Western parts of Myanmar gets first direct rail service to Yangon

By Aye Min Soe

Myanmar Railways has opened a 90-mile long rail link on Saturday, connecting the western parts of the Ayeyawady and Chindwin rivers with Yangon by rail for the first time, with Myanmar Railways offering free services on the route for the first three days, officials said.

The new track leads from Yangon to Hinthada, and in Yangon also connects to the Monywa and Pakokku route, passing through the western parts of the Ayeyawady and Chindwin River.

“There are many advantages with this link. People in the western part of Myanmar or western part of Ayeyawady and Chindwin River now have the opportunity to come to Yangon by direct rail service,” said U Than Htay, Union Minister for Rail Transportation in his opening speech.

There is also a new railroad under construction, which will link Sittway in Rakhine State and Yangon, which will link Sittway in Rakhine State and Yangon, officials said.

The 35-year old French-made locomotive will pull three ordinary and two upper class carriages with about 280-seat capacity in total, shutting between Hlinethaya station on the western out skirts of Yangon and Hinthada in Ayeyawady Region.

The train will leave Hlinethaya Station at 2 pm and will arrive at Hinthada Station at 8.30 pm. After a stop over at night in Hinthada, it will leave Hinthada at 5 am and arrive at Yangon at 11.30 am.

Officials said there are about 11 stops on the new route which takes around six hours to its final stop as the maximum speed is 20 mph.

“If we can replace the locomotive with a modern one, we can reduce the travel time between Yangon and Hinthada,” Union Minister for U Than Htay said in his opening speech.

A ticket for ordinary-class seats costs K900, with upper class seats from Yangon to Hinthada selling for K1900. A bus ticket for the same route would cost between K2000 and K3000.

By Ye Myint

Work to approve one of three priority townships for getting benefit from a World Bank-supported project is underway and will last from two weeks to one month, Daw Lei Yin Win, communications consultant of MMR NCDD project told the New Light of Myanmar on Saturday.

Three townships — Htantabin, Kawhmu and Kungyangon — in Yangon have been selected as first, second and third priorities following consultations among groups of stakeholders at a meeting on Wednesday, she added.

The meeting to select a township to participate in the Myanmar National Community Driven Development Project was held at Yangon Region Government Office with the participation of more than 300 officials from Yangon Region government, local and international non-governmental organizations, development partners and media.

The communications officer from the Department of Rural Development said the proposed townships were chosen in accordance with selection criteria that focused on health, education and socioeconomic data and suggestions by officials present at the meeting.

Regarding the final stage of the selection process, she told the NLM that a report with the Chief Minister’s recommendations on the three priority townships will be submitted to the Foreign Aid Management Working Committee.

The project will then be conducted at the selected township following an approval from the committee charged with aid coordination and the World Bank’s no-objection upon the selection process.

Through the Myanmar National Community Driven Development Project, all
Qualified students to learn accountancy course grade II at Cooperative University

**SAGAING, 24 May**—Those qualified in the advanced accountancy course grade I at the cooperative training schools across the nation will have the opportunity to learn the grade II course at the University of Cooperative and Cooperative Colleges, said Deputy Minister for Cooperatives U Than Tun in meeting with trainees of the advanced cooperative course No 2/2014 at the University of Cooperative (Sagaing) in Sagaing on Friday morning.

The basic cooperative courses for staff and for officers are being conducted at the university and colleges. Similar courses have turned out 109 staff and 259 officers, he said.

The deputy minister explained that the training course will give knowledge about change of the mindset, cooperative policies and procedures of the global countries, types of microfinance and media sector to the trainees.

A total of 104 trainees attended the advanced cooperative course No 2/2014. —Htwe Myint Naing (Sagaing)

Duty of projects assigned to township authorities

**MUSE, 24 May**—A ceremony to assign duty for projects to departmental officials for 2014-15 fiscal year was held at the city hall in Muse of Shan State (North) on Thursday.

The Head of Kutkai Township Planning Department explained facts about projects.

Muse District Deputy Commissioner U Kyaw Kyaw Tun presented certificates of assignments to departmental officials and township authorities.

It was attended by Hluttaw representatives, company representatives, local authorities and representatives of banking services. —L Soe (IPRD)

Homeless, landless list collected in Sagaing

**SAGAING, 24 May**—According to the instruction of Sagaing Region government, the ward administrators collect the list of homeless and landless in Sagaing as of 21 May.

The homeless and landless may enlist at the ward administrative offices with endorsements of the local authorities.

Such tasks is concerned with the green village project being implemented by the Union government, said a source. —Nanda Min Lwin

Five villages in two townships urgently need landslide prevention in Mandalay

**MANDALAY, 24 May**—The combined authorities team checks express buses at Dagundaing roundabout at the exit of Mandalay and highway bus terminal as of 12 May whether the bus drivers and conductors are being conducted at the university and colleges.

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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw
Speaker calls for interest in politics

NAV PYI TAW, 24 May—Myanmar is taking steps to turn itself into an industrialized country by “improving the agricultural sector with added momentum”, Speaker of both Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Lower House Thura U Shwe Mann said at Yeizin Agricultural University in Zeyathiri Township here on Saturday morning, according to sources.

He said that the majority of people rely on agriculture, livestock breeding and forestry for survival, all of which together account for 30% of GDP and 40% of exports.

Speaking of parliamentary functions, he admitted that most people do not have much sense when it comes to parliament, citing the stop-go parliamentary system in the past as the main reason.

He said that nobody should shy away from politics, adding that lack of interest in politics will not lead to national progress.

Regarding differences in ideology among ethnic and religious groups, he also pointed out that mutual respect can conquer all these differences.

Yangon, 24 May—Vice President Dr Sai Maik Kham and wife Daw Nan Shwe Hmon attended a ceremony to honour 78 Buddhist monks who passed the 66th Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination conducted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, at the Maha Pasana Cave in Mayangon Township on Saturday.

The Vice President offered a certificate of Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida title and insignia to monk Ashin Vasetthalankara of Tipitaka Maha Gandayon Monastery of Ngaungaladon Township and a certificate of Mula Abhidhammakavida title to monk Ashin Pannavamsa of Tipitaka Maha Gandawin Niyaka Monastery of Dagon Myothit (East) Township of Yangon.

Union ministers U Aung Kyi, U Soe Maung, U Hsan Hsint, U Kyaw Hsann, U Tin Htawn and U Aye Myint Kyu and Chief Minister of Yangon Region U Myint Swe, deputy ministers and region ministers presented certificates of religious titles to the monks.

Htantabin, Kawnmu and Kungyangon ...

Moderate earthquake hits outside Myanmar

NAV PYI TAW, 24 May—A moderate earthquake of magnitude 5.5 Richter Scale with its epicenter outside Myanmar, about 45 miles southeast of Myitkyina, about 240 miles northeast of Mandalay seismological observatory was recorded at 3 hrs 19 min 50 sec M.S.T on Saturday, the Meteorology and Hydrology Department announced.—MNA

Myawady-Mae Sot border crossing briefly closed

NAV PYI TAW, 24 May—According to the observations at 6 hrs M.S.T on Saturday, the low pressure area over Central Bay of Bengal still persists, announced the Meteorology and Hydrology Department.—MNA
Summer paddy harvested in Sagaing Township

SAGAING, 24 May—Sagaing Township has put 4793 acres of farmlands under summer paddy this year including over 700 acres of summer paddy in Legyi-in area.

Local farmers focus on cultivation of Manaw-thukha paddy strain in Legyi-in area.

In the pre-monsoon paddy, the local farmers faced shortage of farming workers to harvest their ripening paddy in time. To solve such problems, Head of Township Agriculture Department U Soe Myat and Head of Township Agricultural Mechanization Department U Hein Min supervise harvesting of summer paddy with the use of 10 combine harvesters of Htet Aung Khant Company daily.

A combine harvester can harvest 10 acres of farmlands a day. Thanks to the modern farming machinery, the paddy can be harvested in time and can be produced in high yield.

Local farmers can fetch K 1000 per basket of paddy more than that of the last year’s. This year, it is estimated that farmers can earn K 450,000 per acre of paddy.

Kyaukpadaung Township sees uplift of capacity of basic education teachers

KYAUKPADAUNG, 24 May—A meeting on uplift of capacity of basic education teachers was held at No 1 Basic Education High School in Kyaukpadaung Township of Mandalay Region on Friday.

