Labour Ministry explains laws to employers, workers at industrial zones as disputes over low wages increase

By Aye Min Soe

YANGON, 2 June—As the number of labour disputes at factories and industrial zones has been rising in recent weeks, with several well publicized incidents of employees getting sacked for making complaints, officials from the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security held a number of talks on Monday in an attempt to raise awareness of laws among employers and employees.

Department officials gave talks at Hlyin-thaya and Shwelinpan industrial zones on the western outskirts of Yangon, explaining a wide range of issues from safety to salaries in front of 300 people, mostly workers.

“Many disputes between employers and employees occur, because both sides lack knowledge of labour laws,” said U Aung Naing, Staff Officer of the Factories and General Labour Laws Inspection Department following the talks, stressing that low wages are the main concern for employees.

One dispute at Asia Rose Garment Factory on 7 May has, in the meantime, been settled after the employer agreed to increase the daily wages of labourers, he said.

Disputes last month at Good Family Garment Factory in Shwepyitha Industrial Zone, Japan cardboard box factory in Hmawby, a natural ceramic factory in Hmawby and Hope One Garment Factory have been solved by increasing the daily wages and allowances for cost of living for workers, said U Win Shein, the Director-General of the Factories and General Labour Laws Inspection Department, who led a negotiation team dealing with the disputes.

A dispute on 28 May at Shin Soung Garment Factory, owned by a Korean businessman, could not be solved and had to be referred to a tribunal council, following a breakdown of negotiations between the employer and employees.

Twelve workers of the factory were sacked from their job for leading a protest with over 2,000 workers that day.

The ministry is also planning to conduct training on administration and labour laws for managers and supervisors of factories after mid-June.

Myanmar school season starts with inadequate amount of text books, teachers

By Aung Khin

YANGON, 2 June—The Myanmar school season of basic education for the 2014-2015 academic year started across the country on Monday, with some schools not able to provide the children with adequate text books for some subjects and a sufficient number of teachers, locals said.

The country has adopted a compulsory primary education policy starting this term, but doubts persist that preparations have been efficient.

Despite the government’s pledges to enroll all school-aged children this term for basic education in a move aimed at boosting the country’s literacy level, many parents have complained about the lack of learning material and qualified teachers.

Daw Mya Tin, mother of a Grade 4 student in Yangon, said that “I have enrolled my daughter for Grade 5 class and she received six copybooks and one K 1,000, as promised by the government. But the children have not received all of their text books.”

Another issue is the lack of teachers, especially in rural areas, officials have acknowledged. The government pledged sweeping reforms of the education sector, but results have yet to be seen, as Daw Su Su, Grade 5 female teacher in Yangon, confirmed. “My class has 75 students this year. We have requested more teachers to be able to provide adequate education, but we have been accustomed to these situations for some years,” she said.

With the teacher-student ratio a major problem, many parents fear that their children will not receive the education needed to be able to compete for good jobs after graduation. “Although the school enrollment plan has become better, many things still need to be addressed. There are 74 children in the classroom of my daughters. And I think all children have to work extra hours to learn in overcrowded conditions. The number of classrooms is not sufficient,” said U Ohn Maung, father of a Grade 5 student in Yangon.

While this term the number of students enrolled for basic education is supposed to be near 100 percent, many students are still expected to drop out, eventually due to financial constraints.

According to 2011 statistics, the enrollment rate for basic education was 85 percent, with the number of students completing school standing at 81 percent.

According to an international independent study conducted in the same year, students in Myanmar have on average a 2-km way to school, with the number of primary school teachers report ed at just over 180,000—resulting in an overall teacher-student ratio of 1:29. The number of primary school students in 2011 was around 5.2 million, approximately 8 percent of the total population.

There are three types of schools in Myanmar—public schools, private schools and monastic-run schools. Offering free education and especially targeting orphans or children from poor families who cannot afford to pursue formal education, the monastic-run schools play an important role in terms of access to education in the country.
Union Defence Minister receives Israeli Ambassador and party

NA T PY TAW, 2 June—Union Minister for Defence Lt-Gen Wai Lwin received Israeli Ambassador Mr Hagay Moshe Behar, Defence Attaché Mr Ori Bar Chaim of Bang-kok-based Israeli Embassy and his successor Mr Dan Carmel at the ministry on Monday to discuss cooperation between two armed forces of Myanmar and Israel.—MNA

Acting Thai FM calls on Union FM

Y ANGON, 2 June—Acting Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand Mr Sihakak Phuengketow called on Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin at the ministry in Yangon on Monday.

During the meeting, the acting Thai minister briefed the chair of the ASEAN for 2014, the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs on the development in Thailand and renewed Thailand’s commitment to work with ASEAN member states to achieve the objectives of ASEAN.

The Union minister responded by stating that he will convey the message of Thailand to other ASEAN member states. MNA

DoH, JICA sign two grant agreements for Loikaw, Lashio general hospitals

Director-General Dr Min Than Nyunt of Health Department and Mr Masahiko Tanaka, Chief Representative of JICA shaking hands after exchanging notes.

Y ANGON, 2 June—The Department of Health under the Ministry of Health and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) signed two grant agreements of the project for improving Loikaw General Hospital in Kayah State and a project for improving Lashio General Hospital in Shan State on 24 March and 24 April respectively.

Director-General Dr Min Than Nyunt of Health Department and Mr Masahiko Tanaka, Chief Representative of JICA Myanmar Office attended the ceremony.

The projects are going to be implemented with grants of the amount up to JPY 1.945 billion for Loikaw General Hospital and JPY 1.51 billion for Lashio General Hospital.

Two main buildings, roofed passage, guard house, electrical room and elevated water tank will be built at Loikaw General Hospital. Likewise, two main buildings, substance abuse treatment and mental health service center (SAMSC) and mortuary will be built at Lashio General Hospital.—NLM

Serbia to expand economic ties with Myanmar by further investing in electric power sector and infrastructure projects: Ambassador

H.E. Mr. Miodrag Nikol, Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to Myanmar.

As Myanmar and Serbia, the former political center of Yugoslavia, have long-standing relations and continue to cooperate on a number of investment projects, H.E. Mr. Miodrag Nikol, Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, discussed in an interview with the NLM his country’s view on the developments here and further strengthening of economic cooperation.

Q: Please describe the relations between Myanmar and Serbia?
A: It gives me a pleasure to state that the relations between our two friendly countries are traditionally very good. I’d rather say outstanding, what was reconfirmed during the visit last year of, at that time, Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ivan Mrkic. Furthermore, I would like to say that, as the first Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I have the pleasure and honor of having an opportunity to contribute to further promotion of bilateral relations and mutually beneficial cooperation, especially in the field of economy where there are potentials and both sides interest for its enhancement.

It is important to be mentioned that the relations between our two friendly countries are based on the principals of the UN Charter, peaceful coexistence and the international law, respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity of each UN member state. In this connection, we highly appreciate and value Myanmar’s firm and principle stance on non-recognition unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo and Molotov, southern Province of Serbia, that Serbia does not and never will recognize.

Q: Are there any projects underway and plans for further investments in Myanmar?
A: Answering this question, I would like to say that we give a great importance to the promotion and enhancement of the mutually beneficial bilateral economic cooperation with Myanmar.

Regarding that, we have longstanding and fruitful tradition in realization of many projects in the nature and technical aid, Myanmar.

PADIGONE, 2 June—A total of 17 students were injured at a high school in Padigone Township, Bago Region after the floor of school building collapsed on the morning of Monday, local authorities said.

The two-storey school with 280-foot width and 29-foot length was constructed in 1958. Among the injured students, a female student, 13, was taken to the Yangon General Hospital as her three vertebrae of spine were broken. The six students are now receiving medical treatments as in-patients and the remaining 10 children as the out-patients at the Padigone People’s Hospital.

The Ministry of Education has allocated a total of one billion kyats for 2014-2015 fiscal year, allowing the State/Region education officers to permit maximum five million kyats for urgent or small-scaled renovation of school buildings without seeking permission from headquarters of No.1 Department of Basic Education.—MNA

17 injured in school floor collapse

Photo shows collapsed floor of Padigone BEHS. MNA
Vice president calls for participation of private sector in healthcare services

NAY PYI TAW, 2 June—Myanmar’s health sector is at a critical juncture, said Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham in his speech at the workshop on human resources development in the health sector held in Nay Pyi Taw on Monday.

The vice president, who also chairs the national health committee, highlighted the urgency of “five issues” to be discussed at the workshop including health workforce retention, quantity and quality in medical education, administration and management, private sector involvement and HHIP policy.

In the conclusion of his speech, the vice president said that the two objectives of the workshop were to train health workforce who are urgently needed by the country and to enlist the private sector to share the workload of the government in the health sector.

Union ministers, deputy ministers, members of the national health committee, retired physicians and health experts, professors and officials attended the opening of the workshop on human resources development in health sector.

Myanmar, Japan discuss cooperation on microfinance institutions

NAY PYI TAW, 2 June—Vice President U Nyan Tun received a delegation led by Nobuyuki Hirano, president of Tokyo-Mitsubishi Bank UFJ Ltd. of Japan at the Credentials Hall of the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw on Monday. This meeting was held in accordance with the decision of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, to the president.

