President U Thein Sein sends messages of felicitations to Serbian President, PM

NAKYATAW, 15 Feb—U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent messages of felicitations to His Excellency Mr Tomislav Nikolic, President of the Republic of Serbia and His Excellency Mr Aleksandar Vucic, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, on the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Serbia, which falls on 15 February 2015.

Commander-in-Chief meets Myanmar Press Council (Interim)

NAKYATAW, 14 Feb—Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing met members of Myanmar Press Council (Interim) here on Saturday to discuss action plans relating to the outcomes of the coordination meeting took place here on Saturday to discuss action plans relating to the outcomes of the first session of the meeting focused on the amendment, addition and repeal of individual sections of the law, with discussion groups being the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Education and the Education Promotion and Implementation Committee of the National Network for Education Reform and Development.

Student protesters can now retrace their steps home as their demands having been met

YANGON, 14 Feb—A coordination meeting took place here on Saturday to discuss action plans relating to the outcomes of the four-party talks held on 11 February on the amendment of the National Education Law, officials said.

The first session of four-party talks held on 11 February on the amendment of the National Education Law, officials said.

The first session of the meeting focused on the amendment, addition and repeal to individual sections of the law, with discussion groups being the Leading Committee for Democratic Education Movement.

Prof Dr Aung Tun Thet, moderator, urged all the sides to show understanding in negotiations, saying that the enthusiasm of the youth, the maturity of the adults and the expertise of the specialists, when combined, will ensure a better future.

Discussions on the amendment will continue, following an agreement on the draft, he said.

Dr Kyaw Thu, who was also a moderator,

(See page 3)

Traditional papier mâché cow toys seen as last hope for saving a traditional Myanmar folk art

A child plays with cow toys.—PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

By Aye Min Soe

YANGON, 14 Feb—While demand for some traditional animal papier mâché toys is falling fast, papier mâché cows are still handily beating out imported plastic toys and stuffed animals at pagoda festivals.

“As long as farmers and children exist in Myanmar, our cow toys can dominate other imported toys,” says U Kyin Soe, a papier mâché toy maker, “because farmers use oxen and cows and their children are familiar with them.”

He learnt the art of making papier mâché toys

(See page 8)

International Monetary Fund trims Myanmar growth outlook

By Ye Myint

YANGON, 14 Feb—The International Monetary Fund revised its projection for Myanmar’s real economic growth that was forecast at the October annual meeting at 8.5 percent in 2014 to a decelerated 7.8 percent this fiscal year from 8.3 percent in previous fiscal year.

The revision is due to slower growth in the agricultural sector, said Yang Yongzheng who led a recent IMF team’s visit to Myanmar from 28 January to 5 February, in a statement released on Wednesday on conclusion of a nine-day mission to the country.

The IMF also warned of inflation which is forecast to pick up around 6 percent year-on-year in 2014-2015 FY, up from 5.8 percent in 2013-2014 FY.

It also pointed out the country’s net international reserves fell to $4.5billion at end-December due to an increase in the trade deficit to 5.5 percent of GDP caused by a 25% rise in imports in April-December while export growth was flat.

The country’s economic outlook is “favourable” over the medium term, but there has been a noticeable increase in downside risks for near term, Yang warned in the statement, noting fiscal risks that are likely to result from spending pressures, including a potential large increase in public-sector wages that will lead to a rise in inflation expectations.

“The external current account deficit could widen further, and shortfalls in foreign direct investments and other capital inflows could result in slower reserve accumulation,” Yang added.

(See page 3)
Myanmar Maritime University to conduct master’s degree courses as of next year

Yangon, 14 Feb — Myanmar Maritime University (MMU) will conduct master’s degree courses as of the next year.

The main commitment of the MMU, which is under the Ministry of Transport, is to develop human resources by producing qualified naval architects, ocean engineers, marine engineers, marine electrical systems and electronic engineers, port and harbour engineers, river and coastal engineers and navigation officers, according to the ministry.

At the convocation, held in conjunction with a ceremony to award outstanding students, the MMU conferred bachelor degrees and diplomas on about 500 students, an official said.

Since its establishment in 2002, Myanmar Maritime University, the premier university of maritime education in Myanmar, has offered only bachelor’s and post-graduate diploma courses.

In his speech on the occasion, U Nyan Tun Aung said, “Under the ministry’s strategic transport development policy, relentless effort are being made for air and marine sector development to comply with the rules set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).” —GNLM

Government troops seize bodies, weapons from Kokang renegade groups

Nay Pyi Taw, 14 Feb — Government troops clashed with Kokang renegade groups Saturday in Laukkai while combing the area to restore stability of the region.

The two sides exchanged gunfire in the morning when the military forces tried to enforce security in the area that has been infiltrated by Kokang renegade groups.

After the fights ended at around 7 p.m., the military could seize 98 small weapons, ammunition and 13 bodies of the armed group, with the eight were arrested in serious injuries.

Government forces are still taking security measures in Laukkai and nearby areas.

Myawady National Sports Festival continues for second day

Nay Pyi Taw, 14 Feb — The 4th National Sports Festival 2015 continued for the second day at designated sports venues.

Men’s 200-m 5-oar event and men’s 10-oar events were held at Ngalaik Dam.

Thaha Aung (Yangon) secured first prize in men’s 200-m freestyle event, Shoon le Maw Oo (Yangon), first in women’s 200-m freestyle event while Yangon stood first in men’s/women’s freestyle event.

The international and Myanmar traditional chess tournaments were held at Wunna Theikdi Social Zone.

Cyclists participated in the record setting contest on the track outside Wunna Theikdi Stadium.

Tennis event took place at Wunna Theikdi tennis court, badminton at Wunna Theikdi gymnasium-C. Cricket at the training grounds of Wunna Theikdi, golf at City Golf Court, and Taolu event of Wushu at Wunna Theikdi Gymnasium-A.

Central Organizing Committee for Myanmar War Veterans Organization

Announcement No. (1/2015) 14 February, 2015

1. Kokang renegade groups headed by Phon Kya Shin mounted attacks on a military headquarters, a local self-administration office, a prison, a police outpost and an army base in Laukkai as of 8 February 2015. We feel terribly sad to hear from the mass media that the government troops suffered losses from heavy fighting in an attempt to protect the lives and property of the people and safeguard the interests of the country and that the attacks destabilized the region of Laukkai.

2. We are always respectful to and proud of members of the armed forces and their families who have risked life and limb in justified warfare to defend the sovereignty and integrity of the country. We seriously condemn the act of Phon Kya Shin-led Kokang renegade groups as a threat to the stability, peace, sovereignty and integrity of the country.

3. We, the Central Organizing Committee for Myanmar War Veterans Organization, hereby declare our whole-hearted support to the government troops who are engaged in justified warfare and pledge our combat readiness hand in hand with the Tatmadaw.

Lanmadaw BEHS No 1 gets new building

Yangon, 14 Feb — A school building identified Thanlwin was opened at Basic Education High School No 1 in Lanmadaw Township, here, on Saturday.

Deputy Minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Tin Shwe and officials unveiled the stone plaque of new school building.

Chairman of Shwetaung Group U Aik Tun explained donation for construction of the school building. Wellwishers donated note books and cash to the school through the headmistress.

Nay Pyi Taw, 15 Feb — U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitation to His Excellency Mr Ivica Dacic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, on the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Serbia, which falls on 15 February 2015.—MNA


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Commander-in-Chief meets...
(from page 1)

weapons in their area; how-
ever, Kokang leaders de-
nied the reports; they still
refuted photo evidences
of weapon factory and at-
tacked and arrested police
members who were dis-
patched for investigation.

The government troops
seized heavy weapons
and ammunition during
their offensive which lead
14 police members to be
killed by Phon Kya Shin
group before running away
to neighbouring country.

In 2013, he then re-
cruited forces of the same
ethnicity to be able to con-
trol Laukkai and to topple
self-administered govern-
ment and take power with
the help of some ethnic
armed groups.

On February 9, they
robbed eight weapons from
militia from Taikshwite vil-
lage, turning into clashes
with government troops.

The Commander-
in-Chief also said that
the 12th ACDFIM forum in
Malaysia from February 9
to 11 agreed to foster co-
operation of military forces
among ASEAN countries.

