Myanmar is home to a diversity of ethnic communities. Friendship and understanding will undoubtedly flourish when they respect and recognise each other’s cultures, traditions, customs, languages and literature.
Two committees approved
Process of changing, forming and renaming towns, wards and villages documented

THE second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw continued for its fourth day with parliamentarians approving of changing, forming or renaming towns, wards and villages in the regions and states, and the formation of two parliamentary committees yesterday.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than announced the forming of a ward and three villages, the abolishing of a ward and five villages and the renaming of three wards and three villages in Yangon Region, forming Lailinpi Town comprising four wards from Tiddim Township and two wards from Matupi Township in Chin State and the abolition of the Lailinpi village-tract. All were documented at the Parliament.

The Speaker stated that the Parliament approved the formation of the Public Joint Committee which comprises 15 members including chairman U Aye Tha Aung, vice-chairmen U Saw Than Htut and U Aung Min, secretary Dr Sai Hseng Kyauk Hsam and joint secretary U Khin Maung Than.

Tuesday was accepted by chairman Dr Hla Moe and secretary U Min Oo.

Potential gas reserves discovered at deep-sea offshore block AD-7


More gas deposits were found at Thalin (1) well at the offshore block, said the minister, adding that further exploration and drilling will be conducted to identify whether the gas reserves will be commercially exploitable.

According to the ministry, Myanmar’s deep-sea offshore blocks have the potential to produce more natural gas following the discoveries at Thalin (1) well of AD-7 block and Shwe Yi Tun (1) well of A-6 offshore block. — Myanmar News Agency

Union H&T Minister earns PhD in Social Science from Thailand’s Mae Fah Luang University

UNION Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Htay Aung received a doctorate’s degree in social science at a convocation hosted by the Mae Fah Luang University in Chiang Rai, Thailand last Tuesday. The convocation was attended by Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, officials of the Ministry of Education of Thailand, faculty members, professors, the Thai Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Pisanu Suvanajata as well as bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate’s degree holders.

On Monday the Union Minister attended a pre-convocation dinner at the University and spoke on the occasion. The Union Minister had earned a master’s degree in tourism administration from George Washington University in the United States of America under the United Nations Development Program in 1991. He was also presented an alumni award from the University in 2014. — Myanmar News Agency

New sub-printing house opened in Sittwe

A NEW sub-printing house was opened in Sittway ward, Sittwe, capital of Rakhine State yesterday with an opening ceremony attend- ed by Rakhine State Acting Chief Minister U Mya Aung, officials and local people.

Responsible persons of the Aye Nyein Construction Company presented commemorative pennants to the acting chief minister and officials.

Next, the Rakhine State Social Affairs Minister Dr Aung Kyaw Min, U Tha Pwint, chair of Sittwe Township supporting committee for development and Managing Director U Kyaw Soe of News and Periodicals Enterprise formally opened the new facility.

The acting chief minister and the NPE managing director spoke, words of thanks. With the emergence of the new sub-printing house, installed with Orient Satellite 5 unit Web Offset printing machine in Sittwe, newspapers published in colour will be available. — Myanmar News Agency
Spirit of oneness has enabled proclamation of full sovereignty

The following is an unofficial translation of the message sent by Agga Maha Thare Sithu Agga Maha Thiri Thudhamma U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in honour of the 69th Union Day:

THE 69th Anniversary Union Day of today is an auspicious occasion for all national brethren residing in the country.

On this significant day, I extend my warmest greetings to all the nationalities living in harmony across the country.

Throughout the history of the country, the Union Spirit and anti-colonialism bound to national solidarity have provided a solid foundation for keeping the country in perpetuity. Thus, the spirit of oneness and togetherness has enabled the country to proclaim its full sovereignty.

Myanmar is home to a diversity of ethnic communities. Friendship and understanding will undoubtedly flourish when they respect and recognise one another’s cultures, traditions, customs, languages and literature.

This solemn undertaking should reflect ‘non-disintegration of the Union’ and the ‘perpetuation of sovereignty’ embodied in ‘Our Three Main National Causes’.

It is absolutely necessary to create a society with the human resources to enable ethnic communities to enrich and cherish one another’s languages, literatures, cultures, arts, traditions and historical heritages. In addition, all nationalities are now engaged in the development of the country as a national concern.

At this juncture, the issue of cementing national unity is of utmost importance. Greater emphasis has been placed on gradual relaxations of restrictions to push for pragmatic transition processes and to create a society where democracy can thrive through political changes.

As a result, leaders of the government, Parliament, Tatmadaw and eight ethnic armed organisations signed the nationwide ceasefire agreement, which made history in the country’s move towards peace on 15 October 2015.

Under the terms of the agreement, a political dialogue framework was drawn up on 15 December 2015, followed by the Union Peace Conference on 12 January 2016.

Efforts are being made to bring the remaining groups that did not ink the ceasefire deal yet into the peace process; the door is open to them.

It can be seen that all national races were able to express their desires for the country in the elections held recently. It was the fruit of implementing step-by-step democratisation process in accordance with the political situation.

As we all know, people’s participation is imperative for the future of Myanmar while we build a disciplined, flourishing, modern, developed and democratic nation. The government is working on the implementation of regional development undertakings in the areas where ethnic minorities live, thereby contributing toward the establishment of sound foundations in the political, economic and social sectors.

Moreover, the government has carried out reforms in the processes of ensuring national reconciliation based on the peace process and promoting national health care and education systems for the development of Myanmar society.

Free, fair and credible elections held successfully on 8 November 2015 proved the equality of ethnic minorities in the Union. Work is underway to hand over administrative duties to the next government to shape the country’s future following the election results.

On the auspicious occasion of the 69th Anniversary Union Day, I would like to stress the need for cooperation and co-ordination among all stakeholders, including the government, Parliament, ethnic organisations, political parties and political forces to transform the nation into a modern, developed and democratic one, with everyone doing their part.

Vice-President U Nyan Tun to attend US-ASEAN Special Summit

ON behalf of the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, U Nyan Tun, Vice-President, will pay a visit to the United States of America in the near future to attend the US-ASEAN Special Summit, which will be held in Sunnylands, California from 15 to 16 February, 2016.—Myanmar News Agency

Myanmar Ambassador presents credentials to Serbian President

U MYO AYE, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Republic of Serbia, presented his Credentials to His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, on 5 February, 2016, in Belgrade.—Myanmar News Agency

Myanmar Gazette

1. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has transferred the following persons as heads of service organisations shown against each from the date they assume charge of their duties.

   (A) Name  
   U Aung Myo Myint  
   Managing Director  
   Printing and Publishing Enterprise  
   Ministry of Information

   (B) Name  
   Dr Aye Myint  
   Rector  
   Yangon Technological University  
   Department of Technology  
   Ministry of Science and Technology

2. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed Deputy Permanent Secretary U Thaing Naing Tun (Deputy Director General) of the Union Minister’s Office under the Ministry of Immigration and Population as Director General of the Immigration and National Registration Department under the same ministry on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties.

National Authority on Biological Weapons Convention meets

THE national authority on the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) held its first meeting at the Ministry of Science and Technology in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, with an address by Deputy Minister Dr Aung Myat Kyaw.

In his address, the Deputy Minister for Science and Technology called for collaboration between ministries on the collection of information needed for developing a report on Confidence Building Measures, as the ministry is tasked to serve as the focal ministry in the formation of the BWC national authority.

Next, U Kyaw Swa Soe, the permanent secretary of the ministry, elaborated on plans to implement the BWC. Then, the participants held discussions on future works. Myanmar became the 171st country to adopt the BWC on 1 December 2014.—Myanmar News Agency
Shan community in Kyaukme celebrates 69th National Day

THE Shan community recently celebrated the 69th Shan National Day in Kyaukme Township, Shan State, with several entertainment programmes.

With the aim of paying respect to patriots who have fought for the nation and promoted unity among Shan people, the Shan Literature and Culture Association organised the National Day celebration on 7 and 8 February. After hoisting the Shan national flag, U Sai Kham Kaw, a patron of the association, read out messages sent by President U Thein Sein and Shan State Chief Minister U Sao Aung Myat. At the celebration, local entertainers performed traditional songs and dances, sharing techniques with the audience.

Extempore talks will also be held during the two-day event.—Thein Than

69th Mon National Day to be celebrated in February

THE 69th Mon National Day will be celebrated on grand scale on 24 February evening at People’s Square and People’s Park in Yangon, according to the Mon National Day Executive Committee.

“The ceremony aims to show unity and solidarity among Mon people,” said Naing Soe Kyi, secretary of the committee.

The date was chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the establishment of the first Mon kingdom, the Hanthawaddy Kingdom, by the two princes—Samala and Vimala—on the 1st Waning of Tabodwe in the year 1116 of the Religious Era, according to Mon tradition.

Since 1947, Mon National Day has been held on that day. This year’s event will include entertainment by a popular Mon drama troupe, with people of all ethnic nationalities invited to come and enjoy the free show.

As in previous years, the ceremony will include traditional songs and dances and other cultural performances. The annual event formally takes place in Mon State, Yangon Region and other countries where Mon people reside.

Besides Mon State, significant Mon populations are found in northern Taminthay Region, Yangon Region, Bago Region and Ayeyawady Region, as well as along the southern border between Thailand and Myanmar.