During the current legislature’s three years, a total of 98 laws have been approved by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, with 136 laws to be drafted, amended or revoked during the remaining term of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approved the substitution of Defence Services Personnel representative of the Lower House Lt-Col Kyaw Kyaw Lin, a member of the implementation committee for constitutional amendment, with Brig-Gen Than Htut Thein.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw sends Anti-terrorism Bill to president

NAY PYI TAW, 2 June—The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session continued in Nay Pyi Taw on Monday, with lawmakers agreeing to send the Anti-terrorism Bill, which had been sent to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw with remarks by the president and had been amended in accordance with the decision of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, to the president.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approved the substitution of Defence Services Personnel representative of the Lower House Lt-Col Kyaw Kyaw Lin, a member of the implementation committee for constitutional amendment, with Brig-Gen Than Htut Thein.

Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw meets Chief of the Defence Staff (Rtd) of Britain

NAY PYI TAW, 2 June—Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and the Lower House Thura U Shwe Mann held talks with the Chief of the Defence Staff (Rtd) General Sir David Richards of Britain at the hall of the Lower House in Nay Pyi Taw on Monday.

They discussed further strengthening friendly relations and bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

Innovative justice sustainable training course concludes

YANGON, 2 June—The innovative justice sustainable training course was conducted at the hall of the Yangon Region Advocate-General Office in Yangon on Saturday and Sunday as of 17 May.

Ms Caitlin Reiger (Chief Technical Adviser) of the UNDP visited the training room.

The training was jointly conducted by the Union Attorney-General Office and the International Development Law Organization, aimed at enhancing capacity of law officers and improving their duty and functions.
MEB opens remittance counter in Mandalay

Mandalay, 2 June—A ceremony to launch the Mandalay remittance counter of Myanmar Economic Bank was held at the office at the corner of 56th street and Manawhari road in Chammyathazi Township, Mandalay Region, on Monday. Mandalay Region Minister for Finance Dr Myint Kyu and Managing Director Daw Yin Yin Mya of MEB formally opened the counter. They then visited the bank building. —Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Relief items donated to members of Kayin Baptist Church

Dawei, 2 June — A ceremony to provide relief supplies to members of the Kayin Baptist Church was held on 1 June at the church in Dawei of Tanintharyi Region for 2014-15 academic year.

Turnover of express bus leaves one dead, five injured in Mohnyin

Mohnyin, 2 June—An express bus carrying over 40 passengers that left Tanai of Kachin State for Mogok of Mandalay Region overturned near 10th-mile village in Mohnyin Township at 4.30 am on Sunday, leaving one passenger dead and five injured.

The youths from Mogok Township left for Karkmaing Township of Kachin State to hunt jobs for mining works. However, they all returned home due to security measures. Some of them chartered an express bus from Tanai to Mogok. Most of the passengers were Lisu national youths.

Bus conductor Chan Myae Zaw, 16, was dead in the incident. Mohnyin police station opened a file of lawsuit against driver Ko Khaing Lin.

100 copies of newspaper for one year donated to villages in Ngaputaw Tsp

Mandalay, 2 June—The newspaper donation ceremony took place at the Mandalay Sub-Printing House of News and Periodicals Enterprise on Monday. Managing Director Sudhamma Dr U Kyaw Win of Mann Myay Yazar Co., Ltd., donated K1.8 million for one year cost of Myanma Alinn daily to Head of Aungmyethazan Township Information and Public Relations Department U Zaw Lin Oo.

The well-wisher donated 100 copies of the Myanma Alinn daily to seven villages of Ngaputaw Township in Ayeyawady Region as of 1 June. —Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Companies that sell poor quality lamp-posts to be put into black list

Mandalay, 2 June—The companies that could not make some concrete lamp-posts under standard will be put into the blacklist, according to the Mandalay Region Ministry of Electric and Industry. “Some lamp-posts did not make of iron bars. While competing in the market share with cheap products, the quality of products is declining gradually. So we will put such company into the blacklist,” said Region Minister for Electric and Industry U Kyaw Myint.

On 10 May, the squalls broke two concrete lamp-posts on 12th and strand streets. There were some damages and injuries in the incident, said a local. The machine that tests the concrete posts is located in Yangon. So, the concrete posts to be used in Mandalay Region can be put under checking of the machine in Yangon. Mandalay Region government plans to substitute the wooden lamp-posts with concrete posts. In coming budget year, the region government will demand the fund for installation of transformers to be able to supply sufficient electricity to 28 townships of the region.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)

Seintalone mango fruits highly marketable in June

Seintalone mango which is favorite fruit of Mandalayrians will be rare in the Mandalay’s market as of mid-June, said a news source of Mandalay.

Seintalone mango is grown in Hannmyintno village of Kyaukse Township in the region. The ripen fruits are sent to the market as of April, said mango farm owners of the village. “As of last week of April, we export the Seintalone fruits to China and local market,” a farm owner explained. The fruit produced in May is the best quality in color and flavor, he continued.

Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)
Thai army rulers prepare emergency economic measures

Bangkok, 2 June — The military junta running Thailand has drawn up a list of emergency measures such as price caps on fuel and loan guarantees for small firms to kick-start an economy threatened by recession after months of political turmoil.

The plans, outlined by Air Chief Marshal Prayut Prayut Junta late on Sunday after a meeting with officials at economic ministries, take in longer-term measures such as the development of special economic zones on the borders with Myanmar, Laos and Malaysia. The military toppled the remnants of former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra’s administration on 22 May after months of protests that had forced government ministries to close, hurt business confidence and caused the economy to shrink.

Yingluck herself was ordered to step down two weeks before the coup when a court found her guilty of abuse of power.

As well as working to revive the economy, the military council has moved to suppress criticism of the coup and nip protests in the bud. Yingluck, as well as prominent supporters of her and her brother, former premier Thaksin Shinawatra, have been briefly detained and warned against any anti-military activities. On Sunday, the army council sent 5,700 troops and police into central Bangkok to stop anti-coup protests, which were mostly limited to small gatherings held around shopping malls. The military has banned political gatherings of five or more people and protests that have taken place in Bangkok since the 22 May putsch have been small and brief.

On Saturday, as on the two previous days, the authorities closed normally busy roads around Victory Monument, which was becoming a focal point for opposition to the coup. The area was flooded with police and troops but no protesters turned up.

Thailand’s deep political divide pits the Bangkok-based royalist establishment, dominated by the military, old-money families and the bureaucracy, against supporters of former telecommunications mogul Thaksin, who is adored by the poor in the north and northeast.

Considered the power behind Yingluck’s government, Thaksin was ousted as prime minister in a coup in 2006 and has lived in self-imposed exile since fleeing a 2008 conviction for abuse of power.

Air Chief Marshal Prayut, who is overseeing economic matters for the junta, said 30 urgent proposals on the economy would be discussed with coup leader Prayut Chan-o-cha on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Among them, Prayut mentioned a form of price insurance for rice farmers. This would replace a costly buying scheme run under Yingluck that collapsed when her caretaker government was unable to find funding, leaving hundreds of thousands of farmers unpaid for months.

N Korea envoy says positive about visiting Japan for talks

North Korean envoy Song Il Ho tells reporters on 2 June, 2014, at Beijing’s international airport.

Kyodo News

BEIJING, 2 June — North Korea’s chief negotiator in dealing with Japan said on Monday he is ready to visit Japan for the ongoing bilateral negotiations if requested by Tokyo.

“Until now, we have never rejected a request from the Japanese side,” Song Il Ho, who represented North Korea at three-day talks with Japan last week in Stockholm, told reporters at Beijing’s international airport before heading to Pyongyang.

He made the comment when asked about a Kyodo News report on Sunday that the Japanese government is considering inviting North Korean officials to seek more information about Pyongyang’s promised reinvestigation of the whereabouts of Japanese nationals it abducted decades ago. Japan and North Korea announced on Thursday that Pyongyang has agreed to look into the fates of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korean agents in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as other Japanese who are missing and suspected of having been kidnapped.

The deal was struck during the negotiations through Wednesday in the Swedish capital between Japan and North Korea.

For the reinvestigation, North Korea is planning to set up a special committee by around mid-June, Kyodo News reported.

Indonesian president warns against military meddling in election

Jakarta, 2 June — Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on Monday warned senior military officers against intending to support certain presidential candidates running in the upcoming 9 July presidential election, saying that it may stray from movement and jeopardizes the nation.

Citing confirmed intelligence information, the president said that there has been efforts conducted by some senior military officers luring their colleagues to back up certain presidential candidates. “The neutrality of the military and police must be preserved. Don’t make a step back against it, don’t run it. Don’t betray the reform in military and police institutions which we uneasily initiated at that time,” the president spoke in a session with senior military officers in the defense ministry here. The president warned senior military officers, asking them to guard against temptation from external parties luring them to take part in political constellation.

“They even asked the senior military officers not to listen to the president as he is the president of a sinking ship, and better find the other president,” the president said.

The president pointed out if those officers plan to take part in politics, they would have to resign first from the military or police services.

Indonesia will have a new government after the legislative and presidential elections in April and July this year, replacing the administration of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono who served two maximum five-year terms beginning in 2004.

Indonesian military and police were widely believed to have played a role in supporting the administration of then-president Soeharto, who had held the presidency for more than 30 years before being ousted by a nationwide student uprising in May 1998.

Xinhua

Thai gov’t HQ complex reopens after months of closure

Thai soldiers walk in front of Thai Khu Fah Building at the Government House in Bangkok, Thailand, on 2 June, 2014. Thai Government House was reopened on Monday after military coup. — Xinhua

Bangkok, 2 June — A Thai government complex that normally houses the offices of the prime minister and Cabinet ministers resumed functioning on Monday, 11 days after the army staged a coup ending months of antigovernment protests that had forced its closure.