The meeting focused on social security, uplift of teachers’ capacity and correct attitude. A total of 15 teachers who attended the training course at Education College gave multiplier course to 630 basic education teachers and 25 teachers from private schools.

Similar meetings will be held in Myoma, Pwaykyit, Letpapya and Popa of the township, said Headmaster U Hla Kyang of Popa Basic Education High School.—Ko Nay (Kyaukpadaung)

Implementation for green village project explained

KYAUKPADAUNG, 24 May—A talk on cooperation in implementation of green village project for development of the region was held at Magyisu Village of Kyaukpadaung Township, Mandalay Region, on Friday afternoon.

It is aimed at enabling the local people to understand the green village project for uplift of social economic life of the rural people.

Chairman of the project work committee Head of Township Rural Development Department U Soe Naing and staff gave talks on progress of the project to the rural people in Thitsetpin village on 21 May and Khetkoutaw village on 22 May.

Ko Nay (Kyaukpadaung)

Betel price hikes in pre-monsoon period in Mandalay market

MANDALAY, 24 May—Betel production declines in the farms due to drought in the pre-rainy season so the betel market faces high demand in Mandalay.

In February and March this year, betel trading reaches K 3500-4000 per viss (1.6 kilos) of betel in the market. As of April, betel is sold at K 6000 per viss, said the betel growers.

In April and May, the farmers remove the matured betel leaves from the plants as nurturing works. If there is drought, betel production will decline due to weak plants, said betel grower U Moe Kyaw of North Nanda Village in Patheingyi Township.

Decline of betel production is one of the root causes of high price.

Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)

Telenor Mobile Co., to sell K 1500 per SIM card

KYONDOK, 24 May—Norway-based Telenor Co made a clarification on its service of telecommunications to the local people at the hall of Basic Education High School in Kyondok Township.

Kayin State liaison in-charge U Myitta of Telenor company created job opportunities for the local people in education, economic, health and social sectors.—Naing Naing Tun (Kyondok)

Implementation of hydropower project discussed

MYITKYINA, 24 May—Resource and Environment Myanmar Co., held a discussion on implementation of Ngawchankha hydropower project at the hall of Chipwe Township General Administration Department on Friday.

At the ceremony, the company donated one set each of computer for Chipwe Basic Education High School and Nozunbaung BEPS, amounting to K 600,000.

Myyitkyina District (IPRD)
Opposition to Thai coup simmers, ex-PM in ‘safe place’

BANGKOK, 24 May — Former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra was in a “safe place” on Saturday, an aide said, after being held by Thailand’s army following its seizure of power this week, as opposition to the coup grew among her supporters and pro-democracy activists.

The army moved on Thursday after failing to forge a compromise with pro-democracy and the royalist establishment, which brought months of sometimes violent unrest to Bangkok’s streets.

The military detained Yingluck on Friday when she and 154 other people, mostly political associates, were summoned to an army facility in Bangkok. A senior officer had told Reuters she could be held for up to a week and Thai media reported she had been taken to an army base in Saraburi Province north of Bangkok, but an aide denied that.

“Now she’s in a safe place... She has not been detained in any military camp. That’s all I can say at this moment,” the aide said, declining to be identified.

A source from her Peua Thai Party added: “We can’t say she is absolutely free because there are soldiers in the area, monitoring her.”

This source said several former ministers from her cabinet were being held in army facilities in Saraburi, neighbouring Lopburi Province or Bangkok.

Army deputy spokesman Winthai Suvarn told a news conference on Saturday that anyone being held would not be detained for more than seven days. He did not mention Yingluck.

Thailand’s political woes are the latest chapter in a nearly decade-long clash between the Bangkok-based establishment and Thaksin Shinawatra, a former telecommunications tycoon who broke the military’s decades-long stranglehold in 2008.

Despite international calls for the restoration of democratic government, Army chief General Prayuth Chan-ocha has not promised a swift return to civilian rule, insisting there must be broad reforms and stability first.

Pakistan prime minister to attend inauguration of India’s prime minister

ISLAMABAD, 24 May — Pakistan has accepted an invitation to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to attend the inauguration of Indian Prime Minister-designate Narenda Modi, an official said on Saturday.

The Pakistani premier’s attendance will be a first in the history of the nuclear-armed rivals, which have fought three wars since independence in 1947. Mohyuddin Wani, the joint secretary of the Prime Minister’s office, told Reuters that Pakistan had accepted India’s invitation to Sharif to attend Modi’s swearing-in with other South Asian leaders.

Ties have been particularly tense between India and Pakistan since 2008 Mumbai attacks blamed on Pakistan-based militants but Sharif has said he wants to improve relations with India.

Rumblings of dissent against India’s Gandhi after election drubbing

NEW DELHI, 24 May — Dissenting voices in India’s Congress party have for the first time lashed out at the campaign team of Rahul Gandhi, who led the 128-year-old party to the worst electoral defeat in its history last week.

A decade in power for Modi

India’s Congress party have faced the media as his mother and chief of Congress Sonia Gandhi (L) stands next to him during a news conference in New Delhi on 16 May, 2014.

Reuters

Several other high profile lawmakers have spoken out against the campaign this week, saying there was a rift between grassroots workers and party leaders.

One outgoing minister, KV Thomas, called on Rahul’s charismatic sister Priyanka Gandhi to play a bigger party role. During the campaign, Gandhi surrounded himself with a small group of mostly foreign-educated trusted aides who operated out of his central Delhi home, which was often felt to be out of bounds for others in the party.

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Japan, China should “freeze” Senkaku row, focus on economy

TOYO, 24 May — Japan and China should “freeze” the issue of the Senkaku Islands and focus on economic matters in an effort to improve strained relations, former Japanese Ambassador to China Uichiro Niwa said on Friday.

“Neither of us can compromise on those uninhabited islands even by 1 millimeter,” Niwa said in a speech in Tokyo, referring to the East China Sea islets administered for decades by Japan but claimed by China and Taiwan.

“Do we have to resolve the issue in five years? No,” Niwa said. “Maybe 100 years later. So let us freeze the issue and do whatever we can on the economic front.”

Since the Japanese government purchased three of the five main islands in the Senkaku group from a private Japanese owner in September 2012, China has sent patrol ships into Japanese waters around the islands in an attempt to undermine Japan’s administration over the islets, called Diaoyu in China and Tiaoyutai in Taiwan.

Niwa said that separating politics from the economy and putting greater emphasis, for example, on promoting joint development of natural resources and increasing exchange between young people and local authorities of the two countries will be the only way for Japan and China to improve ties.

Niwa, a former Itocho Corp chairman who was Japan’s ambassador to Beijing from June 2010 to December 2012, urged Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping to hold talks when Xi hosts a summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in November in Beijing.

“The leaders of the neighbouring countries have never met in a year and half. It is an abnormal situation,” he said. “The world is laughing, saying what are they thinking about. Some in the United States are even saying that a war may soon break out (between Japan and China).”

Abe and Xi have yet to hold official talks since Xi became general secretary of the Communist Party of China in November 2012 and Abe returned to power in December that year.—Kyodo News

A woman walks past soldiers providing security to the Army Club where senior army officials meet foreign diplomats in Bangkok on 23 May, 2014. —Reuters
Putin signals he will work with Ukraine leader, but blasts US

Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks during a session of the St Petersburg International Economic Forum 2014 (SPIEF 2014) in St Petersburg on 23 May, 2014.—Reuters

ST PETERSBURG, 24 May — President Vladimir Putin appeared to hold out an olive branch on Friday by suggesting he will work with whomever is elected Ukraine’s next president and calling for better ties with the West.

But at the same time he fiercely criticised US foreign and economic policy. In a speech to foreign and Russian businessmen at Russia’s answer to the Davos World Economic Forum on the shores of its elegant former imperial capital, Putin acknowledged that US and European Union sanctions were hurting the country’s economy.

“We are not planning any self-isolation,” Putin said, proposing dialogue and cooperation to show that Russia is open for business and, perhaps, to head off more sanctions.

“We hope that common sense...” will prompt our European and US partners to work with Russia,” Putin said.

Asked whether Russia will recognize the legitimacy of Sunday’s presidential election in Ukraine, he also sounded conciliatory, saying: “We will treat the choice of the Ukrainian people with respect.”