He then answered que-
ries of vice chairman and
members of MPC.

Journalists from local
media organizations—Sky
Net, "Tomorrow", "7Day,
Messenger, Yangon Times
and Eleven Media—met
the Commander-in-Chief
separately.

Myanmar, Singapore focus
on bilateral aviation services

NAV P YI TAW, 14
Feb—Deputy Minister for
Transport U Zin Yaw and
party during their trip to
Singapore met Singaporean
Minister of Transport
Mr Lui Tuck Yew on 10
February and discussed
reform process of Myan-
mar’s Ministry of Trans-
port, corporatization of
its business organization
based on own finance, bi-
lateral aviation services
and construction of Han-
thawady International
Airport.

Deputy Minister of
Transport Mrs Josephine
Teo of Singapore host-
ed a luncheon to Deputy
Minister U Zin Yaw and

hold talks on extension of
bilateral flights, flying of
Myanmar National Air-
lines to Singapore, coop-
eration with Changi Air-
port Group of Singapore
in Hanthawady Interna-
tional Airport, implemen-
tation of ASEAN region
aviation agreements and
ASEAN-China aviation
agreements.

The deputy minister
visited Singapore Avi-
ation Academy, Changi
International Airport,
ATR Training Centre
and Boeing Training
Centre. On 11 Febru-
ary, the deputy minister
arrived back from
Singapore.—MNA

International Monetary Fund...
(from page 1)
The IMF mission chief
stressed the need to prior-
itize spending and increase
tax revenues that are vital
for the containment of next
year’s budget within the
targeted 5 percent of GDP
deficit, highlighting the
importance of broadening
the tax base, improving
tax compliance and mini-
mizing exemptions to mit-
tigate the risk of the large
proposed increased in pub-
luc-sector wages that could
reduce spending in health,
education, and infrastruc-
ture “absolutely” needed to
boost the country’s growth
potential.

He noted that fiscal
decentralization should
refrain from more fund
allocations to regional/state
governments without a
 Corresponding devolu-
tion of responsibilities,
also highlighting the im-
portance of strengthened
natural resources revenue
management. The

The IMF in the state-
ment welcomed the coun-
try’s introduction of treas-
ury securities auctions last
month, describing it as a
move to establish a non-in-
f l atory alternative to the
CBM deficit financing and
helping develop the finan-
cial market.

It noted that maintain-
ing a flexible exchange
rate is critical for Myan-
mar to absorb external
shocks and build up its in-
ternational reserve buffer,
urging state-owned banks
to take part in the auctions
and interbank trading.

The Fund acknowl-
edged the progress mod-
erning the financial
sector and strengthening
supervision and stressed
the need of implementing
modernized regulations
given the expected entry
of foreign banks.

The CBM should
employ measures that
would prevent exces-
sive flows and implement
rules on foreign exchange
lending that avoid exces-
sive risk-taking. The
issuance of new domestic
licenses for policy banks
should be carefully con-
trolled to minimize risks,”
he added.

During their mission
to Myanmar, the IMF staff
met with Union Minister
at the President’s Office U
Soe Thane, Central Bank
of Myanmar Governor U
Kyaw Kyaw Maung, Un-
ion Minister for National
Planning and Economic
Development Dr Kan
Zaw, Deputy Minister for
Finance Dr Maung Maung
Thein, as well as other sen-
or officials, parliamentari-
 ans, and representatives
from the private sector,
according to the statement.

Myawady

Four-party talks agree to finalize bill amending national education law

YANGON, 14 Feb—Four-party talks on amend-
ment of bill amending National Education Law
agreed on Saturday to finalize the bill, according to the
joint statement.

The meeting held at Yangon Region Hluttaw
Building at 9:30 a.m. and the agreement includes
the Amendment of the Bill will be submitted to Hluttaw af-
fter it has been finalized on Sunday.

After a marathon dis-
cussion for nearly nine
hours, government officials,
members of National Net-
work for Education Reform,
parliamentarians and Lead-
ing Committee for Demo-
cratic Education Movement
made the agreement based
on 11 points discussed on
Wednesday.—MNA

Student protesters can now...
(from page 1)
called for the continuation
talks as agreed.

The second session
started in the afternoon,
with Union Minister U Hla
Tun saying that the draft
law as agreed in the first
session met the students’
demands phase by phase.

“Since their demands
have been fulfilled, student
protesters can now retrace
their steps home by cud-
ding the victory,” he said.

The national educa-
tion bill will quickly be
submitted to the parlia-
ment for approval, he said,
adding that the discussion
groups issued a joint state-
ment.

Respective working
groups will continue to
discuss to finalize the bill

A four-party talk among representatives of
government, MP, NNER and students
in progress.—MNA

Photo of a view of
downtown Yangon
showing high-rise
buildings and
Independence
Monument.
PHOTO: YE MYINT
Rice offering marks centenary of General Aung San

MANDALAY, 14 Feb—In commemoration of the centenary of General Aung San, a ceremony to offer meals to 1,500 members of the Sangha was held in front of the organizing committee office in Mandalay on 13 February. Moreover, officials of the organizing committee donated meals to 10 venerable Buddhist monks at U Hla Thein Beikman.

“The commemorative celebrations will continue till 15 February. The photos, paintings, sculptures and historical documents are being displayed at the Beikman from 10 to 15 February,” member of the organizing committee U Htay Aung of Shwe Htoo told media. The centenary organizing committee has plans to hold the commemorative celebrations on the significant days related to General Aung San and distribute pamphlets to the people in 2015. Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)

Zi Village becomes electrified village in Natogyi Township

NATOGYI, 14 Feb—According to the whole township electrification project, a ceremony to launch supply of electricity was held in Zi Village, 35° of its kinds in Natogyi Township, Mandalay Region, on 8 February. Union Minister for Electricity, Mandalay Region, U Nyan Tun Aung switched on the power control to electrify the village.

The union minister, Township Administrator U Kyaw Naing and Township Electrical Engineer U Ye Htet Hein cut the ribbon to launch the electrification for over 200 households in the village round the clock.

Thanks to the union minister, a total of 35 villages are enjoying electricity round the clock, the township electrical engineer told media.—Khin Zar Mon Myint (Law)

Athletes of Myawady District to represent Kayin State in Sepak Takraw, tennis in NSF

MYAWADY, 14 Feb — A Sepak Takraw and ground tennis teams representing Kayin State will take part in the National Sports Festival from 13 to 28 February in sports grounds and gymnasia in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the office of Myawady District General Administration Department, deputy commissioner U Lwin Ko Oo gave words of encouragement to athletes, managers and coaches.

A total of 15 teams from regions and states including Nay Pyi Taw Council Area will take part in 27 sports events of festival. The sports contingent from Kayin State will participate in over 20 sports events. Hein Lin Aung (IPRD)

Staff to get apartments at housings in Natogyi Township

NATOGYI, 14 Feb — Arnt Min and Myintmo construction companies are building two three-storey staff quarters in Natogyi Township under the a five-month assignment of Department of Human Settlement and Housing Development.

A 102 feet long and 25 feet wide three-storey staff quarter is under construction in the compound of Public Works Department, Myingyan-Mandalay Road in Ward 8, Natogyi, Mandalay Region. Both companies have to complete construction of the staff quarters within five months, an official of Arnt Min Construction Company told media.—Htay Myint Maung

Petrified Wood Park opens for public observation

MYINGYAN, 14 Feb—Managing Director U Htay Aung of No 3 Mining Enterprise under the Ministry of Mines visited the petrified wood park of Tree Jade Company in Natogyi, Mandalay Region, on 11 February.

He was pleased for observing invaluable petrified woods at a single place and he welcomed arrangements of the park for public observation, the managing director told media. He viewed four trunks of petrified woods, 100 pieces of rare petrified woods and production of finished goods made of petrified woods. Khin Zar Mon Myint (Law)

28 townships to recruit new assistant surgeons, dentists in Mandalay Region

MANDALAY, 14 Feb — Examinations were held for picking out assistant surgeons and dentists to be appointed at vacancies of hospitals in 28 townships in Mandalay Region.