A spokesman of the junta, which calls itself the National Council for Peace and Order and is based at army headquarters in Bangkok, said Government House will be used for meetings and other functions, but not as junta headquarters.

The complex had been blocked since early December by protesters bent on toppling the government of then Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, who was forced by circumstances to use police and military compounds as her temporary workplace.

Kyodo News
Japan must act fast amid Asia security threats: ex-US diplomat

Tokyo, 2 June — The United States is looking for immediate steps by Japan to address the growing security threats in the Asia-Pacific region posed by China and North Korea, Kurt Campbell, former US assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, said on Monday.

“We believe the security environment indicates that immediate steps are in the best strategic interest of the region,” Campbell told reporters in Tokyo when asked if a review of the US-Japan defence guidelines should be concluded by the end of the year.

“We came to Japan to visit with a variety of friends to send a strong message that the security environment is changing dramatically in Asia,” Campbell said, alongside Michael Green, former senior director for Asian affairs at the US National Security Council.

“If we get nuclear weapons in North Korea and China and the United States are working to renew their defence guidelines, while Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s government is attempting to expand the Self-Defence Forces’ international role by changing the interpretation of part of the pacifist Constitution.

In Tokyo, Campbell explained to government and ruling coalition officials how serious the security situation is in Asia.

Campbell also said the United States, Japan and South Korea need to strengthen defence ties to counter the threats.

“We strongly support the efforts both in public and behind the scenes to build stronger bonds currently between Japan and South Korea,” he said.

“The United States has a strong interest that our two closest partners work together in a changing environment in Asia.”

His comments came at a time when Japan and South Korea are at odds over territorial and historical issues.

“We recognize any hope of diplomacy in Asia right now rests on the strength of defence and deterrence,” Campbell added. “The region is looking for signs of strong leadership from the United States and Japan.”

“We hope that circumstances will permit at some point in improving the relationship between Japan and China as well.”

China has been assertive in both the East China Sea and South China Sea, where it has made territorial claims against Japan, and Vietnam and the Philippines, respectively. As for North Korea, Green said in fluent Japanese that the country has been developing ballistic missiles, and they are targeted at Japan and Guam, where a US military base is located.

“North Korea also has a surprising number of small submarines,” he warned. “With the current constitutional framework, Japan can’t respond to those contingencies. The credibility of the US-Japan security alliance will be in jeopardy if Japan says it can’t cooperate when its allies are under attack.”

Kyodo News

Indonesia to hold presidential polls on 9 July

KUALA LUMPUR, 2 June — A Thai oil tanker reported missing two days ago has been recovered with all of its crew members safe but pirates who hijacked the tanker took its cargo and damaged communications gear, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) said on Monday.

The MT Orapin 4 lost contact with authorities after departing from Indonesia for a terminal in Singapore on Friday, prompting the IMB to send an alert shortly after.

The tanker arrived in Thailand’s Sri Racha port on Sunday evening and Thai authorities will be investigating the incident. Noël Choong, the head of IMB’s Kuala Lumpur-based Piracy Reporting Center, told Reuters.

Pirates raided a tanker off the coast of Malaysia in late April, taking 3 million liters of diesel.—Reuters

Thai oil tanker recovered, cargo taken by hijackers: authorities

OBRENOVAC, 2 June — The flood-caused damage to the energy, telecommunications, railway and road infrastructures amounts to around EUR 260 million, Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Zorana Mihajlovic said on Sunday, adding that all state roads will be built by October.

“We will work on roads first so that Serbia can solve those problems as early as October. The damage to Category I and Category II roads, as well as local roads, amounts to around EUR 40 million,” Mihajlovic said.

The estimated damage in local self-government units that have submitted their reports is at around EUR 200 million, Mihajlovic said.

“We still have not received the reports from all local self-governments. Understandably, we still cannot obtain that information from Obrenovac,” she said.

A difficult period is ahead for us, but the government, alongside international organisations and the EU, will do everything to find a way out of those problems, she said. We will find funds to rebuild houses by the autumn and ensure that life gets back to normal, not only in Obrenovac, but in other flood-hit cities as well, Mihajlovic said, adding that financial assessments are a prerequisite for this. The money for repairing the damage will come from the EU Solidarity Fund, provided by the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), but also from unused IPA funds, she said. World Bank Vice President Laura Tuck expressed condolences in Obrenovac to all those who lost their loved ones or property in the catastrophic floods, adding that the World Bank has already donated USD 150,000 for urgent repairs.—Tanjug

Damage to infrastructure at around EUR 260 mln

Park tells new security chief to prepare for N Korean provocations

SEOUL, 2 June — South Korean President Park Geun Hye on Monday told her new chief secretary for national security to be fully prepared to respond to any new North Korean provocations, according to the presidential office.

“In light of the regional situation, North Korea’s continuing provocations and threats, the security situation is very grave and I want you to maintain a maximum level of preparedness for security,” Park told Defence Minister Kim Kwang Jin at a meeting of secretaries for the president. Kim was named on Sunday as head of the National Security Office. He will double as the defence minister until his successor, former army general Han Min Koo, takes office after a parliamentary confirmation hearing.

North Korea has threatened in recent weeks to carry out a new nuclear test in protest against what it perceives as the US-South Korea hostile stance against it and international denunciations made at the United Nations against its rocket and missile launches earlier this year.

Kim was named to the post in place of Kim Jang Soo in a move widely interpreted as intended to regain public trust amid growing criticism of the government’s inadequacy and mismanagement in its responses to the 16 April ferry sinking that left more than 300 passengers, mostly high school students on a school excursion, dead or missing. —Kyodo News
Three foreign engineers killed in E Afghan suicide bombing

JALALABAD, (AFGHANISTAN), 7 June. — Three Turkish engineers were killed on Monday morning in a suicide bomb attack in eastern Afghanistan's Nangarhar province, official sources said.

“The victims were traveling in a minibus. A militant rammed and detonated a tricycle packed with explosive into the vehicle, leaving three people killed and one injured in the bus,” a security personnel told Xinhua. The blast took place around 7:15 am (local time) in Behsoud district outside provincial capital Jalalabad city, provincial government spokesman Ahmad Zia Abdulzai said. The victims were serving in a local construction firm in charge of building police facilities in the province. 120 km east of national capital Kabul, he said.

The bodies along with the injured were shifted to a hospital in Jalalabad.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack but the Taleban insurgent group was likely behind such attacks.

The Taleban-led insurgency has been rampant since the militant group launched an annual rebel offensive against Afghan government forces and more than 51,000 NATO-led troops stationed in the country in mid-May. — Xinhua

NATO to discuss reinforcing troops in Poland-Germany defence ministry

BERLIN, 2 June — NATO defense ministers will discuss temporarily reinforcing forces in Poland when they meet in Brussels next week, German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen said. For the German defense ministry said on Sunday, a move that would be aimed at reassuring countries nervous about Russia’s intervention in Ukraine.

The spokesman said the 28-member alliance would consider reinforcing its Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin.

In Brussels, NATO spokeswoman Oana Lungescu said NATO defense ministers would on Tuesday review measures the alliance had taken given Russia’s actions towards Ukraine. She said this could include “enhanced air patrols over the Baltic states, AWACS surveillance planes over Poland and Romania, more exercises, and an enhanced naval presence by NATO allies from the Baltic to the Black Sea.” “Defence ministers will also discuss the longer-term implications of the crisis and consider a readiness action plan for preparation for the Wales summit in September,” she added.

In April Poland’s defence minister said Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine’s Crimean peninsula made it vital that NATO station significant numbers of troops in eastern Europe and ignore any objections Russia might have. “Russia says deployment of significant NATO forces close to Russia would violate the 1997 Founding Act, an agreement between Moscow and the alliance. Eastern European states are nervous about Russia after it annexed Ukraine’s Crimea region and massed 40,000 troops on its borders. NATO is trying to provide reassurance with temporary deployments of military forces and exercises.” — Reuters

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

Jerusalem, 2 June — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned on Sunday against an international rush to recognize a Palestinian government due to be announced under a unity pact between the Fatah and Hamas Islamist groups.

Israel and the West classify Hamas as a terrorist organization and have no official dealings with the movement, which advocates the destruction of the Jewish state. But Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, whose Fatah party signed a reconciliation deal with Hamas in April, said a unity government due to be announced on Monday would be composed of ministers without political affiliation, a status, that could ease the way for Western engagement.

“I call on all responsible elements in the international community not to rush to recognize a Palestinian government which has Hamas as part of it and which is dependent on Hamas,” Netanyahu, who has said such an administration would be a front for the Islamist group, told his cabinet.

“Hamas is a terrorist organization that calls for Israel’s destruction, and the international community must not embrace it. It would not bolster peace, it would strengthen terror,” Netanyahu said in public remarks at the cabinet meeting.

Israel froze US-brokered peace talks with Abbas when the unity deal was announced on 23 April after numerous unsuccessful attempts at Palestinian reconciliation since Hamas seized the Gaza Strip from Fatah forces in fighting in 2007.

In a call to US Secretary of State John Kerry on Sunday, Abbas cast the intra-Palestinian moves as a domestic matter that should not affect wider diplomacy with Israel and the West.