The IAEA, which has been a hallmark of Putin’s third term as president since May 2012, appeared to try to drive a wedge between the United States and Europe by praising European companies for being more pragmatic in their softer response to Russia’s annexation of Crimea.

Troops manning a checkpoint between Ukrainian self-defense fighters and separatists manning a checkpoint in a rural location west of Kiev on Tuesday if they decide Moscow has hampered the election, ranging from restrictions on luxury goods imports to an oil and gas ban, although some are wary due to close trade ties.

The Ukrainian authorities have promised a suspension of anti-separatist operations on the day of the election, billed as the most important in 23 years of independence from Moscow, but Friday’s clash suggested violence may mar the event.

A Reuters correspondent saw two dead bodies after the three-hour fire-fight in the morning between Ukrainian self-defence fighters and separatists manning a checkpoint in a rural location west of the big industrial city of Donetsk.

The pro-Kiev fighters issued a Facebook statement late in the day saying four of their men were killed and nine wounded. Allied to Ukrainian billionnaire Igor Kolomoisky, they are at the forefront of Kiev’s efforts to prevent the country splitting. “We are determined that honest and transparent elections will take place,” interim Prime Minister Arseny Yatsenyuk declared in talks with two European Union foreign ministers as the bloc’s foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton voiced support for Kiev and its election.

Reuters

People walk next to an armoured vehicle left as a monument at the Independence Square, or the “Maidan”, in Kiev on 23 May, 2014. Reuters

Armed clashes in east as US weighs down to election

VIENNA, 24 May — Iran has cut its most sensitive nuclear stockpile by around 80 percent under an interim pact with world powers and has begun engaging with a long-stalled IAEA investigation into suspected weapons research, the UN atomic watchdog said on Friday.

The findings, in a quarterly report by the International Atomic Energy Agency, are likely to be welcomed by the six powers trying to negotiate a long-term deal with Iran on ending a decade-old dispute over its nuclear programme and dispelling fears of a new war in the Middle East.

Diplomats and analysts caution, however, that the positions of Iran and the United States, France, Britain, Germany, Russia and China remain far apart and that a successful outcome of their diplomatic efforts is far from certain.

Iran rejects Western allegations that it has been trying to develop the capability to build nuclear weapons. But it has offered to work with the IAEA to resolve its concerns after pragmatist President Hassan Rouhani won office last year on a platform to end the Islamic Republic’s isolation.

The IAEA, which has a pivotal role in verifying that Iran is living up to its part of the six-month accord reached in November, made clear that Iran so far is undertaking the agreed steps to curb its nuclear programme. Under the breakthrough agreement that took effect on 20 January, Iran halted some aspects of its nuclear programme in exchange for a limited easing of international sanctions that have laid low the major oil producer’s economy. It was designed to buy time for talks on a final deal that began in February.

The IAEA report showed that Iran since January had acted to reduce its stockpile of higher-grade enriched uranium gas — a relatively short technical step away from weapons-grade material — by just under 82 percent.

The flag of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) flies in front of its headquarters during a board of governors meeting in Vienna on 28 Nov, 2013.—Reuters

UK sceptics surge, Dutch right-wing stumbles as EU votes

LONDON/AMSTERDAM, 24 May — Britain’s Eurosceptic UK Independence Party made strong gains but their Dutch counterparts stumbled in elections to the European Parliament that are expected to produce a widespread anti-EU vote thanks in part to a low turnout.

Nigel Farage’s UKIP, which wants to pull Britain out of the European Union and severely restrict immigration, grabbed seats from both the governing Conservatives and the opposition Labour Party in local elections held at the same time as the EU vote on Thursday, partial results showed.

If those scores are confirmed or amplified in the European ballot, from which results will only be released late on Sunday, it could increase pressure on Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron to take a harder line on reducing the EU’s powers.

“Looking at the average vote shares across the country, and without wishing to count any chickens before they’re hatched, it looks pretty good,” an ebullient Farage said as evidence of his anti-establishment party’s surge trickled in.

By contrast, far right Dutch populist Geert Wilders, whose anti-EU, anti-Islam Freedom Party had been forecast to top the poll in the Netherlands, was beaten into fourth place by pro-European parties in a surprise result, according to exit polls.

His PVV was projected to get just 12.2 percent, behind the centrist Democrats 66, the centre-right Christian Democrats and Prime Minister Mark Rutte’s right-wing liberals.

Wilders blamed the disappointing score on a low turnout of around 35 percent, saying that “by staying home (voters) showed their disaffection with growing euro disinterest in the European Union. The Netherlands has not become more pro-European.”

Reuters

Iran cuts nuclear stockpile, engages with bomb probe
**US, European allies express concern over Libya violence**

WASHINGTON, 14 May — The United States and European allies on Friday expressed deep concern over mounting violence in Libya and warned that the country stood “at a crossroads” between pursuing a peaceful political transition or facing chaos, fragmentation and terrorism.

“The European Union, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States, deeply concerned by the repeated acts of violence, call on all sides to refrain from the use of force and to address differences by political means,” they said in a joint statement.

The statement comes amid growing chaos in Libya where the government has been unable to control dozens of militias who helped oust veteran ruler Muammar Gaddafi in a NATO-backed uprising in 2011.

On Sunday, gunmen shelled Libya’s General National Congress in an attack claimed by forces loyal to a renegade general Khalifa Haftar. Western powers fear the general’s campaign will split the Libyan army and further destabilize the oil-producing North African country.

In their joint statement, the countries offered to facilitate talks to help stabilize the situation, saying they were prepared to support an inclusive reconciliation process. They warned, however, that “persistent divisions amongst Libyans will gravely challenge the ability of the international community to assist.”

“The process leading to a peaceful transition of power should be based upon broad consensus, avoiding any acts which seek to undermine that process,” the statement said, calling on Libya to move forward as soon as possible with parliamentary elections.

4 soldiers killed in NW Pakistan’s blast

ISLAMABAD, 24 May — At least four soldiers were killed and three others injured at a bomb explosion at their vehicle in Pakistan’s northwest tribal area of Mohmand Agency on Saturday morning, officials said.

Inter Services Public Relations, the mouthpiece of Pakistan army, said in a statement that the incident happened when a vehicle carrying security personnel was hit by a landmine in Atmanzai area of Mohmand Agency, a tribal region at Pakistan-Afghan border.

Media reports said that the troops were on their way to conduct a search operation in the area on an intelligence tip-off when they came under attack on the way.

**Venezuela’s Maduro hits Twitter milestone, still lags mentor Chavez**

VENECUELA’s President Nicolas Maduro hits Twitter milestone, still lags mentor Chavez

CARACAS, 24 May — Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro has hit a Twitter feed milestone of 2 million followers, though his cyber popularity still lags far behind that of his charismatic predecessor, the late Hugo Chavez.

"Today I reached 2 million followers on my Twitter feed that’s been active for barely a year!" he exclaimed during a speech to university students, lauding the follower who propelled him above the mark.

"Greetings to Mr Enver Emir of this communications tool," Maduro, like Chavez, regularly blasts mainstream media as agents of a greedy US-led capitalist system that misrepresents the self-styled Socialist state.

Both leaders proved avid users of Twitter, a US-based social networking company known for its service that lets people send and post text messages of 140 characters.

Maduro’s main Spanish-language @NicolasMaduro Twitter account has been complemented with sister handles in English, French, Portuguese and Arabic.

But on Twitter as in reality, Maduro has failed to trigger the same fervent adoration as Chavez, who amassed 4 million followers. Still, Maduro said the platform is helping him reveal the “true” Venezuela to people in the country’s ideological foe the United States.

"Of those 2 million, 30 percent are followers in the United States ... Every day my messages are reaching them. I thank all followers of this communications tool through which we’re telling the truth about Venezuela, where we show the true Venezuela," he said.

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Media reports said that the troops were on their way to conduct a search operation in the area on an intelligence tip-off when they came under attack on the way.

**US drone arrives at Misawa base for 1st deployment in Japan**

AOMORI, (Japan), 24 May — A US Global Hawk surveillance drone arrived Saturday morning at the Misawa Air Base in northeastern Japan in the first deployment of such an aircraft in the country.

The two Global Hawks to be deployed at Misawa Air Base in northeastern Japan were expected to arrive at the base during the week. The other is expected to arrive at the base in mid-October. The two unmanned reconnaissance aircraft will likely start operating in the Asia-Pacific region in early June.

