Talks on national education law starts in Yangon, with agreement reached on some points

By Aung Khin

Yangon, 1 Feb — Talks took place at the Diamond Jubilee Hall of Yangon University here on Sunday to discuss the National Education Law in accord with the new political culture in practice in the time of the democratically elected government, officials said.

Union Minister U Aung Min addressed the meeting, followed by rounds of discussions. He described discussion and negotiation are the best ways to find solutions to the matter of the law in question, quoting the president’s message as calling for close cooperation in the speedy amendment of the law through negotiation of students’ demands.

In his radio message broadcast on Sunday morning, President U Thein Sein stressed parents raised concern about the postponement of examinations and the closure of schools. The president also called for bringing protests to an end and a firm resolves to find solutions through negotiation of the outcomes of the discussions as a national education bill to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw for approval.

A student representative of the Steering Committee for Democratic Education Movement expressed her views during the discussion, pointing out the need to go by policies and laws as education is a long-term process. “With the examinations drawing near, now is the time to pay priority to peaceful schooling and the rule of law,” she said.

U Thein Zaw, Chairman of the Pyithu Hluttaw National Races Affairs, Rural Development and Internal Peace Making, said that no law is flawless by nature and that weaknesses should be amended as and when they arise, but in line with the existing law. He stressed the early implementation of action plans for agreed points and a continuous discussion of differences, pledging an immediate submission of the new political culture in practice in the time of the democratically elected government.—MNA

Thai based-companies sign to develop Dawei SEZ

A graphical representation of the Dawei Special Economic Zone and deep sea port project.

Yangon, according to a statement of the Thai government on 30 January. After a meeting between Thai and Myanmar officials in Bangkok, Deputy Transport Minister Arkhon Termittayapaisit told reporters the initial stage of investment from the two companies will be $1.7 billion for the first stage of the project.

The Dawei project, located in southern Myanmar, has been delayed since the agreement between Thai and Myanmar officials in Bangkok, Department of Transport Ministry of Transport and Communications Co ltd on construction of 110 feet clinic boat, Lin Sanda Co Ltd on construction of 110 feet general cargo and tankers, Uniteam Marine Yangon Co Ltd on construction of 110 feet fishing trawler and Bravely (Myanmar) Transport & Logistics Co ltd on construction of 3,000 dwts in addition to the dock of Myanmar Shipyards-Dong A Joint Venture Co Ltd was established with US$ 89.5 million for 49 percent by Myanma Shipyards and 85.9 million for 49 percent by Song A Shipbuilding Industry JSC, totalling US$ 175.4 million.

⁄ A dock of Myanma Shipyards-Dong A Joint Venture Co Ltd

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By Aung Khin

Yangon, 1 Feb — Italian Thai Development Pcl and Rojana Industrial Park will sign a $1.7-billion deal in March to develop the Dawei industrial zone in Myanmar, according to a statement of the Thai govern- ment on 30 January. After a meeting between Thai and Myanmar officials in Bangkok, Deputy Transport Minister Arkhon Termittayapaisit told reporters the initial stage of investment from the two companies will be $1.7 billion for the first stage of the project.

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A dock of Myanma Shipyards-Dong A Joint Venture Co Ltd

A graphical representation of the Dawei Special Economic Zone and deep sea port project.

Agreement signed to establish Myanmar Shipyards-Dong A Joint Venture Co Ltd

Yangon, 1 Feb — Myanma Shipyards under the Ministry of Transport and Dong A Shipbuilding Joint Stock Company of Vietnam signed a joint venture agreement for establishment of Myanmar Shipyards-Dong A Joint Venture Company Ltd at Novotel Yangon Max Hotel on Pyay Road, here, on 31 January.

Managing Director U Kyi Soe of Myanma Shipyards and General Manager Mr Ngo The Cu of Dong A Shipbuilding JSC signed the agreement.

Vice Chairman of Myanma Investment Commission Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Htay Aung presented a permit to U Kyi Soe and Mr Ngo The Cu.

The joint venture company signed MoU with Unitame Marine Yangon Ltd on construction of 110 feet clinic boat, Lin Sanda Aung Co Ltd on 90 feet fish trawler and Bravely (Myanmar) Transport & Logistics Co ltd on construction of 30 container vessel, general cargo and tankers.

Myanmar Shipyards-Dong A Joint Venture Company Ltd was established with US$ 89.5 million for 51 percent by Myanma Shipyards and 85.9 million for 49 percent by Song A Shipbuilding Industry JSC, totalling US$ 175.4 million.

The dock of Myanmar Shipyards will be upgraded to build vessels of 22,000 dwt and repair vassals of 3,000 dwt in addition to doing other dock related business.—GNLM
Outstanding students, teachers win prizes

Mandalay, 1 Feb — The prize presentation for outstanding students was held at No 17 Basic Education Primary School in Aungmyehtazan Township on 31 January.

Assistant Township Education Officer U Kyaw Soe Tun made a speech.

Headmaster U Win Maw and officials presented prizes to outstanding students and teachers.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Dawei BEHS No 1 observes School Family Day

Dawei, 1 Feb — No 1 Basic Education High School in Dawei, Taninthayi Region held the 2013-14 academic year School Family Day and annual meeting of parent-teacher association at the school on 31 January.

The ceremony was opened with singing songs of students and followed by an address of Taninthayi Region Education Director U Tun Yi.

Secretary of the PTA Daw May May Sein read the financial report. The meeting elected new executives of the PTA.

Director U Tun Yi, the headmistress and officials presented prizes to the teachers. The schoolchildren honoured the School Family Day with a song.

Also present at the meeting were Headmistress Daw Lwin Lwin Oo and teachers, members of PTA and School Board of Trustees and prize winning students.

Po Shwe Thun (Dawei)

Natogyi Township DAC allows shopkeepers to sell goods at Myoma market during pagoda festival

Natogyi, 1 Feb — The township’s Myoma development market committee recently announced that shopkeepers of Natogyi Myoma market of Township Development Affairs Committee will be allowed to sell their goods at the market freely during the 15-day period of township’s pagoda Puaniya festival.

The Myoma market of the Township DAC was closed and shopkeepers ordered to sell goods at the pagoda’s festival in the past. The Township DAC this year allows them to sell goods at the Myoma market during the period of 57th Buddha Puaniya. Chairman of the Township DAC U Than Htaik Aung told media.

Some shopkeepers do not wish to sell their goods in the pagoda festival due to higher cost, and they want to sell at the market as usual.

Local people expressed thanks for the township development affairs committee because they can choose the best from various goods in two markets.

Khin Zar Mon Myint (Law)

Tourist number larger in Myingyan, Bagan, Mandalay

Myingyan, 1 Feb — This year’s number of tourists rises in Myingyan, Bagan and Mandalay larger than last year, according to the locals.

Tourists visit Mandalay-Bagan route by car, train and ship. The globetrotters prefer to use bicycle and motorcycle on their trips along Mandalay-Bagan route. Five bus lines of the township transport foreigners in groups and individuals daily.

Tourists from China, Japan, US, England, Germany, France, European countries and Thailand visit Bagan and Popa to take photo and video on traditions of local people in central Myanmar.—Khin Zar Mon Myint (Law)

Zabuthiri Township opens three asphalt streets

Nay Pyi Taw, 1 Feb — 1st Padauk street, Myitlay street and 3rd Thitsa street were commissioned into service at the designated places in Thabyegon Ward, Zabuthiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, on 31 January.

Director (Engineer) of Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee U Aung Moe reported on asphalting of the streets.

Nay Pyi Taw Council member U Myo Nyunt, Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Khin Maung Htay and Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee U Kyaw Myint formally opened the repaved streets.

Also present on the occasions were Vice Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee U Kyaw Htoo and members, district deputy commissioner and departmental officials.

The council member U Myo Nyunt, Dakhkina District’s deputy commissioner U Zaw Lwin Oo and officials inspected asphalting the road in Aungzabu Ward and visited the market in the ward. They viewed a site for construction of a systematic market for the shopkeepers.

Three asphalted streets are 3,600 feet long in total length and 12 feet wide. Thanks to the asphalt streets, the local people can enjoy smooth transport.

District IPRD

Township officials team collect data on livelihoods of people

Mandalay, 1 Feb — The poll of livelihoods of local people was conducted in 108 townships in the country as of 26 January.

The poll will be conducted at 34 households each in Tagundaing, Chanmyathaya, Thanapang wards, Ward B, Ward F and Ward G in Pyigyidaung Township, Mandalay.

On 31 January, a team led by the deputy township administrator of Township General Administration Department conducted the poll of livelihoods of the people.

Local authorities and ward supporting groups gave necessary assistance to the officials.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)
Talks on national education law . . .

(from page 1) expressed their willingness for continued discussion and negotiation with stakeholders involved in the writing of the national education law and related rules and regulations.

Dr Thein Lwin of the National Network for Education Reform (NNER) said he agreed with the 11-point proposal demanded by the Steering Committee and called for negotiation.

With some points having been agreed, the talks will resume at the Ministry of Education in Nay Pyi Taw on 3 February for further negotiation and discussion of remaining points.

MNA

MCF President’s cup wraps up in Labutta

NAY PYI TAW, 1 Feb — The Myanmar Chinlone Federation President’s Cup U-25 men’s Chinlone contest reached the final match at Yedagun Hall in Labutta Township, Ayeyawady Region, on 31 January.