A total of 768 candidates applied for 56 vacancies of assistant surgeons and six dentists. As of 7 February, they joined the interviews at the Mandalay Region Health Department, said an official.

A total of 655 candidates applied for 56 posts of assistant surgeons and 113 for six dentist posts. Authorities are making arrangements to appoint qualified ones in the vacancies as much as possible.—Aung Ye Thwin
Myanaung unveils bronze statue of General Aung San on centennial birthday

Myanaung, 13 Feb—In commemoration of the centennial birthday of General Aung San, people of Myanaung Township honoured the national leader by unveiling the general’s bronze statue near Koetaungpyae Pagoda on Yonpwe Street in Myanaung, Ayeyawady Region, on 13 February.

Township Administrator U Min Min Tun unveiled the General’s bronze statue.

The ceremony was also attended by departmental officials, social organization members, political parties and residents.

Win Bo (Township IPRD)

Mandalay Children’s Day

Mandalay, 14 Feb—A ceremony to mark the Myanmar Children's Day was held at the hall of No. 16 Basic Education High School in Mandalay on 13 February.

Students sang a song entitled, “Martyr Aung San”.

Mandalay, 14 Feb—Mandalay District’s deputy commissioner U Win Zaw Naung made a speech and presented prizes to winners in the high and middle school level essay and poem recitation contests and traditional sports events.—Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Rural lake under maintenance to irrigate farmlands

Natogyi, 14 Feb—Water is one of the main resources for growing various crops. Only then will sufficienty of water contribute towards high yield of crops.

Natogyi Township Irrigation Department is maintaining Leduta Lake near Padaung Village under the arrangement of Mandalay Region Government.

Gadaykyaw Company is upgrading the lake to be a 2,500 feet long and 14 feet wide with the use of heavy machinery. It can irrigate 25 acres of farmlands, an official of Township Irrigation Department told media.

Khin Zar Mon (Law)

MGH admits over 55,000 patients in 2014

Mandalay, 14 Feb—According to the statistics, Mandalay General Hospital admitted over 50,000 patients in 2014.

Due to allotment of larger amount of health budget by the government as of 2013, the hospital could install modern hospital and medical equipment so as to provide health care services to the patients, medical superintendent Dr U Win told reporters.

“As of 2013, the hospital has been giving free surgical operations and test to any patient at the emergency unit. Health staff are giving health care facilities to patients,” he added.

The number of patients in 2014 is the largest during five years from 2010 to 2015. The hospital admitted 38,526 patients in 2010, 41,758 patients in 2011, 47,084 in 2012, 52,776 patients in 2013 and 55,099 in 2014.—Aung Ye Thwin

Faculty members of Mdy medical universities hold talks with delegates of Nagoya University

Mandalay, 14 Feb—Professor Sakahibara, Director of Nagoya University in Japan and party paid a visit to Mandalay University of Medicine on 30th street in Mandalay on 11 February.

They met with officials of the university in holding a discussion that focused on exchange of learning medical education between the medical universities of two countries.

Rector of the university Rector Professor Dr Tin Maung Han explained the history of the university and academic matters.

Rector Professor Dr Tin Maung Han, Acting Rector Prof Dr Thida of Mandalay University of Nursing and faculty members held talks with director Professor Sakahibara and party on cooperation in medical academic matters.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

IPRD gives public digital library service to passengers at railway station

Myanaung, 14 Feb—Under the arrangement of Information and Public Relations Department, a public digital library service machine was installed at Myanaung railway station in Ayeyawady Region on 12 February.

The station gives free WiFi service to the passengers at its yard to read various books by downloading the files.—Win Bo (IPRD)
Indian PM expresses wish for stronger economic, trade ties with China

NEW DELHI, 14 Feb — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday expressed wish for stronger economic and trade ties between India and China. During a meeting here with Wang Jiarui, vice chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference and head of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, Modi said the visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping to India last September was highly successful and that the friendship between the leaders of the two countries is a driving force behind bilateral cooperations. He said stronger cooperation in the fields of economy and trade is conducive for India and China to play a more important role in Asian and world affairs. Modi said the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) of India is willing to carry out more exchanges with the Communist Party of China, especially in the fields of local governance, youth and women. Wang said the successful visit by President Xi to India last year has drawn a new blue print for China-India cooperation. The year 2015 marks the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India, and China is ready to build closer development partnership with India, to which the Communist Party of China is willing to make its contribution, he said.

Survivors of WWII Manila battle seek apology from Japan

MANILA, 14 Feb — Survivors and descendants of the victims of a major battle in Manila during World War II pressed Japan on Saturday to apologize for atrocities committed by Japanese forces that left tens of thousands dead.

Juan Jose Rocha, head of Memomare Manila 1945 Foundation, a group of Battle of Manila survivors and descendants of noncombatant victims, said during a memorial ceremony that an apology by Japan “is long overdue.”

“The purpose of our group is not to recriminate, nor to seek compensation, but just to seek an apology from Japan and request Japan to recognize what they did here,” Rocha said at the ceremony held in front of a monument erected by his group 20 years ago in memory of the 100,000 civilians who died during the battle in Manila that lasted from 3 February to 3 March, 1945.

Rocha said around 70,000 of the civilians who died were “victims of heroic crimes or massacres” perpetrated by the Japanese forces, while the remaining 30,000 died in crossfire between US-led Allied and Japanese forces. The battle ended almost three years of Japanese military occupation of the Philippines.

Rocha, who was 7 years old at the time, said among the noncombatant victims were his mother and 13 other relatives.

“The war is over. We are close friends now with Japan, as we should be. But history is history.” Rocha said.

“We ask Japan, please stop trying to rewrite history. Come to terms with your past,” he said.

In his remarks during the ceremony, Kazuya Asakawa of the Japanese nonprofit organization Bridge For Peace lamented that most Japanese are not aware of the human tragedies of the Battle of Manila.

“Learning history is the first step. But it’s not enough. For more than 10 years, Bridge For Peace has been interviewing survivors, Japanese veterans, former Japanese soldiers, and victims of the massacres,” Asakawa said.

He urged the next generation of Filipinos and Japanese to hold further dialogues and said the friendship of the two peoples “will make the future.”

Ricardo Jose, a history professor at the University of the Philippines, said the commitment to remember the events of the Battle of Manila is not intended to re-kindle feelings of anger but to give value and meaning to the lives that were lost.

“In looking back at the past, at what happened 70 years ago, we also look towards the future so that these tragedies will never ever be repeated,” he said.

Speaking at the ceremony, former Philippine President Fidel Ramos said that more than 1.1 million Filipinos died during World War II and irreparable damage was inflicted on the Philippines’ cultural heritage, especially in Manila.

Indian 6.2-magnitude quake jolts off Taipei, delays trains

TAIPEI/BEIJING, 14 Feb — An earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale jolted the southern Indonesian island of Bali earlier this month, delaying trains that affected nearly 3,000 passengers.

The 6.2-magnitude earthquake wobbled areas off Taitung in eastern Taiwan at 4:06 am on Saturday (Beijing time), according to the China Earthquake Networks Centre.

The epicentre was monitored at 22.6 degrees north latitude and 121.5 degrees east longitude, or sea area as 33.6 km east of Taitung.

The quake struck at a depth of 10 km.

There have been no casualties in the first earthquake above the 6.0-magnitude that hit Taipei this year but railways operator said later at least 36 train services have been delayed as of 9:30 am due to the earthquake.

All railway facilities were checked before normal operations resumed, which led to delays of up to 45 minutes, the railways operator said, adding there will be no compensation for the passengers because the delays were caused by a natural disaster.

Taipei’s earthquake monitoring department said that the quake can be felt to different extent in all cities felt to various intensities. An unnamed tourist near the Sun Moon Lake in central Taipei told Xinhua that the bed was shaking for about half a minute. The quake was not clearly felt in Taipe.
Jeb Bush hands out cash to win allies ahead of 2016 election

WASHINGTON, 14 Feb — Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush said on Friday he is giving out more than $100,000 to fellow Republicans, in a sign that he is banking on his fundraising prowess to build allies across the country ahead of a potential White House bid.

The brother of former President George W Bush and son of former President George HW Bush has emerged as an early front-runner in what could be a crowded Republican field in the 2016 presidential election.