The temporary deployment in Japan of the unmanned aircraft is believed to be aimed at avoiding typhoons that frequently hit Guam during summer.

It is also believed to be aimed at monitoring North Korea and China at a time when Pyongyang’s nuclear and missile development programmes as well as Beijing’s maritime assertiveness have raised security concerns in Japan.

The Global Hawk, which is 14.5 metres in length with a wingspan of about 40 metres, is capable of conducting surveillance missions for long periods at an altitude of over 15,000 metres.

Japan’s Defence Ministry tried to ease local safety concerns, saying that since the Global Hawk flies at such a high altitude, it will have little impact on local air traffic.

"We must consider the issue of renewable energies that might substitute oil," he said.

Villanueva, also member of the Congress’s Committee on Water Resources, said Mexico had only 10 years worth of total proven oil reserves.

**Casualties feared as roadside bomb strikes mini-bus in Afghan S town**

LASHKAR GAH, (Afghanistan) 24 May — A roadside bomb struck a mini-bus in Marja District of the southern Helmand Province 555 km south of Kabul on Saturday leaving one civilian dead and injuring four others, police spokesman in the province Abdul Ahad Chopan said.

"A mine planted by Taleban militants on a roadside in Marja District near the mini-bus at around 07:00 on Saturday injured the occupants and wounded four others," Chopan told Xinhua.

Taleban militants fighting the government and largely relying on suicide and roadside bombings are yet to make comment. Notorious for poppy cultivation and militancy, Helmand has been regarded as hotbed of Taleban militants in the conflict-ridden Afghanistan.

**Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro speaks to media after a meeting with his Palestinian counterpart President Mahmoud Abbas at Miroflores Palace in Caracas on 16 May, 2014. — REUTERS**

"Greetings to Mr Enver Emir of this communications tool," Maduro, like Chavez, regularly blasts mainstream media as agents of a greedy US-led capitalist system that misrepresents the self-styled Socialist state.

Both leaders proved avid users of Twitter, a US-based social networking company known for its service that lets people send and post text messages of 140 characters.

Maduro’s main Spanish-language @NicolasMaduro Twitter account has been complemented with sister handles in English, French, Portuguese and Arabic. But on Twitter as in reality, Maduro has failed to trigger the same fervent adoration as Chavez, who amassed 4 million followers. Still, Maduro said the platform is helping him reveal the “true” Venezuela to people in the country’s ideological foe the United States.

Ot those 2 million, 30 percent are followers in the United States ... Every day my messages are reaching them. I thank all followers of this communications tool through which we’re telling the truth about Venezuela, where we show the true Venezuela," he said.

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Myanmar needs incentives for agricultural sector
By Aung Khin

E
nergy and extractive industries such as mining are at the top list of foreign investors in Myanmar. However, they do not regard the country’s agricultural and manufacturing sectors as lucrative businesses.

With its shortcomings, Myanmar still lacks infrastructures, technologies and sound policies to boost the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. Some internal and external factors are hurdles for the development of these sectors.

The protectionist practices of trading partners are also one of the external impediments. Some neighbouring countries do not buy Myanmar rice, claiming it has lower quality and is not competitive on international markets. Observers pointed out some of Myanmar’s trading partners discourage any attempts to produce value-added products. Instead, they prefer buying raw crops.

Thailand and India are major rice exporters. Myanmar hopes to receive modern technologies for planting and milling from these countries, but the country has done little to reform the agricultural sector in order to attract such investments.

Myanmar has an estimated rice production of 19 million tons in 2014-2015 fiscal year, an increase from 18.3 million tons in 2012-2013 fiscal year. The government is now making efforts to provide farmers with support in infrastructure development, mechanization and technology assistance, in addition to financial support of K100,000 (US$100) credit line per rice farmers through its Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank. However, trade sources remarked that Myanmar rice farmers still cannot compete with farmers from other ASEAN countries such as Thailand and Vietnam in terms of receiving government compensations for lower paddy prices.

The Myanmar agricultural sector has favourable conditions with very diverse agro-climatic conditions, abundant fertile lands, long coastal lines, plentiful water resources and access to large markets such as China, India and ASEAN. Therefore, a better strategy and policy should be adopted to develop this sector which accounts for over 48 per cent of the GDP and employs over 62 per cent of the population. Only then, can Myanmar regain the position of the world’s largest rice exporter, which it held from 1961 to 1963.

OPINION

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit an article, please email tun@gmail.com with your name and title.

Maha Saddhamma Jotika dhaja
Sithu Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

Inwa, a well-known commercial urban centre in South-East Asia of the time

Successive kings in Inwa and Pegu enjoyed the benefits of restored peace, and the two kingdoms prospered because of the flourish of local and foreign trades. With China, frontier trade was carried on through the frontier town Bhamo, where Myanmar paddy, cotton and jade were exchanged for Chinese luxuries, silk velvet, porcelain and manufactured wares. With India both land and sea routes provided easy flow of products of Inwa and Pegu. Besides, Inwa as a thriving commercial city in South-East Asia of that time became well-known to the west through overseas traders far and wide.

Thus Nicolo di Conti, a merchant of Venice, Italy, who came to Inwa about 1435 A.D. noted down in his travel account of Inwa he eye witnessed.

“... Having sailed up this river for a month ... arrived at a city more noble than the rest, called Ava. This province abounds in elephants; the king keeps ten thousand and uses them in his wars. They fix castles on their backs from which eight to ten men fight with javelins and bows. This animal is so intelligent that when he is in battle he frequently receives the javelins of the enemy on the sole of his foot in order that those whom he carries on his back may not be injured. The king of Pegu also rides on a wall which is laid around the neck of which is fastened a chain of gold ornamented with precious stones which reaches to its feet.”

“The men are satisfied with one wife. All the inhabitants, men as well as women, puncture their flesh with iron pins and rub in indelible dyes, and so they remained painted for ever. All worship idols, yet when they arise in the morning from their bed they turn towards the east, and, with hands joined together, say “God in His Trinity and His Law defend us.” There is also a tree called tal [talipot palm] the leaves of which are extremely large, and upon these they write, for throughout India they do not use proper paper. There is also a tree which has a head like a pig, a tail like an ox, and on his forehead a horn like that of a unicorn but shorter, being about a cubit in length. In size and colour it resembles the elephant with which it is constantly at war. They say its horn is an antidote against poisons, and it is respected much esteemed. In the upper part of the country, towards Cambodia, there are found black and white bulls the hair of whose tail, fine and light as a feather, is valued at its weight in silver and made into fans for the services of their idols and kings. The cavalry also carry the hair at the head of their lances as a mark of nobility.”

Beyond this province is a land superior to all others in the world, and it is named Cathay (China).”

Long lasting old capital Inwa, Part II

In our country Golden Inwa Palace was built with many spired structures. Bright clouds create amazing landscapes. Auspiciousness of Mingala halo around Golden Inwa, peaceful, prosperous and progressive.

The above chorus in Shwe Inwa song epitomizes the first Inwa that lasted 191 years ruled by 19 kings. It was at the time when King Swa Saw Ke was in the regnal title “Supava Devi”. Sim darit and Min Myat Hla were married. Rajadarit raised her his queen with the regnal title “Supava Devi”. Sim darit and Min Myat Hla were married. Rajadarit raised her his queen. Thus ended the wars, followed by decades of peace, prosperity and progress in both Kingdoms.

Inwa, which is constantly at war. They say its horn is an antidote against poisons, and it is respected much esteemed. In the upper part of the country, towards Cambodia, there are found black and white bulls the hair of whose tail, fine and light as a feather, is valued at its weight in silver and made into fans for the services of their idols and kings. The cavalry also carry the hair at the head of their lances as a mark of nobility.”