After the final match, Deputy Minister for Sports U Thaung Htaik presented the first prize to Yangon Region team, the second to Myingyan team and third to Top Star team.

Deputy Commissioner of the 69th Anniversary Union Day ceremony arrived at No 7 Transit Centre in Nay Pyi Taw on Sunday afternoon.

They were welcomed by officials and staff of Ministry of Transport and artisters of Fine Arts Department of Ministry of Culture. The delegates of Tamnhtayi Region will arrive on Sunday evening.

Cultural troupes arrive in Nay Pyi Taw

NAY PYI TAW, 1 Feb — The cultural troupes of Kachin State who will perform entertainment in traditional dances at the 69th Anniversary Union Day ceremony arrived at No 7 Transit Centre in Nay Pyi Taw on Sunday afternoon.

They were welcomed by officials and staff of Ministry of Transport and artisters of Fine Arts Department of Ministry of Culture.

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing tees off small ball at opening of Tatmadaw (Army, Navy and Air) Golf Tournament 2014-15.—MYAWADY

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services’ Trophy Tatmadaw Golf Tournament kicks off

NAY PYI TAW, 1 Feb — Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing teed off the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services’ Trophy Tatmadaw (Army, Navy and Air) Golf Tournament 2014-15 at Nay Pyi Taw Golf Course, here, on Sunday morning.

Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win, Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) General Hla Htaw Win, the Commander-in-Chief (Navy) and the Commander-in-Chief (Air) teed off the smoke balls at the opening ceremony.

Players of 20 teams are taking part in the tournament at Nay Pyi Taw Golf Course and Yeypyar Golf Course as of 31 January.—Myawady

Thai based-companies sign to develop . . .

(by page 1) of 50 years plus a 25-year extension. The construction period is targeted at eight years starting in the second half of the first year after contract signing.

According to the statement of the Thai government, Thailand will provide soft loans to Myanmar, to meet a budget of around 3.9 billion baht ($119.23 million) for the road construction.

“Today, bilateral relations between Thailand and Myanmar are at their best,” Thai Deputy Prime Minister Pridiyathorn Devakula said in the statement, saying the first phase aims to complete within five years such infrastructure projects as a telecoms network, a small port and a reservoir.

Japan also agreed on 30 January to take part and possibly offer loans for road construction.

Deputy Prime Minister Pridiyathorn Devakula said Japan had agreed to help develop the Dawei Special Economic Zone with an equal partnership in Dawei SEZ Development Co (DSEZ), a special-purpose vehicle, to run the project.

Thailand and Myanmar in June 2013 agreed to set up DSEZ with an equal shareholding and initial investment of 12 million baht, far below the 100 million proposed earlier. The company is registered in Thailand.

Myanmar Vice President U Nyan Tun said the huge project would see quick progress after Japan’s agreement to join the development.

The initial phase, which is expected to see construction work start this year, will include the industrial estate covering 27 sq km, the small port, a small power plant, the telecommunications network, a small reservoir, an LNG terminal, the road network linking the Thai border with the project, and a township for the workers.

GNLM

Convoys of classic cars heading towards ancient Myanmar city

BY AUNG KHIN

NAY PYI TAW, 1 Feb — A group of 70 classic cars driven by those from Brit-ain, Australia, New Zea-land, Canada and the Unit-ed States are now heading to Myanmar after flagging off from the Raffles Ho-tel, Singapore, on Sunday morning, according to the report of Channel News Asia.

The Road to Mandalay event, organised by the Endurance Rally Association (ERA), is due to end in Yangon 25 days later on Feb 24.

The website of ERA said with Myanmar is opening up after years of isolation the association feels the time is right to take a classic rally to this remarkable region.

The rally will pass through places such as Desaru, Kuantan, Camer-on Highlands and George-town in Malaysia and into Thailand for stopovers in areas like Khao Lak, Kanchanaburi and Chiang Mai. The convoy will then cross the border to Myan-mar and wend through Mae Sai, Nay Pyi Taw and Ba-gan.

The convoy includes a 1924 Rolls Royce 40/50 Silver Ghost, a 1929 Bent ley Special Speed 8 and a 1938 Jaguar SS 100. The oldest car among them is a 1907 Parigi Italia.

The ERA has organised some 60 major events, in more than 50 different countries around the world, and has been responsible for some widely-acclaimed initiatives in rallying, taken up by others as well as being responsible for kick-starting the entire historic rally movement back in the 1980s.

It is also already making plans to return for the ‘2nd Road to Mandalay’ running from Ho Chi Min City, through Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and into Myanmar, according to its website.—GNLM

Classic cars getting ready to leave for Mandalay.

PHOTO: RAFFLES HOTEL, SINGAPORE
Myanmar secure 4-1 victory over Ukraine’s Shakhtar Donetsk U-21 in 5th tune-up match

Winning goals for Myanmar came from first opening goal scored over Shakhtar Donetsk U-21 of Ukraine in Turkey on 30 January.

by Captain Nanda Kyaw through a penalty kick in the 13th minute.

The captain seconded for his team in the 35th minutes with a wonderful long shot. The third one was kicked by striker Than Paung in the 63rd minute. Myanmar youth added one more as fourth by striker Aung Thu in the 86th minute.

Shakhtar Donetsk’s single gold was translated by the player in No 9 jersey in the 81st minute.

Myanmar U-20 team scheduled to play four tune-up matches with foreign clubs in Turkey but it set one more tune-up with Ukrainian club.

Tourist’s caravan arrives in Mandalay

and party entered Myanmar through Moreh-Tamu border gate on 24 January. They visited Kalay, Gangaw, Mawrya, Pakokku and Bagan by car and proceeded to Mandalay on 30 January.

Some sections of roads in India were poor transport but we drove smoothly in Myanmar. Up to now, we have no difficult.”

Tour manager U Zin Win Huay said, “Our company has been giving services to the tourists caravan for three years. This caravan will visit ancient cultural areas around Mandalay on 31 January. They will proceed to Kalaw, Nyaungshwe, Inlay, Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon, Kyaikto, Mawlamyine, Hpa-an and Myawady. On 12 February, they leave Myawady for Mae Sot in Thailand. We thank the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Mandalay Region Government and Mandalay City Development Committee for their efforts to ensure smooth process of tourists’ caravan.”

Tin Maung (Mandalay)
Journalists invited to cover China’s major political meetings

BEIJING, 1 Feb — Journalists from China and abroad are being invited to cover two major political meetings in March.

The third annual session of the 12th National People’s Congress (NPC), the country’s top legislature, will open on 5 March.

The third session of the 12th National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the top political advisory body, will open on 3 March.

The general offices of the NPC Standing Committee and the CPPCC National Committee announced on Sunday that a media centre for the two meetings will open from 27 February at the Media Center Hotel.

Chinese mainland and resident foreign journalists should submit applications for reporting passes to the media centre before 2 February, while foreign reporters temporarily in China for the “two sessions” should apply at Chinese embassies or visa organizations authorized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Reporters from Hong Kong and Macao should apply at the central government’s liaison offices in the two special administrative regions. Reporters from Taiwan should apply to the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office.

Two websites went live on Sunday to help domestic and overseas journalists cover the sessions.

The websites — www.npc.gov.cn/cp/12_3 for the NPC session and www.cppcc.people.com.cn for the CPPCC session — will post information related to the events, the offices said.

Bangladesh opposition says leader’s Internet, electricity cut

Dhaka, 1 Feb — Bangladeshi opposition accused the government of cutting the power, Internet and cable connections at their leader’s office on Saturday to pressure her into calling off a strike after days of violent anti-government protests.

The disconnections were reported soon after the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Khaleda, called another 72-hour strike from Sunday morning along with its ongoing blockades of roads, railways and water routes.

Senior ruling party member Hassan Mahmood earlier on Saturday warned that communications at Khaleda’s office would be cut if she did not call off protests before school exams on Monday. The electricity supply has since been restored.

“We have been asked to fix the line and we have restored the connection,” an employee of the Dhaka Electric Supply Company said.

At least two crude bombs exploded on Saturday evening near Khaleda’s office in Dhaka’s diplomatic zone without causing any injuries, police and witnesses said. An autorickshaw passenger died in the northern district of Sirajgonj after opposition activists hurled fire bombs at the vehicle.

At least 41 people have died and hundreds been wounded in protests that surged on 5 January, the first anniversary of national protests. The BNXP boycotted, denounced them as rigged.

Khaleda is at loggerheads with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and has called for her government to step down for a vote under a caretaker administration. Hasina has refused, instead tightening her grip by arresting key opposition leaders and clamping down on critical media.

“There has been no electricity... they have also cut Internet and cable television services to the office,” Khaleda’s Press Secretary Maruf Kamal Khan told reporters on Saturday.

The BNP has warned the government of dire consequences if it does not withdraw two arson charges against Khaleda and stop what it calls the oppression of its leaders and activists.

Analysts say the renewed political turmoil could threaten the country’s $24 billion garment export industry, already under pressure after a string of fatal accidents.

Hasina and Khaleda, both related to former national leaders, have alternated as prime minister for most of the past two decades in a fierce rivalry marked by bouts of political violence.

The United States, the European Union and Britain have voiced concern over the violence and urged all political parties to engage in dialogue to resolve the crisis.

— Reuters

Nepal starts process to draft constitution on majority basis amid opposition protest

KATHMANDU, 1 Feb — A committee formed by Nepal’s Constituent Assembly (CA) has formally started the task of writing a new constitution on the basis of majority amid the protest from the opposition parties.

