired air defence missile system

Russia has completed the delivery of Igla-S shoulder-fired air defence missile systems to Brazil, Deputy Director of the Federal Ser-

vice for Military and Technical Cooperation Anatoly Punchuk told TASS on Tuesday.

Punchuk is heading the Russian delegation at the LAAD-2017 defence and security exhibition in Brazil.

"The 2015 contract for the delivery of Igla-S MANPADS has been implemented in full," Punchuk said.

This is not the first delivery of these systems to Brazil, he noted.

"Brazilian partners highly appreciate the operational characteristics of Russian-made air defence systems," Punchuk said.

The Igla-S man-portable air defence missile system is designed to hit low-flying air targets in on-coming and catch-up flight paths amid false thermal

interference. The Russian Army is being currently re-armed with Verba new-generation MANPADS.

The international Latin American exhibition of aviation and defence systems LAAD-2017 will held in Rio de Janeiro on 4-7 April.

The Russian exposition will feature selections provided by 23 organizations, including 11 manufacturers of military products. On display there will be models of advanced samples of military hardware, including a combat and training plane Yakovlev-130, helicopter gunship Mi-28NE, helicopter Ka-226T, light multi-role helicopter Ansat, air defence missile system Tor-M2KM, corvette of project 20382 Tigr, patrol boat of project 12200 Sobol and other defense industry products.—TASS

Ministry of Planning and Finance Directorate of Investment and Company Administration Announcement of Myanmar Investment Rules

In exercise of the power conferred under sub-section (a) of section 100 of the Myanmar Investment Law, the Ministry of Planning and Finance has issued the Myanmar Investment Rules (Notification No. (35/2017)) with the approval of Union Government on 30th March, 2017. The Myanmar Investment Rules and its unofficial english translation was posted on our website www.dica.gov.mm for public awareness.

Directorate of Investment and Company Administration
Ministry of Planning and Finance

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE (INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER) (7 / 2017)

Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in Myanmar Kyats.

Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Remark
(1)	DMP/L-001(17-18)	Redress Kit, Casing Packer, Shifting Tool & Sliding Sleeve (6) Items	Ks
(2)	DMP/L-002(17-18)	OTECO Gate Valves and Spares for Rig Pumps (16) Items	Ks
(3)	DMP/L-003(17-18)	2", 3" & 4" Pipe Fitting (13) Items	Ks
(4)	DMP/L-004(17-18)	Welding Electrode (6) Items	Ks
(5)	DMP/L-005(17-18)	Steel Wire Rope for Oil Field Truck (2) Items	Ks
(6)	DMP/L-006(17-18)	2" Oteco Pressure Relief Valves (PRV Type), Thread End (2) Nos	Ks
(7)	DMP/L-007(17-18)	Foreign Bentonite (500) Tons	Ks
(8)	DMP/L-008(17-18)	Steel Helmet (2000) Nos	Ks
(9)	DMP/L-009(17-18)	A3 Digital Multifunction Copier (1) No	Ks
(10)	DMP/L-010(17-18)	18 R 22.5 x 18 PR Tyre Tubeless (12) Sets	Ks
(11)	DMP/L-011(17-18)	Assorted Sizes of PDC Bits (2) Items	Ks
(12)	DMP/L-012(17-18)	5 1/2" Change Nipple (2) Items	Ks

Tender Closing Date & Time- 2-5-2017, 16:30 Hr

Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 3TH April, 2017 at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No (44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise
Ph . +95 67 - 411206 / 411274

Britain's May must prove "no deal is better than a bad deal"—committee

LONDON — British Prime Minister Theresa May must prove that "no deal is better than a bad deal" by offering an economic assessment on the impact of leaving the European Union with no agreement, a parliamentary committee said on Tuesday.

Just days after May triggered the formal divorce procedure with the European Union, the committee, made up of lawmakers from the prime minister's Conservatives and other parties, also called on the government to publish its contingency planning for failing to strike a deal after two years of talks.

May enters the unprecedented talks with an ambitious game plan, wanting "frictionless" trade and good coopera-

tion with the bloc while gaining control over immigration and returning sovereignty — a wish list EU officials have balked at.

But she has also said she is prepared to walk away from the talks without a deal rather than accepting a "bad" one, a term her government has so far declined to elaborate on despite fears among manufacturers over new trade barriers if Britain has to revert to World Trade Organization rules.