Abbas told Kerry “the coming government will be formed of independents and will represent the political agenda of the president,” the official Palestinian news agency Wafa said.

Kerry, who oversaw the peace talks that stalled in April, "expressed concern about Hamas’s role in any such government and the importance that the new government commit to the principles of nonviolence, recognition of the State of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements with it," the State Department said in a statement.

Abbas assured Kerry that “the new government would be committed to these principles,” State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said in the statement. Abbas said on Saturday that Israel “informed us ... they would boycott us if we announced the government”. Netanyahu, in his brief statement on Sunday, made no reference to any Israeli sanctions. Israel has withheld tax revenues from Abbas’s aid-dependent Palestinian Authority, which exercises limited self-rule in the West Bank, in retaliation for his signing in April of international conventions and treaties after Israel reneged on a promised release of Palestinian prisoners. On Saturday, a Palestinian official said Israel had denied requests by three Gaza-based Palestinians expected to be named as ministers to attend the new government’s swearing-in ceremony in the occupied West Bank.

Afghans say Taleban prisoners freed by US will rejoin battle

KABUL, 2 June — The release of five Taleban prisoners in exchange for a US soldier has drawn criticism from some Afghans, who say the detainees are dangerous and will rekindle ties with terrorist networks to resume fighting, just as most foreign troops leave.

The men had been held at the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba since 2002 and were classed by the Pentagon as “high-risk” and “likely to pose a threat”.

Two are also implicated in the murder of thousands of minority Shi’ite Muslims in Afghanistan, according to the US military.

They were released in a swap with US army sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, the sole American prisoner of war held in Afghanistan who was flown to a US military hospital in Germany on Sunday.

“They will definitely go back to fight, if health-wise they are able to go,” said a top official at Afghanistan’s spy agency, who asked to remain anonymous because of the sensitivity of the topic. "They will be very dangerous people, because they have connections with regional and international terrorist organizations around the world.”

The Taleban denied the prisoners would return to battle but said the swap should not be regarded as a gesture of good will or a step towards the revival of peace talks between Israeli and Palestinian officials and the Afghan government.

Reuters

Netanyahu urges world not to recognize Palestinian unity government

Jerusalem, 2 June — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned on Sunday against an international rush to recognize a Palestinian government due to be announced under a unity pact between the Fatah and Hamas Islamist groups.

Israel and the West classify Hamas as a terrorist organization and have no official dealings with the movement, which advocates the destruction of the Jewish state. But Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, whose Fatah party signed a reconciliation deal with Hamas in April, said a unity government due to be announced on Monday would be composed of ministers without political affiliation, a status, that could ease the way for Western engagement.

“I call on all responsible elements in the international community not to rush to recognize a Palestinian government which has Hamas as part of it and which is dependent on Hamas,” Netanyahu, who has said such an administration would be a front for the Islamista group, told his cabinet.

“Hamas is a terrorist organization that calls for Israel’s destruction, and the international community must not embrace it. It would not bolster peace, it would strengthen terror,” Netanyahu said in public remarks at the cabinet meeting.

Israel froze US-brokered peace talks with Abbas when the unity deal was announced on 23 April after numerous unsuccessful attempts at Palestinian reconciliation since Hamas seized the Gaza Strip from Fatah forces in fighting in 2007.

In a call to US Secretary of State John Kerry on Sunday, Abbas cast the intra-Palestinian moves as a domestic matter that should not affect wider diplomacy with Israel and the West.

Abbas told Kerry “the coming government will be formed of independents and will represent the political agenda of the president,” the official Palestinian news agency WAPA said.

Kerry, who oversaw the peace talks that stalled in April, “expressed concern about Hamas’s role in any such government and the importance that the new government commit to the principles of nonviolence, recognition of the State of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements with it,” the State Department said in a statement.

Abbas assured Kerry that “the new government would be committed to these principles,” State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said in the statement. Abbas said on Saturday that Israel “informed us ... they would boycott us if we announced the government”. Netanyahu, in his brief statement on Sunday, made no reference to any Israeli sanctions. Israel has withheld tax revenues from Abbas’s aid-dependent Palestinian Authority, which exercises limited self-rule in the West Bank, in retaliation for his signing in April of international conventions and treaties after Israel reneged on a promised release of Palestinian prisoners. On Saturday, a Palestinian official said Israel had denied requests by three Gaza-based Palestinians expected to be named as ministers to attend the new government’s swearing-in ceremony in the occupied West Bank.

Reuters

Cambodia, Iran look to enhance bilateral ties, cooperation

PHNOM PENH, 2 June — Cambodia and Iran are looking for possibilities to strengthen and expand bilateral ties and cooperation for the mutual benefits of the two countries and peoples.

Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hor Namhong held a talk on Monday with the Hanoi-based Iranian Ambassador to Cambodia Hossein Alvandi Behineh to discuss ways to increase relations in economics, trade, investment, tourism and education.

“Both sides agreed that the two countries should frequently exchange visits between their senior leaders and business peoples in order to heighten ties and cooperation in politics and business,” Koy Kuong, Spokesperson for the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told reporters after the meeting.

He said trade, investment, and tourism relations between the two countries were relatively small at the present, and Ambassadou s Behineh had pledged to encourage Iranian investors to come to Cambodia for investment opportunities.

The ambassador also said Iran decided to grant a number of scholarships to Cambodian officials to study in the fields of oil and gas in Iran.

Xinhua

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

NATO spokesman Oana Lungescu.
By Aung Khin

School season and the dangers of bad quality snacks

Consumer advocates recently warned that many cheap and tasty snacks in eye-catching packaging could pose a health hazard to children. While some bad quality snacks were imported from China through border trade, some are locally-made. These snacks have been sold in small shops or by street vendors in Myanmar for many years, and with school season started in Myanmar, children will have even more exposure to snacks when passing by shops on their way to school or buying food at the school snack shops. It is a problem the government should address.

Many school snack shops are now selling low quality products that may contain toxic substances, including jellies, chips and sweets produced by immoral people who want to make quick money. Many imported snacks are found to contain high levels of harmful chemicals, high doses of additives and prohibited ingredients, with no expiry dates on the packages.

Education authorities have prohibited selling Chinese snacks on school grounds last year. However, the move was not enforced. As this prohibition scheme is important for the future of the younger generation, efforts should be made to implement it. Without proper registration or approval of health authorities, many snacks are being sold in local markets. Many cheap snacks were found to contain banned dyes like Orange II, Sudan III, and Rhodamine B. They are also widely used in plastic, paper, cosmetics, etc.

If the snacks tainted with these toxic dyes are frequently eaten, the result would be stomach ulcer-related diseases, liver cancers, and other fatal illnesses. In addition, it is expected that many children will be sold to children from low-income families, the people at grass root level are yet again the victims of dishonest business people.

The punishment for producing or selling harmful foods will not be effective as there is a lack of enforcement in Myanmar. Therefore, subordinate standards should be prohibited to save the lives of children and ensure they do not become victims of greed and selfishness.

By San Thein

Allowing foreign banks in the country

It is not surprising that Myanmar’s nascent banking sector finds it hard to get out of this developmental stage since it had been under the strong financial restrictions during the last decade starting from 2003 when there was a bank-run. The impact of these restrictions can be seen in the low quality and range of financial services. Myanmar’s financial sector becomes the least developed of all in Southeast Asia and cannot adequately fulfill its principal role of financial intermediation—channeling savings into investment. At the same time, limited banking network with poor facilities has kept the country’s financial inclusion in terms of access to finance considerably low.

However, the strong determination of the new democratic government to commit itself to modernize the economy and to alleviate poverty in the country has called for necessary economic reforms. As part of its comprehensive reform program, significant changes have taken place in the financial sector by enacting (a) Microfinance Law in November 2011, allowing microfinance institutions to engage in providing micro credit to the households and very small enterprises; (b) Foreign Exchange Management Law in August 2012, adopting a more realistic exchange rate system; (c) Central Bank of Myanmar Law in July 2013, giving the central bank an autonomous power to implement its monetary policy; and (d) Securities Exchange Law in July 2013, paving the way for a capital market. Moreover other relaxations on banking activities like foreign banks to promote their financial intermediation and financial inclusion by expanding their retail market and creating new facilities. As part of its effort to integrate into the regional and global community, Myanmar has allowed foreign banks to open their representative offices in the country. Foreign banks see Myanmar as an attractive place with a lot of potential business opportunities for their clients. Convinced of the country’s non-reversal of its committed course towards modernization and openness, foreign banks mostly from neighbouring Asian countries, are determined to stay in the country with high hopes of receiving banking licenses.

Currently, there are all together 35 foreign banks anxiously waiting for the door to open—seven from South Korea; four each from Japan, Singapore and Thailand; three from India; two each from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Malaysia and Vietnam; and one each from Australia, Brunei, China, Taiwan and United Kingdom. Allowance of foreign banks in the country becomes a hot topic of discussion among the bankers these days and a seminar or workshop never concludes without a question on the possibility of foreign banks. However, why would these foreign banks be interested in Myanmar? Why would the local banks feel anxious about this competition from foreign banks? What would happen to the local banks if foreign banks are allowed in the country?

The pros and cons of allowing foreign banks in the country

Pros and cons of allowing foreign banks in the country

Foreign banks could bring both economic and political benefits to Myanmar. Allowance of foreign banks in domestic market would mean that Myanmar is taking a bold step towards regional and global integration. For the foreign banks, it would be a strong signal that Myanmar has committed itself to integrate into the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) which is scheduled to be in place by 2015. Under the program of AEC, there will be free flow of goods, services, investment, capital and skilled labour among the member countries. Therefore, these foreign banks in the country would improve the country’s political image not only among its fellow ASEAN member countries but also in the global community.