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(See Page 9)
**The Winning Edge**

By Kyi Mun

The Four Factors of Success
- A Burning Desire
- An Indomitable Mind/Spirit
- An Unyielding Effort
- Insight Wisdom

The Four Strands of War/Competition
- The Quality and Capability of the Leader
- The Quality and Capability of the Followers
- Morale
- Resources

The Four Personal Qualities
- Physical Strength & Health
- Mental Strength & Intelligence
- Emotional Strength & Passion
- Spiritual Strength & Altruism

The Four Organizational Resources
- Human Resources
- Financial Resources
- Technological Resources
- Organizational Resources

The Four Spheres of Change
- Changes in the Political Sphere
- Changes in the Economic Sphere
- Changes in the Cultural Sphere
- Changes in the Technological Sphere

The Four Kinds of Impact
- The Impact of Educational Advancement
- The Impact of Economic Development
- The Impact of Environmental Pollution
- The Impact of Degeneration

The Seven Factors of Competitive Advantage
- Quality
- Uniqueness
- Innovation
- Value
- Excellence
- Relationship
- Service

The Eight Principles of War/Competition
- The Principle of Objective
- The Principle of Concentration
- The Principle of Offensive
- The Principle of Cooperation
- The Principle of Economy of Force

The Four Core Values
- Man Matters Most
- Brain Builds Best
- Heart Holds Highest
- Spirit Serves Supreme

The Four Sphere of Change
- The Quality and Capability of the Leader
- The Quality and Capability of the Followers
- Morale
- Resources

The Four Personal Qualities
- Physical Strength & Health
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- Emotional Strength & Passion
- Spiritual Strength & Altruism

The Four Organizational Resources
- Human Resources
- Financial Resources
- Technological Resources
- Organizational Resources

The Winning Edge

By Kyi Mun

Golden Age of Myanmar literature

By Kyi Mun residing in Yangon is a consultant of NAING GROUP CO., LTD.

Long lasting old .... (from page 8)

First Inwa, the seat of Buddhist Learning and Culture

Although first Inwa was no match to Bagan in terms of art, architecture and other media of tangible culture, it can take pride in its contributions by its own standard. Because of peace, prosperity and progress kings and people were able to spare their time and wealth for religion. Theravada Buddhism that was already well established in Bagan period, continued to be a flourishing faith, patronized by kings and supported by the people. The entire vast areas around the city became embellished with several religious monuments—pagodas, temples, monasteries and nunneries. Inwa’s urbanization extended beyond the River Ayeyawady on the west bank of which lie ranges of Sagaing hills which had become abodes of holy recluses since ancient times.

It was there that Inwa extended its growth in religion. We can still see many monuments of first Inwa—Tupayon Zedi built by King Narapati in 1443 A.D. where and when the king held dedication festival, invited Sawbwas, and royal delegates from Pegu, Taninthayee, as well as Ayutthia [Thailand] and Lanzin [ Laos] came to participate, as recorded in the stone inscriptions of Tupayon Zedi. We cultivated friendship with the rajas of the Rakhine State by sending royal gifts and letters to them. Other monuments of this period were Shwegu Pagoda, Ponnyashin Pagoda and many others.

Nostalgia & reminences shake me in thrills.

This song relates history true

Temples Shwegu and Tupayon so, sacred holy

That’s time of city’s veneration,

Successive Myanmar kings held sway, is the story,

Buddha Sasana flourished in glory

That’s time of city’s veneration,

The song’s composed for next generations.

Temples Shwegu and Tupayon so, sacred

Let’s bow to Shwe Inwa in respect.

This song relates history true

When arrive in Inwa, turn west to view.

Across Ayeyawady, are Sagaing hills,

Nostalgia & reminences shine me in thrills.

On the lofty Sagaing ranges yonder,

Ponnyashin Pagoda and many others,

The abodes of holy recluses in resort,

Painting, cartoon and poster contest held in Phakant

Phakant, 24 May—To mark the international day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking which falls on 26 June, the 17th painting, cartoon and poster contest took place recently at the Phakant Basic Education High School in Mohnyin District in Kachin State. Altogether 29 students from every level participated in the contest.

The Township Administrator, police officers and teachers enjoyed participation of students in the contest.

Ko Lwin (Swa)
Syria video shows chlorine gas floating in streets

BEIRUT, 24 May — Opposition activists have posted a video of what they say is chlorine gas floating through the streets of a Syrian village and they accuse President Bashar al-Assad of mounting a chemical weapons campaign.

Activists and medical sources said the village of Kfar Zeita, in the central province of Hama 125 miles (200 km) north of Damascus, has been the focus of a two-month-old assault in which chlorine gas canisters have been dropped out of helicopters.

The government denies its forces have used chlorine or deadlier poisonous gases and blames all chemical attacks on rebels waging a three-year-old uprising against Assad.

The Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has opened an investigation into the alleged chlorine attacks, more than a dozen of which have been reported since 11 April in several areas. “Inspectors for the fact-finding mission are trying to get to some of the sites,” the OPCW told Reuters. Text accompanying the opposition video, posted by a user called Mustapha Jamaa, said it was filmed on Thursday in Kfar Zeita by the Revolution General Commission opposition group.

It showed green-yellow low gas in a street. A man runs away from the gas cloud with a woman who is holding a cloth to her mouth. Another man in camouflage trousers and wearing a gas mask calls out for a car to assist the woman. The voice off screen says: “Chlorine gas bombing. Yellow smoke.” Reuters could not independently verify the authenticity of the footage. The video did not show an impact site or indicate where it was filmed.

A freelance photographer told Reuters he arrived at the scene of the attack an hour after a helicopter dropped the bomb.

“The smell of chlorine was very obvious. It smelt like vinegar, or bleach. I started to cough and hyperventilate. My eyes were burning,” he said.

One of his photos showed the woman who was running away from the gas in the video. She was being treated with oxygen at a field hospital.

“There were 70 wounded people,” he said. “Those who were at the impact site fainted.”

Activists said Kfar Zeita was attacked twice on Thursday, as well as the village of Al-Tamana’a in northwest Idlib Province.

Russia and China vetoed a resolution to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court for possible prosecution of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Assad agreed with the United States and Russia to dispose of his chemical weapons after hundreds of people were killed in a sarin gas attack on the outskirts of the capital last August.—Reuters

India recalls troops sent for joint exercise from Thailand

NEW DELHI, 24 May — India has recalled its troops sent to Thailand for a joint combat exercise after the military coup there, said government officials on Friday.

“Our troops, currently in Thailand for a military exercise, have been advised to return to India,” said an external affairs ministry (MEA) spokesperson.

An Indian contingent of 45 soldiers had landed in Bangkok in the early hours of Wednesday for the joint exercise.

“India is concerned with the recent developments in Thailand. We are monitoring the evolving situation closely. As a friendly neighbour, with civilizational affinities, we hope for an urgent political resolution and restoration of normalcy based on the principles of democracy, the will of the people and the rule of law in Thailand,” said the spokesperson.—Xinhua

EGYPT’S BROTHERHOOD STRUGGLES TO REGROUP IN EXILE

DOHA / DUBAI, 24 May — Exiled leaders of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood are struggling to regroup, targeted by hostile Arab powers, cut off from senior colleagues imprisoned back home and challenged by angry young followers tempted to seek change by violence.

Gathered over the past 10 months in Qatar, Turkey, Britain and elsewhere, hundreds of activists have set about trying to isolate Egypt’s army-backed government diplomatically for last year’s removal of an elected Brotherhood-backed administration.

The senior figures keep busy, shuttling between London, Doha and Istanbul to strategise in countries that still tolerate the movement, the standard-bearer of mainstream Sunni political Islam since it was founded in Egypt in 1928.

But a political rebirth will be tough, even for a movement long adept at surviving repression and exile. Former army chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who deposed the Brotherhood’s elected president Mohamed Mursi last year and has since led a violent crackdown against its followers, is all but certain to win Egypt’s presidency in an election next week.

He says that when he takes charge, the Brotherhood, which seemed an unstoppable electoral force after autocrat Hosni Mubarak was toppled in 2011, will cease to exist.

Kerry to testify in June before US House panel on Benghazi

WASHINGTON, 24 May — Secretary of State John Kerry has agreed to testify on June 12 before a House committee investigating the 2012 attack on the US diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya, resolving a contentious dispute with Republicans in Congress.

Kerry had been subpoenaed to testify on 29 May, but the State Department said prior commitments would prevent his appearance. Kerry offered two other dates and the House of Representatives Oversight Committee accepted his offer to appear on 12 June. In a letter to the committee, the State Department said if Kerry testifies before the Oversight panel, it should remove any need for him to appear before a House Select Committee that was formed recently to look into the Benghazi incident.

Four Americans, including US Ambassador Christopher Stevens, were killed in the attack.

House Republicans have launched multiple investigations into the Obama administration’s handling of diplomatic security in the run-up to the 11 September, 2012, attack and the steps it took in the aftermath. Republicans have accused the Obama administration of playing down the role of al-Qaeda-linked militants in the assault.