"Without an economic impact assessment of 'no deal' and without evidence that steps are being taken to mitigate the damaging effect of such an outcome, the government's assertion that 'no deal is better than a bad deal' is unsubstantiated," said Hilary Benn, chairman of the Committee on Exiting the EU.

"Parliament must be in an informed position to decide whether a proposed deal is, in fact, better or worse than no deal," he added in a statement.

May has been reticent about what she hopes to achieve in the talks so as not to give her hand away.

"I'm very clear that we will be working to get the best possible deal for the UK," May told Sky News. "I set out (in the formal letter to the EU triggering Brexit) what would be a no deal situation but I also said I don't think that's in anybody's interest."

Government officials, lawmakers and analysts say privately that she believes she has some strong cards to play, while also hoping that EU officials will favour pragmatism over punishment. —Reuters



British Prime Minister Theresa May. PHOTO: REUTERS

Indian farmers beef up below sea-level system for climate fight

By Maripadma Jena

KUTTANAD, (India) — Farmer Moncy Joseph, who grows rice on land below sea level in India's Kuttanad region, is determined not to be beaten by climate change.

Last year, the 44-year-old bought two Kasaragod Dwarf cows, an endangered native breed that grows just 3 feet (91 cm) tall and whose dung makes extra-rich fertiliser.

Last season's bitter gourd vines, now withered grey, hang from plastic nets above the grazing animals. It's been three years since Joseph diversified into two-storey vegetable farming, using overhead trellises.

"Plan B — in readiness," he said at his home in Champakulam village, making light of the uncertainty faced by farmers in the southwest coastal state of Kerala as temperatures and the ocean rise.

Here in Kuttanad, scientists are working to adapt a 150-year-old Indian farming system used on land 2 metres (6.56 ft) below sea level that has withstood saltwater infiltration and monsoon floods, hoping it could help fight global warming, rising oceans and coastal storms.

As the only part of India where rice is farmed below sea level, it was designated in 2013 by the United Nations as a globally important agricultural heritage system.

But since India's Green Revolution began in the 1960s, farmers came to rely on chemical fertilisers and pesticides to boost rice yields.

That damaged fish populations and distorted the system — an effect that has worsened in recent years as



A farm hand sprinkles chemical fertilisers to protect the rice crop from pests that are increasing with heat and high humidity arriving early in Kidangara village, Kuttanad, India, January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

they use more chemicals to keep up production in the face of climate change.

Now efforts are under way to rejuvenate the traditional model as a wider "ecosystem approach" that treats rice, fish, ducks, cattle, humans, houses, coconut and cash crops as part of a single system, said Leena Kumari S., a scientist who leads Kerala Agricultural University's Rice Research Station in Moncompu town.

The aim is to make farmers self-sufficient, cutting the use of chemical inputs and costs, and providing an alternative income if crops fail due to weather or climate extremes, she explained.

Half of the Kuttanad region, a trough of 110,000 hectares (271,816 acres) covering 79 villages in three districts, is under sea level, consisting of reclaimed delta swamps fenced by dykes, out of which water is pumped every few days, similar to the Dutch polder system. It supports 30,000 farming families.

The rest consists of higher dry land where coconut trees are grown, as well as wetlands and a maze of water networks including canals and sea-water inlets.

Four rivers, fed by monsoon rainfall, drain into Kuttanad, bringing fresh water, fertile silt and flooding that can last for weeks between June and October.

When the rivers' flow slows from December to May, the water level drops below that of the sea, enabling salt water to leach into the low rice lands.

"So adapted were traditional rice varieties to local deep water situations that they grew taller with the rising flood water, keeping their panicles (grain-producing tips) above water at all times," explained Leena Kumari.

Farmers traditionally cultivated saline-tolerant rice varieties like this and bred fish on the same plot, together or alternately in two seasons per year, alongside coconut on the dykes, comprising their staple

foods.

Fish fed off the rotting rice-harvest residue while rice was fertilised by fish excrement, making added nutrients unnecessary.

"Cooked rice from these grains had a distinctive aroma and taste," said 81-year-old Thommy Thomas, a wiry man in a white wrap watching over the emerald green fields he has farmed for 54 years.

But rice yields were low, at 2 tonnes per hectare, compared with 10 tonnes from today's high-yielding varieties, Leena Kumari said.