Foreign banks, with their strong capital base and efficient customer services, would become a major driving force in transforming the nascent industry into a modernized one with high hopes of achieving a 4% growth rate.

In the meantime, the central bank of Myanmar would not be as loyal and patient with the country in the event of an economic crisis. Keeping this imminent danger in mind, local bankers never hesitate to take the opportunity to express their concern about the domination of the local markets by foreign banks. With their inferiority complex, they think that foreign banks are getting a battle against these foreign banks if they are allowed in the country. Contrary to their worry, both deputy governors of the Central Bank of Myanmar Daw Khin Saw Oo and U Sei Aung, at a workshop on financial development jointly held by the Parliamentary Banks and Monetary Development Afairs Committee and the German Development Co-operation (GIZ), on the 5th of last March, made their strong arguments against the possible domination of foreign banks in domestic banking markets provided that they were allowed with limited functions and capacities in the country at an initial stage. Citing the experience of Vietnam and other ASEAN countries, their arguments sound reasonable if foreign banks were allowed with limited function of whole-sale banking together with restricted branch networking so that local banks could maintain their existing retail markets supported by their ever expanding internet banking services.

If you look at the dark side of the picture, there is a threat of a domination in Myanmar would pose a threat to the domestic banks which are often perceived to be inefficient, non-transparent and not very effective in meeting the needs of local farmers and micro-credit borrowers. With their inferiority complex, the local banks are afraid of losing their market share to foreign banks over the course of competition with them. In the worst-case scenario, the whole domestic banking market could be dominated by foreign banks. The argument also goes that foreign banks would not be as loyal and patient with the country in the event of an economic crisis. This is easier said than done. At the same time, the central bank has to promote its supervisory capacities, and it is up to the area of cross-border supervision where home and host supervision authorities coordinate to implement a smooth monitoring process of foreign banks’ entrance.

With regard to capacity building of the central bank and local banks, it is encouraging to learn that many international organizations including ADB, ADB’s Development Partners and bilateral organizations including GIZ, JICA and Bank Negara Malaysia are helping Myanmar by providing financial and technical assistance to the banking sector. These organizations are Myanmar’s main development partners. On the 25th of last April, the development partners’ conference was held in Nay Pyi Taw under the auspices of the Central Bank of Myanmar. The objectives of the conference were to create synergies among development partners and explore complementary activities among them, and to work closely with the technical assistance coordination committee so that various technical assistance programs can be implemented systematically and properly. Restoring foreign banks’ activities in domestic markets becomes an internationally recognized practice and therefore to be able to protect the local banks, Myanmar can impose reasonable restrictions on foreign banks in the domestic market.

Enhancing capacity of domestic banks

In the meantime, the central bank can provide warm nurturing care to local banks. Appropriate liberalization and necessary reforms should be taken in a timely and sequenced manner. This is easier said than done. At the same time, the central bank has to promote its supervisory capacities, and it is up to the area of cross-border supervision where home and host supervision authorities coordinate to implement a smooth monitoring process of foreign banks’ entrance.

By Aung Khin

The New Light of Myanmar

Write for us

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

Tuesday, 3 June, 2014

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Tuesday, 3 June, 2014
Prevention against dengue fever carried out in Pyinmana

**Pyinmana, 2 June**—Preventive measures against dengue haemorrhagic fever were carried out in Pyinmana of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area on Saturday morning, with officials chlorinating wells and water tanks and spraying classrooms and buildings to prevent the reproduction of mosquitos. Similar activities were carried out in other wards of Pyinmana, officials said.

Members of Nay Pyi Taw Council Professor Dr Paing Soe, Head of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area Health Department Dr Tun Myint, Medical Superintendent Dr Kyaw Myint of Pyinmana General Hospital (200-bed) and officials supervised the mission at Mingala Basic Education Primary School and other public buildings.

Students in Dawei mark Int’l Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

**Dawei, 2 June**—To mark International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, around 80 students on primary, middle and high school level took part in a contest on Sunday aimed at highlighting the problem in creative ways. The students produced paintings, cartoons and posters at No 1 Basic Education High School in Dawei, with Chief Minister of Taninthayi Region Min Min Latt (Mandalay University) supervising the mission.

Min Min Latt (Mandalay University)

Relief items donated to fire victims in ChaungU

**ChaungU, 2 June**—People from 53 households in North ChaungU Ward in Sagaing Region were left homeless, after a fire broke out in on Saturday, with officials saying the victims have received relief items.

A relief camp at the monastery in North ChaungU Ward has been established, with private donors and officials handing out K1.85 million, over 200 bags of rice, personal goods and clothes at the donation centre. Chairman of the Township Development Supportive Committee U Kan Htay said, “People from villages near North ChaungU Ward donated rice and purified drinking water for the victims on Saturday. We have a list of donors for the next three days.”

Meanwhile, servicemen of military and police units and local people are carrying out sanitation of the ward while undertaking relief and rehabilitation tasks.—Township IPRD

Surveillance of reckless bus drivers tightened

**Nay Pyi Taw, 2 June**—Following a fatal bus accident last months on the Nay Pyi Taw-Yangon route, officials have stepped up surveillance of bus companies and drivers, urging passengers to report bad conduct.

The Road Transport and Inland Water Transport Board on 29 May informed passengers that complaints about fast driving and drivers operating without licence should be sent to the Nay Pyi Taw All Bus-line Control Committee, the Nay Pyi Taw Road Transport and Inland Water Transport Board. In order to demonstrate their efforts in trying to crack down on malpractices, officials have been checking vehicles and documents at Bawgathiri Highway Bus Terminal prior to departure.

They said action will be taken against those who operate illegally or drive in an irresponsible manner, urging passenger to report drivers who exceed a speed limit of more than 100km on expressways.

“Passengers should join hands with the discipline enforcement teams to combat traffic accidents” said a highway control official.

Shwe Kokko

Nutrition tips to pregnant women in Chanmyathazi Township given

**Mandalay, 2 June**—The Chanmyathazi Township Maternal and Child Welfare Association organized an event, in which pregnant women were taught about nutrition and given advice on clean eating during pregnancy. Officials also organized a cooking contest near Myayinanda delivery room in Chanmyathazi Township, showcasing the most beneficial diet and handing out iodized salt and ferrous sulphate to the participants.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)
**Egypt rejects appeal of defeated presidential candidate**

**Cairo, 2 June —** Egypt’s elections committee said on Sunday it had rejected a defeated presidential candidate’s appeal against voting results that gave former army chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi a landslide victory.

Leftist politician Hamdeen Sabahi only got 3 percent of the votes in last week’s elections, according to initial results that showed Sisi in the lead with 93 percent of votes.

The elections committee’s statement did not give details on its ruling on the appeal. It said the official results will be announced on Tuesday night.

The vote came 10 months after the army’s ouster of elected Islamist President Mohamed Morsi in July in reaction to protests against his rule.

The army-backed government has since cracked down hard on Morsi’s supporters, killing hundreds and jailing thousands.

On Thursday, Sabahi conceded defeat but said the initial turnout figure of over 40 percent was too high and “an insult to the intelligence of Egyptians.” He said he would accept the final result of the vote, however.

Sabahi’s campaign sent a complaint to the elections committee on Friday objecting to what it said was “the existence of campaigning inside polling stations” by Sisi supporters, among other alleged abuses.

It also appealed to the committee to nullify all votes cast on the third day of polling, which was introduced at the last minute of the second day of the vote on Tuesday in a surprise move to boost low turnout.

Sabahi came third in the 2012 vote won by Morsi, Egypt’s first democratically elected president who came to power after an uprising in 2011 that ended Hosni Mubarak’s autocratic 30-year rule.

**African Republic premier calls for voluntary disarmament next week**

**Dakar, 2 June —** Central African Republic’s prime minister on Sunday called for voluntary national disarmament next week in a bid to halt a worsening cycle of violence that threatens to drive Muslims from the West of the country. In a televised address, Prime Minister Andre Nzapayeke declared 6 June would be a day for all citizens to hand in their weapons to their authorities’ approval.

UN officials say at least 17 people were killed, sparked two days of violent protests in Bangui. Thousands of people took to the streets to demand the departure of African Union peacekeepers and the resignation of Interim President Catherine Samba-Panza.

“Everyone who has a firearm is called upon to return it voluntarily to the town hall of their neighbourhood,” Nzapayeke said, adding he hoped this would encourage all neighbourhoods — Christian and Muslim alike — to disarm at the same time.

Muslims in Bangui have expressed anger that previous attempts at disarmament left them prey to the “anti-balaka” Christian militia. Nzapayeke said that members of the armed forces — many of whom have joined the anti-balaka Christian militia — were urged to declare their weapons to their commanding officers and to return to the ranks of the army. He said the government would not tolerate any further demonstrations which had not received authorities’ approval.

Central African Republic has been gripped by ethnic and religious violence since northern Seleka rebels, who are mostly Muslim, seized power in the mainly Christian nation in 2013.

Seleka left power in January under international pressure after 10 months of looting and violence that had prompted the formation of a Christian self-defence militia.

Since then attacks by anti-balaka have largely driven Muslims from Bangui and the west, effectively partitioning the country, whose east is controlled mainly by Seleka.