There are five million Mon people across Myanmar. According to the Mon population survey taken in 2014, Yangon is home to more than 40,000 Mon nationals. —Ko Chit

Crime News

Car accident injures two people

A BUS from no 220 line collided head on with a taxi in front of a CNG gas filling station in Thamaing township on Monday, leaving two injured.

The 220 line bus, being driven by one Pyone Maung Maung, crashed into the taxi which was being driven by Ko Myint San with Ma Thin Zar Win on board. The taxi car plunged into the drain. The collision injured Ko Myint San and Ma Thin Zar Win. Police are searching for the bus driver and have filed charges against him.—Myanmar Police Force

Three teens drown in Pyay

THREE teens drowned in the Ayayawady River in Pyay yesterday.

The bodies of the three victims have been found, said local authorities to the Global New Light of Myanmar.

The three victims named Zin Min Khant, 16, Nyein Chan Aung, 15, and Tun Tun Lin, 14, drowned as two of the teens searched for their friend, the third victim, who disappeared in the river while cooling himself during a football match at around 2.30 pm on a sandbank in the river.

The victims were 10th grade students.—GNLM

Nearly 5,000 Yabba pills seized in Tamwe

MEMBERS of the police seized 100,000 Yabba pills from a car in Bahan township on Monday.

Acting on a tip-off, local police searched a car being driven by Zaw Zaw Aung alias Phay Yut with Soe Naing alias Mamad Rolfit on Tamwe road in front of the Modern Teashop. Police also confiscated 3,900 pills at a house owned by one Soe Naing on Shwe Oo Daung road, Tamwe township. The suspects involved in these cases have been charged by local police.—Myanmar Police Force

Heroin and Yabba seized in Moemeik

LOCAL authorities seized heroin and yabba pills at a house owned by one Ma Eh Swe in Mo Hauk village, Moemeik township on Monday. Acting on a tip-off, members of the police arrested Ma Eh Swe and Ma Aye Khan alias Daw Khan with four Yabba pills, a tiny amount of heroin and petty cash on them. When interrogated, they admitted to keeping 390 grams of heroin and 137 Yabba pills in an abandoned house next to their own.—Myanmar Police Force

Man charged with motorbike theft

POLICE have filed charges against a man on suspicion of motorbike theft as he failed to identify a motorbike in his possession.

The police stopped Soe Moe Aung alias R Bit, 19, while he was pushing the motorbike near Myin Yadanar traffic lights on Tuesday.—Min Min Lat (Physics)
Local Business

Scenic Gokhteik viaduct rides opened

A RAIL bus engine that can carry 50 passengers and cars with a capacity to carry 20 passengers are now offering riders sight-seeing opportunities along the Gokhteik viaduct, according to Myanma Railways.

The service costs K5,000 per person and includes 10-minute stops on both sides the bridge.

People can hire the service by contacting its Mandalay Office at 0235986 or the Myanma Railways Head Office at Nay Pyi Taw Railway Station at 067 77118 and 77050. According to Myanma Railways, walking along the bridge has been prohibited in order to maintain the durability of the historic viaduct.

Low rubber prices leave Myanmar rubber market in hopeless position

THE Myanmar rubber market is in a hopeless position following tumble of rubber prices which continue to fall, according to an official from the Myanmar Rubber Planters and Producers Association.

“The price of rubber at home and abroad has continued to slump year after year. Price is expected to stay low this year. It is impossible for rubber farmers to store their products for a certain period to fetch good price as farm workers must be paid by selling rubber at the price they are given,” said U Khang Myint, secretary of the association.

The secretary forecast that prices will not change this year. Rubber latex collection season in Myanmar ends in mid May annually. Although some farm owners store rubber until the end of the rainy season it has not affected the price.

Rubber trading is at a price of US$1250 a ton for RSS-3, a variety on the world market but Myanmar rubber farmers fetch $900 a ton for the variety grown here.

It is found that growers fail to accept the concept of growing high quality rubber to fetch good prices, said the secretary who is also a rubber farm owner.

Despite the market sending the price up and down, we never have a good price as the quality of our products does not meet international standards, said the farm owner, stressing the need to produce quality products to get a good price.

According to rubber planters and producers, Myanmar rubber cannot meet the quality as demanded by foreign buyers.

Annual per acre yield for rubber in Myanmar is about 700 pounds while farms of neighbouring countries have outputs from 500 to 1800 pounds an acre, they said.

U Khang Myint highlighted the importance of knowing whether foreign varieties could be grown here.

Despite having 1.6 million hectares across the country, rubber latex production comes from 600,000 acres of farmland. The country exported only 75,000 tons of rubber last year. We hope to export around 80,000 tons this year, the secretary of Myanmar Rubber Planters and Producers Association said.

Onion exporting resumes

FOLLOWING a halt in the exporting of onions in late 2015, onion exporting has resumed with a new harvest in upper Myanmar.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Commerce, more than 220 tons of the kitchen crop was exported over borders in the last week of January reaching a total volume of 696 tonnes in January worth more than US$164,000.

Onions have been exported under normal trade conditions as of January this year. The government has given the green light to exporters to sell 300,000 kg of onion to Singapore.

The going price for onions is still higher than that it was this time last year, according to brokers in the area.—Khin Saing

K10m cars sells best

ONLY motorcars worth around K10 million have found buyers at market these days while cars valued over K20 or K30 million are at the bottom of the market in terms of sales, according to the automobile dealerships at Hlaaine automobile sale station.

The auto market has been cold, said the car dealers. Cars with vehicle registration number plates with the letters J, K, H, I in them see higher demand, said U Johnnie the car dealer.

To change the registered ownership name of cars valued around 10 million Kyats at the current state will cost around K3,000-K4,000.—163

Mobiles favourite for online marketing

THE Myanmar free online advertisement website www.ads.com.mm announced that 80 per cent of online marketing is based on mobile phones.

80 per cent of viewers who encounter advertisements are using a mobile phone while the rest are using laptops and tablets. Information Technology (IT) products are increasingly popular in Myanmar. The electronic imports continue and prices become more competitive.

People are widely using web advertising via the Myanmar free online advertisement website. The business, based on harnessing the online media market, has become widespread in Myanmar, said Mr. Elijah Htang, Head of Public relations from the website.—Moon Oo Nadi

Sagaing farmers to expand cowhage

FARMERS in Sagaing Region have shown a high interest in growing cowhage seeds, or velvet beans, on a commercial scale in the coming rainy season as they believe the crop will generate high profits for them.

“It is a marketable and medicinal seed,” said one farmer. “Farmers in Nyaungkai Village in Kawlin Township, Sagaing Region, cultivated cowhage last season. Every commercial plantation produces good profits for them.”

“Growing of one tin of cowhage seeds can produce seven baskets within 9 months,” Farmer U Myint Tun said. “We receive K8,000 (US$6.48) per pyi (a traditional unit equal to 2.13 litres) of seeds.” Some growers who have cultivated cowhage seeds near their farms and homes sell roasted seeds to locals. The local demand for roasted seeds has gradually increased in the region, bolstering local interest in the crop.

The consumption of cowhage seeds provides valuable health benefits—the seed is said to be good for treating anxiety, heart diseases and diabetes.—Soe Lu Min

Energy Ministry gives press briefing

THE Ministry of Energy gave a press conference in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday that focused on its fuel distributions, officials said.

In its press release, the ministry explained its 24/7 distributions of compressed natural gas (CNG) from 46 stations in Yangon Region, the assessment of environmental impact the oil and gas explorations can have on the nearby areas in Myanmar township, and possible cooperation with a foreign company in the import and distribution of oil products.

U Phe Zin Tun, permanent secretary at the ministry, responded to queries raised by correspondents.—Myanmar News Agency

Rubber latex is collected in a bowl. PHOTO: REUTERS

Heating up to 90 degrees in the Myanmar capital, our readers are searching for ways to beat the heat. Here are some tips that can help:

1. Stay hydrated: Drink plenty of water throughout the day to prevent heat exhaustion.

2. Wear loose clothing: Wear lightweight, loose clothing that allows air to flow around your body. Dark colors absorb more heat than light colors.

3. Avoid strenuous activity: Avoid strenuous activity during the hottest part of the day, usually between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

4. Take cool showers: Take cool showers or baths to help lower your body temperature.

5. Use sun protection: Use sunscreen with a high SPF rating and wear a hat and sunglasses to protect your skin and eyes from the sun's rays.

6. Stay indoors: If possible, stay indoors during the hottest part of the day to avoid exposure to the heat.

7. Keep your home cool: Use air conditioning or fans to keep your home cool, especially if you have young children or elderly family members.

8. Eat light meals: Eat light, easy-to-digest meals to help prevent the body from working too hard to digest food in the heat.

9. Stay in the shade: If you must go outside, stay in the shade as much as possible to avoid direct sunlight.

10. Keep an eye on others: Be aware of those who may be vulnerable to heat, such as young children, elderly persons, and individuals with chronic health conditions.

Remember, heat can be dangerous, so take precautions to stay safe and healthy during the heat wave.
**Thai-Cambodian border market quiet, empty due to contraband crackdowns**

BANGKOK — A Thai-Cambodian border market, which has earlier thrived on pirated and second-hand goods, will likely go out of business in the face of crackdowns on contraband merchandise, said a Thai business executive yesterday.

Daily businesses at Rong Klua market in Aranyaprathet District, some 230 km east of Bangkok and across from Poipet township in Cambodia, have turned from hectic to quiet as Thailand’s Department of Special Investigation and police have been cracking down on pirated, copyright-infringing goods which would have been otherwise abundantly put on sale by Cambodian vendors.