The Questionnaire Committee, formed last week, started to prepare questions on contentious issues of the new constitution.

The formulated questions will be put in vote in CA to settle them on the basis of numerical strength after the parties failed to settle them.

The two key opposition parties UCPN (Maoist) and Madhes-based parties have boycotted the meeting of the committee, saying that they would not attend any major process.

The opposition parties are saying that disputed issues should be settled through a consensus among parties. The ruling parties have said there would be rooms for the consensus till the eleventh hour of the constitution drafting.

“CA and its committee members are appropriate places to forge consensus on contentious issues so the opposition parties should join the meeting. Nepal Congress Joint General Secretary Prabhu Bhandar Khadka told reporters.

North Korea says US rejects invitation to Pyongyang

SEOUL, 1 Feb — North Korea said on Sunday the United States had rejected an invitation to send one of its top diplomats to Pyongyang, accusing Washington of trying to shift the blame for the deadlock in denuclearisation talks on the North.

Sung Kim has been meeting with officials of the countries that had been part of the so-called six-party talks in the past week in Tokyo and Beijing, where he said it was up to the North to show it was serious about ending its nuclear programme.

US Special Representative for North Korea Policy Sung Kim speaks to the media at a news conference in Beijing on 30 Jan, 2015.— Reuters

“We (We) invited Kim Sung to visit Pyongyang as he expressed his willingness to meet with his counterpart of the (North) during his visit to Asia this time,” the North’s KCNA news agency quoted an unnamed foreign ministry spokesman as saying.

“However, the US, in disregard of this, is working hard to shift the blame onto the (North), misleading public opinion by creating impression that dialogue and contacts are not realized due to the latter’s insincere attitude.”

Kim said in Beijing on Friday that Washington was “open to engagement, substantive dialogue with North Korea about the issue of denuclearisation”.

He did not mention a possible trip to Pyongyang or an invitation by North Korea to visit for talks. The US embassy in Seoul did not immediately have comment.

In 2005, North Korea reached an agreement with the United States, South Korea, China, Japan and Russia to suspend its nuclear programme in return for diplomatic rewards and energy assistance.

— Reuters

Singapore’s Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (2nd L) and his wife Ho Ching (2nd R) attend the light up ceremony in Singapore’s Chinatown on 31 Jan, 2015. Singapore’s Chinatown held a light up ceremony for the Lunar New Year celebrations on Saturday.—Xinhua
Crucial week for under-fire Australian PM after ‘catastrophic’ poll

The personal approval rating of Australia’s conservative Prime Minister Tony Abbott came under renewed leadership pressure on Sunday, a little over a year into office following a voter backlash in a state poll and a slump in his popularity contest, but conceded Saturday’s rout of the Liberal-National party (LNP) in the Queensland election had delivered a jolt.

“The people of Australia elected me as prime minister and they elected my government to get on with the job of governing our country,” he told reporters in Sydney, “I accept that we’ve had some difficulties.” Abbott said. “I accept that we need to learn from the difficulties that we’ve had, but in the end, government is not a popularity contest, it is a competence contest.”

In an embarrassing result for the Queensland LNP, closely aligned to Abbott’s Liberal-National coalition, the party surrendered the largest political majority in Australia’s history after just one term in office. Members of the government called the result “catastrophic,” sparking speculation of a possible party revolt against Abbott’s leadership.

Local media reported that Abbott has called a two-day meeting of his cabinet to thrash out a policy agenda for 2015 and confront the political issues dogging his government. Fairfax media reported backbenchers and ministers have been expressing growing doubts over Abbott’s leadership in recent weeks, however the majority of the dissatisfaction has been kept behind closed doors or through background briefings to the media.

A Justice General George Brandis told Sky News the cabinet “was determined, unitedly and strongly behind the prime minister.”

Abbott has been criticized for broken electoral promises and a series of policy U-turns.

That pressure intensified last week when even his biggest supporters, including Australian-born media baron Rupert Murdoch, publicly criticized his contentious and unpopular decision to award Britain’s Prince Philip a knighthood.

Abbott’s surprise reintroduction of knights and dames in the honours system last year drew criticism that he was out of touch with national sentiment.

FBI says it had no prior knowledge of deadly Philippine raid targeting militants

WASHINGTON, 1 Feb — The FBI had no prior knowledge of the planning or execution of the operation. We do express our deepest condolences to the brave officers of the Philippine National Police who lost their lives in the line of duty,” FBI spokesman Josh Campbell said.

Campbell said the FBI is analyzing a biological sample provided by the Philippines of an unknown individual killed in the raid to determine if it belongs to bin Hir.

“It is routine for the FBI to process biometric information that may positively identify a subject and his or her whereabouts,” Campbell said.

A Malaysian member of the al-Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah militant group behind numerous bombing attacks in the Philippines, the FBI had offered $5 million for the arrest of bin Hir.

Humanitarian aid delivered to Donbass without a hitch

The clash, which the Philippine government has described as a “misencounter,” shattered a three-year ceasefire between Philippines police and Muslim rebels in the south of the country.

It also dealt a temporary setback to peace talks, Manila’s chief peace negotiator said on Saturday, appealing for renewed efforts to keep the process on track.

The other convoy heading to Lugansk was met at the border crossing by an OSCE observer, he said. The twelfth Russian convoy delivered 1,500 tonnes of humanitarian aid to Lugansk and Donetsk on Saturday, mainly foodstuffs, medicines, building materials and prime necessity items to people remaining in the conflict-stricken region.

In particular, 170 white trucks delivered to Donbass canned fish, cereals, flour, pasta and oil along with antibiotics, blood-devised products and insulin for diabetics. “These relief supplies to people remain in the line of scourge. We feel the greatest sorrow and extend our strong solidarity to them and pray to save their lives. We feel the greatest sorrow and extended our strong solidarity to these terrorists. I will work with the international community to hold them responsible for their deplorable acts.

3. Japan will never give in to terrorism.

We will further expand our humanitarian assistance in the Middle East in areas such as food and medical care.

Japan will steadfastly fulfill its responsibility in the international community combating terrorism.

4. I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the world leaders, our friends, who have kindly extended their strong solidarity against these acts of terrorism and cooperation toward the release of the hostages.

5. We will continue to take all possible measures to ensure the safety of Japanese nationals at home and abroad.
Greece seeks to reassure Europe as tensions rise

ATHENS, 1 Feb — New Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, striking a conciliatory note on debt talks after a turbulent start to office, has called the European Central Bank chief to assure him that Athens was seeking an agreement.

The new government in Athens made clear from its first day in power that it would not back down on its election pledges to abandon the austerity policies imposed under the bailout agreement sealed by the last government.

But facing growing disquiet from partners led by Germany, Tsipras rang European Central Bank President Mario Draghi on Friday night to assure him that Athens was seeking an accord, a government official said.

“The discussion was conducted in a good spirit and it was evident that there’s a willingness to find a mutually beneficial solution for Greece and for Europe,” said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

He also spoke to Jeroen Dijsselbloem, head of the euro zone finance ministers’ group who ended a visit to Athens on Friday with a thunderous expression after an apparently chilly exchange with Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis.

The official said Dijsselbloem had called Tsipras to reassure him that despite minor signs of tension, the negotiations would continue. After halting some privatisations and announcing plans to reinstate thousands of public sector workers laid off under the bailout, the government confirmed on Friday it was not interested in renewing the bailout deal when it expires on 28 February.

With German politicians from Chancellor Angela Merkel down to European Commissioner for Economic Affairs and International Monetary Fund "troika", Tsipras and his finance minister begin lobbying for support in other European capitals on Sunday.

Varoufakis meets his French counterpart Michel Sapin in Paris before travelling to London the next day. Tsipras, whose first foreign visit will be to Cyprus, will join him on Tuesday in Rome before meeting European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and French President Francois Hollande on Wednesday.

France and Italy, the two governments that have pushed hardest to loosen the strict budget austerity imposed at the start of the euro zone crisis, may offer Varoufakis and Tsipras a sympathetic ear when they visit.

But they have both said they would not accept the new leftwing government’s call for a “haircut”, writing down part of Greece’s 320 billion euro debt and potentially exposing their own Treasuries to billions of euros of losses.

Varoufakis told Di- jours de France on Friday that Athens did not want an extension to the bailout but a new accord and would not deal with the troika mission overseeing the bailout.

On Saturday, he told the weekly Agora newspaper that Greece needs “fiscal breathing space” with a bridging deal of a few weeks while a new agreement with creditors is worked out and economic reforms including a crack down on tax evasion begin.

With both sides keen to prevent tensions during the crucial weeks, Tsipras’ government slipping out of control, he warned against “verbal fetichism” and said all differences could be overcome.

While there was resistance in Europe to a straight haircut on the face value of the debt, there was more willingness to explore other options including extending maturities or cutting interest payments that could have the same effect.

In an interview with German weekly magazine Der Spiegel, Greek Economy Minister Georgios Stathakis said it would be better to link the country’s debt repayments to its economy than to risk it as it needs a feasible solution to bring its sovereign debt under control.

Italians face about 10 billion euros (7.5 billion pounds) in repayments this summer and is shut out of international bond markets while it waits for a final bailout tranche from international lenders of 7.2 billion.

Reuters

Italy elects senior judge Sergio Mattarella as president

ROME, 1 Feb — Italian lawmakers elected Sergio Mattarella, a constitutional court judge and centre-left politician, as president on Saturday, handing a welcome political victory to Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. Mattarella, speaking at his office in the Constitutional Court after the vote, said: “My first thoughts are of the difficulties and hopes of our citizens.”