LANDSLIDES, DISEASES POSE THREATS IN WAKE OF DEVASTATING FLOODING IN BALKANS

UNITED NATIONS, 24 May — UN humanitarian agencies on Friday raised concerns about landslides and possible water-borne diseases from the worst flooding in Serbia and Bosnia in more than a century, and sounded alarmed over the possible exposure of deadly minefields left from the Bosnian war.

The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) said on Friday the devastating floodwaters have affected around 1 million people, or a quarter of the population in Bosnia, driven some 300,000 away from their homes, and forced closure of schools and social health centers.

In Serbia, 150 schools in the most-affected areas remained closed.

Authorities in Bosnia have reportedly issued strong warnings of the unearthing of mines and other unexploded devices from the 1992-1995 conflict as a result of the landslides.

In Bosnia, UNICEF was taking the lead in water sanitation, hygiene protection and education sectors in cooperation with other partners.

The agency had procured 300 hygiene kits and distributed more than 1 ton of chlorine to decontaminate water supplies in the affected areas, where a significant number of dead animals floating in waters have posed a grave risk to public health.

Kerry speaks to US embassy employees during a reception in Mexico City on 21 May, 2014.—REUTERS

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US Secretary of State John Kerry speaks to US embassy employees during a reception in Mexico City on 21 May, 2014.—REUTERS
Apple, Google, Intel, Adobe to pay $325 million to settle hiring lawsuit

NEW YORK, 24 May—Four major Silicon Valley companies have formally agreed to pay $325.4 million to settle claims brought by employees who accused them of limiting competition by colluding not to poach each other’s talent. The settlement, between Apple Inc, Google Inc, Intel Corp, and Adobe Systems Inc and roughly 64,000 workers, was disclosed in papers filed late on Thursday with a federal court in San Jose, California.

Cape Canaveral (Flor- ida), 24 May — An asteroid that exploded last year over Chelyabinsk, Russia, leaving more than 1,000 people injured by flying glass and debris, collided with another asteroid before hitting Earth, new research by scientists shows.

Analysis of a mineral called jadeite that was em- bedded in fragments recov- ered after the explosion show that the asteroid’s parent body struck a larger asteroid at a relative speed of some 3,000 mph (4,800 kph).

“This impact might have separated the Chely- abinsk asteroid from its parent body and delivered it to the Earth,” lead researcher Shin Ozawa, with the Uni- versity of Tohoku in Japan, wrote in a paper published this week in the journal Scientific Reports.

The discovery is expect- ed to give scientists more insight into how an asteroid may end up on a collision course with Earth. Scien- tists suspect the collision happened about 290 million years ago.

Most of the 65-foot (20-metre) wide asteroid that blew up over Chelyabinsk in southwestern Siberia on 15 Feb, 2013, was incer- nated in a bright fireball, the result of frictional heating as it dropped through the atmosphere at 42,000 mph (67,600 kph). But many small fragments survived. The asteroid was travel- ing almost 60 times the speed of sound and exploded about 18 miles (30 km) above ground with a force nearly 30 times as powerful as the atomic bomb dropped by the United States on Hiroshima, Japan in 1945 in World War Two.

The blast over Chely- abinsk caused shock waves that destroyed buildings and shattered windows. More than 1,000 people were in- jured by flying debris.

Analysis of recovered Chelyabinsk meteorites revealed an unusual form of jadeite entombed inside glassy materials known as shock veins, which form after rock crashes, melts and re-solidifies.

Jadeite, which is one of the minerals in the gemstone jade, forms only under extreme pressure and high temperature. The form of jadeite found in the Chely- abinsk meteorites indicates that the asteroid’s parent body hit another asteroid that was at least 492 feet (150 meters) in diameter.

Scientists are still an- alyzing fragments of the asteroid and calculating its precise path toward Earth.

In an email to Reuters, Ozawa described the Chelyabinsk meteorite as “a unique sample.”

“It is a near-Earth ob- ject that actually hit the Earth, and its trajectory was well-recorded,” Ozawa wrote.

The first possible me- teorites from the so-called Tunguska event were re- covered just last year. Re- sults have not yet been published.—Reuters

Samsung may unveil ‘watch-phone’ as early as June

NEW YORK, 24 May—Samsung Electronics Co Ltd is developing a smartwatch that can make or receive calls without having to be tethered to a mobile phone, the Wall Street Journal reported on Friday. Samsung, the world’s largest maker of smartphones, is in discussions with uniden- tified US, Korean and Eu- ropean telecommunications carriers about a so-called “watch-phone” that it hopes to unveil between June and July, the Journal reported, citing people familiar with the company’s plans.

The current crop of smartwatches, such as Sam- sung’s own Galaxy Gear, have to be linked to a phone to receive and send messages and perform other basic functions.

But the proposed watch- phone, which will run on Samsung’s Tizen operating software, can take photos and handle email independently and will come equipped with a heart monitor, the newspa- per reported. Samsung declined to comment. Major technology companies such as Apple Inc, Google Inc and Samsung are expected to be in a race to market wearable computing devices, like watches, to consumers this year. It is unclear how much demand there is for gadgets such as smart glass- es or watches, but industry insiders consider them to be the next phase in an increas- ingly saturated mobile device market.—Reuters
US defence chief to visit Singapore for Asia security forum

WASHINGTON, 24 May — US Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel will visit Singapore to attend a three-day international conference on Asia security from 30 May, a Defence Department spokesman said on Friday.

Hagel will deliver a speech on President Barack Obama’s focus on the Asia-Pacific region at the event widely called Shangri-La Dialogue, Adm John Kirby, Pentagon Press Secretary, told reporters.

“It is an important opportunity to build on the momentum we’ve achieved in strengthening our engagement and our alliances and partnerships in the Pacific region,” Kirby said.

Hagel will also take part in a trilateral meeting with Japanese Defence Minister Itsunori Onodera and South Korean National Defence Minister Kim Kwan Jin on the sidelines of the conference.

Onodera said earlier that Hagel plans to participate in another trilateral round with him and Australian Defence Minister David Johnston, as well as meet bilaterally with him.—Kyodo News

US Coast Guard ends search for missing British yacht sailors

NEW YORK, 24 May — A renewed search for four British sailors who vanished with their yacht a week ago in the Atlantic was called off late on Friday, two hours after the overturned vessel was spotted at sea with no sign of its crew, the US Coast Guard said.

The missing men, all experienced sailors, ran into trouble last Friday, 16 May, as they were returning to Britain from a sailing event in Antigua in the Caribbean. They had reported that their vessel, the 39-foot (12 metre) Cheeki Rafiki, about 1000 miles (1600 km) off Cape Cod, Massachusetts, in this US Coast Guard handout photo taken on 22 May, 2014.—REUTERS

A crew member of the US Coast Guard Cutter Vigorous searches for crew members of the sailing vessel Cheeki Rafiki, about 1000 miles (1600 km) off Cape Cod, Massachusetts, in this US Coast Guard handout photo taken on 22 May, 2014. —REUTERS

SEOUl, 24 May — South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se and visiting European Union (EU) foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton on Friday reaffirmed that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK)’s nuclear weapons programme is unacceptable, Seoul’s Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

During their meeting, the two diplomats reaffirmed their determined opposition to what they called the DPRK’s further provocation, including another nuclear test, agreeing to strengthen cooperation in denuclearizing DPRK and achieving the denuclearized DPRK.

Tensions are running high on the Korean Peninsula as the DPRK threatened to fire some 90 short-range missiles in late February and March. The latest nuclear test of the DPRK was conducted in February 2012.

Pyongyang on Thursday fired two artillery shells in waters near a South Korean naval ship sailing around the disputed maritime border. Yun and Ashton shared the view that move was very regrettable and intolerable. Ashton pledged to strengthen cooperation with South Korea in tackling the DPRK issues.

After the meeting, the two diplomats signed a basic participatory agreement on crisis management, which covers natural disasters, piracy control and peacekeeping activities.

Four dead, one missing in south China flood

QINGYUAN, (Guangdong), 24 May — Four people have died and one another is still missing in a rain-triggered flood in Qingyuan City of south China’s Guangdong Province, local authorities said on Saturday. Qingxin District in Qingyuan has been worst hit by persistent heavy rain, which has caused four small- and medium-sized reservoirs to overflow.

