State Counsellor urges care in repair of historic pagodas

By Thein Ko Lwin

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has warned against haphazard repair of the toppled spires of the pagodas, following a 6.8 magnitude earthquake that struck the ancient city of Bagan in central Myanmar yesterday.

According to the US Geological Survey, the quake struck 25km (15.5 miles) west of Chauk, at a depth of 84km.

At least 200 pagodas in Bagan have been damaged, Deputy Director General U Zaw Htay of the President’s Office said, adding that the state counsellor had instructed the Ministry of Religious and Cultural Affairs not to start the repair job in a hurry.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi urged them to get technical assistance from the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi urged them to draw up a project plan with the technical assistance from the World Heritage Centre of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. The UNESCO office in Yangon has deployed experts to assess the damage. U Zaw Htay described the move as part of a measure to preserve cultural heritage in the country’s archaeological site.

President U Htin Kyaw, teaming with five union ministers, is now in the country’s most venerated religious and cultural site.

Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko, also in Bagan, is meeting with officials of the cultural and geological departments to discuss the maintenance and renovation of the damaged pagodas in the top tourist destination.
MOI meets for broadcasting media development

THE Ministry of Information held a meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday to discuss the development of broadcasting media.

Director General U Myint Htwe said the discussion focused on amending the broadcasting law to comply with current trends.

A team of legal experts has been formed to amend the law, he said, adding that the amendment requires parliamentary approval.

Chief Engineer of Myanmar Radio and Television U Haing Moe spoke of broadcasting channels using the DVB-T2 (Digital Video Broadcasting-Second Generation Terrestrial) broadcasting standard. He hinted at the plans to increase the number of broadcasting channels from 14 to 16.

Under the new broadcasting plan, 11 of the 14 existing channels will remain while the next five channels will be undertaken by interested broadcasters.

An official of Tim Group Asia Ltd, which will act as consultant to MRTV’s multichannel playout system, explained the “expression of interest” (EOI) processes and tender procedures for broadcasters.

The meeting was followed by a press briefing.—Myanmar News Agency

VP U Myint Swe addresses Consultative Workshop on Civil Service Reform

A SUCCESSFUL reform process requires departmental officials with a keen understanding of reform to evolve their mindsets to effectively participate in the change process, said Vice President U Myint Swe at a Consultative Workshop on Civil Service Reform (Strategic Action Plan) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

In his address the Vice-President highlighted the importance of civil service in implementing the reform process, saying that there is a need to establish a modern institution formed with competent service personnel.

As people’s high expectations challenge the present government, transforming the country’s civil service into a competent and accountable institution is needed to deliver the government’s pledges and meet sustainable development goals, added the Vice President.

He pointed out that departmental staff’s performance and work behaviour can determine the success of the reform process, adding that all service personnel need to know what the government is doing and which policy the government is pursuing.

Next, Chairman of Union Civil Service Board Dr Win Thein stressed the need for ensuring transparency in civil service institutions and decentralisation and separation of powers to better serve the people.

The UCSB chairman said that the findings of the civil service personnel’s perception survey on civil service ethics, equal opportunities and meritocracy in Myanmar will be released soon.

Works are underway to open a Civil Service Academy in Myanmar early next year, he added.

Speaking on the occasion, Ms Emma Morley, Team Leader, Democratic Governance, United Nations Development Programme, said that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Myanmar will be dependent on a strong, effective and innovative public sector. The performance and action of public and civil servants will be key to achieving Myanmar’s SDG targets.

“The perception that bribery, discrimination, and nepotism affect recruitment, promotion, and possibly even benefits, is harmful to the overall productivity and effectiveness of the civil service,” she said.

“You could be looking at public health staff who have hopes for a bright career ahead of them, where they will be promoted on merit and treated equally,” she said.

The consultative workshop followed with experts and departmental officials holding group discussions on a broad range of civil service matters. The workshop continues today.—Myanmar News Agency

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets with Special Advisor to Japanese Prime Minister

STATE Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received Mr. Hiroto Izumi, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister of Japan, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the call the two representatives discussed matters relating to cooperation in development programmes such as the greater Yangon City Master Plan, agriculture sector development, Thilawa Special Economic Zone development and water research works.—Myanmar News Agency

President assesses damage in Bagan

PRESIDENT U Htin Kyaw went on an inspection tour of archaeo-

logical site in Bagan to assess the damage caused by a 6.8 magnitude earth-

quake on Wednesday.

The president was accompa-

nied by Union Ministers Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, Lt-Gen Ye Aung, Dr Py Myint and U Win Khaing.

At the Bagan Archaeologi-

cal Museum the president and his entourage were given a briefing on the impact of the quake, an inventory of ancient objects and an explanation of security measures.

Union Minister Thura U Aung Khin, who is Mandalay Region Chief Minister, Dr Zaw Myint Maung gave follow-up briefings on future tasks.

The president pointed out the need to compile an inventory of crumbling religious structures and protect the heritage of ancient objects.

He also urged officials to ensure that pilgrims have right of access to pagodas and stupas that were left undamaged.

“Visitors should be allowed access to the maximum safe area of the damaged pagodas for travel records,” the president said.

He pledged the govern-

ment’s assistance to the reno-

vation and maintenance of the quake-affected ancient pagodas, adding that the renovation work should maintain the original features with the help of foreign experts.

The president accepted K100 million each donated by the Shwe Thanbwin Company and Zayka-

bar Company and K50m by the Amazing Hotel Groups for the restoration work.

The Mandalay Region gov-

ernment accepted K200m do-

nated by Kambawza’s Brighter Future Foundation and K30m by MRTV-4.

Officials led the president on the inspection tour which covered Gubyaukgyi, Htilo Minlo, Sulamani, Pyithathgyi, Dhamma-

yangyi and Setanakyi pagodas in Bagan.

According to latest reports, the earthquake rattled at least 187 pagodas in the region. Local authorities, the military, police, fire brigades and residents are engaged in rescue works, clearing piles of bricks from the toppled spires and crumbling temple walls.

According to officials, 33 pagodas and stupas have been closed to pilgrimage due to damage.—Myanmar News Agency

VP U Myint Swe delivers an opening address at Consultative Workshop on Civil Service Reform (Strategic Action Plan) in Nay Pyi Taw. Photo: MNA

Ms Emma Morley. Photo: MNA