He later visited the site in Rome where German troops killed 335 Italians in World War Two, saying that Europe must unite to battle terrorism the same way it united to battle the Nazis, racism, anti-Semitism, and totalitarianism.

The election shows the 40-year-old Renzi, who steered his centre-left government to victory, is the man to bring about the much-needed economic recovery in Italy, where unemployment is soaring after six years of off-off recession.

After three inconclusive rounds of voting this week in which a two-thirds majority was needed, his candidate Mattarella was elected in the fourth round, when the required quorum fell to a simple majority.

As the ballots were counted out loud in the Chamber of Deputies, the 1,009 parliamentarians and regional officials eligible to vote burst into applause when Mattarella’s name surpassed the 505-vote threshold, making him Italy’s 12th president since World War Two.

Mattarella, 73, who is little known to most Italians, got 665 votes. He will be sworn in on Tuesday at 10 am (0900 GMT) for a seven-year term, taking over from 89-year-old Giorgio Napolitano, who resigned earlier this month.

“Keep up the good work, President Mattarella. Long live Italy!” Renzi tweeted after the vote, while Pope Francis sent his congratulations by old-fashioned telegram. The Italian president is a largely ceremonial figure, but heields important powers at times of political instability, a frequent scourge in Italy, when he can dissolve parliament, call elections and pick prime ministers.

Centre-right rival Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia party appeared in disarray after the vote.

Berlusconi ordered his party to cast blank ballots after accusing Renzi of betraying what he said was a promise to give him a role in choosing the candidate. Instead, more than 30 refused, opening a wound in the party.

Renato Brunetta, Forza Italia’s chief whip in the lower house, said the pact that Renzi and Berlusco- ni sealed last year to make institutional reforms was dead, but not all his party colleagues were so resolute and Berlusconi himself has yet to comment.

“Renzi made a unilateral decision to break the pact,” Brunetta said. “Nothing will be the same now.” Mattarella is the first northern Italian to become president. He has a reputation for being a reserved but straight-talking former constitutional law professor, whose career in politics began after his brother, Pierantsit, was shot dead by the Sicilian Mafia in 1980.

Mattarella’s political roots are in Italy’s defunct Christian Democrat party that his father Bernardo, an anti-fascist, helped to found after the war.

Though Mattarella is not seen as having vast international experience, he has served as defence minister in two different centre-left governments, from 1999 to 2001. When Mattarella resigned as education minister to protest a decree that favoured Berlusconi’s media empire, and three years later he drafted a voting law, which has since been changed, that was used when Berlusconi won his first of three national elections in 1994.

In a rare diplomatic row between France and Morocco, Morocco decided in February 2014 to suspend its judicial co-operation with its former colonial ruler to protest over allegations of human rights abuse.

France summoned the French ambassador after French police went to the Moroccan embassy in Paris last month to head of the domestic intelligence service for torture allegations, following lawsuits filed against him in France by Moroccan activists.

Xinhua

France, Morocco resume judicial cooperation

PARIS, 1 Feb — France and Morocco have resumed judicial and legal partnership after bilateral relations were set back by allegations of human rights abuse and freedom repression, France’s Justice Ministry said in statement on its website on Saturday.

While meeting her Moroccan counterpart Mustapha Ramid in Paris on Thursday and Friday, French Justice Minister Christiane Taubira “discussed in depth the difficulties which led to the suspension of judicial cooperation between France and Morocco,” the ministry said.

The two countries had agreed to amend the Franco-Moroccan judicial cooperation convention to boost the exchange of information between the two countries as a part of Paris plan to improve international cooperation against terrorism suspects after deadly attacks early this month.

They will also bring back liaison magistrates, according to the communiqué.
Monday, 2 February, 2015

To be truly patriotic

By Myint Win Thein

It is known to everyone that there are a lot of people who say they love their country and that they are patriotic. They always express or preach patriotism whenever they have an opportunity to do so. However, their actions should be scrutinized to judge whether they are true patriots or not because it is easier said than done. It is understandable that the country does not want to see it ravaged by poverty, war and social woes. Therefore, those who are genuinely patriotic act responsibly toward getting rid of those evils. To drive them away, it is necessary for everyone who is really patriotic to exert efforts to make one’s country peaceful and prosperous, as peace and prosperity give people mental security as well as physical security.

In addition, one does not need to fight with others to show one’s patriotism as this will not bring about peace. In contrast, it will create more hatred and put one’s country in jeopardy. Peace can only be brought about by mutual recognition and bilateral interests. It is a fact that people are not able to build peace will never make a love for one’s country. Peace is the prerequistes of prosperity. If one truly loves one’s country and is genuinely patriotic, one is also required to appreciate intrinsic peace.

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

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish “Letter to the Editor” that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

Monday, 2 February, 2015

Amarapura, the second last old capital city VIII

(Further urbanization and renovation of Amarapura under King Bagan)

Maha Saddhamma Jotika dhaja Sithu Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

On his arrival back at his capital city, Amarapura, King Thayawaddy was too much involved in family affairs and court politics. Although he was quite satisfied with his religious works and defensive measures he took during his long sojourn in Yangon, he was very frustated for the British could not be prevailed upon for the return of Myanmar territories especially Rakhine and Taninthayee and also that his military strength was no equal to that of the British in terms of weapons and strategy and tactics of naval warfare. But he was determined to retrieve the lost territories of his kingdom. Taxed by the challenges of the Anglo-Myanmar relations and family affairs and court politics, King Thayawaddy, like his elder brother King Bagyidaw, fell into moments of mental pain and disorders which contributed to his death in 1846. So, the oldest of his three sons – Prince Bagan, Mindon and Kanaung – Prince Bagan succeeded him.

Young, very patriotic and naive King Bagan too was like his father, determined to carry out the unfinished effort of his father to drive out the British aggressors by force. With the help of the French and other Europeans he planned to modernize Myanmar army and to purchase modern arms and ammunitions or manufacture them in his kingdom. He received envoy’s messages from the west other than Britain. He extended urbanization of his capital by building new roads, founding new quarters for his local and foreign servants, and trading and commercial communities, and constructing highways and bridges.

The lake “Taungtha-man” was almost an inland sea at the peak of monsoon. Daily thoroughfare on its extensive stretch of water surface by water crafts by the public was time-consuming and dangerous when storm arose unexpectedly. As a prince, Bagan had two boyhood friends U Pein and U Sak. Three young friends would just cross the lake to visit places of their interests, rambling hunting shooting games and visiting pretty village dams on the other side of the lake. There were tall palm trees which produced fermented intoxicant drinks for joyful Myanmar males, where they also often made their way to.

It was U Pein’s idea to build nearly a mile long wooden bridge across the lake by using many discarded teak planks and posts at the sites of old capitals and towns. Today, this U Pein Bridge across the lake Taungthaman in Amarapura is the oldest and longest wooden bridge in the world, attracting visitors and tourists at home and abroad to walk leisurely on it and to enjoy beautiful scenario around.

The construction of the Bridge begun in 1849 by Myanmar engineers and carpenters, using Myanmar traditional technology was completed in 1851. The bridge was not aligned on a straight line but a curve in order to withstand the storm, the wind and the waves in high monsoon. So it slants to the south. Few very nails were used for joints were intertwined. The thick teak posts supporting the long bridge were struck down into the lake bed seven feet deep. Two props at the foot of each post were affixed into it to keep it stable and strong. The tops of the posts were carved conical to let rain water stream down easily.

Originally, there were 984 teak posts but now some of them were replaced by concrete ones. Two wide verandas, on right and left sides were fenced by teak or bamboo screens of diamond shape designs through which fresh breeze and sunlight came in.

The bridge in its heydays, envvoys who eyewitnessed the bridge in its heydays, spoke of its grandeur and artistic wonders. Because of this wooden bridge, Taungtha-man Kyauk Taw Gyi Phaya, Taungtha-man Kyauk Taw Gyi Phaya which stands out prominently in the scenario around.

Heritage List. The beauty of the bridge changes in harmony with the three seasons of Myanmar – Geimmin (summer), Wathaw (monsoon or rain) and Heyman (cold or winter). The whirlwind brings down withering leaves turning the environment dry and dusty. But in no time scarlet blooms of Letpan (cotton trees) appear around the bridge. The bridge is majestic against the azure blue sky. Cuckoos harbing the approach of summer while doves sing indolent songs making the bridge romantic. When monsoon arrives, green, yellow and white vegetation and rains water caress each other under the overcast ink sky. In mid monsoon, July and August, billows of water in the over-brimful lake Taungtha-man toll and roar almost engulfing the wood- en structure thus creating an exciting romance. When cold season brings in winter, fragrance of wild flow- ers of different hues is being wafted in the soft breeze. Dew-laden green foliage and morning mist veil the bridge, while smoke from the far distant rooster and dove also adds a little bit to the atmosphere, breaking the monotony of buzzing cicadas. A forlorn romance indeed.

The next outstanding work of King Bagan in the renovation of his capital city Amarapura was the sumptuous temple he built on the bank of Taungtha- man lake. When he became king he moved the great ancient Wooden Monastery of old Amarapura to Taungtha-man Kyauk Taw Gyi Temple, where his grandson and successor King Bagyidaw invited to reside. He was one of the UNESCO world cultural heritage committee would turn its attention to them.