Bush’s political committee, Right to Rise, announced it was handing out $10,000 to Republican state parties in Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Nevada and Florida — states that will be among the first to hold nominating contests in the 2016 primaries that decide the party candidates for the election.

His committee also gave out $5,200, the legal maximum, to 14 Republican lawmakers. Among the recipients: Senator Chuck Grassley and Representative David Young of Iowa; Senator Richard Burr and Representative Frank Guinta of New Hampshire.

The families had called on Obama to insist that federal authorities investigate whether the murder suspect, 46-year-old paralegal student Craig Stephen Hicks, was motivated by hatred towards the victims because they were Muslim.

Police seized more than a dozen firearms and a large amount of ammunition from his home, according to search warrants filed on Friday, WRAL-TV reported.

Newlyweds Deah Shaddy Barakat, 23, a University of North Carolina dental student, his wife, Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, 21, and her sister, Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha, 19, a student at North Carolina State University, were killed in a condominium about two miles (three km) from the UNC campus.

According to the warrants, a friend of the victims stopped police and directed them to the condo, where authorities found Barakat dead and bleeding from his head in the front doorway, the television station reported.

One of the sisters was found in the kitchen and the other in its doorway, according to WRLA-TV.

On Thursday, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan criticized Obama and other US leaders for their silence about the incident, which has garnered international attention and left some US Muslims feeling concerned about their safety.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Friday praised the three victims, who were all involved in humanitarian aid work, as representing the best values of global citizenship and said he was deeply moved by scenes of thousands of people mourning their deaths.

A Justice Department spokesperson said its Civil Rights Division and the US Attorney’s Office for the Middle District of North Carolina would participate in the FBI inquiry announced in the case on Thursday evening.

Muslim advocates on Obama’s Reform Agenda and the White House expressed appreciation for US cooperation and solidarity over the course of Japan’s bid, which ended in failure, to secure the two hostages.

In the meeting, part of which was open to the media, Kishida said that with this year marking the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, Japan will continue its commitment to peace and stability in the region and the world as a robust ally of the United States.

Blinken said that especially in the 70th anniversary year, the alliance “sets an incredibly powerful example for the rest of the world” about what is possible from the two allies working together for a common cause.

Kishida and Blinken also discussed the situation in Asia-Pacific region and the crisis in Ukraine, according to the ministry.

Obama, according to diplomats.

Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida (L) and US Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken shake hands before their talks at the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo on 13 Feb, 2015. They agreed to cooperate closely in enhancing counter-terrorism measures following the recent murder of two Japanese nationals by the Islamic State militants.—KYODO NEWS

Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and US Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken shake hands before their talks at the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo on 13 Feb, 2015. They agreed to cooperate closely in enhancing counter-terrorism measures following the recent murder of two Japanese nationals by the Islamic State militants.—KYODO NEWS

In a separate meeting, Blinken and Vice Foreign Minister Akitaka Saki re-affirmed bilateral and trilateral cooperation with South Korea in dealing with issues involving North Korea such as its missile and nuclear weapons development, as well as Pyongyang’s past nuclear tests and its reclusive government’s pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Blinken focused on the grpahic importance of the upcoming 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. Blinken underscored the importance of strengthening the alliance and working with Japan and South Korea to achieve peace and stability in the region. They discussed the situation in the Asia-Pacific region and the crisis in Ukraine.

Kishida said that Japan and the US will continue to cooperate closely in enhancing counter-terrorism measures following the recent murder of two Japanese nationals by the Islamic State militants.

“Japan, US to cooperate for success of Abe’s US trip”, according to Kyodo News.

During a private meeting with Abe’s aides, Blinken said the US-Japan alliance is “the bedrock of regional security,” according to the ministry.

Blinken underscored the importance of strengthening the alliance and working with Japan and South Korea to achieve peace and stability in the region.

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Obama denounced “outrageous murders” of three US Muslims

WINSTON-SALEM, (NC) 14 Feb — US President Barack Obama on Friday described the deaths of three young Muslims gunned down in North Carolina this week as “brutal and outrageous murders” and said no one in the United States should be targeted for their religion.

The president’s statement came as the US Justice Department said it would join the FBI’s preliminary inquiry to determine whether or not the man accused in the Chapel Hill shooting on Tuesday broke any federal laws, including hate crime laws.

“No one in the United States of America should ever be targeted because of who they are, what they look like, or how they worship,” Obama said in a statement, offering his condolences to the victims’ families.

5,000 Hezbollah, Iranian fighters spearhead battles near Israeli borders

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said another 5,000 fighters could also join the battle upon the request of those fighters to consolidate their hold on the mainly Muslim town of Qanaafer.

Meanwhile, the Syrian National Coalition, the main opposition umbrella in exile, criticized the main opposition umbrella’s move and said it will promote the fight against terrorism in partnership with the international community.

Blinken said that especially in the 70th anniversary year, the alliance “sets an incredibly powerful example for the rest of the world” about what is possible from the two allies working together for a common cause.

Kishida and Blinken also discussed the situation in Asia-Pacific region and the crisis in Ukraine, according to the ministry.

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Curable if treated in good time

By Aung Khin

O ne child is diagnosed with cancer every three minutes somewhere in the world. International Childhood Cancer Day on February 15 is dedicated to the more than the estimated 250,000 children diagnosed with cancer each year worldwide. It is not like other commemorative day, but a day for people around the world to stand up and speak out for kids with cancer, survivors and their families.

Cancer is horrible for people of any age, and it is especially so for kids and their families. It is estimated that childhood cancer has an incidence of more than 175,000 cases per year in the world, with an approximate mortality rate of 96,000 per year—80 percent in the developing world.

Many developed countries have also unfortunately seen a slow increase of childhood cancer rates each year. In the United States, an estimated 15,780 children and adolescents ages 0 to 19 were diagnosed with cancer in 2014.

The most common cancers in children are leukemia (34 percent), brain tumors (23 percent), and lymphomas (12 percent). Pediatric oncology is the branch of medicine concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of cancer in children.

According to the 2014 report of US National Library of Medicine, an estimated 85 to 92 percent of Myanmar children with cancer are undiagnosed or not receiving treatment. Abandonment of treatment is as high as 60 percent.

Some traditional toys such as jockeys, dolls, nurses, zawgyi alchemists with supernatural powers, zebras, dogs, and elephants have even disappeared from the markets.

But the papier mâché cows are in greater than ever at pagoda festivals that attract mostly people from rural areas, said U Kyin Soe as he worked his wonder with waste paper from a weekly journal and home-made glue to transform a wooden cow into a work of traditional art.

The artisans now generally make their papier mâché toys with used paper from weekly journals because it is easier to find that raw material than paper cement bags, which have also been used.

U Kyin Soe still clearly remembers that a member of the Pagoda Board of Trustees of Kyaik-khauk Pagoda about 4 miles east of Yangon told him about a decade ago that the pagoda festival had turned into a festival of cow toys due to the high demand for the toys at the festival.

And demand for cow toys at the shops at the famed Shwedagon Pagoda remains as high as ever, said U Kyin Soe who supplied his art works to the shops there before he moved to Bago, about 50 miles north-east of Yangon.

The traditional cow toys attract not only local children but also children from rural areas prefer the cow toys to other toys, but children from the cities are not quite as enamoured with them, he added.

But U Kyin Soe doesn’t mind the varied tastes.

“I challenge foreign-made toys. Cow toys continue to keep beating them in Myanmar because majority of our country’s population are farmers,” said U Kyin Soe with confidence.
The Outcomes of 3rd MDCF and New Resolution: towards Sustainable Development Goals after Millennium Development Goals

Since Myanmar is a comparatively late entrant to the phase of its remarkable journey to the democratic state, a journey that has propelled it to the top tier of the Dream of Myanmar people and which will lift hundreds of people out of poverty in a remarkably short period of time. This new transformation with firm destination, a clear roadmap, and a deep sense of responsibility has undertaken with Three Waves: Myanmar’s first wave of reform dealt with the introduction of a bi- or tri-party democratic system and the transition from the old to a new system, while the second wave of reforms put emphasis on strategies for executive, economic, political and social reforms which have been supported by the international community. The Third Wave calls for the emergence of a strong democracy alongside higher living standard for the people.