DROWNING IN CHEMICALS

As farmers were encouraged to adopt chemical inputs and new varieties during the Green Revolution, Kuttanad became Kerala's rice bowl in the 1970s.

One-third of the state's rice came from here, although it accounted for only 15 per cent of Kerala's 875,000 hectares of paddies.

That area has since reduced to 200,000 hectares, devoured by urban expansion. But Kuttanad has not let its rice fields shrink and is now seen as central to Kerala's future food security.

The Thanneermukkom barrage, built in 1975 to block seawater, and a spillway constructed in 1955 to drain off floodwater extended the rice season, also pushing up annual yields.

But human intervention has harmed Kuttanad's ecology — particularly its fish stocks, which have dwindled due to the high level of chemicals in the water, said KG Padma Kumar, director of the International Research and Training Centre for Below Sea-level Farming, set up in 2016 to rejuvenate the heritage farming system.

Calls are now growing among Kerala's ecologists, scientists and fishing communities to change the way the dam is used and to cut the use of agricultural chemicals.

Scientists estimate that reverting to the traditional system where rice and fish are co-produced organically could boost farmers' incomes by 40 per cent, compared with today.

For now, some farmers, like Joseph, are experimenting with new sources of income. Hundreds of ducks nest on water-logged farms, fertilising them with their manure, which is supplemented by cattle and vermi-composted kitchen waste.

Others are planting vegetables on top of the thousands of kilometres of low earthen dykes, alongside the coconut trees whose roots have strengthened the banks against floods for decades.

At the research station,

traditional flood-tolerant rice germplasm cross-bred with high-yielding varieties is already surviving 15 days of submergence. The next goal is to breed rice that can withstand 30 days of water stress, as floods become more frequent.

EXPORTING KNOWLEDGE

Meanwhile, as climate change brings higher temperatures, combined with up to 95 per cent humidity due to the water all around, insects and disease vectors are rapidly multiplying.

"Kuttanad is turning into a hot spot for plant pests and diseases during the November-to-April cropping season," Leena Kumari said.

Minor pests are turning into major ones, increasing damage, and hitherto unknown crop diseases are emerging, she added.

At Joseph's farm, a plastic bottle containing a green cube hangs on a mango tree, with dozens of dead large-winged ants at the bottom.

"We are experimenting with native bio-control organisms that feed on attacking pests in soil, fruit and crop plants," Leena Kumari said.

Other countries facing similar problems are interested in learning more about Kuttanad's unique farming system, including Sri Lanka, China and Thailand, said Nadesa Panicker Anil Kumar, biodiversity director at the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation.

Once work to adapt the below sea-level system to a changing climate is further advanced, India could share the approach with Bangladesh and the Maldives too, helping bolster food security against sea level rise, said the scientist.—Reuters

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV ANDAMAN STAR VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ANDAMAN STAR VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 5.4.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GLODEN SEA**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV MERATUS GORONTALO VOY. NO (168)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MERATUS GORONTALO VOY. NO (168) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 5.4.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S YANG MING LINE**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV DENSA EAGLE VOY. NO (0577)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV DENSA EAGLE VOY. NO (0577) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 5.4.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T-5 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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AGENT FOR: M/S CHUN AN SHIPPING PTE LTD**

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‘Speaking up’, Depeche Mode expect more musicians to sing about world today



LONDON — With lyrics like “We’re going backwards” and “Blame misinformation”, the British electronic band Depeche Mode hope to “make people think” about the state of the world with their new album and expect more musicians to do the same.

Singer Dave Gahan, guitarist and keyboardist Martin Gore and keyboardist Andrew Fletcher last month released “Spirit”, featuring politically and socially-charged songs like “Where’s the Revolution”, first inspired in 2015 by the Syrian conflict.

“When Martin ... wrote the songs a couple of years ago, he was sort of feeling that things weren’t going in the right direction,” Fletcher told Reuters.

“We don’t feel music can change things, really, but just to make people think a bit, look around the world and see what’s

going on.”

Breaking onto the British new wave scene in the 1980s, the band is known for its synthpop music rather than being “overtly political” and decided to “speak up a bit” in its latest work, Fletcher said.

“I feel there definitely is a move to the right all over Europe and Britain to a certain extent and definitely in America. Personally, I think it is something to worry about a little bit. We’re not communists ... we’re just slightly left ... I think there probably will be a reaction in music,” he said.