Among Buddhist monasteries which King Bagan renovated or built at and around his capital city Amarapura in 1782 A.D. and founded a new, a large teak and gold girt monastery named Taungtha-man Kyauk Taw Gyi Temple on the bank of Taungtha- man lake. He also moved the old Bakaya Temple to the new, a large teak and gold girt monastery named Taungtha-man Kyauk Taw Gyi Temple, the monastery of Amarapura, which stands out prominently in the scenario around.

When King Bagan moved his capital city from Inwa to Amarapura in 1782 A.D. and founded a new, a large teak and gold girt monastery named Taungtha-man Kyauk Taw Gyi Temple, the monastery of Amarapura, which stands out prominently in the scenario around.

Inwa, Amarapura, Konbaung...
### Meteorological radar station in Rakhine State expected to be completed by March

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

**YANGON, 1 Feb** — With the assistance of the Japanese government, the establishment of a weather-radar station in Kyaukpyu Township is expected to be completed by March, according to the Msyministry of Transport.

The $12 million project was implemented in 1993, the government reconstructed the second Bakaya monastery on its original model, the picture the ground plan and all detail were found in the frescoes of Maha Thet Kyaw Thiri Kyi Temple. The modern technology is used to make the traditional delicacy from 31 January to 1 February, 2015.

The traditional delicacy is ceremonially prepared around and on the full moon day of Tabodwe, the 11th lunar month on the traditional Myanmar calendar (roughly in February) just as the cool season ends.

### Htamane season begins

**YANGON, 1 Feb** — Volunteers make Htamane, a glutinous rice-based savory snack, and a seasonal festive delicacy from Vedas, alchemy, astrology, occult sciences to technology gold, silver, bronze, blacksmithy to all visual and performing arts. Htamane season ends.

Htamane is usually made at monasteries and specialized shops to accommodate the quantity and space requirements.

A small portion is taken first as an offering to the Buddha as per custom and then it is usually sent around in the neighbourhood, to family and friends as a festival gift. It is a Myanmar’s traditional delicacy from Vedas, alchemy, astrology, occult sciences to technology gold, silver, bronze, blacksmithy to all visual and performing arts. Htamane season ends.

### Carving of General Aung San monument finishes

The stone monument, six feet and four feet wide was carved by sculptor U Tin Tun Aung, bronze smith U Hla Myint and stone sculptor U Aung Min in line with the design of Tampawady U Win Maung. The stone inscription was written in English and Myanmar by Sitagu Sayadaw who sponsored the cost of a marble stone and transport.

“We created the stone monument for enabling the people to know activities of General Aung San in his centennial anniversary,” Tampawady U Win Maung said.

The stone inscription says that General Aung San is a Myanmar’s hero not only in military affairs but also in political field during independence struggles.

*Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)*

### Amarapura, the second last old capital...

(from page 5)

The second Bakaya monastery of Amarapura was one of the architectural wonders of that time. Except the staircases, the entire edifice was built of teak posts and planks of superb size and quality true to the typical design of the royal monastery. It had a magnificent gift spire of 7 tiers sheltering a big Buddha image house, and a four-tiered-roofed main hall and residence and a three tiered roofed meal room and stores. The enclosure residence in Natmauk. The stone monument said to have been made to transport it from Mandalay to Natmauk to keep the stone monument at the Bogyoke museum at his request.

In the reign of King Mindon [1853-1878 A.D.] a great fire destroyed it in 1866 A.D. In 1951, Mya Thein Dan Sayadaw Monk Ashin Nyanutara built a two storey building on the site in which he deposited over 500 Buddha images and 5000 sets of old palm leaf manuscripts collected around Mandalay and around the country.

In 1993, the government reconstructed the second Bakaya monastery on its original model, the picture the ground plan and all detail were found in the frescoes of Maha Thet Kyaw Thiri Kyi Temple.

Today, this reconstructed Bakaya monastery, of Amarapura is not only an architectural and artistic marvel, but also a museum and library of antiquities and manuscripts of Myanmar religious and secular subjects – ranging from Vedas, alchemy, astrology, occult sciences to technology gold, silver, bronze, blacksmithy to all visual and performing arts.

In spite of political turmoil and economic downturn that King Bagan’s short reign of 7 years [1846-1853 A.D.] encountered, Buddha Sasana [Theravada Buddhism] continued to flourish, as the king provided his lavish patronage and his people constantly gave their supports. Because of the successful achievements of his predecessor kings in the reforms of Buddhism especially in Vinaya, the disciplinary rules of the Sangha, Buddhist Holy Order was re-strengthened, unified and stabilized. Happy results of Sangha unity were the emergence of highly learned Sayadaw monks and their scholarship of high erudition. A young monk of exceptional learnedness and high moral character named Pannajothabhiha was appointed by King Bagan Sangha-raja [Sasanaibaing Sayadaw]. This young monk wrote a commentary and sub-commentary in Myanmar language on the Anguttara Nikaya. This monk also translated into Myanmar “Suddhamavita-sini”. His other works were commentaries on Samyutta Nikaya and Digha Nikaya in Myanmar. Despite wars and political turmoil, Theravada Buddhism continued to flourish. There was progress in Buddhist scholarship. Pali texts were translated into vernacular, thus making them available and accessible to Myanmar literati. The entire Suttanipata appeared in Myanmar language. Commentaries sub-commentaries and vinaya were authored by learned bhikkhus thanks to the royal patronage of King Bagan and support of his subjects.

### Advertisement

**Union Minister U Nyan Tun Aung inspects construction of a weather-radar station in Kyaukpyu Township.**

**MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT**

**By Khaing Thanda Lwin**

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A small portion is taken first as an offering to the Buddha as per custom and then it is usually sent around in the neighbourhood, to family and friends as a festival gift. Maung Maung Thani (The Mirror)
Tokyo, 1 Feb — Islamic State militants said they had beheaded a second Japanese hostage, journalist Kenji Goto, prompting Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to vow to step up humanitarian aid to the group’s opponents in the Middle East and help bring his killers to justice.

“I feel intense indignation at this utterly cruel and despicable act of terrorism,” a grim-faced Abe told an emergency Cabinet meeting early on Sunday. Shortly after a video surface purporting to show the beheading of Goto, after the failure of international efforts to secure his release through a prisoner swap.

The hardline Islamist group, which controls large parts of Syria and Iraq, released an emergency statement on Sunday the country wanted to drive all insurgents out of its territory in 2015 and was prepared to back any attempts to fight global militancy. Speaking in parliament, Wael al-Halqi said Syria’s main aim was to “flush out all terrorists from its land” this year and it would “back any initiatives to fight global terrorism,” a broadcast on state television showed.

Syria has repeatedly said it wants to coordinate with other countries to fight groups in its territory. It describes all anti-government forces in Syria as terrorists, unlike Western countries and their Arab allies who distinguish between the hardline jihadists and more mainstream rebel fighters.

Syria’s uprising started in 2011 with anti-government protests and has descended into a civil war pitting a range of armed groups against the military. Hardline groups such as Islamic State and al-Qaeda’s Nusra Front have gained ground.

US-led forces started a military campaign against Islamic State in Syria and Iraq last year when the militant group captured tracts of land in between the hardline jihadists and more mainstream rebel fighters.

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WASHINGTON, 1 Feb — Kurdish ground forces, helped by US and allied air support, have retaken the Syrian town of Kobani from Islamic State militants, US Lieutenant-General James Terry said on Saturday.

Supporting what Kurdish forces said earlier this week, Terry, commander of the Combined Joint Task Force that has been leading air strikes against Islamic State, said in a statement issued by the US military: “Kurdish ground forces, supported by our air component, were successful in retaking the town of Kobani.”

A monitoring group and Syrian state media reported Kurdish fighters took full control of Kobani on Monday, but on Tuesday a US official said the town on the Turkish border had not been fully retaken. Saturday’s statement said Kurdish forces had pushed Islamic State out of Kobani on Tuesday.

US general says Syrian town of Kobani taken from Islamic State

Iraqi old man kills seven IS militants in revenge for slain son

TIKRIT, IRAQ, 1 Feb — An Iraqi old man on Sunday shot dead seven Islamic State (IS) militants in revenge for the killing of his son by the extremists in Iraq’s northern central province of Salahadin, a provincial security source said.

The incident took place in the morning when Basil Ramadan, in his 60s, opened fire from his AK-47 assault rifle on a group of IS militants at a checkpoint in the provincial capital city of Tikrit, and killed seven of them before they shot him dead, the source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity.

Over a month ago, the IS militants executed his son Ahmed, who was a college student, with seven other young men who were accused of collaborating with the Iraqi security forces, the source said. In early 2007, another son of Ramadan was killed by the al-Qaeda terrorist group in Tikrit, some 170 km north of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, the source added.—Xinhua

Iraqi old man kills seven IS militants in revenge for slain son

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Israel says it has beheaded second Japanese hostage Goto

Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (C) speaks to the media at his official residence in Tokyo on 1 Feb, 2015. — Kyodo News

Japanese hostage Kenji Goto, 47, and Yukawa, 42, two weeks ago, it justified its move by citing Abe’s pledge of $200 million in aid to countries battling the militant group.

But in a show of defiance, Abe on Sunday vowed to increase Japan’s food, medicine and other humanitarian aid for the Middle East.

Islamic State had said Goto was held along with a Jordanian pilot. Efforts to win their release had focused on the possible release in exchange of an Iraqi would-be suicide bomber jailed in Jordan 10 years ago. The video did not mention the pilot.