Pramual Khiewkham, secretary general of the Sakaeo Chamber of Commerce, said daily trading at Rong Klua market will likely grind to a halt due to the ongoing crackdowns by the Thai authorities while most Cambodian vendors have closed down their shops and stalls since last week.

“The Cambodians will likely go out of business at Rong Klua market where they can no longer put their merchandise on sale. There’s no way of running the market the way it used to be in the face of the crackdowns,” said the executive of the chamber of commerce in the eastern Thai province of Sakaeo.

Most visitors to Rong Klua market, including Thai shoppers from Bangkok, would obviously look for low-priced, second-hand and pirated goods, many of which were smuggled across the border from Cambodia.

Large quantities of contraband items were abundantly put on sale ranging from shoes, clothes, hats, sportswear and automobile accessories to camping and fishing gear.

“Due to the unprecedented crackdown, the market has virtually become a deserted town,” he commented.

One Cambodian trader was quoted as saying that his fellow vendors would indefinitely keep their shops closed during the crackdown period which was said to last a few months-time.

He declined to tell whether the Cambodian vendors might possibly reopen their shops without any more pirated goods for sale at Rong Klua market.

Last week, a brief riot occurred at the border market as hundreds of Cambodian vendors blatantly expressed frustrations at the Thai crackdown mission. Some threw stones and other hard objects at the officials and others damaged government property.

Two young Cambodian males were arrested and sentenced to three months in jail on charges of attacking the Thai officials and vandalizing a van of the DSI border unit.

Bun Sokvibol, the Cambodian consul general attached to Aranyaprathet, made inquiry with an consul general attached to the Thai Department of Special Investigation, expressing his worry about the government seemingly trying to use anti-DPRK sentiment in the upcoming general election in April.

Seoul decided Wednesday to stop operations at the Kaesong Industrial Complex in the DPRK’s border city in response to Pyongyang’s Sunday launch of a long-range rocket in violation of UN Security Council resolutions. The launch came a month after its fourth nuclear test on 6 January.

Rep. Lee Jong-Geol, floor leader of the main opposition Minju Party, told a meeting with party members that the government should have self-reflected its own DPRK policy ahead of the upcoming general election to shut down the industrial zone, expressing his wonder about the government’s intention to use anti-DPRK sentiment in the April general election.

Lee expected security threats to escalate further on the Korean peninsula as the last remaining cooperating project between the two Koreas was stopped, denouncing the government’s DPRK policy as a very emotional response without any strategy and vision.

Past conservative governments have sometimes used anti-DPRK sentiment or deliberately caused security fears ahead of important elections as people tend to vote for the governing party under such situations.

The minor opposition People’s Party told a press briefing that the permanent shutdown of the Kaesong complex means a disappearance of a line of hope for reunification between the two Koreas and the government should maintain the line of hope with a temporary suspension.

---Xinhua

**South Korea’s opposition lawmakers condemn shutdown of inter-Korean factory park**

SEOUL — South Korea’s opposition lawmakers yesterday condemned the government for its decision to shut down a jointly run factory park with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), saying the government seemingly tries to use anti-DPRK sentiment in the upcoming general election.

Lee expected security threats to escalate further on the Korean peninsula as the last remaining cooperating project between the two Koreas was stopped, denouncing the government’s DPRK policy as a very emotional response without any strategy and vision.

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---Xinhua

**Dozens face riot charges over Hong Kong Lunar New Year violence**

HONG KONG — Dozens of people in Hong Kong were charged yesterday with taking part in a riot after a dispute between vendors and police on the first day of the Lunar New Year holiday, expressing their anger at the heart of the Asian financial centre.

Thirty-four people have been arrested in connection with the Monday night violence that saw protesters hurl bricks at police and set fire to rubbish bins in Mong Kok, a tough, working-class neighbourhood just across the harbour from the Chinese financial centre. Thirty-seven were charged yesterday.

Police fired two warning shots into the air, almost unheard in the former British colony which reverted to Chinese rule in 1997 and is considered one of Asia’s safest cities.

More than 130 people were wounded in the clashes.

The violence has compounded a sense of unease since an “Occupy Central” pro-democracy movement in late 2014 that saw thousands of protesters block major roads, including in Mong Kok, to demand Beijing’s Communist leaders allow full democracy in the city.

At least one of those charged in connection with this week’s trouble belongs to a group called Hong Kong Indigenous, one of a cluster of outspoken groups calling for greater Hong Kong autonomy and even independence from China, the group said.

Hong Kong Indigenous confirmed to Reuters that one of its members, Edward Leung, had been arrested. Leung, who had been planning to contest a by-election for the Hong Kong legislature, was one of those who appeared in court yesterday.

The head of the University of Hong Kong student union, Billy Fung, said three of its students were also in court. Students from the university were at the forefront of the 2014 protests.

Thirty-eight people, including 35 men and 3 women aged between 17 and 70, were charged with participating in a “riot”, the police said in a statement. The 15-year-old was due to appear in a juvenile court on Monday.

The defendants, who appeared one after another before the court including one with a bandage on his head, were charged with participating in a “riot”, the police said in a statement. The 15-year-old was due to appear in a juvenile court on Friday.

The next hearing will be on 7 April, following a request by prosecutor David Leung to allow authorities time to gather evidence.

Rioting carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison.

The violence broke out after police tried to clear hawkers selling snacks and trinkets at stalls on the first day of the Lunar New Year holiday. —Reuters

---Xinhua

**Riot police guard a street where a fire was set by protesters at Mongkok district in Hong Kong, China, on 9 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS**

---Xinhua
Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull will likely inherit a hard-right, climate change sceptic for his deputy after the retirement of his current No.2 yesterday, an appointment that could block any revamp of an emissions trading scheme.

Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce, an outspoken lobbyist for the nation’s farmers and for tougher controls on foreign investment, is the leading candidate for the job traditionally held by the coalition government’s minor partner, the Nationals.

“We will likely see a more assertive Nationals under Barnaby,” said University of Sydney political scientist Rod Tiffen. “He and Turnbull really have very opposing views on climate change and they will butt heads over this.”

Australia is one of the world’s largest exporters of coal and iron ore and one of the largest carbon emitters on a per capita basis thanks to its reliance on coal-fired power plants.

The country pledged to cut emissions by 26-28 per cent of 2005 levels by 2030 ahead of the Paris climate talks late last year. But a planned carbon trading scheme, which would have been the world’s third biggest, was axed by previous conservative Prime Minister Tony Abbott to fulfill an election pledge.

Turnbull who ousted Abbott in a party coup last year, is a carbon trading advocate who supports progressive climate policies. Infact he lost the Liberal Party leadership to Abbott while in opposition in 2009 because of his support for the then Labour government’s carbon trading scheme.

“When Turnbull has put an emissions trading scheme on the backburner, he would want to revisit it at some point,” said Tiffen. “That would be impossible with Barnaby.”

Joyce, the sole candidate standing for election to replace outgoing deputy prime minister Warren Truss, did not comment ahead of a party ballot scheduled for later Thursday. Joyce has repeatedly said he does not believe Australia’s extreme weather events, like drought and floods, are linked to man’s impact on the climate.

Turnbull and Joyce are the odd couple in relation to more than climate change.

Turnbull, an urban multimillionaire former tech entrepreneur, is a careful thinker and erudite speaker who wants Australia to focus on a future in innovation.

Joyce, who is known for speaking his mind, is concerned with support for regional Australia, including tougher rules on foreign investment in Australian farmland.

In 2015, he made international headlines when he threatened to euthanise Hollywood actor Johnny Depp’s dogs, Pistol and Boo, after biosecurity officials learned the animals had illegally entered the country — telling them to “bugger off back to America”.

A change of deputy leader paves the way for possibly a significant Cabinet reshuffle ahead of a federal election expected in September or October.

Turnbull is under pressure from within his splintered government. He faces rear-guard actions from a conservative wing, led by Abbott, on a range of social issues including same sex marriage. Earlier this month he ruled out an increase in the consumption tax under pressure from within his own party.—Reuters

Elephant on rampage in India’s West Bengal

NEW DELHI — A wild elephant Wednesday went on a rampage in India’s eastern state of West Bengal, smashing at least 100 residential structures and cars, and trampling damaged cars and motorbikes at 100. However, the number of damaged structures leasued back in the forest area.

“We were told it would be released back in the forest area.” —Rishikesh Banerjee

A crane to lift it into a truck and leased back in the forest area.

“We were told it would be released back in the forest area.” —Rishikesh Banerjee

Unconfirmed reports put the number of damaged structures at 100. However, the number of damaged cars and motorbikes was not known immediately.

Experts say wild animals stray into residential areas usually in search of food. However, the human presence makes them insecure, following which they resort to attacking people. At times these creatures are attacked by scared villagers in retaliation which also proves fatal for them.

In India the man-animal conflict is on increase because of the growing human population and expansion of towns, cities and residential areas.

There are strict laws in force in India against the killing of wild animals.

On Sunday, wildlife officials in Bengaluru city captured a leopard from a school after it mauled six people.

Wildlife expert say mass urbanisation, denudation of forests, encroachment of forest-land, vanishing of buffer zones in the forests and extraction of medicinal plants are some of the reasons responsible for increasing conflict between humans and wild animals.—Xinhua

ASEAN urges DPRK to comply with UN resolutions after rocket launch

JAKARTA — The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has “strongly” called on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to comply with all the relevant UNSC resolutions.