“Maybe we got a bit of a break where we happened to be a bit ahead of the curve and this just came out at the perfect time, but I’m sure there are people now that are probably writing stuff that reflects what’s going on,” Gore said.

At home, Brexit remains top

of the agenda. Depeche Mode formed in Basildon, a town that voted to leave the European Union in last year’s referendum.

“I think it’s terrible ... It could lead this country down completely the wrong path,” Fletcher said.

Gore said he was “completely depressed” the day after the vote: “I didn’t actually, really think it was going to happen...It doesn’t seem like it’s a very good idea to me at all ... Let’s hope it’s going to somehow be OK for the UK.”

Asked if politically stanced songs were now on the agenda for the band, Gore said he did not want to be “pigeon-holed”.

“The thought of having to write political songs forever would be probably quite disheartening,” Gore said.

“Let’s hope that nobody needs to, let’s hope the world becomes a better place.”—Reuters

Harrison Ford not disciplined by US agency for pilot mishap

LOS ANGELES — Actor Harrison Ford, the daring space pilot of “Star Wars” fame, will get to keep flying airplanes in real life after federal officials closed a probe of his latest aviation mishap near Los Angeles without fines or other discipline, his lawyer said on Monday.

Ford, 74, came under investigation after he mistakenly flew his single-engine private plane over an American Airlines passenger jet and landed on a taxiway, rather than a runway, on 13 February at John Wayne Airport in Santa Ana.

The Federal Aviation Administration determined at the conclusion of its inquiry that “no administrative or enforcement action was warranted,” Ford’s lawyer, Stephen Hofer said in a statement. “Mr Ford retains his pilot’s certificate without restriction.”

The actor, who played swash-buckling space smuggler and Millennium Falcon pilot Han Solo in the “Star Wars” film franchise, also was cited by the agency for his “long history of compliance” with FAA regulations and “his cooperative attitude during the investigation,” Hofer said.

Although Ford incurred no penalty, he agreed to undergo voluntary “airman counseling” before the FAA closed the matter, his lawyer said. It was Ford’s second known misadventure in the more than 20 years since becoming a licensed pilot.

In 2015, he crashed a vintage

plane onto a golf course near a Santa Monica airport, suffering serious injuries and badly damaging the aircraft. He told investigators then he did not recall the moments before the plane went down.

In addition to interviewing Ford following the Santa Ana incident, investigators examined audio tapes of pilot and air traffic control radio traffic, radar data and a three-dimensional flight analysis.

The actor was alone and at the controls of his Aviat Husky on a landing approach when he errantly flew over a Boeing 737 preparing for takeoff with 116 passengers and crew aboard, then landed his plane on a taxiway parallel to the runway assigned him.

Ford was clearly embarrassed by the gaffe, according to radio traffic, acknowledging to the tower, “I’m the schmuck that landed on the taxiway.” An air traffic controller assures the film star that the mishap is “no big deal.” Audio also revealed Ford had apparently been momentarily distracted by an Airbus passenger jet landing just ahead of him.

The FAA declined comment on the case other than saying it had completed an investigation of a 13 February incident in which a pilot landed on a John Wayne Airport taxiway.

Ford has logged more than 5,000 hours of flight time without being subject to FAA discipline, Hofer said.—Reuters

Drake unshakeable on Billboard 200 with ‘More Life’

NEW YORK — Drake’s album “More Life” spent a second week at the top of the Billboard 200 chart on Monday, keeping Britain’s Ed Sheeran in second place while musician Trey Songz debuted at No 3, according to figures from Nielsen SoundScan.

The Canadian singer-songwriter sold another 225,000 units of “More Life,” which last week set a new record for streaming and proved the biggest-selling album in the United States since Drake’s last release, “Views,” in 2016.

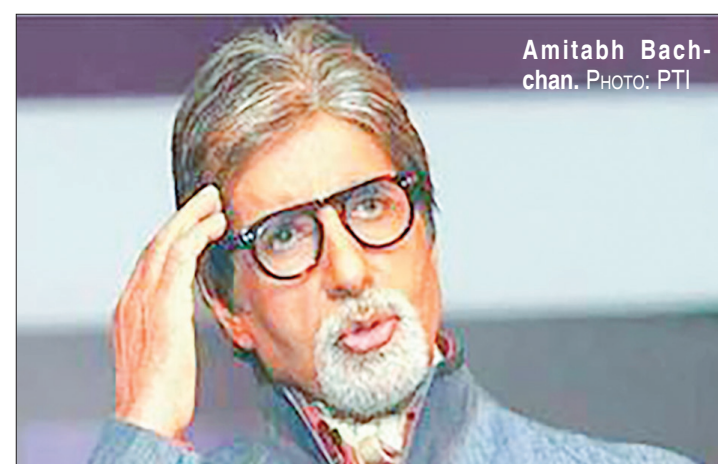
The Billboard 200 album chart tallies units from album sales, song sales (10 songs equal one album) and streaming activity (1,500 streams equal one album).