President Barack Obama said the United States condemned the “heinous murder” and would continue to work with allies to destroy the hardline Islamist group.

British and France also condemned the killing.

Addressing Abe, the militant in the video said: “Because of your reckless decision to take part in an unwinnable war, this knife will not only slaughter Kenji, but will also carry on and cause carnage wherever your people are found. So let the nightmare for Japan begin.”—Reuters

Sudan rebels free Bulgarian aid workers

SOFIA, 1 Feb — Six Bulgarian UN aid workers who were detained by rebels in Sudan’s strife-torn South Kordofan region have been released, the Bulgarian foreign ministry said on Sunday.

“They are in good health and are in a safe place,” a spokesperson for the United Nations (World Food Programme),” foreign ministry spokeswoman Betina Zhotka said.

The WFP six workers were taken into custody by Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) on 26 January, after their helicopter made an emergency landing in South Kordofan. SPLM-N spokesman Maharab Ardol confirmed to Reuters that the six Bulgarians’ transfer to the United Nations was complete, after they were moved from rebel-held territories in Sudan to the Yida refugee camp in South Sudan, where they were handed over to the United Nations.

On Friday, the chairman of Bulgarian Heli Air, the helicopter’s operator, told Reuters the aid workers would be released on the day or on Saturday after talking with the detainees over the phone.

The SPLM-N rebels said the aid workers had been free to leave but accused the Khartoum government of blocking access to United Nations helicopters. A Sudanese government source has denied this.

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Uber will improve privacy, data security following report

SAN FRANCISCO, 1 Feb — Ride service Uber, which is trying to enhance its image after several controversies, on Friday released the findings of a report on its handling of passenger data and said it would act on all the report’s recommendations for improvements.

Lawyers at Hogan Lovells, who wrote the report commissioned and paid for by Uber, found that the app-enabled service had appropriate guidelines and procedures in place for internal access controls with respect to passenger data and data retention.

The report said Uber could improve privacy and data security by following steps such as providing training for employees, making policies easier for customers to understand, and tightening access controls.

Management at the San Francisco-based company, which announced

Japan launches backup intelligence satellite

TOKYO, 1 Feb — Japan on Sunday launched a backup information gathering satellite with a radar reconnaissance payload for the Japanese government.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd. — Japan’s space agency and the commercial operator of the H-2A rocket — launched the spy satellite aboard a H-2A rocket at 10:21 am (0121 GMT) on Sunday from Tanegashima Space Centre in Japan’s southwestern Kagoshima prefecture.

The launch was supposed to take off on 29 January, but was delayed due to adverse weather conditions. The information gathering satellite is equipped with a radar spy instrument capable of peering through clouds, darkness and camouflage to obtain high-resolution imagery of the Earth’s surface.

The exact capabilities of the satellite are kept secret by the Japanese government.

NASA satellite to measure water in Earth’s soil sent into orbit

CAPE CANAVERAL, 1 Feb — An unmanned Delta 2 rocket lifted off from California on Saturday carrying a NASA satellite to measure moisture in the top layer of the Earth’s soil, data to be used in weather-forecasting and tracking of global climate change.

Soil moisture is a variable that binds together all of the planet’s environmental systems, scientists say.

More precise data will enable forecasters and policy-makers to deal more effectively with droughts or flooding in specific regions. “It’s the metabolism of the system,” said Dara Entekhabi, lead scientist of NASA’s Soil Moisture Active Passive (SMAP) observational.

The 127-foot (39 metre) rocket, built and flown by United Launch Alliance (ULA), blasted off at 6:22 am PST (9 am ET) from Cape Canaveral Air Force Base, located on California’s central coast, a live NASA Television broadcast showed.

ULA is a partnership of Lockheed Martin Corp and Boeing Co.

The launch had been delayed for two days by high winds and the need to make minor repairs to the rocket’s insulation.

Perched on top on the rocket was NASA’s 2,100-pound (950 kg) SMAP, which will spend at least three years measuring the amount of water in the top 2 inches of Earth’s soil.

Overall, soil moisture accounts for less than 1 percent of the planet’s total water reservoir, with 97 percent in the planet’s oceans and nearly all of the rest locked in ice, Entekhabi, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said at a pre-launch news conference.

Currently, scientists rely largely on computer models to estimate soil moisture.

But from an orbit 426 miles (685 km) above Earth, SMAP has two microwave instruments to collect exact soil moisture measurements everywhere on Earth and update the measurements every two or three days.

“This data will benefit not only scientists seeking better understanding of our planet’s climate environment, but it’s also a boon for weather forecasters, agriculture and water resource managers, emergency planners and policy makers,” NASA deputy associate administrator Geoffrey Yoder, said after the launch.

SMAP joins 19 other NASA satellites keeping tabs on Earth’s land, seas and atmosphere.

“We strive to give the world a consistently expanding view and understanding of our planet from space,” Yoder said.

Including the rocket launch and three years of operations, the SMAP mission will cost NASA $916 million. — Reuters

China sets up first high security bio lab

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China Mobile eyes 5G technology

China Mobile, the country’s largest 4G mobile network operator, has begun development on the next generation of mobile internet following the success of 4G, a senior executive of the company said on Saturday.

Xi Guohua, chairman of the board for the telecom giant, made the announcement during the 15th China Enterprise Development Forum held by the Development Research Centre of the State Council.

The move suggested the company is trying to maintain its leading position in an increasingly heated competition among the country’s three and only telecom service providers.

However, Xi did not unveil more details on the ambitious strategy.

China Mobile outperformed its two rivals, China Unicom and China Telecom, in the 4G race after getting official approval to launch services based on TD-LTE standard by the end of 2013, nearly half a year ahead of the latter two.

China Mobile had 90 million 4G subscribers last year with 240 million cell phones sold and 700,000 base stations built, data from the company showed.

The other two operators did not release relevant data but media reports said even their combined figure cannot compete with China Mobile.

In addition, Xi said the successful development of TD-LTE improves China’s research capability and equipment manufacturing.

China co-launched Global TD-LTE Initiative (GTI) in 2011 with telecom operators from other countries to promote the 4G technology in the world. — Xinhua

Researchers take part in a drill at the newly-completed lab in Wuhan, capital of central China’s Hubei Province on 30 Jun, 2015. China completed its first high level biosafety laboratory based in Wuhan on Saturday in Wuhan after more than a decade of construction. The lab will be used to study class four pathogens (P4), which refers to the most virulent viruses that pose a high risk of aerosol-transmitted person-to-person infections. — Xinhua

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China Mobile eyes 5G technology

China Mobile, the country’s largest 4G mobile network operator, has begun development on the next generation of mobile internet following the success of 4G, a senior executive of the company said on Saturday.

Xi Guohua, chairman of the board for the telecom giant, made the announcement during the 15th China Enterprise Development Forum held by the Development Research Centre of the State Council.

The move suggested the company is trying to maintain its leading position in an increasingly heated competition among the country’s three and only telecom service providers. However, Xi did not unveil more details on the ambitious strategy.

China Mobile outperformed its two rivals, China Unicom and China Telecom, in the 4G race after getting official approval to launch services based on TD-LTE standard by the end of 2013, nearly half a year ahead of the latter two.

China Mobile had 90 million 4G subscribers last year with 240 million cell phones sold and 700,000 base stations built, data from the company showed.

The other two operators did not release relevant data but media reports said even their combined figure cannot compete with China Mobile.

In addition, Xi said the successful development of TD-LTE improves China’s research capability and equipment manufacturing. China co-launched Global TD-LTE Initiative (GTI) in 2011 with telecom operators from other countries to promote the 4G technology in the world. — Xinhua

China sets up first high security bio lab

China sets up first high security bio lab

Researchers take part in a drill at the newly-completed lab in Wuhan, capital of central China’s Hubei Province on 30 Jun, 2015. China completed its first high level biosafety laboratory based in Wuhan on Saturday in Wuhan after more than a decade of construction. The lab will be used to study class four pathogens (P4), which refers to the most virulent viruses that pose a high risk of aerosol-transmitted person-to-person infections. — Xinhua
Gas-filled balloon completes record-breaking Pacific flight

**La Poza Grande, in the Mexican State of Baja California**—A gas-filled balloon co-piloted by an American and a Russian touched down safely in the waters off Mexico on Saturday, completing a week-long trans-Pacific flight that unofficially broke two world records, a spokeswoman for the mission said. The balloon carrying Troy Bradley of Albuquerque, New Mexico, and his Russian co-pilot Leonid Tiukhtyayev, landed near La Poza Grande in the Mexican State of Baja California Sur after a flight that lasted six days, 16 hours and 38 minutes and covered 6,646 miles (10,696 km), organizers of the mission said in a statement.

Bradley and Tiukhtyayev, known as the Two Eagles, left Saga in southern Japan on 25 January in their attempt to surpass the world distance record for flying a gas-filled balloon, as well as the record for time in flight for that type of aircraft. Both records need to be certified before becoming official.

“The pilots made a controlled descent to a gentle water landing about four miles off the Baja coast,” said Kim Vesely, a spokeswoman for the ballooning mission.

During the balloon’s descent, winds turned parallel to the coast, making it more prudent for the pilots to execute a landing in the water, she said.

The Albuquerque, New Mexico-based team that oversaw the flight later said in a statement the two pilots were picked up by a fishing boat and taken to shore.

“We would note that a water landing is acceptable under the international rules governing the establishment of world records,” Vesely said.