Moreover, the political reform is the most critical and the movement which, however, has been called by the President on the government bodies and the public to cooperate in order to avoid internal conflicts similar to those of some countries which are in a transitional period. Since Myanmar has been left behind by the lengthy conflicts and instability furthered in terms of development, political parties are urged to avoid confrontation and enter into negotiation as a gesture of a political and cultural culture for a stable and peaceful political reform. With regard to the measures being taken in line with the Framework on Economic and Social Reform (FERSR) were done by reforming the 10 priority areas such as finance and revenue, trade and foreign investment, development of the private sector, education and health sectors, food security and development of the agricultural sector, transparency in government, the mobile phone and internet systems, and development of the basic infrastructure. With the establishment of the Ministry of Culture, the State remains a significant path of economic development, and utilize the technological knowhow and resources, received from the international community.

One of the Milestones of the achievements during these years is the government measure to hold the First Myanmar Development Co-operation Forum which was held from 19 to 20 January 2013, the Second Myanmar Development Cooperation Forum from 27 to 28 January 2014 and the Third on 7 to 8 February 2015 respectively. The Nay Pyi Taw Accord was adopted and made public in the Third Nay Pyi Taw Accord for Effective Development Co-operation was presented by the Ministry for MNPD and Advisor to the President.

At the 3rd MDCF, the Joint Statement by the Euro-Africa Investment and Development Cooperation to become more meaningful expressed their positive views and commended what the Government of Myanmar for all they have achieved and remarkable progress of reform process, their aids, supports and assistance with the country’s development priorities and plans, to continue cooperating with the Government in our reform processes and making the development process aids more effective.

Even during its 30 months of assuming the Office, the Government has taken two phases of reform process by the introduction of a multi-year development plan as well as Myanmar Comprehensive Development Plan. In this regard, these can help our Development Partners to better align their supports, and assistance with the country’s development priorities and plans, to continue cooperating with the Government in our reform processes and making the development process aids more effective.

While cooperating with donors, we have also convinced the international donor community has made considerable efforts to listen to aspirations of the people and our development partners’ commitments and obigations. It is observed that the Government’s commitment and commitment of Myanmar and its Development Partners. They are in fact part of aspirations that will secure the “Myanmar dream” for the next generation.

The initiatives of the government by adopting a people-centered approach in line with the Framework on Economic and Social Reform (FERSR) were done by reforming the 10 priority areas such as finance and revenue, trade and foreign investment, development of the private sector, education and health sectors, food security and development of the agricultural sector, transparency in government, the mobile phone and internet systems, and development of the basic infrastructure. When we try to make a successful reform process, we have achieved good socio-economic development outcome for our country’s people.

The second phase of economic and social reforms under the theme of “Partnerships for Actions, Implementation for Success”.

During the 2nd MDCF, to maintain and accelerate the momentum of development processes, the theme of Forum was chosen as “Accelerating Actions for Progress through Enhancing Inclusive Coordination”. By that theme, we are committed to accelerate our progress with actions; we will achieve tangible results and outcomes through enhancing coordination between the government and development partners, and making our development cooperation to become more inclusive progress. Since in 2014, Myanmar has projected 9.1% GDP growth rate for the fiscal year 2014-2015. In order to achieve this targeted growth rate, we systematically managed and utilized development aids and concessional loans, technical assistance, attract local and foreign investment which will support the development of our country.

The Government has also formulated first five-year national development plan as well as Myanmar Comprehensive Development Plan. In this regard, these can help our Development Partners to better align their supports, and assistance with the country’s development priorities and plans, to continue cooperating with the Government in our reform processes and making the development process aids more effective.
**Yemeni Houthis fighters fire on protesters after clashes kill 26**

SANAA, 14 Feb — Tens of thousands of Yemenis demonstrated in several cities on Saturday against the rule of the Shi'ite Muslim Houthis movement whose gunmen fired on protesters in the central town of Ibb and wounded four, medical sources said. It was the second day of nationwide demonstrations against the Iranian-backed Houthis in less than a week after its dissolution of parliament this month unraveled security and sent Western and Arab embassies packing.

Activists said they were enraged by the death on Saturday of Saleh al-Bashiri, who they say was detained by gunmen as they broke up an anti-Houthi protest. There was no sign of torture on his body.

Heavy clashes between Houthi fighters and Sunni Muslim tribesmen fighting alongside al-Qaeda militants in the southern mountainous province of al-Bayda on Saturday killed 16 Houthis rebels along with 10 Sunni tribesmen and militants, security officials and tribal sources told Reuters. The state faces collapse in impoverished, strife-ridden Yemen two weeks after the Houthis took formal control of the country and continued an armed push southward.

France, the United States, Britain, Germany, Italy and Saudi Arabia have closed their missions in the capital Sanaa and withdrawn staff, citing security concerns. Spain and the United Arab Emirates announced the closure of their embassies in Sanaa on Saturday.

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**G-7 “concerned” about ongoing battle in run-up to Ukraine cease-fire**

WASHINGTON, 14 Feb — The Group of Seven major nations voiced concern on Friday about continued fighting in eastern Ukraine in the run-up to the recently negotiated cease-fire between Ukrainian troops and separatists.

The United States, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan in a joint statement warned of “possible additional sanctions against Russia if the promised truce that takes effect Sunday is broken.”

The G-7 countries said they “welcome” the agreement on the planned cease-fire reached by Russia and Ukraine, as well as France and Germany on Thursday after their marathon talks in Minsk. Implementation of the so-called Minsk Package “offers a way forward to a comprehensive, sustainable and peaceful resolution to the crisis in eastern Ukraine,” the G-7 said.

“However, the G-7 remains concerned about the situation in Ukraine, in particular in view of the fighting around Debaltseve,” causing numerous civilian casualties, it said.

The G-7 urged “all sides” to adhere strictly to the provisions of Thursday’s cease-fire deal.

The G-7 “stands ready to adopt appropriate measures against those who violate the Minsk package and therefore intensify the costs for them,” it said.

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**UN chief appeals to Indonesia to stop death row executions**

UNITED NATIONS, 14 Feb — United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appealed to Indonesia on Friday not to execute prisoners on death row for drug crimes, including citizens of Australia, Brazil, France, Ghana, Indonesia, Nigeria and the Philippines.

Indonesia has harsh penalties for drug trafficking and resumed executions in 2013 after a five-year gap.

Five foreigners were among six people executed last month, the first executions since President Joko Widodo took office in October.

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Ban had spoken with Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi on Thursday “to express his concern at the recent application of capital punishment in Indonesia.”

“The United Nations opposes the death penalty under all circumstances,” Dujarric said in a statement on Friday. “The Secretary-General appeals to Indonesia’s foreign ministry spokesman to make every effort to ensure that Indonesia’s authorities that the executions of the remaining prisoners on death row for drug-related offences not be carried out.”

Indonesia’s Attorney General HM Prasetjo said this month that two Australians — Myuran Sukumaran, 33, and Andrew Chan, 31 — are among eight prisoners due to be executed after Widodo rejected their clemency pleas in January.

Nations of Brazil, Malawi, the Netherlands, Nigeria and Vietnam were executed by firing squad in January. The case of the two Australian men threatens to strain already fragile relations between Australia and Indonesia.

The two were identified as leaders of the so-called Bali Nine, a group of nine arrested on the resort island in 2005 and convicted of attempting to smuggle some 18 lb (8 kg) of heroin to Australia. Other members of the group have been sentenced to long prison terms.

Indonesia’s foreign ministry spokesman said the death penalty was in accordance with Indonesian law and did not conflict with respect for human rights as governed by the constitution.

“The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that the death penalty can be imposed for the most serious crimes,” spokesman Armanatha Nasir said by text message.

“I don’t know if we can figure out what to do whatever we can so that this doesn’t happen. It’s very pessimistic about that now,” Jeroen Dijsselbloem said. “Greeks’ expectations of the Greek government are sky high,” he added. “But the possibilities, given the state of their economy, are very limited. So that still needs a huge adjustment and I don’t know if we can figure that out as soon as Monday.”