Sheeran’s album “Divide” pulled in some 98,000 more units

in its fourth week of release, and the musician’s single “Shape of You” added another 85,000 units to keep its place at the top of the digital songs chart.

Trey Songz’s album “Tremaine” was the only other new release to debut in the Top 10, selling 67,000 units to take the No. 3 spot on the Billboard 200.—Reuters

Recording artist Drake walks to the stage to accept the Favourite Artist — “Rap/Hip Hop” award during the 2016 American Music Awards in Los Angeles, California, US on 20 November, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS



Bachchan, SRK thank PV Sindhu for making India proud

MUMBAI — Megastar Amitabh Bachchan and superstar Shah Rukh Khan have congratulated newly-crowned India Open Super Series champion PV Sindhu on her win and thanked her for making the country proud.

The Bollywood stars took to Twitter to express their excitement on Sindhu’s success.

Sindhu, who had lost to Marin in Rio, produced an inspiring performance and won the

final in straight sets 21-19 21-16.

“@pvsindhu1 wins #IndiaSS title...HUGE congratulations ! Sweet revenge, after the Olympic loss...But this one more convincing,” Bachchan tweeted.

“Super performance by @Pvsindhu1. Congratulations and thanks for making us proud,” Shah Rukh wrote.

It was Sindhu’s maiden India Open Super Series title.—PTI

Austrian blacksmiths produce armour for Vatican's Swiss Guards

VIENNA — Austrian blacksmiths who produce ceremonial suits of armour for the Vatican's Swiss Guards are close to the end of their current deal to do so, and say supplying the suits will not now be an issue for many years to come.

One of the drawbacks of the Swiss Guards' medieval uniforms is that the craftsmanship needed to make them is disappearing.

Faced with an aged stock in need of replace-

ment, they turned to brothers Johann and Georg Schmidberger — the fifth generation to run the family blacksmith's business in the Austrian town of Molln — to provide them with 80 suits of armour covering the torso and arms.

The brothers have produced 10 of the suits a year since 2009, meaning the deal will be completed this year, and new replacements will not be needed for quite some time.

"I think it won't be an

issue for another couple of hundred years," Johann said.

The brothers' workshop, where all kinds of hammers are piled high near a furnace and anvil, will continue to supply swords, locks, gates and other items to customers including theatres and private collectors.

And, for the coming years at least, he and his brother will produce the Guards' distinctive crested helmets, he said. —Reuters



Suits of armour for the Vatican's Swiss Guards are pictured at a workshop in Molln, Austria, on 29 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Inventor hopes eTrike will succeed where uncle's Sinclair failed

CHEPSTOW (WALES) — More than 30 years after his uncle spectacularly failed to get Britain moving in battery-powered tricycles, inventor Grant Sinclair is optimistic his updated version of the C5 will be a well ridden success.

Gone is the low seat, poor protection and white bath-like design that Clive Sinclair, who made his name as a famed innovator in the computer sector, was ridiculed for when he launched it in 1985 as the future of transport.

In its place is a three-wheeled Iris eTrike prototype, with an elevated seat, the look of a modern day cycling crash helmet and made from expanded polypropylene foam, a hardy substance used in model aircraft builds for its ability to absorb impacts.

"There's nothing else like this on the market. In terms of other e-bikes this is much lighter weight, and much safer because it's like sitting inside a large crash helmet," Grant Sinclair told Reuters.

Sinclair, 44, showed off

the zippy 55 kilogram (121 pounds) one-seater vehicle in a ride over Old Town Bridge from England to Wales, riding ahead of a post van and then through a path in a local park.

The Iris has normal bicycle pedals and eight-speed race bike gearing, combined with a 250-watt electric motor with rechargeable battery pack that kicks in automatically once pedaling is detected. Recharging takes one hour.