Several thousand Muslims, however, remain in the PKS neighbourhood of Bangui, where skirmishes with anti-balaka have become a regular occurrence. Hundreds of Muslims in PKS protested on Saturday against calls for disarmament and demanded their safe evacuation from the city. Samba-Panza, visiting hospitalised people injured in recent days of violence in Bangui, said that disarmament would be done in an orderly fashion in collaboration with the AU force (MISCA) and France’s 2,000-strong peacekeeping mission so as to protect the Muslim population.

**Warplane targets Islamist base, hits university in Libya’s Benghazi**

**Benghazi, (Libya) 2 June —** A Libyan warplane under the command of a renegade general targeted an Islamist militia base in the eastern city of Benghazi on Sunday but instead hit a university building, witnesses said.

The attack was part of a campaign by irregular forces loyal to former army general Khalifa Haftar to purge the North African state of Islamist militants whom he says the weak central government has failed to control.

Libya is in turmoil three years after the NATO-backed war that ousted Muammar Gaddafi, with Islamists, anti-Islamist, regional and political factions locked in conflict.

One jet attacked a historic building which houses a base belonging to the militant group Ansar al-Sharia, said Mohamed al-Hejazi, a correspondent now has two prime ministers and a parliament deadlocked by splits between factions.

A Seleka fighter speaks with local villagers between Bambari and Grimari on 31 May.
Air travelers can expect better mobile services

BY BEIJING, 2 June — Mobile devices have become part of people’s daily life nowadays and many passengers bring their devices aboard, but without inflight WiFi service, they only can play Angry Birds game during the boring flight period. That will change on the flights of Air China Ltd. The company signed an agreement with Honeywell Aerospace, part of Honeywell International Inc. It will test from the second quarter 2015 the Global Xpress (GX) Aviastion system on its fleet of A330 aircraft.

GX Aviation is a high-speed Ka-band in-flight connectivity service powered by GX Ka-band satellite network of Inmarsat Plc, a communications firm established in 1979 by the International Maritime Organization to enable ships to stay in touch with the shore or call for help.

With the technology, passengers can expect a 60 percent faster download speed compared with now.

The first GX satellite was launched in December 2013, Bill Peltola, Inmarsat’s aviation vice president said. The second and third GX satellites are scheduled for launch by year-end.

Those three satellites will span the globe and provide a more stable signal.

There are two different solutions to provide in-flight connectivity services currently, either through ground bases or satellites.

Compared with the new satellites, the current satellite solution is less certain, as a result of satellites moving from area to area. Jack Jacobs, Honeywell Aerospace’s vice president of marketing and product management, said. Once the new satellites are in place, the cost of the satellite service will be lower too, he said.

Under Honeywell and Inmarsat’s agreement, the US technology company will exclusively develop, produce and distribute onboard hardware to allow mobile-device users to connect to Inmarsat’s GX communication network.

“The advantage of GX Aviation is not just its satellites,” said Brian Davis, vice president, Asia Pacific, Airlines, Honeywell Aerospace. “It’s also for the global and high-speed communication network.”

Being able to connect at higher speed to the network while in flight will open opportunities industry wide, Honeywell showed related research applications at its international media day on 21 May.

The satellite system can be used elsewhere, said Vamsi Gunduru, Honeywell’s marketing and product manager of cockpit systems.

“It provides a real-time data to a maintenance center when the airplane is flying and show the flight path to passengers. The company will continue to further cut costs and increase speed, he added.

Mid-air, online surfing is not new. Boeing Co developed its Connexon system being able to connect to Inmarsat’s GX Aviation, a high-speed Ka-band mobility network. Honeywell also provides in-flight connectivity services to airlines. They may talk with Honeywell about possible cooperation on GX Aviation technology.

A Honeywell survey showed almost 90 of respondents from the US, UK and Singapore would change inflight mobile service providers if they could.

Honeywell estimates that in 20 years it can get $2.8 billion from in-flight mobile services.

Anonymous threatens cyber-attack on FIFA World Cup sponsors

BY SAO PAULO, 2 June—The hacker group Anon imous is preparing a cyber-attack on corporate sponsors of the World Cup in Brazil to protest the lavish spending on the soccer games in a country struggling to provide basic services, said a hacker with knowledge of the plan on Friday. Earlier this week, Anonymous attacked the Brazil’s Foreign Ministry computer networks and leaked dozens of confidential emails. “We have already conducted late-night tests to see which of the websites are more vulnerable,” said the hacker who operates under the alias of Che Commodore. “We have a plan of attack.”

“This time we are targeting the sponsors of the World Cup,” he said in a Skype conversation from an undisclosed location in Brazil. Asked to name the potential targets he mentioned Adidas, Emirates airline [EMIRA. UL], the Coca-Cola Co and Budweiser, which is owned by Anheuser-Busch InBev.

Reuters had no means of confirming Che Commodore’s identity or his affiliation with Anonymous. The sponsors did not immediately respond to requests to comment on the threat. A DDoS or Distributed Denial-of-service is a low-cost attack aiming at taking a website offline by simultaneously requesting access from thousands of computers in order to jam the host server.— Reuters

The Hunger Games Mobile Game coming soon to smartphones and tablets

BY SAN FRANCISCO, 2 June — “The Hunger Games” is becoming a mobile game. Interactive entertainment company Kabam announced on Friday that it agreed with film studio Lionsgate to make a title for play on smartphones or tablet computers based on the dystopian books and films.

San Francisco-based Kabam specializes in mobile games that are free-to-play, instead bringing in revenue through tactics such as digital ads or hawking virtual goods or abilities. “Lionsgate has an unparalleled track record of developing and producing blockbuster movie franchises like ‘The Hunger Games,’” Kabam chief operating officer Kent Wakeford said in a release.

“Partnering with Lionsgate, Kabam will build a mobile game that’s as much fun to play as the movie is to watch,” Kabam’s vision for the game included casting players in roles as District members out to build alliances and liberate themselves in the spirit of the story told in the books on which the film is based.—PTI

Acer Iconia Tab 8 tablet with full-HD display, Android 4.4 KitKat launched

BY TAIPEI, 2 June — Acer has launched the Iconia Tab 8 tablet ahead of Computex that kicks off this week in Taiwan. The company announced that the tablet will be available starting Q3, but did not reveal its pricing.

Acer launched five new smartphones, and a new smartband. These are the Acer Liquid E700, Acer Liquid E600, Acer Liquid Z200, Acer Liquid X1, and Acer Liquid Jade smartphones, and the Liquid Leap smartband.

The Acer Iconia Tab 8 runs Android 4.4 KitKat out-of-the-box, and is the first tablet from the company to run the most recent version of the Android.

The tablet features an 8-inch full-HD (1920x1200 pixels) IPS display and comes with Zero Air Gap technology.

The tablet also features what the company calls Acer Touch WakeApp, which lets users quickly wake up the Iconia Tab 8 with a touch gesture.

An Air China official holds an Internet conference on the airliner’s flight CA4116 in Tokyo, inaugurated the NexTV-F, inaugurated the Electronic Promotion Forum, or Television and Broadcast Services Promotion Forum, consisting mainly of TV stations, electronic devices, agencies and trading houses.

Viewers need a 4K television, tuner and antenna, and will need to send an application to the operator to watch the channel.

NexTV-F, set up in May 2013 to promote 4K broadcasting, has 62 corporate members consisting mainly of TV stations, electronics makers, ad agencies and trading houses.

The Japanese government is aiming to begin the commercial service for 4K broadcasting in 2016.

The Seattle, Washington-based aircraft builder promoted its service with German airline Lufthansa AG at the time. The programme closed after two years due to costs and low market growth. It costs over $1 million to put the Connexon system into an aircraft and Boeing invested more than $1 billion in the project.

Companies such as Gogo, OnAir and Lake Forest, California-based Panasonic Avionics Corp, also provide in-flight connectivity services to airlines. They may talk with Honeywell about possible cooperation on GX Aviation technology.

A Honeywell survey showed almost 90 of respondents from the US, UK and Singapore would change inflight mobile service providers if they could.

Honeywell estimates that in 20 years it can get $2.8 billion from inflight mobile services.
UK official denies that Cameron threatened to advance EU vote

BERLIN, 2 June — A British official on Sunday dismissed a report that Prime Minister David Cameron had threatened at an EU summit last week to bring forward a referendum on British membership of the EU if Jean-Claude Juncker became European Commission president.

The German magazine Der Spiegel reported that Cameron had said he would not be able to ensure that Britain stayed in the European Union if Juncker got the job.

It said participants understood this to mean that a vote for Juncker could destabilise Cameron’s government to the extent that the referendum would have to be brought forward from its planned date of 2017, and that this would make it likely that the British people would vote to leave the EU.

Cameron must anyway go to the polls in less than a year. A British official, who declined to be named, said Cameron’s plan to hold a referendum on membership in 2017 if re-elected had not changed, and that he did not favour bringing the vote forward.

But the official said Cameron had told his EU counterparts he did not think Juncker was the right person for the job, and made clear at a summit dinner in Brussels that choosing someone who was not a reformer could damage the EU’s image in Britain and make it more likely that Britons would vote to leave.

A spokesman for Cameron’s office said he would not comment on leaders’ private discussions.

Cameron has promised to renegotiate the terms of Britain’s EU membership before the referendum — a difficult job that could become even harder if someone with Juncker’s long-standing commitment to EU integration heads the executive European Commission in Brussels.