The flight surpassed the distance record of nearly 5,209 miles (8,383 km) for gas balloons set on the only previously manned trans-Pacific flight, in 1981. It also topped the flight duration record of about 137 hours aloft in a gas balloon set in 1978 by a team crossing the Atlantic.

The mission team earlier on Saturday gave a time for the duration of the Two Eagles flight as one minute less than a figure they provided later.

The Two Eagles balloon, which relied solely on an enclosed chamber of helium gas for lift, is different from hot air balloons and so-called Roziere balloons, which rely on both hot air and lighter-than-air gas. Roziere balloons have by far the greatest range of the three types. The National Aeronautic Association and the Federation Aeronautique Internationale, need to certify the records, a process that can take months, officials with the mission said.—Reuters

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**Carl Djerassi, the man who helped develop “the pill”, dies at 91**

**San Francisco**, 1 Feb — Carl Djerassi, an Austrian-born chemist who helped to develop the birth control pill before becoming a playwright and novelist, died in San Francisco on Friday at the age of 91, his family said. Djerassi, professor emeritus at Stanford University, was the leader of a team of researchers in Mexico City who synthesized a derivative of the hormone progesterone in a form that women could take orally. The breakthrough in 1951 became the basis of some of the first pills to prevent pregnancy.

“The pill” as it became known in popular culture has been credited with fueling a radical shift in sexual mores and changing the role of women in Western society. Djerassi was awarded the National Medal of Science in 1973 for his contribution to the new form of contraceptive. But by the time of his death Djerassi had left science behind and was well into his second career as a novelist and playwright.

Beginning in the 1980s, he wrote about 20 books including “This Man’s Pill”, a memoir, and novels such as “Cantor’s Dilemma”.

“I’m sick and tired of talking about the pill,” Djerassi told the San Francisco Chronicle in an interview four months ago at his flat in the Russian Hill neighbourhood. Instead, he wanted to talk about his passion for writing plays with scientific content—a genre he dubbed science-in-theatre. Djerassi divided his time among San Francisco, Vienna and London. Born in Austria, his family fled the country when the Nazis came to power, moving first to Bulgaria then to the United States. His image is on an Austrian postage stamp.

After becoming a wealthy man thanks to his shares in Syntax, a company which marketed early birth control pills, Djerassi became an art collector. But he later sold the bulk of his collection of works of Paul Klee and turned to supporting creative artists, setting up a colony near Woodside, California, where more than 2,000 choreographers, writers, visual artists and musicians have had residencies.

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**Winter storm threatens heavy snow, sleet from US Midwest to East Coast**

**New York, 1 Feb** — A winter snowstorm was expected to blanket a wide swath of the US Midwest on Saturday before heading to the East Coast, bringing up to a foot (30 cm) of fresh accumulation to parts of New England, days after a blizzard slammed the region, forecasters said.

Six to 12 inches of snow were predicted from Iowa to Massachusetts, with New York and New Jersey expected to bear the brunt of the storm when it blows in to the region on Monday, the National Weather Service said.

“This close to 100 million people live within the swath forecast to be hit with accumulating snow or enough wintry mix to make for slippery roads from Saturday evening into Monday,” said AccuWeather forecaster Alex Sosnowski.

The winter weather was also threatening a new round of travel delays after thousands of flights were canceled earlier this week when a blizzard pummeled parts of the East Coast. The National Weather Service forecasters expected the new snowfall to begin as rain and sleet around Kansas and Missouri, while states to the north and east can expect moderate to heavy snowfall through Sunday, the agency said.

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**Mason Gloudeaman, 26, uses a snowboard to jump from a pile of snow in Fort Greene Park in Brooklyn after a snow storm in New York on 27 Jan, 2015.** — Reuters
Three climbers rescued after fall on Oregon’s Mt Hood

PORTLAND, 1 Feb — Two mountain climbers were rescued by helicopter on Saturday after they fell on Oregon’s Mount Hood at an altitude of more than 10,000 feet (3,048 metres), and a third climber was helped down the mountain on foot, authorities said.

The climbers, two men and one woman, were injured on the renowned peak when they fell in the Hog’s Back region, the Clackamas County Sheriff’s Office said in a statement.

Authorities did not provide details on how far the climbers had fallen. Their identities were not released.

Sheriff’s deputies worked to reach the injured climbers in conjunction with Portland Mountain Rescue, who were in the area training at the time, and a team from the ambulance and helicopter rescue company AMR touched down to come to the climbers assistance within hours of their fall, officials said.

The woman climber suffered two fractured ankles, while one of the men sustained a fractured leg, the Sheriff’s Office statement said, citing initial reports. The third climber was assisted down the mountain under his own strength.

The Oregon National Guard said the two injured climbers were later transferred to its helicopter and airlifted to a hospital.

Mount Hood, about 60 miles (97 km) east of Portland, is a popular climbing spot, with 8,000 to 10,000 climbs per year.—Reuters

Beijing department store fire put out after 71 hours

BEIJING, 1 Feb — The fire at a department store in downtown Beijing was extinguished on Sunday morning, 71 hours after it started.

A total of 850 fire fighters and 165 fire trucks were dispatched to quell the flames, which began raging around 9 am on Thursday at the Bairong Shimao Department Store in Beijing’s Dongcheng District.

There were no casualties and the fire died down at 8:30 am on Sunday.

A 16-year-old boy who allegedly caused the fire by igniting a carton in the warehouse of the store was arrested on Thursday, according to the Beijing Public Security Bureau.

Demonstrators take part in a protest against corruption and demand the impeachment of Brazil’s President Dilma Rousseff, in Sao Paulo, Brazil on 31 Jan, 2015.—Xinhua

Cambodian court convicts three Frenchmen for taking nude photos

PHNOM PENH, 1 Feb — A Cambodian court sentenced three Frenchmen on Saturday to six-month suspended jail terms and expelled them from the country for taking nude photos, a court official said.

Kampong Cham province's Court of Appeal’s major structure was extinguished on Sunday morning, 71 hours after it started. A total of 850 fire-fighters and 165 fire trucks were dispatched to quell the flames, which began raging around 9 am on Thursday at the Bairong Shimao Department Store in Beijing’s Dongcheng District.

There were no casualties and the fire died down at 8:30 am on Sunday. A 16-year-old boy who allegedly caused the fire by igniting a carton in the warehouse of the store was arrested on Thursday, according to the Beijing Public Security Bureau.

A Cambodian court sentenced three Frenchmen on Saturday to six-month suspended jail terms and expelled them from the country for taking nude photos, a court official said.

Keut Sovanareth, chief prosecutor, told Kyodo News the court convicted the trio for taking nude photos at an ancient temple, Banteay Kdey, in Cambodia’s northern province of Siem Reap.

“All the three were convicted to six months in jail but suspended and are expelled from the country and are banned from returning to Cambodia for four years,” he said.

The men, aged between 20 and 22, were arrested on Thursday and confessed to taking the photos, he said.

A report by the Apsara Authority, which oversees all temples in Siem Reap, the home of the Angkor Wat temple complex, said that in cooperation with police the men were questioned and detained soon after they took the photos at 11:30 am on Thursday.

They arrived in Cambodia on 23 January as tourists.

Chau Sun Kerya, spokesperson for the Apsara Authority, said the men’s behaviour at the ancient temple was “inappropriate” because it is a site of worship for Cambodians.

Kyodo News

WEATHER REPORT

BAY INERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy in the Andaman Sea and South Bay and generally fair elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 2ND FEBRUARY, 2015: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Kachin, (Northern and Eastern) Shan States, weather will be partly cloudy in Yangon and Tannthayi Regions, Mon State and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Slight increase of night temperatures in the Southern Myanmar areas.

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I’m tempted to get a tattoo: Judi Dench

Veteran actress Judi Dench

PTI

LOS ANGELES, 1 Feb — Veteran actress Judi Dench says she is tempted to get a tattoo to mark her 80th birthday. The actress’s daughter, Finty Williams, is all for the idea, reported Daily Telegraph.

“Finty’s very keen on me having one. There’s an Indian symbol that I like which supposedly represents love and everything. One of the cameramen who worked on The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel told me what it meant, but I’m a bit nervous in case I’m being set up. It might be unbelievably rude,” Dench said.

Dench turned 80 in December but said the words ‘old’, and ‘retire’ are banned in her house.

“The thought of putting my feet up doesn’t appeal at all — no, no, no. I’ve got plenty of time. The prospect of no work on the horizon makes me a bit edgy. I have no particular ambitions — I just want to be employed,” Dench said.

PTI

Whitney Houston’s daughter revived after found unresponsive in tub

LOS ANGELES, 1 Feb — Bobbi Kristina Brown, the only daughter of the late pop star Whitney Houston and singer Bobby Brown, was found unresponsive in a bathtub at her Georgia home on Saturday, but she was revived and rushed to a hospital on Sunday, police said.

The incident comes nearly three years after Houston, a superstar who battled substance abuse, drowned in a bathtub in Beverly Hills, California, in February 2012. Authorities determined cocaine use and heart disease contributed to her death.

Brown, 21, was found in the bathtub at her suburban Atlanta home by her husband and a friend, said Lisa Holland, public information officer for the Roswell Police Department.

Brown’s husband, Nick Gordon, started CPR and police continued life-saving measures until an ambulance arrived and took her to the hospital.

Brown was taken to North Fulton Hospital in Roswell, a suburb north of Atlanta, Holland told reporters. “She’s alive at the hospital,” Holland said.