Sinclair said his ve-

hicle, which can reach speeds of upto 30 miles per hour (48 kph) and be ridden for up to 50 miles (80 km) with the motor, had grabbed the attention of three established manufacturers who were keen to mass produce it.

He is the third Sinclair to attempt to convince the world about eTrikes, with Clive's son Crispin failing two years ago with a design called Babel, which was unable to raise the required funds through

crowdfunding. The original C5 enjoyed millions of investment but managed minimal sales before it was discontinued, but Grant Sinclair is optimistic the world is now ready for e-Trikes.

"I think the C5 would have a much easier time these days because you have cycle paths everywhere," Sinclair said. The Iris Trike will cost 3,999 pounds (\$5,000) with first deliveries anticipated in late 2017. —Reuters



Grant Sinclair, nephew of Sir Clive Sinclair, who developed an electric tricycle in the 1980s, riding his invention, the Iris E-Trike electric tricycle, Chepstow, Wales, on 28 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Food and Wine magazine picks most promising US chefs in 2017

NEW YORK— Some of the most promising US chefs are serving their food in elaborate formats, suggesting multi-course tasting menus might be enjoying a revival, according to Food and Wine magazine which released its annual list of up-and-coming chefs on Monday.

Tasting menus, while a staple at high-end restaurants, have seen their popularity eclipsed in recent years by small plates and family-style dining.

"The tasting menu has always been a great showcase for creative chefs who want to tell a story through their food, but this year we're seeing something even more dynamic," Food and Wine magazine Editor-in-Chief Nilou Motamed told Reuters.

At his 12-seat restaurant Otoko in Austin, Yoshi Okai combines two Japanese styles — "omakase" in which customers leave the dish selection entirely up to the chef, and the "kaiseki" meal of numerous small plates. Customers can feast on a 22-course dinner.

At Californios in San Francisco, Val Cantu showcases upscale Mexican food with California influences in a tasting menu involving up to 16 dishes.

Other chefs from this year's roster also feature tasting menus, many of which run about \$100 to \$200 a person.

Noah Sandoval serves a 16-course dinner at his 28-seat Oriole in Chicago.

At Mixtli in San Antonio, a dozen guests at the "chefs table" can enjoy more than 10 Mexican-in-

spired dishes from Diego Galicia and Rico Torres.

Jay Blackinton, who raises his own pigs and grows his own vegetables, offers small plates and a tasting menu at Hogstone's Wood Oven in Orca's Island, Washington.

At the other end of the price scale, Peter Cho creates a \$35 Korean-American family-style fixed-price \$35 menu at Han Oak in Portland, Oregon.

Previous chefs on the closely watched annual list have achieved national success: receiving Michelin stars or winning a James Beard award, the most prestigious US culinary prize.

Reinvention of familiar cuisines are seen from this year's roster.

"We are looking for people who are pushing the boundaries of food and reimagining the way we approach restaurant cooking," Motamed said.

Critics praised Angie Mar's inventive meat dishes at Beatrice Inn in New York, while Nina Compton combines her upbringing in St Lucia and her classic European training at Compère Lapin in New Orleans.

Sara Kramer and Sarah Hymanson bring their version of Middle Eastern cuisine at Kismet in Los Angeles.

Jordan Kahn perhaps stands out the most in this year's class. With his reputation for avant-garde dishes featuring molecular gastronomic technique, Kahn turned his focus on vegetables at Destroyer in Culver City, California, open only for breakfast and lunch. —Reuters

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Myanmar International

Programme Schedule

(5-4-2017 07:00am ~ 6-4-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:25	Am	Myanmar Social & Charitable Association (EP-3) (Part-1)
07:50	Am	Myanmar Social & Charitable Association (EP-3) (Part-2)
08:03	Am	News
08:25	Am	Lawka Nandar Wildlife Sanctuary And Its Rare Star Tortoises
08:49	Am	Farming: Duck Breeder
09:03	Am	News
09:25	Am	Chef Life: Thit Htoo
09:37	Am	Thingyan Songs & Dances

09:48	Am	Civic Duty
10:03	Am	News
10:25	Am	Shrinking Footprints
10:49	Am	Sai Ye Kwan
(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm) - Tuesday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)		
(03:00 Pm ~ 07:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)		
Prime Time		
07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	Cruising To Precious Islands (Part-1)
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Innovative Handiworks Based on The Art of Line Drawing
08:45	Pm	Five Hair Relic Enshrined Pagodas
(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)		
(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am) - Tuesday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)		
(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) - Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)		
(For Detailed Schedule - www.myanmaritv.com/schedule)		



A Japanese player aims for the ball as the opposing team readies their defense. PHOTO: KO KO SOE NYUNT

Myanmar to vie with Australia for 7th place of U-19 Asia Volleyball Championship

MYANMAR will fight against Australian team for the 7th place of the under-19 Asia Volleyball Championship in Nay Pyi Taw today after being defeated by Thailand 3-0 in straight sets (15-25, 18-25, 17-25) at the Wunna Theikdi Indoor Stadium in Nay

Pyi Taw yesterday.