A spokesman for Tsipras, who has accepted Dijsselbloem’s offer of the technical talks during a first encounter with fellow EU leaders at a Brussels summit on Thursday, said: “We will do whatever we can so that a deal is found on Monday.”

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**Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras addresses a news conference after a European leaders summit in Brussels on 12 Feb, 2015.**

**On Wednesday, euro zone finance ministers failed even to agree a broad common statement on how to maintain funding for Greece following the expiry at the end of this month of the three-year-old bailout package - hated by many Greeks along with the troika that has endorsed its terms.**

Tsipras wants a new financial package, freed of unpopular terminology and the most burdensome conditions. But Germany, backed solidly so far by the other 17 euro zone states, insists his government would extend the current terms for some months, giving it time to develop a new strategy if it fails. Greek spokesman Gabriel Sakellaridis also said that if euro zone finance ministers failed to get a deal in Brussels on Monday evening, that would not be catastrophic. That view is not entirely shared in some other European capitals, especially those like Berlin and Helsinki where any deal with Greece will need to be ratified by local parliaments.
Gov’t urged Japanese woman in October not to go to Islamic State areas

Tokyo, 14 Feb — A Japanese woman who went missing with her French husband in November was urged by the Japanese government in October not to go to areas controlled by the Islamic State militant group after public authorities were alerted that she was planning to go.

According to a written response to an opposition lawmaker approved by the Cabinet on Friday, the Foreign Ministry asked the woman not to travel to Syria, much of which is controlled by Islamic State, in mid- and late October.

The government said it does not know whether the woman is currently in Islamic State territory.

The woman and her husband, who is of Algerian descent, are both Muslims in their 20s and have said they want to engage in humanitarian activities, according to the authorities.

The couple left Narita airport near Tokyo for Turkey.

A Royal Jordanian Air Force plane takes off from an air base to strike the Islamic State in the Syrian city of Raqqa on 5 Feb, 2015.—Reuters

US moving to resupply Jordan’s military with munitions

WASHINGTON, Amman, 14 Feb — The United States is readying plans to resupply Jordan with munitions in the coming weeks, possibly including precision-guided arms, expediting support for the kingdom as it expands its role in airstrikes against the Islamic State (IS), officials say.

The State Department and Pentagon declined comment on any future moves to assist Jordan with requests for weapons. But several US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that planning was well underway to help replenish Jordan’s supplies of ordnance.

US efforts to expedite delivery of munitions and other weapons follow a vocal appeal from Jordan’s King Abdullah to American lawmakers last week for greater US support.

A source close to the Jordanian government told Reuters the kingdom believed its supplies of bombs are being stretched too thin as it expands its role in airstrikes following the Islamic State’s grisly execution of a Jordanian pilot.

The Islamic State’s release of a video early this month showing pilot Muath al-Kasaesbeh burned alive in a cage has triggered a public backlash in Jordan and prompted a campaign of international condemnation.

A Royal Jordanian Air Force plane takes off from an air base to strike the Islamic State in the Syrian city of Raqqa on 5 Feb, 2015.—Reuters

Iraqi army repels attack on base hosting US Marines, officials say

Baghdad, 14 Feb — About 25 Islamic State fighters led by several suicide bombers attacked Ain al-Asad air base in Iraq’s Anbar Province on Friday but were repulsed by Iraqi security forces guarding the perimeter who killed most of the assailants, the Pentagon said.

Rear Admiral John Kirby, the Pentagon press secretary, told reporters in Washington that US Marines were able to penetrate into the facility. Kirby cautioned that the information was preliminary and some details could change as Iraqi officials get a better understanding of how the attack unfolded.

“It does appear now that most, if not all of them, were wearing Iraqi uniforms,” Kirby said of the attackers.

Militants from the jihadist group had attacked the Ain al-Asad base and the nearby town of al-Baghdadi a day earlier, leading to sporadic clashes in the town overnight.

An Iraqi official said US military aid to “countries threatened by Islamic State militants, at the Ain al-Assad military base in Anbar Province on 15 Nov, 2014.—Reuters

Kurds regain Syrian villages from Islamic State

Beirut, 14 Feb — Kurdish forces backed by US-led air strikes have regained control of at least 163 villages around the Syrian town of Kobani after driving back Islamic State militants in the past three weeks, a group monitoring the conflict said on Saturday.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that although the Kurds had recaptured many villages since winning back Kobani in late January, their progress had been slowed by renewed clashes to the west and southwest of the town, where Islamic State had redirected its fighters.

The battle for the predominantly Kurdish town, known as Ayn al-Arab in Arabic, became a focal point for the US-led air campaign against the al-Qaeda offshoot in Syria.

Islamic State controls large areas of northern and eastern Syria, including a strip of territory across the northern Aleppo countryside and a corridor stretching southeast from Raqqa Province to the frontier with Iraq.

The Syrian Kurds, who received US military support from Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga forces, said they drove Islamic State from the town near the Turkish border on 26 January. US-led forces have carried out almost daily air strikes on Islamic State targets around the area since late last year.

The Kurds were joined by several hundred rebel fighters in the battles for areas surrounding the town, the Observatory’s founder Rami Abdulrahman said.

The rebel groups included the Shams al-Shamal brigade and the Raqa Revolutionary Brigade, anti-Islamic State fighters from northern Syria who had battled alongside the Kurds to win back territory.

The government’s advance on Kobani last year with heavy weapons drove thousands of residents over the border into Turkey. The Kurds, armed with mainly light weapons, called for international help and the town now lies in ruins.—Reuters

Tribe fighters take part in a military training to prepare for fighting against Islamic State militants, at the Ain al-Asad military base in Anbar Province on 15 Nov, 2014.—Reuters

The UAE this week said it was providing a cage has triggered a public backlash in Jordan and prompted a campaign of international condemnation.

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First flight of HondaJet planned in Japan in April

File photo taken in July 2014 shows Honda Motor Co’s HondaJet small aircraft, being unveiled for the first time to the general public during an air show in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Honda Aircraft Co President Michimasa Fujino said on 13 Feb, 2015, that it will show off the flight of the HondaJet for the first time in Japan in April. — KYODO

Mexico must probe thousands of ‘disappearances’ — UN

Geneva, 14 Feb — A United Nations watchdog called on Mexico on Friday to probe and prosecute alleged complicity of state forces in thousands of “disappearances”, including a notorious case of 43 students believed murdered last year.

Mexico’s delegation told the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances at a review last week that 11,300 people were unaccounted for. Amnestiy International said in a statement that more than 22,600 had gone missing in the past eight years amid “a huge problem of impunity”.

In their findings, the committee’s 10 independent experts said they had received information that “illustrates a context of generalised disappearances in a great part of the territory (of Mexico), many of which could be qualified as enforced disappearances”.

“Enforced disappearances” are those linked to detention or abduction by state agents such as police or security forces, or their allies, who conceal the victim’s fate.

“The state has informed us that in contrast to the thousands of enforced disappearances that we assume ... there are exactly six persons put to trial and sentenced for this crime,” committee member Rainer Huhle told a news briefing.

The panel urged Mexico to establish a special prosecutor’s office to lead investigations and prosecutions.

It said Mexican authorities should step up searches for all missing, including migrants from Central America who have vanished on their way to the United States, and share DNA samples from unidentified bodies.

In a statement, Mexico’s government said it was fully committed to improving the way the country handles disappearances. Mexico’s Attorney General Jesus Murillo has said there is no doubt that the 43 students were murdered last September and their remains incinerated and dumped into a river in the nearby town of Cocula.

Officials say they were abducted by corrupt police officers, who handed them over to a local drug gang. The former mayor of the southwestern town of Iguala has been arrested.

Parents of the students met the UN panel to appeal for help in seeking justice, saying they had no faith in the government’s ability to investigate the crime.

“The grave case of the 43 students subjected to enforced disappearance in September 2014 in the state of Guerrero illustrates the serious challenges Mexico is facing in terms of the prevention, investigation and punishment for enforced disappearances and searching for the disappeared,” the UN panel said. — Reuters

Relatives hold up posters of some missing students from Ayotzinapa Teacher Training College during a news conference, at the Miguel Agustin Pro Juarez Human Rights Centre in Mexico City on 9 Feb, 2015. — Reuters

Canadian police say Valentine’s Day mass shooting plot foiled

Toronto, 14 Feb — Canadian police said on Friday they foiled a plot in which at least two people allegedly planned to commit a mass shooting in the East Coast province of Nova Scotia on Valentine’s Day.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) said in a statement the plot involved a 19-year-old man from Timberlea, Nova Scotia, and a 23-year-old woman from Geneva, Illinois.