She gave no other details and a hospital spokesperson declined to comment. Brown married Gordon in January 2014. Gordon was also raised for a time by Houston, one of the best-selling recording artists of all time, but she never formally adopted him. On Houston’s birthday last year, Gordon had his arm tattooed with a portrait of the late singer.

Houston, a multiple Grammy Award winner who was known for her vocal power, clarity and mezzo-soprano range and whose dozens of hit songs include “How Will I Know” and “I Will Always Love You,” was the daughter of gospel singer Cissy Houston and a cousin of pop singer Dionne Warwick.

Bobbi Kristina Brown’s father, Bobby Brown, is a Grammy Award winner who started his career as frontman for the R&B group New Edition.

Both of Bobbi Kristina’s parents struggled with substance abuse, and Houston described their 15-year marriage, which ended in 2007, as drug- and alcohol-fueled. Bobby Brown was sentenced to 55 days in jail in 2013 after admitting to driving drunk in 2012.

She and her grandmother, Cissy Houston, and other relatives starred in a 14-episode reality show for cable channel Lifetime, “The Houstons: On Our Own,” about their struggle to cope after Houston’s death.

Brown’s Twitter feed over the past year included motivations to work out, quotes from celebrities on being true to oneself, loving messages for her husband and remembrances of her mother.—Reuters

China’s first all-Tibetan language film released

LHASA, 1 Feb — China’s first language film with dialogue purely in Tibetan opened in cinemas across Tibet on Saturday. The two-hour “Tibet Sky” (or “Phurba & Tenzin”), was filmed on the Tibetan plateau with an all-Tibetan cast. It narrates the life of Tenzin, child of a serf-owner, and Phurbu, a serf of Tenzin, from the liberation of Tibet in the 1950s until the 1980s. Screenwriter Alai, a Chinese novelist of Tibetan descent, said the script was modified 17 times in order to more authentically reflect Tibetan culture.

Tibetan actor Lhasang Norbu said the film respects the history and reality of Tibet, which will help the audience understand a real Tibet. He said he hoped that the film would be introduced to audiences around the world. Earlier in 2014 the film was released with Chinese subtitles in places such as Shanghai, Sichuan and Guangdong.

Ren Zhongjun, producer of the film, said, “We will further improve the content of the film based on the feedback of the Tibetan audience in order to better present the history of Tibet.”

“We plan to translate the film into different languages such as German, French, Italian and Japanese and have it released around the world,” Ren said.

Xinhua

‘American Idol’ made me what I am today: Kelly Clarkson

LOS ANGELES, 1 Feb — ‘American Idol’ alum Kelly Clarkson has credited the talent reality show for making what she is today. Clarkson, 32, said her life could not have been any better if she had not participated on the show, reported People magazine.

“I am considerably blessed in my life. I came from nothing, and my life took a whirlwind change overnight. My life couldn’t be any better. But you just pass and go. Why wouldn’t you want to give back? Why wouldn’t you want to help out when you have so much spotlight to share?” she said. Clarkson said music has a healing power.

“Music has such an influence on our emotions, and it aids in recovery. It’s kind of a healthy little elixir for everyone. And I can relate to it. I was very much an outsider as a kid, and music kind of saved me.”

PTI

Actor Val Kilmer hospitalized in Los Angeles after ‘complication’

LOS ANGELES, 1 Feb — Actor Val Kilmer, best-known for his roles in “Batman Forever” and “The Doors,” said on Saturday he was at a Los Angeles hospital for observation following what he called a “complication.” The 55-year-old film and stage star posted to his Facebook page after media reports that he had been rushed to the hospital with a suspected tumour.

“Thank you for all your sweet support,” Kilmer said in the Facebook post. “But I have not had a tumour, or a tumour operation, or any operation. I had a complication where the best way to receive care was to stay under the watchful eye of the UCLA ICU,” Kilmer wrote, referring to the intensive care unit of the University of California, Los Angeles, Medical Centre.

Kilmer is undergoing tests, family spokeswoman Liz Rosenberg said in an email. Rosenberg had earlier said in a statement that Kilmer was tested for a “possible tumour.”

The actor, who has disclosed in previous interviews that he is a Christian Scientist, also said in the message he was assisted by friends who know his “spiritual convictions” and have helped in minimizing what he called “gossip and silly talk.”

Some Christian Scientists, based on the precepts of their faith, have been known to advocate prayer before or instead of medical treatments when a person is ill.

Kilmer did not disclose any further details about his ailment in the post, but said that he hoped for a speedy recovery. “God bless you all and please don’t worry,” he wrote. “I don’t have an official diagnosis at this time,” Rosenberg said.

“He is with his two children Mercedes and Jack,” she said. Kilmer played Doors singer Jim Morrison in a 1991 film about the band and Batman in the 1995 superhero film “Batman Forever.” In 2013, the actor reunited with Anthony Edwards, his co-star in the 1986 film “Top Gun,” to give voice to characters in the animated comedy “Planes.”—Reuters

PTI

Actor Val Kilmer
Djokovic grinds Murray down to win Australian Open

MELBOURNE, 1 Feb — Novak Djokovic reasserted his rule over the hard-courts of Melbourne Park on Sunday, grinding down Andy Murray 7-6(5), 6-7(4), 6-3, 6-0 to win his fifth Australian Open title.

The pair waged a fierce baseline duel for the opening two sets, but Djokovic won 12 of the last 13 games to close out an emphatic win and become the first man in the professional era to secure five titles at Melbourne Park.

Top seed Djokovic sealed the victory on the second match-point, rushing to the net with a searing volley and putting a 90-second lead on Murray to secure the win with his shirt and throwing it into the crowd before tearing off his_pair set the tone from the first point with a fierce rally featuring scrambling, net-rushes and a Murray lob before the Scot forced an error from the Serb. Murray failed to capitalize on three early break points and Djokovic made him pay, leaping to a 4-1 lead.

But in the first of many momentum shifts, the Scot clawed back to 4-3 when Djokovic netted an ambitious backhand down the line. The Serb broke Murray again to 5-3, but at a cost, injuring his thumb when he slipped on the hard court and calling for the doctors to get some treatment at the change of ends at 5-4 when handing serve back.

The Serb fumed at chair umpire Jake Garner over fans yelling out during points and grew more agitated as Murray held on to make the set a tiebreak and compile a 4-2 lead after a string of at-tritional rallies. With the set being to put away, Murray flinched, however, serving a double-fault and then rushing to the net, sending a volley an inch past the baseline to give Djokovic a set point.

Hammering a second serve return into the net, the Scot conceded it and a pumped-up Djokovic threw a steely-eyed glance at his player’s box.

Frustrated, Murray channeled his anger into his tennis, jumping out to a 2-0 lead but soon after was chastising himself again. He conceded 12 straight points to be broken again and fell back to 4-2.

The match was interrupted a game later when two people jumped on the court in an embarrassing security lapse to protest against the Australian government’s offshore detention of asylum seekers.

The players were forced to wait a few minutes as security restored order and the break gave Murray time to settle. Reuters

Real and Atletico Madrid both win on Saturday in Spain

MADRID, 1 Feb — Real Madrid remain top of the BBVA Primera Liga after coming back from conceding a first minute goal to defeat Real Sociedad 4-1 on Saturday.

Arizt Elustondo opened the scoring in the first minute with a powerful header following a corner, but James Rodriguez leveled just 90 seconds afterwards and Sergio Ramos put Madrid ahead seven minutes before halftime.

Real Madrid were without the suspended Cristiano Ronaldo, who was watching from a VIP box, but Karim Benzema produced a fine display which he capped with two excellent second half goals to ensure he wasn’t missed.

Benzema’s first goal came following a pass from the otherwise disappointing Gareth Bale, while his second of the day was an excellent curling finish from the edge of the visitors’ penalty area.

Atletico Madrid overcame the dreadful conditions and an in-form rival to defeat Eibar 3-1 in a rain soaked Ipurua Stadium.

The game was over as a contest by the 25th minute after a goal from Antoine Greizmann and two from Mario Mandzukic saw Atletico overcome their mid-week Kings Cup exit to FC Barcelona and set them up for next weekend’s home clash against Real Madrid.

Granada also enjoyed a good day with a 1-0 win at home to Elche thanks to a Jhon Cordoba strike.

Friday saw Deportivo la Coruna win 2-1 away to Rayo Vallecano, while the majority of the weekend’s matches, including FC Barcelona’s home game to Villarreal are played on Sunday. — Xinhu
Chelsea stay five clear after 1-1 draw with Man City

London, 1 Feb — Chelsea and Manchester City drew 1-1 in their top-of-the-table Premier League clash at Stamford Bridge on Saturday, leaving Jose Mourinho’s team five points clear of City but with the champions still believing they can retain their title.

Chelsea’s run of 10 straight home league wins came to an end when David Silva cancelled out Loic Remy’s opener just before half-time. There were no further goals, and very few on-target attempts in the second half which City edged in terms of possession.

Chelsea had lost 4-2 at home in the FA Cup last Saturday to third tier Bradford City but bounced back with a 1-0 win over Liverpool in the League Cup semi-final on Tuesday.

City, also beaten at home last week in the FA Cup by lower league opponents Middlesbrough, were still too tough an obstacle and Chelsea only managed three shots, their lowest total in a game since 2003-04.

The result left Chelsea top on 53 points, five ahead of City’s total in a game since 2003-04.

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