Juncker, a former Luxembourg prime minister, had been the lead candidate for the European People’s Party, the majority parliamentary group that includes German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s conservatives, ahead of last week’s election.

Der Spiegel reported that Merkel had said she would join Cameron in opposing Juncker in a vote.

The German government declined to comment, but officials spoke to Reuters, including some with direct knowledge of the discussions at the summit, played the report down, saying the leaders’ talks had focused on the priorities for the next Commission rather than on specific candidates.

They said only a few people had mentioned Juncker by name, and that some leaders had been opposed to him while others had supported him.

Almost a week after the summit, it seems clear Juncker will face weeks of wrangling to decide who will get the post.

“We don’t know the position of the majority of the parties in Brussels, so it’s too early to say,” an EU official said.

The European Commission president is selected by EU leaders but must be approved by parliament, where Eurosceptics from the right made gains in last week’s election. Juncker called on EU leaders not to bow to pressure from the minority.

Reuters

China investigates senior state TV official over bribery

BEIJING, 2 June — China’s top prosecutor is investigating a senior executive with state broadcaster CCTV on suspicion of bribery, the official Xinhua news agency reported, as the government’s anti-corruption campaign intensifies.

The government has cracked down on official corruption and extravagance in China since President Xi Jinping’s appointment last year. Public flaunting of personal, and often illicit, wealth had been common and had led to widespread criticism of the ruling Communist Party.

Xinhua, citing a statement from state prosecutors, said Guo Zhenxi, CCTV’s advertising director and director-general of its finance and economics channel, had been detained because he was “suspected of bribery”.

The Xinhua report late on Sunday said another official, Tan Liwu, a producer on CCTV’s finance channel, had also been detained. It gave no other details.

The influential magazine Caixin said Guo had been detained in the northeastern province of Jilin.

Reuters

Cuba experiments with wholesale market for farmers

HAVANA, 2 June — Cuba opened its first wholesale market for farmers in decades on Sunday, an experiment limited to agricultural supplies in one area and the latest market-oriented reform for the communist-run island.

While Cuba has allowed nearly 500,000 small business owners and their employees to operate privately and hundreds of thousands of farmers to grow their own crops, it has been slow to give them access to wholesale markets.

Even though the farming sector has been the most liberalized, Cuba continues to import more than 60 percent of its food, in part because farmers still depend on state-run allocation and distribution of subsidized supplies. Official output has not significantly increased since the reforms began six years ago.

But as of Sunday, farmers on the Isle of Youth, home to 60,000 people off the southwest coast of the main Caribbean island, can purchase unsubsidized supplies on demand.

Since President Raul Castro took over from ailing brother Fidel in 2008, fallow state lands have been leased, and farmers are freer to sell directly to consumers.

The reforms have also gained the attention of business leaders in the United States, even though US companies are largely banned from trading with Cuba.

A delegation from the US Chamber of Commerce visited Cuba last week, calling for an end to the US trade embargo and urging the government to deepen and accelerate the reforms.

Cuban economist Armando Nova has argued for years that farmers need to be allowed to buy their own supplies and sell on an open market.

“ Agriculture is cyclical. You need to close the cycle for reforms to work and now that means the import barriers,” Nova said.

Life-long farmer Ibrain Vibes, 43, who inherited his land in Artemisa Province just west of Havana, was skeptical.

“The reforms are one thing and all the regulations are another. It feels like the earth keeps moving under our feet. Nothing works like they say it will,” he said.

Vibes complained a government crackdown on black market fuel was forcing him to buy it at the retail price of $4.50 per gallon. Otherwise he would lose the acres of malanga, a tuber staple of the Cuban diet, he had been cultivating for months.

Another Artemisa farmer, who asked to be identified only as Carlos, looked down the pages of herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers and other products now on sale on the Isle of Youth as he sat in his brand new house, the largest by far in the neighbourhood, a vintage Ford truck with a rebuilt motor outside.

Reuters

Japan starts annual “Super Cool Biz” casual work wear campaign

Environment Ministry officials work in casual clothes at their office in Tokyo’s Kasumigaseki district at the start of the government’s annual “Super Cool Biz” campaign on 2 June, 2014.

KYODO NEWS

TOKYO, 2 June — The government began its annual “Super Cool Biz” campaign on Monday to encourage workers to dress more casually so as not to rely excessively on air conditioning, as unseasonably hot weather continued across Japan.

The energy-saving campaign is an enhanced version of the “Cool Biz” initiative that started 10 years ago, in which workers at central government ministries and agencies are allowed to work without their usual ties and jackets.

During the “Super Cool Biz” period, which will continue through 30 September, workers are allowed to wear polo shirts, sneakers and even Hawaiian aloha shirts in the office.

The Environment Ministry is also calling for company workers to adjust their lifestyles to save energy, such as by shifting their work hours to earlier in the morning when the temperature is cool and avoiding working overtime.

Over the past two days, temperatures in some parts of Japan rose to 35 C and higher due to a high-pressure system far in the neighbourhood, which workers at central government ministries and agencies have been forced to buy it at the rebuilt motor outside.

KYODO News

A farmer plows the land with two oxen in Caimito on 28 March, 2014.—REUTERS
Group of suicide bombers attack government building in S Afghanistan, 3 killed

LASHKAR GAIL, Afghanistan, June 2 — A group of suicide bombers attacked the district headquarters of Gereshk district in the southern Helmand Province 555 km south of Kabul on Monday, killing three people while gun battle continues, spokesman for provincial government Omar Zawak said.

“A group of suicide bombers, presumably four persons, targeted the headquarters of Gereshk district at around 11:30 am local time today and so far three persons have been killed; while gun battle goes on,” Zawak told Xinhua.

Xinhua
Sonakshi Sinha: I have no friends in the industry

MUMBAI, 2 June — Sonakshi Sinha is a well-known actress in Bollywood, but she says she doesn’t have any friends in the industry as she has not worked with other actresses. “I don’t think I have any friends in the industry. If you look at my films, I have done only solo roles and I have not worked with any other actresses in the films. So, I don’t interact much with others. If at all we meet, we meet at award functions,” said the Dabangg star.

Asked if she would like to do a film which has multiple stars in it, she said: “Why not? Of course, I would like to and my next film Action Jackson is such a film.”

While the audience is yet to see her as a part of an ensemble cast, Sonakshi will be next seen with Akshay Kumar in their forthcoming film Holiday.

“I was introduced to Vijender Singh (boxer) by Akshay to learn the body language of boxing. He helped me with the basic body language of boxing and it helped me a lot,” said the actress, who will be next seen with Akshay in Holiday. The 26-year-old might have needed some help from the experts to make her role look convincing but the student of fashion designing likes to give inputs to designers she works with.

“I give some inputs as far as outfits are concerned. So, whichever stylist and designer works with me, I interact with them and they give me options. I give lot of inputs so, it’s a joint effort,” Sonakshi said.

Los Angeles, 2 June — Actress Katie Holmes will reportedly play Ryan Reynolds’ onscreen wife in the Jewish refugee drama Woman in Gold.

Katie Holmes to play Ryan Reynolds’ wife in Helen Mirren’s Woman in Gold

ACTRESS Helen Mirren has already started filming the project, in which she stars as Maria Altmann, who spent four decades battling Austrian officials for the safe return of art stolen from her family by the Nazis during World War II.

Ryan Reynolds will portray Altmann’s young lawyer Randy Schoenberg, and now Holmes has been added to the line-up as his wife, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Directed by Simon Curtis, the film went on floors in May.

Lindsay Lohan looking to make a fresh start outside US, house-hunting in London

LONDON, 2 June — Actress Lindsay Lohan is reportedly house hunting here as she wants to make a fresh start outside the US. The Mean Girls star, who recently documented her struggle to get her life and career back on track after her six stints in rehab through a self-titled TV series, thinks it will be good for her career, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

“Lindsay’s really enjoying being in the UK and has told her pals that she’s staying here for good,” The Sun newspaper quoted a source as saying.

“Lindsay has also started investigating getting acting work in London...,” added the source.

The news comes after the 27-year-old moved back to her native New York City from Los Angeles earlier this year.

Reuters

'Maleficent' casts $70 million spell over box office, halts 'X-Men' uprising

LOS ANGELES / NEW YORK, 2 June — “Maleficent,” Walt Disney’s special-effects laden take on “Sleeping Beauty’s” wicked fairy godmother, captivated moviegoers, collecting $70 million in ticket sales to win the North American weekend box office stakes.

The movie starring Angelina Jolie as the black-robed villain finished far ahead of last week’s winner, “X-Men: Days of Future Past,” which took $32.6 million at US and Canadian theaters.

Seth MacFarlane’s western comedy “A Million Ways to Die in the West” was third with $17.1 million for the three days from Friday to Sunday, according to box-office tracking firm Rentrak

Produced for $180 million, “Maleficent” received mixed reviews but opened strongly with $4.2 million on Thursday night and conjured up more than 80 percent of advance ticket sales for the weekend, according to movie tracking site Fandango.

The film is the latest in a line of reimagined classics, following “Alice in Wonderland” in 2010 and “Oz the Great and Powerful” in 2013. Industry experts forecast the film would open with $55 million, according to the movie site Box Office Mojo.

“We’re very excited with this start,” said Dave Hollis, head of distribution for Walt Disney Studios, noting it hoped for an opening of around $60 million. “Maleficent” took in another $100 at overseas box offices.