Meanwhile, China (Taipei) and Thailand will fight for the 5th place and China and Iran for the 3rd place today at the stadium.

Australia has already lost to host Myanmar 3-0. In semi-final matches, Japan defeated China

3-0 (25-16, 29-27, 25-22) and South Korea beat Iran 3-2. Japan and South Korea will compete for the championship of the 2017 Asian Youth Boys Volleyball Championship which opened on March 28 in Nay Pyi Taw and will wrap up today.—*Ye Yint Shine*

Press Conference on Pre Magway-Angkor AFC Cup

A press conference was held before the day of the AFC Magway-Angkor match at MFF Office and was attended by coaches and players from both teams.

“This is our first national match so we are a bit inexperienced and we lost some matches we should have won. We are also weak on the offense so we couldn’t score enough goals, although I am satisfied with the team’s footwork and determination. This match is another step for raising the dignity of our team and could possibly be another step up for us. We will play with teamwork, not individually,” said U Zaw Win Htun, the coach of Magway FC. Mark Jilan, coach of the Angkor team said, “We won against the Magway team in the first

matchup. We can hope to go another step further, so we will try our best to win this match. The Magway team is a good team and the expatriate players are exceptional. Although the field is away for us we will try hard to win.”

This match is the hope for the Magway team to step up the ranks. In the first matchup Johodharshall (Malaysia) scored 7 points, Global (Philippines) scored 6 points, Angkor (Cambodia) scored 3 points, and Magway scored 1 point. In the first matchup the Magway team played on the opposing team’s home field and lost by 0-1 goal.

The second matchup for Magway-Angkor will be held in Thuwanna stadium on 5 April at 3:30 pm.—*Shine Htet Zaw*



Tennis-Injured Konta withdraws from Charleston tournament

KEY BISCAINE — British number one Johanna Konta has withdrawn from this week’s Volvo Car Open in Charleston, South Carolina, citing a right shoulder injury. Konta, winner of the weekend’s Miami Open, would have been the number two seed in the WTA event.

“I was battling a slight shoulder injury and sickness during Miami which has taken hold,” Konta said in a statement. Konta, the world number seven, won the biggest title of her career when she beat Caroline Wozniacki 6-4, 6-3 in the Miami final on Saturday. American Madison Keys is the Charleston event’s top seed.—*Reuters*

Wenger confident Arsenal can still claim top-four finish

LONDON — Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger said on Tuesday his side remain in the race for a top-four Premier League finish despite the recent slump in form and will look to ensure a positive end to the season.

The North London side, who are sixth in the league and trail fourth-placed Manchester City by seven points, will seek their first victory in four games when they host 14th-placed West Ham United on Wednesday.

Arsenal have never finished outside top-four under Wenger, who sees increased importance in finishing with one of the four Champions League qualification spots this season.

“It’s a good challenge but I think it’s certainly possible,” Wenger told a news conference. “For 20 years I have done it and it looked nothing. Suddenly now it’s important and people realise it is not as easy

as it looked.

“We are fighting to have a positive end of season. That’s why you want the fans to stand behind the team.”

Wenger said defender Laurent Koscielny, who was substituted at half-time during 2-2 draw with Man City on Sunday, suffered an Achilles injury and is set to have a scan later on Tuesday.

“It (the injury) is serious,” said Wenger. “If he has ruptured the fibres then he could be out for a few weeks, if not, he could be available to face Crystal Palace. I will tell you more tomorrow.”

Defender Per Mertesacker and midfielders Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain and Aaron Ramsey return from injury lay-off and could feature against West Ham. Arsenal suffered their first home defeat in eight years when Slaven Bilic’s side won 2-0 at the Emirates last season.—*Reuters*



Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger. PHOTO: REUTERS