Rain has flooded nearly 483 villages and 12,300 homes, toppled 45 houses and trapped 454 residents, officials with Qingxin District said. In the district’s Shitan Town, although floodwater has dispersed, more than 20,000 residents lack drinking water as a reservoir has been emptied, said Liu Minyi, an official with the township government. Heavy rain has battered the province over the past few days. Rescue efforts are under way.—Xinhua

A resident clears sludge brought by a flood in Shitan Town of Qingyuan, south China’s Guangdong Province, on 24 May, 2014. Four people have died and one is still missing in a rain-triggered flood in Qingyuan, local authorities said on Saturday. —Xinhua

Over 36,700 affected by floods in northern Brazil

RIO DE JANEIRO, 24 May — Over 36,700 people were affected by the flood in the Amazon River basin in Brazil’s northern Para state, local authorities said on Friday.

In the Para state through which the lower Amazon River flows to the sea, seven towns declared state of emergency due to the flooding that affected entire neighbourhoods, while eight others were currently in state of alert, the authorities said.

The towns in state of emergency will distribute humanitarian kits with food, cleaning and personal hygiene products, with a priority given to families left homeless by the floods, the authorities said.

The Civil Defence authorities said they expected the flood to increase over the next few days.

Seasonal floods are common in northern Brazil due to the high volume of water in the rivers of the Amazon River basin.

Earlier this year, Rondonia state, also in Brazil’s northern region, faced the worst flood in decades. Entire communities were underwater and a federal highway that was the only connection by land to neighbouring Acre state was blocked for a month.

Photo taken on 23 May, 2014 shows the displayed organic vegetables at the 8th International Organic Trade Fair and Conference (BioFach China) in Shanghai, east China. The organic trade fair, which kicked off on Thursday, attracted more than 300 exhibitors from 16 countries and regions.—Xinhua
PLASTIC BANKNOTES TO BE RELEASED IN SCOTLAND IN 2015

EDINBURGH, 24 May — Clydesdale Bank in Scotland will release Britain’s first plastic banknotes next year to mark the 125th anniversary of the Forth Bridge, it was confirmed on Friday.

The bank will release two million five-pound notes (about 8.43 U.S. dollars) notes from March 2015 to coincide with the anniversary of the opening of the road bridge, according to an official statement.

The Clydesdale Bank note, which is smaller than the existing notes, celebrates the nomination of the Forth Bridge for inclusion in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)’s World Heritage List in 2014. It features the image of Sir William Arrol, one of Scotland’s most celebrated engineers, whose company constructed the Forth Bridge. Built over seven years, the Forth Bridge was opened on 4 March, 1890 as the first major structure in Britain to be constructed of steel.

In December, the Bank of England announced that it planned to issue plastic banknotes for the first time from 2016, when a new five-pound note featuring Sir Winston Churchill will be introduced. A 10-pound note featuring Jane Austen will follow around a year later, to be made from polymer rather than cotton paper which is currently used.

Polymer notes are proven to be more durable than existing notes, with research finding that they stay cleaner for longer, are more difficult to counterfeit and are at least 5 times longer-lasting, according to banks.—Xinhua

China enterprise helps resolve Mozambique’s food crisis

MAPUTO, 24 May — Although Mozambique has emerged from the nightmare of civil war, the “Pearl of Southeastern Africa” remains troubled by serious problems, including a food crisis.

Though far apart from China, its connection with the world’s most populous country is becoming tighter. It has not only found, near its coastline, porcelain relics from the Ming-era maritime voyages of Chinese trading fleets between 1405 and 1433, but also benefited from agricultural projects from the world’s second largest economy.

In recent years, an increasing number of Chinese agricultural enterprises are seeking broader development overseas, with some of them figuring their way into Mozambique, where their hard work and the experience of feeding Chinese people are assisting locals in achieving self-sufficiency in food. Lianche Africa Agriculture Development Co is one of them.

Although the company set its foot on the Mozambican soil only less than two years ago, it has already put high-quality rice to the market in Beira, the second largest city and a major seaport and airport in Mozambique.

According to Zhou Mingzhao, Lianche’s president, the firm started to explore overseas opportunities three years ago in response to the Chinese government’s call on private enterprises to go global.—Xinhua

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Kardashian and West will celebrate their wedding in the 16th century Belvedere Fort in Florence on Saturday.

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Hungarian dog film takes prize for innovative film at Cannes

CANNES (France), 24 May — The Hungarian film “Feher Isten” (White God), starring a pack of stray dogs that terrorises the capital Budapest and directed by Kornel Mundruczo, won the top prize in the “Un Certain Regard” forum of the Cannes International Film Festival on Friday. The runner-up, winning the jury prize, was “Turist” by Swedish director Ruben Ostlund. It is about the disintegration of a marriage after a husband abandons his wife and children on a terrace and flees when he falsely believes they are all about to be killed by an avalanche.

Jury President for the “Un Certain Regard” festival was Argentine director Pablo Trapero.

The forum, “A Particular Outlook” in English, is for young, innovative filmmakers or directors that runs alongside the main Cannes competition, whose winners will be announced on Saturday. Other films competing for the prize were the directorial debut of Hollywood A-list actor Ryan Gosling, “Lost River”, the only Indian film in the competition, “Titli”, by Kanu Behl, and “Jauja” starring Viggo Mortensen from Argentina’s Lisandro Alonso.

Director Kornel Mundruczo (5thR), winner of the Prize Un Certain Regard for his film “Feher isten'' (White God), poses on stage surrounded by jury members and laureates during the 67th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes on 23 May, 2014. — Reuters

I screamed at Daniel Radcliffe: Jennifer Lawrence

LOS ANGELES, 24 May — ‘Hunger Games’ actress Jennifer Lawrence has revealed she screamed at ‘Harry Potter’ star Daniel Radcliffe when she first met him.

The 23-year-old actress, who is a self-confessed Harry Potter fan, recalled the awkward moment during an appearance on Late Night with Seth Meyers, reported Ave Showbiz.

Speaking of what her interests were growing up, Lawrence said, “Harry Potter. I read that three times. NSYNC, Backstreet Boys, but it all changes as you get older.”

Sushmita Sen: I will certainly get married

MUMBAI, 24 May— Former beauty queen and actress Sushmita Sen, who has adopted two daughters, says she will certainly get married and that too in a beautiful ceremony. The 38-year-old, who has been linked to the likes of Randeep Hooda and Vikram Bhatt among others, doesn’t conform to the social norms.

When asked about this, she said: “I think you save the best for last.”

“I don’t think I should walk with the system. Our society has made this system that get graduate at 18, by 22 start panicking to get married and by 27 have your first child. I don’t believe in that.”

“Every person’s DNA is different. I will certainly get married and for sure it’s going to be a beautiful wedding. Masha allah bahut khoob surat hogi meri shaadi.”
**Mali Tuareg separatists accept ceasefire agreement**

BAMAKO, 24 May — Tuareg separatist groups in Mali on Friday accepted a ceasefire agreement with the government following clashes this week that threatened to plunged the country back into war.

The agreement was reached following a meeting between the chairman of the African Union and separatist groups in northern Mali to discuss a permanent truce and the resumption of talks between the rebels and the government in Bamako.

Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz and United Nations special representative in Mali Albert Koenders held talks for more than four hours with the three main rebel groups and local Tuareg traditional leaders in an effort to also revive peace negotiations between the two sides.

“I can confirm that we have agreed to a ceasefire,” senior Tuareg official Ambeiry Ag Rhissa told Reuters by telephone from Kidal, the separatist stronghold. “We have also agreed an exchange of prisoners and that an independent commission of inquiry should investigate what happened in Kidal.”

The Malian army launched an assault on Kidal on Wednesday after clashes broke out last weekend during a visit to the northern town by new Prime Minister Moussa Mara. The action threatened to sink the peace negotiations between the government and the rebels.

Mamadou Camara, Mali’s communication minister, said on Friday that President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita did not give the order for the army’s failed attempt to retake Kidal. The government has launched an inquiry into the matter. “We had accepted a ceasefire,” Camara told Reuters. “Our forces decided on their own they did not want for the political order that should come down from the president to the prime minister and then the minister.” — Reuters

**French Open draw offers Nadal chance of quick revenge**

PARIS, 24 May — Two fellow Spaniards who have already beaten him on his favourite clay surface could lie in wait for favourite-defending champion Rafael Nadal at the French Open.