“ASEAN follows closely the situation in the Korean Peninsula and shares the concern of the international community over the recent developments in the said region,” said a statement dated 10 February on the association’s website. “ASEAN strongly urges the DPRK to comply with all the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

“The change of deputy leader paves the way for possibly a significant Cabinet reshuffle ahead of a federal election expected in September or October.

Turnbull is under pressure from within his splintered government. He faces rear-guard actions from a conservative wing, led by Abbott, on a range of social issues including same sex marriage. Earlier this month he ruled out an increase in the consumption tax under pressure from within his own party.—Reuter.
Motivation comes from recognition

Kyaw Thura

It is natural that people want to receive recognition for their commitment to the organisation or institution they work for. It is, however, unhealthy for a person to merely fancy being recognised by people in power and from above. Employers tend to use recognition in order to motivate their employees to expand their capacity for high performance.

As the country is rapidly opening up to the world, we are witnessing the influx of foreigners into the country today. Some come on business and most are on vacations. These are very welcoming: to have more and more tourists visiting our country. As the tourism industry could generate much income, they are good for our economy and would also create job opportunities. However, are we prepared to cope with the invasion—the invasion of cultures, the invasion of behaviours, invasion of the safety and security, etc?

A few days ago, while I was surfing the Facebook webpage, I came across a very disturbing photo of two tourists, a male and a female, and on the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, clad in shorts with foot-wears on. That is a sacred place where such improper attires and foot wears are prohibited. Their mannerism, according to the written post was even more outrageous. The person who posted the photo wrote that, when she saw the offensive sight, she reported the incident to a member of the pagoda trustees. However, that person did not do anything. So the young lady took it upon herself to confront the offenders and told them of their inappropriate manners. The response from the tourists was hostile.

I’m not a religious extremist but a liberal Buddhist. However, in my opinion such disrespectful manners should not be tolerated. Such mannerism, shown by foreign nationals on our sacred grounds could be deemed as an act of provocation. It could be viewed as an insult not only to our religion but also to our people. Their actions could have resulted in unpleasantness. The trustees should have intervened.

Such undesirable incidents should be anticipated to become more frequent in future, with the surge in the number of tourists arriving. Thus, it would be necessary for the departments concerned to provide clear information to every foreigner entering the country, concerning the regulations and cultural and religious customs that need to be observed. The tour operators should be tasked to make their clients aware of the information concerning the “DOs” and “DON’ Ts” in our country.

In some neighbouring countries, I had observed that such information is widely promulgated by mentioning them in the air lines’ inflight magazines, brochures or pamphlets distributed by the respective tourism departments. I believe our country too has such arrangements at present. However, more attention should be given to get all the foreigners to know and understand and observe them.

Even with such systematic arrangements, Thailand is having much trouble with tourists from a certain country. The root cause, in my opinion, is the differences in social, religious and cultural customs and norms.

One important thing to note in this respect is that recognition by superiors and authorities alike is prone to produce a class of self-seekers. It is recognition by peers and people around us that drives a sustainable source of motivation and morale. It is, therefore, better for leaders of all organisations to encourage a culture of peer recognition so that they can make sound judgement about employee performance. In addition, it is necessary for leaders at all levels to better leverage the skill sets of their subordinates by utilising all available resources.

Undeniably, awards in recognition of excellent performance have the potential to make people more productive and engaged in their work. There are incidents in which awards have gone to those who did not deserve recognition. This is why leaders ought to be smart enough to reward those who deserve to be rewarded based on their ability and hard work rather than on favouritism. After all, leaders are responsible for creating a decent environment in which their workers are inspired to improve their levels of performance through unbiased recognition.

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email khinmaungaye@hotmail.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.

Foreign Tourists are Flocking In. But!

Khin Maung Myint

I would like to discuss my views on the prohibition of foot wears at sacred Buddhist shrines and temples. I consider the practicality of prohibiting foot wears on the premises of the said places. These prohibitions have caused controversies between the foreigners and the locals since the colonial days. In those days this issue had created quite a row as our peoples’ nationalistic spirits were high because of the animosity against the colonialists. Thus they opposed, ardently, the wearing of foot wears by the Europeans at Buddhist sacred places. So, it could not be wrong to assume that such prohibitions had nothing to do with religion or culture, but more related to political sentiments.

Most people may not agree with my assumptions. However, as they are based on my experiences gained while travelling to other Buddhist countries, I deemed it my duty to validate them. Once when I visited the Temple of the Buddha’s Sacred Tooth in Kandy, Sri Lanka, I was surprised to find that I could wear my shoes on the temple premises and temples. I had thought foot wears are allowed on the premises of the temples and even cetas (pagodas), except inside the shrines. Foot wears are allowed right to the foot of the cetas and Buddha images if they are in the open, with no roofs over them. At first, I was surprised to see such strange practices. However, I resolved later that they are practical, when I went to a famous pagoda in Myanmar during the afternoon, while the concrete pavements were scorching hot. It was very difficult to walk over to the hot concrete pavements without getting the feet blistered.

Today at some monasteries in our country, the residing Sayadaws with practical and rational outlooks, permit foot-wearing on the temple grounds. Such thoughtfulness spared the visitors to those places, from the discomfort of having to tread bare-footed on the scorching concrete pavements or, in some cases, sharp-edged gravel strewn grounds. This fact led me to assume that the prohibitions of foot wears on the premises of the sacred places are just optional but not compulsory and have nothing to do with the religion.

Undoubtedly, the surge in the number of foreign visitors to the country would benefit many sectors, however, we should be wary of the negative impacts they could inflict. Especially, such incidents could give rise to conflicts that could result in undesirable consequences. To avoid them in future, we should make some adjustments to our outlooks on norms and values in regard to religion and culture.

On the other hand, although we should encourage the growth of the tourism industry, care should be taken not to compromise the religion, culture and above all the security and safety of the citizens.

Aviation academy awards full scholarships to 10 trainees

THE Myanmar Aviation Academy has awarded scholarships worth US$65,000 each to 10 trainees from the academy’s third and fourth batches. The academy was established by the Htoo Foundation.

A total of 36 trainees were accepted in to the two batches this year, 10 of whom will have their fees covered.

The “training course fee is $65,000. Those who were awarded scholarships will have their training, food and accommodations covered,” said U Kyi Win, chairperson of the MMA.

In general, trainees can pay for the MMA’s 20-month programme in three instalments.

“Among the candidates who have been awarded scholarships, some are the descendants of farmers who are interested in aviation and show high potential but cannot afford the programme financially. The programme can be paid in three instalments of $22,000. As such, trainees who pay in instalments will be charged an additional $1,000,” said U Hnin Myint, the CEO of MMA.

Among the first batch of 24 trainees, ten were awarded full scholarships, but no scholarships were offered to the second batch.

MMA is the first civilian aviation training course in Myanmar. It was established in Pathein, Ayeyawady Region. Trainees’ education will include theoretical and practical studies at the Yangon Aviation Academy headquarters as well as at MMA.—Myitmaukha News Agency.
**Demand for Bamboo Baskets from Ottwin increases**

THE demand for bamboo baskets made by a family business in Ottwin Township, Bago Region has become higher as local farmers are harvesting beans. Demand has risen in Kyauktata, Kyaukkyi and Pyu townships. The basket makers are selling a bamboo basket at 1,200 Kyats. They sell around 40 baskets per day.

Since we cut and weave them ourselves, the family is employed and can make savings, said Tun Naing who sells baskets from Ottwin Township. — Phyo Ko Lin (Nyaung Wine)

**Permitted tonnage of vehicles crossing Pathein suspension bridge halved as repairs commence**

REPAIRS are being made to the Pathein – Chaung Thar suspension bridge after ten bolts broke off, causing the bridge to start sagging by around four inches on the morning of 7 February. As such, the tonnage weight limit of vehicles permitted to cross the bridge has been halved.

“Orders have been placed for materials needed to repair the bridge from the Steel factory. We will conduct repairs as soon as these parts arrived. The bolts broke away from daily reverberations made by large vehicles crossing the bridge. There is nothing to be concerned about.” explained U Aye Win, an engineer from the Department of Public Construction and Bridges.

He also mentioned that prior to the sagging of the bridge, vehicles weighing less than 60 tonnes were permitted to cross the Pathein suspension bridge. Now however, as repairs are still being made, only vehicles weighing less than 30 tonnes have permission to cross, with the weight of vehicles being inspected at toll gates on both sides of the bridge, he said.

Officials and designers from the Department of Public Construction and Bridges came to inspect the bridge and found that bolts between 100 – 200 tonnes must be used to mitigate the same incident from recurring. The department also made it known that there is no need for concern over other hanging suspension cords.

“To be honest, whether it’s once every six months or once a year, inspections should be carried out on the bridge. Only by conducting such regular inspections can we mitigate these kinds of things from happening in the future.” said U Yo Win, head assistant engineer of the Pathein township development committee. The Pathein suspension bridge is the only bridge which links the town with the coastal regions of Ngwe Thaung Yan, Ngwe Saung, Kyauk Thar and surrounding villages of Nga Yoke Kaung and Tharbaung towns.