Police said they obtained information that suggested the two had access to firearms and intended to go to a public venue in the Halifax, Nova Scotia, region on 14 February to kill people, and then themselves.

The police statement did not suggest a possible motive, but officers told a media briefing they would not characterize it as a “terrorist event.”

“We would classify it as a group of individuals that had some beliefs and were willing to carry out violent acts against citizens, but there’s nothing in the investigation to classify it as a terrorist attack,” said Nova Scotia RCMP Commanding Officer Brian Brennan, according to CBC News.

“I can tell you that it’s not culturally based.”

Evidence suggested two other Nova Scotia males, aged 20 and 17, were involved, though their role is still to be determined, police said.

Police said they found the 19-year-old male dead at a residence early on Friday and the 20-year-old male and 23-year-old female were arrested at the Halifax airport. The 17-year-old male was arrested elsewhere.

“We believe we have apprehended all known individuals in this matter and eliminated the threat. We are not seeking any further suspects at this time,” the statement said. — Reuters

A duplex home where a 19-year-old man was found dead is shown in Timberlea, Nova Scotia, on 13 Feb, 2015. — Reuters

Austria calling on UN members to back anti-nuke statement

Vienna, 14 Feb — Austria has called on members of the United Nations to back a written statement denouncing nuclear weapons and pledging to work toward banning them, diplomatic sources said. In the statement, distributed to all UN member states in mid-January, Austria “calls on all states parties to the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) ... to identify and pursue effective measures to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.”

The move is aimed at giving momentum to discussions on nuclear disarmament ahead of a meeting to review the key nuclear treaty from late April and 70 years on from the US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

It is expected to meet resistance from nuclear weapons states including Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States.

Japan, which is protected by the US nuclear umbrella and opposes an outright ban, is facing a difficult decision.

A Japanese government official said: “We will make our stance clear by the review conference.” The statement is based on an earlier one at the third international conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear arms held in Vienna in December. It does not directly address the creation of a nuclear ban treaty. The Austrian government is seeking as many UN members as possible to express support for the statement and plans to present the results at the NPT review conference in New York from 27 April to 22 May.— Kyodo

Evidence suggest
Claims Day Notice

MV ER TURKU VOY NO (065W)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ER TURKU VOY NO (065W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15.2.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the hatches of H.P.T. where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Shipping Agency Department
Myanmar Port Authority
Agent For: MS Han Jin Shipping Lines

Phone No: 2301185

Sunday, 15 February, 2015

Shooting at Dallas airport as prisoner tries to escape

Houston, 14 Feb — A shooting happened at an airport in the US city of Dallas on Friday when an inmate who was being transported tried to escape and got shot by an officer escorting him.

The incident occurred on Friday afternoon at Terminal C of Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, according to the Dallas Morning News. The prisoner, who was being moved from Utah to Oklahoma and was staying at the Dallas airport for a layover, was escorted to a restroom where he assaulted the officer and was shot in one of his hands.

The prisoner fled the restroom and tried to escape but was tackled by another officer waiting outside. Both the prisoner and the first officer were sent to hospital.

Bong, Indonisia, 14 Feb — Indonesia’s government remains sticking on its stance that it will impose stern actions against the violation on drug use and is ready to take the risks of the policy.

President of Indonesia’s cabinet anti-drug agency, Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran, who are on death row now on drug cases.

President Joko Widodo had decided to take stern action on drug cases.

The official reaffirmed that President Joko Widodo and Munar Sukumaran were convicted to death penalty in February 2006 for involving in plotting to smuggle over eight kilograms of heroin to Australia from Bali in 2005.

BRICS cooperation expands to population issues

Brasilia, 14 Feb — The BRICS bloc of emerging economies has adopted a five-year agenda to jointly tackle population issues, including women’s rights, aging and migration.

The bloc, which has a combined population of nearly 2.9 billion, announced the decision late Thursday in Brazil’s capital Brasilia, following three days of talks.

The approval of the 2015-2020 agenda means the bloc, which has already consolidated cooperation in political, financial and economic fields, will now work together on social and demographic matters.

Alexandre Ghisleni, director of human rights and social affairs at Brazil’s Foreign Affairs Ministry, said the measure helps bolster not only the bloc, which includes four of the world’s 10 most populous nations, but also “south-south cooperation.”

“BRICS countries want to share our experience not just among ourselves, but also with other developing nations that are interested,” Ghisleni said.

President of Brazil’s National Population and Development Commission Ricardo Paes de Barros highlighted the importance of cooperation, saying China has rich experience in migration management during its urbanization as well as in training, health care and education.

Brazil can learn from China how to manage the floating population, increase the presence of women in the workplace and reduce maternal mortality, said Paes.

Deputy Minister of China’s National Health and Family Planning Commission Wang Pei’an underscored the importance of adequately attending to an aging population, especially in a country with 200 million people over the age of 65, to offer this segment a better quality of life.

Prasias’s Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Protection Sergey Velmyaykin said “aging and waves of migration” are among the problems affecting bloc members, so it makes sense to work together towards “mutual goals.”

His Indian counterpart, SK Sikdar, noted only 30 percent of India’s population currently lives in urban areas, but the figure is expected to reach 90 percent in the next 70 years, leading India to take an interest in others’ experience in rural-to-urban migration.

The next BRICS ministerial meeting on population issues will be hosted by China in 2018, along with a series of technical meetings over the coming years on each of the agenda’s six themes.

Train-bus collision kills 16 near Mexico-US border

Mexico City, 14 Feb — A train hit a coach, leaving at least 16 people dead and 30 others wounded on Friday night near the Mexico-US border, local authorities said.

The accident took place in the town of Anahuac, Mexico’s northeastern Nuevo Leon State, at 18:40 pm Friday (GMT 0040 Saturday).

Jorge Camacho Rincon, head of the local state Civil Protection Department, told reporters that the injured have been sent to two area hospitals.

Jorge Ovidio Mendoza, another local official, explained that the coach’s driver was trying to cross the railway regardless of an incoming train.

There were 60 people aboard the bus, exceeding its capacity, he added.

Mexican army and local police rushed to the site after the incident.

Indonesia sticking on tough anti-drug policy

Boor, Indonesia, 14 Feb — The Indonesian government remains sticking on its stance that it will impose stern actions against the violation on drug use and is ready to take the risks of the policy.

Secretary of Cabinet Andi Widjaranto said here on Friday.

The official made the remarks following the public warning from Australia to possibly avoid visiting Indonesia during holiday to smuggling and find other alternative destinations if Indonesia executes two Australian citizens, Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran, who are on death row now on drug cases.

“Yes,” Widjaranto said, “all the decisions must have risks.”

The official reaffirmed that President Joko Widodo had decided to take stern action on drug cases.

Both Chan and Sukumar were convicted to death penalty in February 2006 for involving in plot to smuggle over eight kilograms of heroin to Australia from Bali in 2005.

Weather Report

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

Forecast Valid Until Evening of the 15th February, 2015:

Light rain are likely to be isolated in Kachin State, weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing Region, Chin and Shan States, generally fair in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%).
Oscar winner behind ‘Birdman’ filming daunted by one long shot

L A N G E R N O N, 14 Feb — Cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki was finishing the complex filming of “Gravity” when director Alejandro G Inarritu approached him with a daunting proposal: To film “Birdman” in a way that makes the movie appear to be one continuous shot.

In an interview with Reuters, Lubezki said his first thought was: “I hope I don’t get to do this” because it was such a big challenge and I didn’t want it to be gimmicky.”

Known popularly as “Chivo” (“goat” in Spanish), Lubezki is a favourite to win the Academy Award on 22 February for best cinematography, a year after the Mexican earned his first for space thriller “Gravity.”

“Birdman” is also a front-runner for best picture.