Friday’s draw, conducted by Nadal at Roland Garros, also handed women’s champion Serena Williams and David Ferrer are seeded to face him in the fourth round and the quarter-final respectively.

Almagro surprisingly beat Nadal in the quarter-finals of the Barcelona Open while Ferrer, who the Malcoran beat in last year’s French Open final, knocked him out at the same stage at the Monte Carlo Masters.

“Last week in Rome was tough physically but sometimes you need these things, I played a bit better during the tournament,” Nadal told a news conference.

Defeat by Novak Djokovic in the Italian Open final meant Nadal has lost three matches on the European claycourt swing for the first time in a decade, raising doubts over his form.

*Reuters*

**Italy struggles to turn page on corruption**

MILAN, 24 May — They usually met in Milan although on Wednesdays they lunched in Rome. But for the seven men arrested on suspicion of corruption, the menu was always the same, prosecutors said: alleged bribes to obtain building contracts for Italy’s Expo 2015 world fair.

Milan prosecutors are investigating whether the group of former politicians and entrepreneurs rigged contracts for Expo and other public tenders, including a 67 million euro contract to build facilities for next year’s Universal Exhibition, according to a copy of the arrest warrant seen by Reuters.

Details of the case, revealed in the prosecutors’ warrant, have reminded Italians of the 1990s, when a wave of high-profile bribery cases landed top business men and politicians in jail and broke up Italy’s post-war party system.

Two decades later, despite promises from the new prime minister, Matteo Renzi, that he will invigorate the economy, business is still seen as murky, with many of Italy’s most prominent companies under investigation.

Corruption still exists in Italy, lawyers and prosecutors say, because many of the old offenders are still around — in some cases well past the normal retirement age — and Italian society typically takes a forgiving attitude to their crimes.

Despite repeated attempts to clean up politics and business, Italy still ranks 69 out of 177 countries in Transparency International’s corruption index, below most European nations.

Two of the people under investigation in the Expo case — 74-year-old Giansteфанo Frigerio, a former local leader of Italy’s Christian Democrats, and Primo Greganti, 70, former member of the defunct Communist Party — served jail time in the early 1990s after being convicted for corruption and illicit political party financing.

They both denied wrongdoing in the Expo case when questioned by prosecutors, according to people close to the investigation. Frigerio had no comment, his lawyer said, while Greganti’s lawyer said his client denied any wrongdoing.

“In Italy corruption is above all a cultural problem,” says Raaffae Canone, a magistrate who heads Italy’s anti-bribery authority and who was put in charge of the Expo 2015 organization after the recent arrests. “Those who have been involved in corruption cases, once they have served their sentence, are welcomed back with open arms by the business world, the political class, by the entire society.”

Canone says the Expo case shows how corruption in Italy has evolved over the past 25 years. In the case of the so-called “Clean Hands” trials of the early 1990s, political parties were the center of kickback schemes linked to public works contracts.

*Reuters*
Myanmar youth thumb up in tune-up match playing with Nigerian club

Myanmar U-19 team that is making preparations for taking part in the international football tournaments trounced Arafat FC 7-0 in the tune-up match at Sports Ground-1 in Thawda of Yangon on Saturday.

Myanmar deployed its first line-up players in the match. The Nigerian amateur Arafat FC could not effectively defend the storming attacks of Myanmar youths.

Winning goals for Myanmar came from two goals each from Aung Thu and Hein Nay Hsan and one each from Yan Min Aung, Hlaing Myo Aung and Maung Maung Lwn. Myanmar youth team won good results in tune-up matches without loss in playing against Japanese U-19 and Indonesian U-19 teams as of April.—By Nyi Myat Thawda

Rio 2016 chief determined Games will be ready on time

ATHENS, 24 May — Brazil will prove the doubters wrong and deliver the 2016 Olympics on time and within budget, Carlos Arthur Nuzman, president of the 2016 Rio Games organizing committee, has said.

In a rare interview given to international media, Nuzman conceded that delays had slowed the work down, with the final venue master plan having not been completed until last September, but he insisted everything would be ready.

“We know don’t have a problem,” Nuzman told the newspaper Kathimerini. “Bringing the Games to Brazil was an ambition I held for a very long time and we are determined that we will deliver a Games to be proud of, within the agreed schedules and budgets.”

Last month International Olympic Committee (IOC) vice president John Coates labelled Brazil’s preparations the worst he had ever seen and critically behind schedule.

Attending an Olympic forum in Sydney, Coates told delegates construction had not started on some venues, infrastructure was significantly delayed and water quality was also a major concern two years out from the Games, although he later said he was certain the city would be able to host a “great” event.

Nuzman responded by saying that “working as a team is the best and only way to make this progress, but we need constructive criticism which can help us improve”. The first Games on the South American continent have been plagued by delays, rising costs and bad communication between different levels of the Brazilian government and organizers, prompting criticism from international sports federations.

The IOC announced a series of unprecedented measures in April to kick-start lagging preparations, including setting up a special task force, employing extra monitors and sending project managers and teams of experts.

Amid problems with stadium construction, labour unrest and security in other parts of the country, thousands of troops were deployed to Rio’s slums in February to wrest them back from the control of drug gangs and criminals.

Turning to the finances behind the Games, Nuzman said the role of his organizing committee should be distinguished from that of the three levels of government — the central administration and regional and municipal authorities.

President of Brazil’s Olympic Committee
Carlos Arthur Nuzman

Chelsea defender Luiz set for Paris St Germain move

LONDON, 24 May — French champions Paris St Germain have agreed terms with Chelsea to sign Brazilian defender David Luiz, the clubs said on Friday.

“The move is now subject to David Luiz agreeing personal terms with PSG and passing a medical examination,” Premier League club Chelsea said on their website (www.chelseafc.com).

British media reported that the versatile 27-year-old would command a world record fee for a defender of between 40 million (€57.37 million) and 50 million pounds ($84.21 million).

That would surpass the 36 million pounds Qatari-backed PSG paid for Luiz’s Brazil team mate Thiago Silva in 2012 although neither club disclosed the financial terms of their agreement.

The easily recognisable Luiz, with his long and shaggy hair, joined Chelsea in January, 2011 from Benfica for about 21 million pounds and helped the west London side win the Champions League for the first time the following year.

Strong, energetic and armed with a powerful shot, Luiz likes to venture forward but can be somewhat erratic and prone to the odd defensive lapse.

He has made 143 appearances for Chelsea in 3-1/2 seasons at Stamford Bridge, scoring 12 goals.

PSG said in a statement that they hoped to reach a quick agreement with Luiz, who can also play as a defensive midfielder and is part of Brazil’s World Cup squad for the finals which start next month. “In accordance with the player’s wish to prepare for and play in the World Cup in his home country and in the best possible conditions, both clubs and

David Luiz wished to reach an agreement as soon as possible between, on the one hand, Paris St Germain and Chelsea, and on the other, between the Parisian club and the player in order to formalise the transfer as soon as the transfer window opens (on 10 June),” the club said.

PSG, who strolled to the Ligue 1 title but lost to Chelsea in the Champions League quarter-finals, were last week fined up to 60 million euros ($82.23 million) and had their squad capped for next season’s European campaign after breaching UEFA’s Financial Fair Play (FFP) rules.

Wealthy Premier League champions Manchester City were hit with the same punishment and as part of their settlement with European soccer’s governing body, both clubs also agreed to curbs on transfer spending over the next two seasons.

FIFA to release last-minute World Cup tickets

RIO DE JANEIRO, 24 May — Football’s governing body FIFA will offer fans their last chance to attend the World Cup by releasing a final batch of tickets on 1 June.

In a briefing with Brazilian media on Friday, FIFA’s marketing director Thierry Weil said an unidentified number of seats would go on sale at venue ticketing centres.

“We had to hold on to 7% of seats that were installed after (the last sales phase),” Weil was quoted saying by O Globo. “We are currently looking to see how many tickets we can sell.”

Weil reiterated FIFA’s warning to fans about scalpers.

The body earlier said those who purchased tickets from unauthorized sellers would be denied entry.

“Are we going to stop all the ticket touts?” Weil said in comments published on FIFA’s official website. “Probably not. But we’ve been very successful in terms of selling World Cup tickets on the internet.”

“My advice is not to take risks. Don’t buy tickets on the black market. If we find out, you’ll be stopped and will be prevented from entering the stadium.”—Xinhua

Image source: Myamyanmar.org