The Pathein cast iron and concrete suspension bridge, which crosses the Ngaung river, was completed in November 2004 by the Ministry of Construction. It is 2,040 feet in length and features a road for vehicles 28 feet in width, with a four foot wide pedestrian path on either side. — Myitmakha News Agency

**Tomato cultivators in Myingyan face losses**

GROWER’S tomato plantations in Phet Yin village, North part of Myingyan, Mandalay Region are experiencing lowered prices of their stock.

Though the farmers have seen a good harvest of the seasonal crop, they expressed distress at the decreased price of tomatoes.

“When I’m starting a plantation, one viss (1.6 kilograms) jumps up to K1000. But when we harvest, the price decreased to K100 and then K50. I planted roughly half an acre and I plucked around 15 baskets at one time”, said a local farmer.

“Over 500 visses are yielded from my farm. But only the growers who are harvesting early get a good price”, he added.

A local market has offered K130 and K80 for one viss but local farmers have to pay 20 per cent of one viss for transportation. — Than Zaw Min (IPRD)

**Department of Fisheries, Myanmar Fisheries Federation to attend ASEAN forum**

THE Department of Fisheries, which falls under the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development, along with the Myanmar Fisheries Federation (MFF), will attend a fisheries discussion forum and drafting committee meeting to be held in Thailand in March this year.

The discussion forum will run for four days between 1 and 4 March and is financially supported by the Japanese Trust Fund and Sweden Project from the South East Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEADEC).

“We haven’t yet selected [representatives] from the fisheries federation to attend the event. I have proposed Daw Toe Nandar Tin to attend. She’s also very knowledgeable when it comes to fishing enterprises. One additional person must also be chosen. The specifications of fishing industries within ASEAN region differ from country to country. Of course, one is going to work for a way that best suits one’s own situation,” said U Han Htun, the executive vice president of the MFF.

Discussion will be held in a bid to increase the competitive capacity of seafood products produced in the ASEAN region and to crack down on illegal fishing activities. Delegates will also discuss the obstacles facing development of the fishing sector in the region today. — Myitmakha News Agency
EU warns UK deal ‘fragile’ as Paris, East seek changes

BRUSSELS — A draft accord to help keep Britain in the European Union is “very fragile”, a top EU official warned on Wednesday as France and eastern states pushed for changes before leaders meet to try and seal the deal next week.

European Council President Donald Tusk, who agreed reform proposals last week with British Prime Minister David Cameron, said they were “balanced and solid” and he hoped to finalise them when he chairs a Brussels summit next Thursday and Friday.

“However, let me be clear — this is a very fragile political process,” he added, announcing that he had cleared his diary and would travel to Paris, Berlin and eastern Europe early next week “to secure broad political support for my proposal”.

Tusk spoke on the eve of a second round of talks among the 28 EU leaders’ top aides and envoys in Brussels. Officials said they will discuss a new draft with small, technical tweaks.

The first meeting of “sherpas”, on Friday following Tusk’s circulation of his reform proposals, saw participants broadly welcomed a first draft as a way to help Cameron win a referendum in the coming months to prolong Britain’s 43-year membership.

But on Wednesday, France, the traditional pro-European sparring partner of eurosceptic Britain, demanded significant changes, particularly to Cameron’s effort to secure protections for the sterling-based City of London from possible EU measures favouring the majority of states which uses the euro.

Finance Minister Michel Sapin told lawmakers in Paris that the current draft must be amended to avoid skewing EU rules in favour of London, the bloc’s leading banking centre. “There are several ambiguities in the texts,” he said. “Treatment must be as identical as possible. That’s why we are fighting.”

French concerns focus on British-based banks benefiting from different regulations to those in the euro zone — less onerous capital requirements, say — while retaining full access to the single European Union market in financial services. And while Cameron has insisted he has not sought a veto over the euro zone’s affairs, Paris also argues that the current wording of a new British right to delay euro zone decisions which it fears could hurt its interests must be amended to place tighter limits on how long London could hold up the process.

Eastern European negotiators also plan to seek amendments to limit the extent that their citizens may be penalised by a new “emergency brake” mechanism on EU immigration. Under the Tusk proposal, governments who persuade their EU peers that immigration is jeopardising their welfare system will be able to deny benefits to other Europeans for up to four years after they start work in that country. That stretches EU rules which ban discrimination among EU citizens on national grounds.

A draft statement seen by Reuters that was prepared by Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic — collectively the Visegrad Group — broadly endorses the effort to appease London but says the welfare issue is a “primary concern”.

NATO agrees Russian deterrent but avoids Cold War footing

BRUSSELS — NATO agreed on Wednesday its boldest steps yet to deter Russia from any attack in the Baltics or eastern Europe, setting out ways to rapidly deploy air, naval and ground forces with small, technical tweaks.

In an effort to dissuade Moscow after its annexation of Crimea, NATO defence ministers will rely on new alliances, forces on rotation, warehoused equipment and regular war games, all backed by a rapid-reaction force.

“Russia is a threat,” Lithuanian Defence Minister Juozas Olekas told Reuters at an alliance meeting in Brussels. “It is Moscow’s actions in Crimea, their support for separatists in Ukraine and their snap exercises that concern us.” The measures, which British Defence Minister Michael Fallon said proved that “NATO means what it says”, showed a unity the West has not been able to muster against Russia in Syria — where the United States faces criticism for not stopping the Russian-backed assaults on rebel-held areas of Aleppo.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said he will meet Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov at the Munich Security Conference later this week to discuss the defensive nature of NATO’s strategy for the Baltics and eastern Europe. “We believe that especially when times are difficult, as they are now, it’s even more important that we have political dialogue, channels open, between NATO and Russia,” he said. Russia has it has acted aggressively.

Moscow blames the West for stirring anti-Russian feeling across the east, particularly in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, which it considers its historic sphere of influence.

The crisis in Ukraine, where the West accuses Russia of fomenting a separatist rebellion, and the Western economic sanctions on Moscow have raised concerns about a new Cold War.

Non-NATO member Georgia, which fought a five-day war with Russia in 2008 that left two of its regions occupied by Russian troops, has asked NATO to be on alert. “With the Kremlin, nothing can be excluded,” Tinatin Khidasheli, Georgia’s defence minister, told Reuters. “They cannot show weakness.” Poland’s new conservative government has been the most vocal in calling for permanent NATO bases on its territory and while Warsaw has been agreed to the new lighter military presence, its defence minister Antoni Macierewicz signalled that difficult talks over troop numbers will go ahead.

Six killed in French school bus crash

PARIS — At least six were killed in a school bus crash in France’s southwestern department of Charente-Maritime yesterday, local media reported.

A school bus carrying 18 teenagers collided with a truck at 07:15 local time (0615 GMT), news channel iTele said.

“Government fully supports the families of the bus accident’s victims in Rochefort and sharing their distress,” Segolene Royal, the Ecology Minister wrote in her tweet account.

“IT is not NATO’s remit to push back or stop refugee boats,” the official said.

Turkey, Greece seek NATO mission in Aegean — German official

BRUSSELS — Turkey and Greece have agreed to ask for a NATO mission to monitor refugee flows in the Aegean Sea and combat people smugglers, a senior German government official said late on Wednesday.

“Turkey and Greece are both asking NATO to develop an overview of the situation with the national coastguards and Frontex,” the German official said, referring to Europe’s border protection agency.

Struggling to stop refugees streaming into Greece despite a deal between Ankara and the European Union to combat the flood, Germany and Turkey surprised partners this week by saying they would raise the issue with NATO.

Turkey has said it is prepared to take back refugees who are rescued at sea or picked up by NATO, the official said. Information gathered by NATO should also be passed on to Turkish authorities to go after people smugglers, the official added.

“IT is not NATO’s remit to push back or stop refugee boats,” the official said.

DPRK expels all South Koreans in Kaesong Industrial Zone

PYONGYANG — The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) announced yesterday that it is expelling all South Koreans in the Kaesong Industrial Zone (KIZ) and closing the joint-run complex.

The DPRK “will expel all persons of the south side in the KIZ till 5 pm, 11 February, 2016,” the official news agency KCNA reported, citing a statement released by the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea (CPRK).—Xinhua

Bangladesh upholds death sentences over 2004 attack on British envoy

ATHENS — A Bangladesh court upheld death sentences yesterday for three members of an outlawed Islamist militant group in connection with a grenade attack on the British ambassador in 2004.

The Islamists, including the head of the Harkat-ul Jihad Islami group, were sentenced to death in 2008 for the attack in which three people were killed and about 50, including the then British high commissioner, Anwar Choudhury, were wounded.

“The high court today upheld death sentences for three, including the HUJI leader Mufti Abdul Haman, and life imprisonment for two others in the attack,” Sheikh Moniruzzaman Kabir, a public prosecutor, told reporters.

The attack came after Friday prayers at a Muslim shrine in the northeastern district of Sylhet. The Bangladesh-born British envoy was wounded in the leg. —Reuters

Greek navy helicopter crashes in Aegean, killing three

A draft statement seen by Reuters that was prepared by Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic — collectively the Visegrad Group — broadly endorses the effort to appease London but says the welfare issue is a “primary concern”. —Reuters
SINGAPORE — Gold surged to its highest in 8-1/2 months yesterday as investors bet that the Federal Reserve could find it hard to hike US interest rates this year, while safe-haven demand amid a tumble in equities and the dollar also boosted the metal.

The Fed is unlikely to reverse its plan to raise interest rates further this year, but tighter credit markets, volatile financial markets, and uncertainty over Chinese economic growth have raised risks to the US economy, Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen said on Wednesday.