A seven-time Oscar nominee, the 50-year-old Lubezki has what Inarritu describes as “beautiful talent and exquisite taste,” and to-"
China stresses tourist safety for coming holidays

BEIJING, 14 Feb — The State Council, China’s cabinet, has called for strengthened safety measures for tourists for the upcoming dual holidays after a deadly stampede in Shanghai on the New Year eve.

“(Related departments) should be on alert of potential risks and keep a strong sense of responsibility so as to map out sound arrangements and safety measures to ensure the security of tourists’ lives and assets,”

Germany returns books worth 2.5 million euros stolen from Italian libraries

MUNICH, 14 Feb — German authorities on Friday returned 500 historical books including original works by Renaissance scientists Galileo Galilei and Nicolaus Copernicus, stolen from Italian libraries three years ago, to Naples prosecutors.

Most of the books, worth around 2.5 million euros, were stolen from the Girolamini library in Naples, according to Italian prosecutors. German authorities seized them in a Munich auction house at the Italians’ request.

The former director of the library, Massimo De Caro, was convicted of stealing the books and served a jail sentence before being put under house arrest.

“As director his role was to do all he could to protect and preserve the books. However, he reversed his function. By taking advantage of his position, he was able to remove books,” said prosecutor Vincenzo Pistritelli, in Munich to collect the works.

“He deactivated the security alarm systems, carried out his activities during night hours or during the holidays when library staff were not there. He was alone, he had the keys, everyone knew he was the director. Therefore he was able to work in complete freedom,” he added.

Prosecutors are still trying to discover how many books disappeared in total from the library, which is one of Italy’s oldest and richest. — Reuters

Cursed striker Carroll faces another long lay-off

LONDON, 14 Feb — Type the name of West Ham United striker Andy Carroll into any internet search engine and you will be greeted with page after page chronicling various failing parts of his body. You will also find a few more describing those all too rare days when he was fit enough to terrrify defences for club and country. A torn knee ligament, surgery on Tuesday, means there will be no more of those this season for the man who cost West Ham a club record of around 16 million pounds ($24.63 million) to sign from Liverpool in 2013.

Past history suggests Carroll’s recovery time will be anything but speedy.

“The recovery phase is expected to keep Carroll out for the remainder of the 2014/15 season,” a club statement said.

It is a familiar tale of woe.

When Carroll finally made his move permanent in the summer of 2013, he spent the first half of the season sidelined with a foot injury more commonly associated with ballerinas.

On returning he scored twice in 16 appearances. Before the start of this season Carroll injured his ankle on a pre-season tour of New Zealand and needed surgery in the United States that kept him out until November. — Reuters

Andy Carroll (L) challenges James Chester during an English Premier League soccer match at Upton Park in London on 18 Jan, 2015.— Reuters
Porto close gap at top in Portugal to one point

LISBON, 14 Feb — Yacine Brahimi scored the only goal of the game to give Porto a 1-0 victory over Guimaraes on Friday that closed the gap at the top of the table in the Portuguese league to within a single point of Benfica.

Benfica’s lead came in the 30th minute after Danilo’s cross had been brought down by Oliver in the area and with one swift turn later, the Algerian was left with a relatively easy chance to slot home, which moved them to 49 points on the table.

With Porto due to travel to Basel for their Champions League round of 16 game next Wednesday, they will be happy to have got the potentially tricky game out of the way before their European commitments.

They can now wait to see if Benfica (50) and Sporting (43) can maintain the status quo this weekend, with wins over Setubal and Belenenses respectively. Os Encarnados disposed of Setubal in midweek to reach the Taça de Liga (League Cup) final and must now play them for the second time in four days on Sunday.

Sporting have the seemingly harder task where they must try to defeat a resurgent Belenenses side who are showing good form under coach Lito Vidigal and then need to restart their Europa League campaign against Wolfsburg next week.

Although Benfica have been temporarily pegged back, of the three leaders they appear to have by far the easiest run of fixtures ahead of them, with the added bonus of no European commitments to distract them. — Reuters

Atletico squad is even stronger than last season — Juanfran

MADRID, 14 Feb — After they sold top scorer Diego Costa and fullback Felipe Luis to Chelsea, some predicted Atletico Madrid would struggle to repeat their achievements in 2013-14 when they won La Liga and reached the Champions League final.

The high-profile departures also included goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, who returned to parent club Chelsea after a loan deal, but defender Juanfran believes the arrival of the likes of Mario Mandzukic, Antoine Griezmann and, most recently, Fernando Torres means the current squad is even better.

Results on the pitch suggest he may be right. Atletico are third in La Liga, three points behind Barcelona and four adrift of leaders Real Madrid following their 4-0 humilation of their city rivals at the Calderon last weekend.

They are also through to the last 16 of Europe’s elite club competition to face Bundesliga side Bayer Leverkusen. As Juanfran and his team mates prepare for Sunday’s La Liga game at Celta Vigo, the Spanish international praised the ability of the club and coach Diego Simeone to bolster the squad effectively and maintain the team’s competitiveness.

“The club has made a big effort to keep great players and bring in other very important ones who have lifted the level of the team,” Juanfran told a news conference on Friday.

“The squad is better every year ... and that speaks very well of the work the club and the coach are doing,” he added.

“It is very difficult for Atletico Madrid to prevent key players leaving given what we are achieving. But this year, for me, the squad is the best ever and I hope that next year it’s better again so we can continue to challenge the big clubs.”

Atletico have proved they remain one of Europe’s top teams; their dubbing of Real, who beat them in last season’s Champions League final, was their second success against their neighbours in La Liga in 2014-15.

They also beat Real 2-1 on aggregate to win the Spanish Super Cup in August and knocked them out of the King’s Cup 4-2 over two legs last month.

“What the truth is we played a great match the other day but we have already put it out of our minds,” Juanfran said. “For us they were three more points to help us in our goal of achieving great things. It has given us a lot of confidence to approach an extremely tough game against Celta.” — Reuters

Serena, Bouchard pull out of Dubai event

DUBAI, 14 Feb — Australian Open champion Serena Williams has pulled out of this week’s Dubai Tennis Championships, organisers said on Saturday.

Officials released a brief message on Twitter saying Williams and Canada’s Genie Bouchard had withdrawn from the lucrative WTA event.

Williams recently won her sixth Australian Open title but the world number one said last week’s Fed Cup tie for the United States because of a persistent, nagging cough. No reason was given for Bouchard’s withdrawal, after she was awarded a wildcard in the event. Venus Williams won the title last year and will be defending her crown at 15-21 February tournament. — Reuters

United system still giving Van Gaal a headache

LONDON, 14 Feb — Louis van Gaal leaves the pitch after their English Premier League soccer match against Burnley at Old Trafford in Manchester, northern England on 11 Feb, 2015.

The Dutchman’s team were humiliated by West Ham United on Saturday and are fifth in the Premier League table, 12 points behind leaders Chelsea, a title challenge which has already been written off.

With United third in the Premier League, 12 points behind leaders Chelsea, a title challenge is unlikely but the FA Cup offers a seemingly harder task ahead of Monday’s clash.

“You know the world is against you, the environment is against you because everyone is with the underdog. But the chance that you can succeed is higher because you are playing against lower qualities.”

Van Gaal is waiting on fitness doubts over Manchester United’s top strikers, Robin van Persie and Radamel Falcao.

“I have already described, we have to play for the third time a lower team,” he said.

“Van Gaal whose side are in FA Cup fifth-round action against third tier Preston North End on Monday.

“In spite of the fact we are looking for the balance, our results are not bad and our defensive organisation is not bad. We also score a lot of goals so I cannot say I am very disappointed about that.”

With United third in the Premier League, 12 points behind leaders Chelsea, a title challenge is unlikely but the FA Cup offers Van Gaal a chance to mark his first season with a trophy.

After labouring against fourth tier Cambridge United in the fourth round, though, he is taking nothing for granted.

“It is fantastic. I have already described, we have to play for the third time a lower team,” he said.

“Now you know the world is against you, the environment is against you because everyone is with the underdog. But the chance that you can succeed is higher because you are playing against lower qualities.”

Van Gaal is waiting on fitness doubts over his top strikers, Robin van Persie and Radamel Falcao.

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