Hollis said momentum built through weekend on positive word of mouth. With schools beginning to let out and a “general absence of family product in this marketplace,” Disney was optimistic for the film continuing its strong performance.

“A Million Ways to Die in the West," MacFarlane’s second time directing a live action film after his 2012 hit “Ted” about a foul-mouthed toy bear, disappointed in its opening weekend.

Reuters

Ryan Reynolds plays a lawyer in the film which features Helen Mirren in the lead.

Los Angeles, 2 June — Ryan Reynolds plays a lawyer in the film which features Helen Mirren in the lead.

PTI

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PTI

Sonia Sinha will be seen as a boxer in her next film Holiday releasing on 6 June —PTI

Actress Sonakshi Sinha will be seen in a live action film after her six stints in rehab through a self-titled TV series, thinks it will be good for her career, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

“Lindsay’s really enjoying being in the UK and has told her pals that she’s staying here for good,” The Sun newspaper quoted a source as saying.

“Lindsay has also started investigating getting acting work in London...,” added the source.

The news comes after the 27-year-old moved back to her native New York City from Los Angeles earlier this year.

Reuters
100 Japanese to perform “Awaodori” folk dance in Paris next May

TOKYO, 2 June — Some 100 Japanese folk dancers will perform the traditional “Awaodori” in Paris next May to promote Japanese culture overseas, according to organizers of the event.

The first performance in France of the dance originating in western Japan’s Tokushima Prefecture will be held at the Place des Vosges square in Paris for two days in May, the organizers told a preview event held last week at the French ambassador’s residence in Tokyo.

Regis Arnaud, a 42-year-old French journalist based in Japan who is behind the Paris event, said, “Awaodori represents the Japanese national character,” adding he hopes young French people will get a genuine taste of Japanese culture through the dance.

“Tribute to Jim Clark” rally held in Scotland

BRITAIN, 2 June — A rally car involved in a crash is removed from the scene during the Jim Clark Rally near Coldstream, in the Scottish Borders, on 1 June, 2014. —Xinhua

A rally car involved in a crash is removed from the scene during the Jim Clark Rally near Coldstream, in the Scottish Borders, on 1 June, 2014. —Xinhua

A woman walks with her baby on a street in Shibuya, a shopping district of Tokyo, Japan, on 2 June, 2014. The temperature in Tokyo on 2 June is estimated to rise over 31 degrees Celsius. —Xinhua

Froome casts doubt on Tour de France spot for Wiggins

LONDON, 2 June — Bradley Wiggins’s place in next month’s Tour de France is a hot topic.

Chris Froome suggested he would prefer Australian Richie Porte as his number two.

Wiggins was the first Briton to win the world’s most famous cycle race in 2012 but team leader Froome said a place even as a super domestique rider was by no means certain just over a month before the endurance classic gets underway in Leeds on 5 July.

“Talking about a Plan B, that’s a decision the team needs to come to, and Bradley has been talking about playing a support role, not being our Plan B as such,” fellow Briton Froome told the Daily Mirror newspaper.

“Richie is looking pretty good at the moment and has the potential to be riding for a place on the podium. “As far as Bradley is concerned, the final nine riders selected to start the race in Yorkshire is a hot topic.

“That’s going to come down to what is best for the team, who is best for each role and the team dynamics.”

Wiggins announced his intention of racing in the Tour de France after an impressive victory in the Tour of California last month.

Already tense relations between the two riders were likely to have been further strained after Froome’s recently released book revealed they had fallen out in 2012.

“I would have been criticised a lot for not covering that topic in my autobiography,” Froome told the paper.—Reuters

3 killed, 6 injured in rally crashes in Scotland

BRITAIN, 2 June — Three spectacolrs were killed and six injured on Saturday after two crashes at a rally in the southern Scottish Borders, the police confirmed on Sunday.

The collision incident occurred on Saturday afternoon near Little Swinton, Coldstream, which led to the death of a 4-year-old man, a 63-year-old woman and a 71-year-old man, all from the “Greater Glasgow” area, said a Police Scotland spokesperson.

The three victims were pronounced dead at the scene, while another man was taken to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary in a critical condition. The event was called off by the Jim Clark Rally organizers after the crash.

Women dancers from the Hyottoko dance group, dressed in traditional straw hats and yukata. In all, the Hyottoko group has 100 members, including men and children. —Kyodo News

Two hours before the fatal crash, another car in the rally left the road and hit five people, one woman and four men, near a farm on the Eccles stage of the competition.

Three of the men were taken to Borders General Hospital but one was then moved to an intensive care unit in Edinburgh. The remaining two spectators were treated for minor injuries.

Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond said, “This is desperately sad and difficult news from the Borders of the tragic circumstances that have occurred at the Jim Clark Rally.”

The organizers of the race also expressed their heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the families and their friends affected by the tragic events. As a long-standing event of over 40 years, the Jim Clark Rally takes place over three days on closed roads in the Duns and Kelso areas in southeast Scotland.

Froome casts doubt on Tour de France spot for Wiggins

LONDON, 2 June — Bradley Wiggins’s place in next month’s Tour de France looks under threat after last year’s winner and Team Sky team mate

Team Sky rider and Tour de France winner Christopher Froome of Britain holds a trophy and a stuffed toy on a podium during a victory ceremony as he celebrates winning a criterium race in Saitma, north of Tokyo on 26 Oct, 2013. —Reuters

LONDON, 2 June — Bradley Wiggins’s place in next month’s Tour de France looks under threat after last year’s winner and Team Sky team mate Lee happiness
Federer hits 10-year low, Djokovic eases through

PARIS, 2 June — Roger Federer suffered his earliest defeat at the French Open for a decade on Sunday when he lost to Latvian Ernests Gulbis in the fourth round but Novak Djokovic made light work of Jo-Wilfried Tsonga to reach the quarter-finals in a flash.

The Swiss fourth seed, who won the title in 2009, seemed to have the match in his grasp against the unpredictable Gulbis but faded badly to lose 6-7(5), 7-6(3), 6-2, 6-3.

World No 2 Djokovic destroyed local favourite Tsonga 6-1, 6-4, 6-1 to set up a meeting with eighth seed Milos Raonic of Canada, who advanced with an emphatic 6-3, 6-3, 6-3 victory over Spain’s Marcel Granollers.

Last year’s runner-up Maria Sharapova, the seventh seed, survived a shaky start to beat Australian Sam Stosur 3-6, 6-4, 6-0, winning the last nine games to set up a quarter-final against Spanish sensation Garbine Muguruza, who rounded off a bad day for the host nation with a 6-4, 6-2 win against France’s Pauline Parmentier.

Another fast-rising talent, Canadian Eugenie Bouchard thrashed German eighth seed Angelique Kerber 6-1, 6-2 to claim a quarter-final spot, crunching 30 winners in 52 dazzling minutes to stretch her winning run on clay to nine matches.

Andy Murray lived to fight another day after a five-set thriller against Philipp Kohlschreiber in the third round.

While Djokovic made it to his 20th consecutive grand slam quarter-final, it was the first time since 2004 that 32-year-old father of four Federer failed to reach the last eight in Paris. He has now fallen before that stage in three of his last four grand slam tournaments.

“Mentally I have already switched to the grass, to be quite honest,” said Federer. “For me, it’s like, okay, claycourt season was fun, but we are moving on. Clay doesn’t need me anymore, I got flushed out here.”

Former world No 1 Federer, who became father to a second set of twins recently, looked a slightly forlorn figure as Gulbis turned around the match and the days when he was a near certainty to reach semi-finals appear to be over.

The 17-times grand slam champion was beaten in the second round on Wimbledon last year and the last 16 at the US Open although he did enjoy a semi-final run in Australia.

On yet another gloomy day in Paris after some welcome sunshine on Saturday, Federer never looked comfortable against Gulbis, who said earlier this week he was hoping to catch the “last-chance train” after under-achieving since reaching the quarter-finals of the French Open in 2008.

Honduras struggle again in 4-2 loss to Israel

HUNTSVILLE, Texas, 2 June — Honduras, who face France in their World Cup opener in two weeks’ time, suffered a second straight defeat in a warm-up for the tournament with a 4-2 loss to Israel in Houston.

Honduras lost 2-0 to Turkey in their opening friendly on Thursday and once again they struggled against UEFA opposition.

Israel’s early pressure paid off when they grabbed the lead in the 34th minute through a superb strike from Eran Zahavi, who grabbed the ball outside the area and drove it into the bottom corner.

Two minutes after the break, though, Honduras equalized with an even more spectacular goal — Roger Espinoza unleashing a fierce left foot drive from 25 metres which crashed in off both posts.

It took only five minutes for Israel to restore their advantage, however, with Tal Ben Haim’s harmless looking shot deflected in off Honduras defender Maynor Figueroa.

Israel went 3-1 up on the hour when Gil Vermouth struck the upright and Omer Damari reacted well to control the loose ball and slot home.

Vermouth got his reward in the 74th minute, adding Israel’s fourth with a low diagonal strike that went in off the far post after a smart head down from Bebar Natcho.

Honduras grabbed a consolation seven minutes from the end when Espinoza found Carlo Costly at the back post and the big striker headed in.

After playing France, Honduras must tackle Ecuador and Switzerland in World Cup Group E.

The Central Americans face England in their final warm-up game on 7 June in Miami.