Yellen said she expected continued US economic growth would allow the Fed to pursue its plan of “gradual” rate hikes, but her comments kept the central bank’s options open. A slowing of rate hikes could help bullion, keeping down the opportunity cost to hold it.

Spot gold jumped to an intra-day high of $1,213.10 an ounce, its highest since 22 May, before paring gains to trade up 0.8 per cent at $1,206.10 by 0222 GMT.

US gold rose to an intra-day high of $1,215.30 an ounce, a near-nine-month peak. “Stop loss orders are being triggered on the break of ongoing investigations into Low Taek Jho. Singapore’s Commercial Affairs Department declined to comment on whether Jho Low is under investigation.

Yak’s career blossomed at BSI Singapore. “He was a big success and the way he brought in business was constantly showcased,” one person who has worked with Yak, told Reuters.

Yak went back on BSI’s pay roll in October and was last paid his monthly salary of nearly S$83,000 on 27 January, according to his court affidavit.

Singapore authorities are conducting a money laundering probe into bank accounts linked to 1MDB, whose activities have triggered legal action across three continents.

Some of the accounts Singapore is probing belong to Yak and have been frozen together with S$9.7 million of his funds, according to documents released at Singapore’s High Court last week.

Yak handled the lucrative 1MDB account after he joined Swiss private bank BSI in Singapore in 2009, a person who worked with him at the bank said. He was on unpaid leave for five months last year while BSI investigated him for alleged misconduct related to client accounts, the court documents say, but did not disclose details of the internal probe.

A private banker, caught up in Singapore’s money laundering probe linked to 1Malaysia Development Berhad, was a key link between the embattled state investor, a Swiss private bank and a Malaysian businessman connected to the troubled fund.

Yak Yew Chee, a senior banker at Swiss-based BSI Singapore, has emerged for the first time as a key figure in Singapore’s money laundering probe, according to documents released at Singapore’s High Court.

Yak was not personally at the Singapore High Court on Friday, when he sought to unfreeze his Singapore funds to pay taxes and legal fees. His lawyer agreed to withdraw the petition after the prosecutor raised no objection in allowing Yak to transfer S$1.76 million ($1.3 million) from his overseas bank accounts.

In an affidavit filed at the court, he denied any wrongdoing or getting unlawful benefits from managing the accounts of 1MDB or its affiliates.

Yak handled the lucrative 1MDB account after he joined Swiss private bank BSI in Singapore in 2009, a person who worked with him at the bank said. He was on unpaid leave for five months last year while BSI investigated him for alleged misconduct related to client accounts, the court documents say, but did not disclose details of the internal probe.

The bank was making between S$15 million and S$20 million in fees from the stock it invested into 1MDB, the bank’s annual report shows. In the 2014 annual report, BSI said its Singapore unit had almost doubled its net profit compared to 2013.

But the relationship between the banker and its star banker appeared to sour last year, the court documents show.

Yak asserted in the court documents that the bank was trying to terminate him and deny him some of the S$8.8 million of bonus that he says has not yet been paid. BSI declined to comment on any aspect of Yak’s case.

BSI has been put up for sale by its owner, investment bank BTG Pactual, which is rushing to sell assets to raise cash and shore up investor confidence following the arrest of its founder Andre Esteves in November.—Reuters
FBI tightens grip on final occupiers at Oregon wildlife refuge

PORTLAND — Federal agents on Wednesday closed in on the last four anti-government militants still holed up at a national wildlife refuge in Oregon after a 40-day armed occupation protesting federal land control in the West.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation said no shots have been fired and that negotiations to end the standoff without violence were continuing as the FBI escalated pressure on the protesters refusing to leave the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in remote eastern Oregon. It was not immediately clear how much further law enforcement officers would go in the latest confrontation, which the FBI said began after one of the protesters was seen riding an all-terrain vehicle outside the encampment.

A number of the occupiers were relating their account of events as they unfurled via an independent Internet broadcast, "Revolution Radio," that is known to be sympathetic to the occupation. The militants said FBI agents had moved to within 50 yards (45 meters) of the occupiers' position in the compound, and one reported seeing FBI snipers perched on a nearby hillside with high-beam vehicle lights trained on the compound.

"If they tear gas us, it's the same as firing on us," said one of the occupiers, who identified herself as Sandy Anderson. "Don't come in. Don't do it."

She later reported that federal agents were trying to coax the protesters out of hiding. "But added, "We're not leaving without our weapons." Nevada state Assembly member Michele Fiore, a Republican supporter of the protesters, identified herself over the broadcast as she talked with the occupiers via telephone. She said she was in Portland waiting for an FBI escort to Malheur, roughly 300 miles (480 km) to the southeast, in order to help broker a peaceful resolution to the standoff. The broadcast was frequently interrupted by the sounds of the protesters shouting and law enforcement officers calling out to them by bullhorn.

Fiore repeatedly tried to calm the occupiers by leading them in prayers over the phone. The four remaining protesters were indicted last week along with 12 others previously arrested on charges of conspiring to impede federal officers during the occupation.

The takeover at Malheur, which began on 2 January, was sparked by a 40-day armed occupation of federal property in the West. The protest was led by Idaho ranchers convicted of setting fires that spread over millions of acres public land in the region characterized by a rather difficult security situation.

"The emergence of elements of the US global missile defense system in the region, characterised by a rather difficult security situation, could provoke an arms race in northeast Asia and will further complicate the solution of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula," the statement said. "This step could only enhance the destructive impact of the US global missile defense system on international security and strategic stability."

The ministry warned that increased NATO military presence near Russia's borders threatens European stability and security. "Unfortunately, this is not an issue of threatening one's territory, it is preventing the European continent from achieving common security," she said, suggesting that the NATO's move was aimed at containing Russia. —Xinhua

Russia concerned over possible deployment of US missile defence system in South Korea

MOSCOW — The Russian Foreign Ministry on Wednesday expressed concerns over possible deployment of US missile defence system in South Korea.

The Pentagon said Monday that the United States and South Korea have begun negotiations on the issue in response to the missile launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on 7 February.

The Russian ministry noted that the action of DPRK was used by Washington to expand the deployment range of the US global missile defence system, according to an online statement. "The emergence of elements of the US global missile defence system in the region, characterised by a rather difficult security situation, could provoke an arms race in northeast Asia and will further complicate the solution of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula," the statement said. "This step could only enhance the destructive impact of the US global missile defense system on international security and strategic stability."

The ministry said. The DPRK said Sunday that it had successfully launched a Kwangmyong-song-4 Earth observation satellite into orbit, which was widely seen as a disguised test of long-range ballistic missile technology. Earlier in the day, head of Russian Foreign Ministry's security and disarmament department Mikhail Ulyanov also said the deployment of US missile defence system, as well as the current developing trend of events, would benefit neither Pyongyang nor Seoul.

Meanwhile, Ulyanov warned that the US is developing air defence systems that could in the future influence Russia's capability in providing nuclear restraint. "Russia does not pose a real threat for NATO countries," Ulyanov said, vowing "adequate reaction to any changes of the military-political landscape in Europe." Recent media reports said that NATO plans to step up its military deployment along the European border with Russia. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova on Wednesday warned that increased NATO military presence near Russia's borders threatens European stability and security.

"Unfortunately, this is not an issue of threatening one's territory, it is preventing the European continent from achieving common security," she said, suggesting that the NATO's move was aimed at containing Russia. —Xinhua
SHORT OF OPTIONS, SRI LANKA TURNS BACK TO BEIJING’S EMBRACE

COLOMBO — Just over a year after a new leader was elected and Sri Lanka’s business ties with China came under close scrutiny, Colombo is reversing course by resuming a stalled port project and naming Beijing as the front runner for a new special economic zone.

India is nervous about losing influence over the island nation off its southern tip, while China’s push into the Indian Ocean, and the possibility of dual purpose civilian-military facilities in Sri Lanka, are raising alarm further afield.

The outster of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who steered Sri Lanka towards China until 2015, was a set-back for ties, as his successor reviewed projects to check if they were fair and legal.

Now Matrithpala Sirisena’s government, faced with falling foreign reserves, a balance of payments crunch and few, if any, alternative investors, is heading back into Beijing’s embrace, albeit on better terms than before.

“The stance on China has completely changed,” cabinet spokesman Rajitha Senaratne told Reuters. “Who else is going to bring us money, given tight conditions in the West?”

Most of the focus has been on the $1.4 billion port city China wants to build in the commercial capital, Colombo, where cranes and diggers have sat idle for months.

But according to International Trade Minister Malik Samarawickrama, Chinese investors have also expressed interest in a special economic zone (SEZ) in Hambantota, southern Sri Lanka, where a $1.7 billion seaport and airport built by the Chinese are operating at a fraction of capacity.

“We will agree to that,” Samarawickrama told Reuters. “Beijing’s rehabilitation does not mean the door is closed to other potential investors in Sri Lanka’s $79 billion economy.”

Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj had talks with Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe for an SEZ in Trincomalee last week, according to an Indian official. And New Delhi said it was not unduly worried by China’s return to pole position in talks with Colombo. “The relationship between India and Sri Lanka is robust, is getting stronger,” said Renu Pall, joint secretary in the Indian foreign ministry in charge of the Indian Ocean region.

“But so far, only Beijing had come up with specific proposals for a trade zone, an official at Sri Lanka’s Board of Investment said.

Beijing has already pumped hundreds of millions of dollars into roads and ports since the end of Sri Lanka’s civil war in 2009, when Colombo was largely shunned by Western investors over its human rights record.

China’s interest is seen as part of its ambitions to build a “Maritime Silk Route” to the oil-rich Middle East and on to Europe.

That makes some countries, including India and the United States, nervous, with Sri Lanka sitting near shipping lanes through which much of the world’s trade passes on its way to China and Japan.

Western diplomats have expressed particular concern over Hambantota, located in Rajapaksa’s stronghold on the southern tip of the country, because they say it could have both civil and military use.

Sri Lanka’s government says such fears are misplaced and that it plays host to a far higher number of ship visits by other foreign navies, including India’s.

The SEZ in Hambantota is the biggest of four proposals made by the Chinese to Sri Lanka’s Board of Investment, the official there said. He did not provide details about others.

The SEZ is one of 45 projects the government plans to help lift growth at a time when public finances have deteriorated and Colombo is seeking an emergency IMF loan to avert a balance-of-payments problem.

Trade Minister Samarawickrama said the government decided to go forward,” Samarawickrama told Reuters. “Beijing’s rehabilitation does not mean the door is closed to other potential investors in Sri Lanka’s $79 billion economy.”

A worker looks on at the Colombo Port City construction site, which is backed by Chinese investment, in Sri Lanka, on 2 February. REUTERS

A German train crash investigators focus on signal controller

BAD Aibling/Berlin — German prosecutors and police investigating a head-on train crash in Bavaria that killed ten people are focusing on the actions of a signal controller, a source said.

However, investigators said it was too soon to speculate on the cause and that they have recovered two of three black boxes from the two passenger trains that collided at peak commuter time on Tuesday morning.

“The investigations are focussing on the controller,” said the source, who declined to be named. The single track stretch was opened for both trains, the source said.

The source did not name the controller. Reuters was unable to determine the identity of the controller or what actions were under scrutiny.

In addition, Reuters could not determine if other individuals were also under scrutiny.

A spokesman at state-run railway, Deutsche Bahn [DBN.UL], which is responsible for the track, said the company was pre-empting the results of the investigation, she said.

— Reuters

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF ENERGY
MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE
(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)

(2/2016)

Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in United States Dollars and Myanmar Kyats.

Sr.No Tender No Description Remark
(1) IFB-074(15-16) 600 Series Well Head Equipment & Accessories (2) Sets US$50,000
(2) IFB-075(15-16) 900 Series Well Head Equipment & Accessories (1) Set US$50,000
(3) IFB-076(15-16) 1500 Series Well Head Equipment & Accessories (4) Set US$50,000
(4) IFB-077(15-16) Mud Agitator Unit with (15KW) Motor (4) Sets US$50,000
(5) IFB-078(15-16) Spares for GM 8V-71 Engine Ex Cementing Unit (21) Items US$1,000
(6) IFB-079(15-16) Assorted Sizes of Butterfly Valves(12)Items US$1,000
(7) IFB-080(15-16) Spares for Draxwell and Catwork(28)Items US$1,000
(8) IFB-081(15-16) Adaptors, Flanges and Gate Valves(24) Items US$1,000
(9) IFB-082(15-16) Rig Floor Handling Accessories (41) Items US$1,000
(10) IFB-083(15-16) Fire Fighting Truck (5000 L) (1) Unit US$1,000
(11) IFB-084(15-16) Low Bed Trailer (50 Ton) (2) Nos US$1,000
(12) DMP-/013(15-16) Generator (18KVA) with Diesel Engine (1) Set US$1,000
(13) DMP-/014(15-16) 95mm x Cable, 1 Core, Aerial Bundle Cable, KS AL / XLPE (3500) Meters US$1,000
(14) DMP-/015(15-16) 10 HP Induction Motor Complete with Motor Starter (10) Sets US$1,000

Tender Closing Date & Time - 9.30 AM, 16.30 HR
Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 10th February, 2016 at the Finance Department, Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, No:44 Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise Ph: +95 67-411097/411206
LOS ANGELES — Harry Potter is coming back — for everyone.

Nine years after publication of the last novel in the best-selling series about the boy wizard, what has been billed as the “epic 8th Harry Potter story” will be published worldwide in July.

“Harry Potter and the Cursed Child Parts I & II,” a script version of the upcoming, sold-out London play, will be published in physical book form in North America and Britain, and globally as a digital ebook. The book will read like a play rather than a narrative novel.

The play, based on an idea by author J.K. Rowling, is set 19 years after “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.” It features a grown-up Potter as an overworked employee of the Ministry of Magic and father of three children who is grappling “with a past that refuses to stay where it belongs,” US publishers Scholastic, UK publishers Little, Brown, and global digital company Pottermore said on Wednesday.

David Shelley, chief executive of Little, Brown Book Group, said the script was being published due to public demand.

“J.K. Rowling and her team have received a huge number of appeals from fans who can’t in London to see the play and who would like to read the play in book format — and so we are absolutely delighted to be able to make it available for them,” Shelley said in a statement.

Potter fans squealed with delight at the news. “On behalf of all potterheads, thank you thank you very much indeed. OMG I’m so happy,” tweeted Lazi on Wednesday.

The book script will be published on 31 July, Potter’s fictional birthday, and the day after the play opens in London.

The play, which stars Jamie Parker as Potter and black actress Noma Dumezweni as an adult Hermione Granger, is already sold out through January 2017. The original Hermione was played in the movies by Emma Watson, who is white.

The play opens ahead of the much-anticipated November 2016 movie version of Rowling’s Potter spinoff book “Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them,” starring Eddie Redmayne, and the opening in April of a second Harry Potter attraction within a theme park, this time at Universal Studios in Los Angeles.

More than 450 million copies of the seven original Harry Potter books have been sold worldwide in 59 languages. The movie franchise has grossed more than $7 billion worldwide. — Reuters

I used to dread the big 30: Megan Fox

LONDON — Actress Megan Fox says she was scared to turn 30. The “Transformers” beauty hits the age marker in May and admits she no longer dreads becoming a 30-something, reported Contactmusic.

“When you’re young, that sounds so old. When you’re in high school or even when you’re in your early 20s, it still sounds like, ‘By the time I’m 30, I should just give up. What’s the point of going on at that age?’,” she said.

Now Fox is on the verge of a new decade, she has realised she feels exactly the same as she did a few years ago. “What makes it even weirder is that you don’t feel any different. And then you turn 30... (and) you don’t feel any older at all. — PTI

Kate Winslet goes ‘properly evil’ for crime thriller ‘Triple 9’

LONDON — With bouffant hair and lots of bling jewellery, Academy Award winner Kate Winslet adds a somewhat different role to her acting repertoire in crime thriller “Triple 9”, portraying a “properly evil” mafia boss.

The “Titanic” actress, in the running for another Oscar this year for her role in “Steve Jobs”, stars alongside Woody Harrelson, Casey Affleck and Chiwetel Ejiofor in the action-packed movie about corrupt police and the criminal underworld.

“...When I read it, I just thought ‘God, why on earth did they want me to be in this film?’ This is nothing like I ever did before and something very different,” she told Reuters at a London screening of the film on Tuesday night.

“It’s a contemporary heist movie. I play a Russian Israe-li mafia boss, I mean ... she’s properly evil. And I wanted that challenge.”

Winslet, who puts on a thick accent in the film, added she worked early on with director John Hillcoat to create her character Irina Vlasov’s appearance. “The look was really quite specific. When he first showed me pictures of these rather sort of Versace hairstyles, I couldn’t quite believe that he was going to be that daring,” she said.

“But that was what he wanted and that was what we gave him. And it was a heck of a lot of fun for me.”

Set in Atlanta, the film follows the planning of a major heist, with plenty of guns and bloodshed thrown in.

“It’s a comment on where America’s at at the moment ... in terms of the criminal landscape, the stakes are much higher out there,” Hillcoat said.

“Breaking Bad” actor Aaron Paul portrays a former cop turned gang member in the film, which he called “the darkest thing” he had ever worked on.

“I just love super dark, intense, gritty dramas and this is just that,” he said.

“Triple 9” hits UK cinemas on 19 February and US theaters on 26 February. — Reuters

People look at a model of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry which is part of the Warner Bros ‘The Making of Harry Potter’ studio tour in Leavesham, England, in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

British actress Kate Winslet. PHOTO: Reuters

Harry Potter returns in ‘8th story’ script of London play

The play opens ahead of the much-anticipated November 2016 movie version of Rowling’s Potter spinoff book “Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them,” starring Eddie Redmayne, and the opening in April of a second Harry Potter attraction within a theme park, this time at Universal Studios in Los Angeles.
In Kenya’s Rift Valley, blood and bulls mark gateway to manhood

BARINGO COUNTY, (Kenya)— In an isolated region in Kenya’s Rift Valley, young men spear a bull in a ceremony that marks a gateway to adulthood.

Far from the bustling capital of Nairobi, locals gather at dusk, men on one side, women on another, to witness the event in a community where cattle play a central part in life.

The men, aged between 18 and 20, are part of a small Pokot community of herdsmen who tend cows, goats, sheep, camels and donkeys in Baringo County. The initiation is called Sapana in the Pokot language.

A Reuters photo essay at shows the ritual killing of the bull, young Pokot men drinking clogged blood from its carcass, clashes between some initiates during the ceremony, the smearing of participants with the contents of the bull’s stomach, and Pokot women dancing in celebration. “In our culture, Sapana is the most important rite for a man to be able to gain authority within in his community,” says Hassan Tepa, an elder.

It is a jolting, three-hour drive to this region from the lowland town of Marigat, close to Lake Baringo. Kenya has about 620,000 Pokots, 2009 census statistics show, and some also live in neighbouring Uganda’s Karamoja region. As Kenya develops and more people migrate to the cities in search of work, such traditional practices are on the wane. However in this remote region, ceremonies such as Sapana still hold sway.

The ritual allows men to sit with local elders and take part in their community’s decision-making. Sapana also gives improved access to marriage, once the man and his family have accumulated a dowry of cattle.

A man as old as 30 can also undergo the rite. The initiate’s age depends in part on when he and his family can afford to spare a bull for the killing in a community where cattle are precious.

The Pokots can have several wives, and men are allowed to marry women many years their junior. Livestock are everything for the Pokots, representing wealth and social status. And in an isolated region with no permanent police presence, elders deal with disputes. Those who have broken the law are often required to pay a fine in the form of animals.

The Sapana ceremony begins the day before, usually at dusk, when locals gather and fires are lit for the night. Then begins the dancing, singing and drinking of fermented local wine. Many stay awake through the night.

The young men stay at home, waiting for the morning’s initiation rite. As the sun rises, the young man walks toward the bull, fixes his aim and pierces the animal with a spear on its right side.

According to tradition, the bull must be speared several times before death as a way to respect its life – to consider that a single blow could fell a bull would be to dishonor the animal.

Village men open up the slaughtered animal, taking it in turns to eat clot’s of blood. Most of the blood is kept in a container to be mixed later with milk, a traditional delicacy to be shared.

Men take their place in a semi-circle and wait for the choicest parts of the animal to be cooked and served to them. Women and children await their turn at a distance. Every single part of the animal is eaten or put to use.

In one of the most important, final stages of the ceremony, a respectul elder smears the contents of the animal’s stomach on the initiate.

As Tepa explains, this concluding rite seals the young man’s entrance to adulthood, conferring a new status on him.

“Only then will he be able to speak to elders,” he says. “In return (he will) be listened to and respected.”—Reuters

Storyful editor to join Facebook to manage journalism partnerships

NEW YORK — The managing editor of News Corp’s social media news agency Storyful said on Wednesday she is leaving to manage journalism partnerships at Facebook Inc., as the social network broadens its push into news.

Aine Kerr said in a blog post on Storyful’s site that she would leave later this month. She linked her announcement to a separate post from Storyful Chief Executive Rahul Chopra who announced her departure, as well as the appointment of Mandy Jenkins as head of news, and Joe Galvin as director of news.

“I leave so excited about the possibilities for journalism, for the role Facebook plays as a source of valuable, newsworthy content, but also as a destination for the largest online audience in the world and advertising revenue models to match,” Kerr wrote.

Facebook did not respond immediately to requests for comment on Wednesday.

Facebook has pushed to include more news on its site, including a change to its algorithm to surface higher-quality and more relevant news. It also launched last year Instant Articles, a partnership with nine news publishers that lets them publish articles directly into the News Feed, rather than directing users to another website that has a slower load time.

Founded in 2010 and based in Dublin, Ireland, Storyful finds and verifies social media content for its clients so that the content can be trusted for use in print.

Kerr joined Storyful in 2011, according to her post. Prior to becoming managing editor, she was political editor and head of content at the agency, which News Corp acquired in 2013.

Her former boss, Storyful founder Mark Little, left last year to join Twitter Inc.—Reuters

British Vogue fetes 100 years with photo exhibition

LONDON — From Second World War photographs to shoots with famous models, British Vogue magazine marks its 100th birthday this year with an exhibition of fashion, beauty and portrait prints.

Opening at London’s National Portrait Gallery yesterday, “Vogue 100: A Century of Style” features more than 280 photographs from publisher Conde Nast’s archives that the magazine has commissioned over the decades. It includes the work of renowned photographers such as Cecil Beaton, Irving Penn, David Bailey and Mario Testino, portraits of celebrities including Marlene Dietrich, Britain’s Princess Diana and David Beckham and shoots with famous models such as Kate Moss and Linda Evangelista. “This ... was a great opportunity for us to replay Vogue’s greatest hits,” exhibition curator and British Vogue Contributing Editor Robin Muir told Reuters.

“I wanted to have all of these slightly well known images and balance it perhaps with ones people had not seen before. And one of the guiding principles of the show is that we wanted to show original vintage photographs.”

Among the highlights are “a rare vision” of Horst P. Horst’s 1939 Manbocher Corset photo, which inspired the music video for Madonna’s “Vogue” song and Peter Lindbergh’s 1990 cover shot “that defined the supermodel era,” according to organisers. —Reuters
Sharapova withdraws from Qatar Open with arm injury

MOSCOW — Former world number one Maria Sharapova has withdrawn from this month’s Qatar Open due to a persistent arm injury, the Russian said on Wednesday in a statement from tournament organisers.

The five-times grand slam champion has been troubled by her left forearm since the start of the year when she pulled out of an Australian Open warm-up tournament in Brisbane.

She has also unable to play for Russia in last week’s Fed Cup quarter-final defeat by the Netherlands.

“Unfortunately, I will not be able to play the Qatar Total Open because of my left forearm injury,” Sharapova said.

“I would like to wish the tournament and all the great fans in Doha a great week of tennis. I hope to see them next year.”

World number one Serena Williams is the top seed for the tournament which begins on 21 February.—Reuters

Barca salvage 1-1 King’s Cup draw against improved Valencia

MADRID — Cameroon teenager Wilfried Kaptoum scored a late equaliser to give Barcelona a 1-1 draw at Valencia in their King’s Cup semi-final on Wednesday.

The second-leg result, which denied home coach Gary Neville a much-needed first win in four matches, was academic after Barcelona had crushed Valencia 7-0 in the first leg at the Nou Camp.

Barca, who went through to their sixth final in eight seasons, will face Celta Vigo or Sevilla in the showpiece match.

“I’m very happy to play another final... It’s one of the nicest matches of the season,” Barca coach Luis Enrique told reporters.

The draw was Barcelona’s 29th match unbeaten and Luis Enrique’s side surpassed the previous best mark set by former boss Pep Guardiola in the 2010-11 season.

Alvaro Negredo put Valencia in front in the 39th minute after goalkeeper Marc-Andre Ter Stegen had parried his first effort but the ball fell nicely back to the striker to tap home.

It was Valencia’s first goal in four games since Rodrigo scored in the second leg of their Cup quarter-final win over Las Palmas on 28 January.

Kaptoum found the net two minutes after coming on as a substitute eight minutes from time.

Luis Enrique rested nearly all his first-choice players, making eight changes from the first leg of the competition.

“Strategic decision which begins on Tuesday. They play Chelsea in the first leg of the Champions League in early November and all his first-choice players, making eight changes from the first leg of the competition.”

The ex-Italy coach said he was looking for a first win in 10 league games in charge, also rested a number of first-choice players.—Reuters

West Brom sneak past Peterborough on penalties

LONDON — Premier League West Bromwich Albion won a penalty shootout 4-3 to beat third-tier Peterborough United in a dramatic FA Cup fourth-round replay on Wednesday.

The game finished 1-1 after extra time, Peterborough taking the lead having dominated the first half when winger Jon Taylor found space to slot home from 15 metres after 55 minutes.

Midfielder Darren Fletcher grabbed West Brom’s equaliser with a crisp half-volley from the edge of the penalty area.

Lee Angol missed the decisive spot-kick in the shoot-out for Peterborough and West Brom will travel to championship side Reading in the fifth round.—Reuters

Ibrahimovic double helps PSG sink Lyon in Cup

PARIS — Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored twice in four second-half minutes as Paris St Germain breezed into the French Cup quarter-finals with a 3-0 home victory over Olympique Lyonnais on Wednesday.

After a goalless first half at the Parc des Princes, Ibrahimovic opened the scoring on 63 minutes when he converted Lucas’ cross from close range. The Swede added to his tally and effectively made the game safe when Serut Aurnier’s cross from the right found him in acres of space on the penalty spot to finish left footed.

Adrien Rabiot scored from a Maxwell cross to complete the rout with 15 minutes left. PSG have not lost in any competition since defeat by Real Madrid in the Champions League in early November and they have gone 21 matches with only one drawn game.

St Etienne needed extra time to beat Troyes 2-1 away as did Nantes, who reached the last eight with a 4-3 win at Girondins Bordeaux. FC Lorient thrashed fourth-tier Sarre Union 4-0.—Reuters

PSG coach Blanc extends contract until 2018

PARIS — Paris St Germain coach Laurent Blanc has extended his contract until 2018, the Ligue 1 club said yesterday.

“I want to thank the club for the faith they put in me,” said Blanc, whose existing contract was expiring at the end of the season.

The former France defender, who won the World Cup in 1998, joined the club in June 2013 replacing Carlo Ancelotti one year after ending his term as the Les Bleus coach.

He led PSG to two successive Ligue 1 titles and an unprecedented treble of league, League Cup and French Cup titles last season.

The capital side lead the French Ligue 1 standings by a massive 24 points after 25 games. They play Chelsea in the first leg of the Champions League last 16 on Tuesday.—Reuters