INSUFFICIENT RICE EXPORTS TO CHINA FALL SHORT OF COMMITMENTS

MYANMAR and China signed an MoU in March 2015 requiring Myanmar to officially export 100,000 tonnes of rice to China that year, but only 3,000 tonnes of rice were ultimately exported, according to Myanmar Rice Federation.

Myanmar began exporting rice to China in June 2015, but exports halted between 5 September and 15 October after Myanmar was hit by severe floods. Rice producers are directed to sell same portions of their yield for crops domestic consumption.

“We’ve only been able to export about 3,000 tonnes of rice [by the end of 2015]. We are currently planning to export an additional 5,000 tonnes,” said U Nay Lin Zin, the general secretary of the Myanmar Rice Federation.

The MoU between Myanmar and China does not impose a time limit, he added.

Current high prices of locally grown rice have led the Ministry of Commerce, the Myanmar Rice Federation and the Myanmar Rice Mill Entrepreneurs Association to discuss the prospect.

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U Nay Lin Zin
General Secretary of the Myanmar Rice Federation

Carlsberg Group to discontinue phrase coined by famous composer

CARLSBERG announced yesterday it will discontinue the use of ‘too poh’ in the branding material for Tuborg beer in Myanmar following an announcement from a grandson of the well-known Myanmar composer Myoma Nyein that he will sue the Carlsberg Group for using the Myanmar phrase.

“We are taking immediate steps to implement the necessary modifications and will endeavour to have this completed before Thingyan. We appreciate the public’s patience while this ongoing,” said Carlsberg Group in its statement released yesterday.

The family of the late composer held a press conference in Mandalay this week to make the announcement. Myoma Nyein coined the phrase ‘too poh’ to represent Myanmar’s traditional Thingyan Festival. The composer’s grandson U Myo Zaw Oo said his family will settle the issue in court.

The family refused to allow the company to use the phrase ‘too poh’ throughout four rounds of negotiations between the two sides before the company distributed the product to the market, he added.

The Denmark-based Carlsberg Group operates in Myanmar through a joint venture with its local partner Myanmar Golden Star. It officially opened its factory in Bago last year where it brews Tuborg beer and its flagship brand Carlsberg beer.—Kay Khant

Paddy cultivations work in a field in Bago. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE
Pyidaungsu Hluttaw discusses national comprehensive development plan

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw put a law on record yesterday and discussed one bill and a national development plan. The parliament put on record the issues of budget allotments from the exclusive fund of the Union Budget Law for 2015. The Bill Committee called for a discussion of its findings on the Monetary Institutions Bill, which was returned by the president with remarks.

National Planning and Economic Development Minister Dr Kan Zaw responded to queries raised by four representatives in connection with the National Comprehensive Development Plan 2010-2030, which was re-submitted to parliament by the Union government.

During the discussion, MP U Htay Maung of Mindat constituency stressed the importance of the inflow of foreign investments into small, medium and large enterprises for the generation of revenue.

In response, the Union minister spoke of the need for principles to ensure a smooth economic transformation and to overcome challenges in implementation of the national development plan.

Following the discussion, the parliament put the National Comprehensive Development Plan on record.—Myanmar News Agency

Amyotha Hluttaw Round-up

THE 13th regular session of the first Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) entered its 26th day yesterday, with a question and answer session, an approval process for two reports and the submission of one report.

Deputy Minister for Construction U Soe Tint responded to a question about a government-funded highway in Kayah State posed by MP U Hnin Wai of Kayah State Constituency No. 12. The MP asked whether upgrading and maintenance works are being undertaken with the use of annual funding allocations.

The Union minister said the ministry plans to upgrade roads, build bridges, culverts and rock retaining walls and to have arrived in Yangon in the township and returned them to their respective parents.—Myanmar News Agency

Pre-paid toll card system rolled out on Lashio-Muse highway

SMALL vehicles travelling along the Mandalay-Lashio-Muse highway will be able to pay road tolls using pre-paid cards by July 2016, according to the Oriental Highway Company Ltd, which is implementing the system. U Tin Ko Ko, the company’s project manager, explained that the pre-paid card system was initially rolled out on 1 January of this year, with around 200 large vehicles currently using the system along the highway.

“We’ve got about 200 large vehicles currently using the system and have estimated that it will be made available for small vehicles by the end of July, as we’ve still got some preparations to take care of. [The pre-paid card system] will make it quick and easy to pay road tolls, mitigating any additional charges that might otherwise be incurred. [Drivers] will be able to check their remaining balance as they pass through the toll gates,” he said.

In order to use the pre-paid cards, one must submit an application with their vehicle’s registration and the name of the primary driver. A minimum balance of K50,000 must be initially added to each new card.

The Oriental Highway Company Ltd has announced that the pre-paid cards will not be transferrable between different vehicles.

The Mandalay-Lashio-Muse highway has a total of 14 toll gates. Pre-paid cards can be topped up along the way at the toll gates at Kyauk, Kyaw (Mandalay), Kyaukme, Shaung Lan (Lashio) and 105 Mile (Muse).—Myitmakha News Agency

FIVE missing schoolgirls returned to parents

FIVE schoolgirls aged 15 and 16 were returned to their parents on 17 January, according to police women in Hlaingthaya Township, Yangon Region. They had previously run away from their homes leaving no explanation, fuelling speculation that they had been abducted.

The high school students were reported to have left Hlaingthaya, Kayin State, on 16 January and to have arrived in Yangon in the late evening, with the local police saying the girls spent the night at the house of bus conductor Myo Myint Zaw, with whom they became friends on the way.

Following a tip-off about their arrival in Hlaingthaya, local police found the five schoolgirls in the township and returned them to their respective parents.—Police Information Centre

Exports to China fall short of 2016 estimates

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Exports to China fall short of ...
President discusses disaster reduction with Four Paws Int’l CEO

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein met Mr Helmut Dungler, CEO and President of Four Paws International at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Four Paws International is an Austria-based animal welfare charity foundation. Their discussions focused on disaster reduction, rehabilitation, establishment of sanctuaries and the protection of biodiversity and wildlife.

The president was accompanied by Union Ministers U Wunna Maung Lwin, U Soe Than and U Win Tun and other officials.—Myanmar News Agency

New Myanmar ambassador presents credentials to South Korean president

THURA U Thet Oo Maung, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Republic of Korea, presented his Credentials to Her Excellency Madame Park Geun-hye, the President of the Republic of Korea, on 15 January 2016 in Seoul.—Myanmar News Agency

Foreign minister meets CEO of Four Paws International

U Wunna Maung Lwin, the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs, received Mr Helmut Dungler, CEO and President of Four Paws International at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw at 9:30am yesterday. Four Paws International is a non-profit animal welfare charity foundation based in Austria. During the meeting, the two discussed rehabilitation works in the flood-affected areas in Myanmar, the establishment of rescue units and mobile clinics for animals and the establishment of an international-grade elephant hospital, rehabilitation centre and sanctuary in Myanmar.—MNA

Myanmar, ADB partner to strengthen Auditor General’s Office

THE Office of the Union Auditor General has partnered with the Asian Development Bank in coordinating a workshop on capacity development and technical assistance (R-CDTA) titled “Enhancing Roles of Supreme Audit Institutions in Selected Countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations”.

The workshop began in Nay Pyi Taw on 19 January and will continue until 22 January. Officials from the Office of the Union Auditor General and various ministries and agencies and representatives from the World Bank and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) are attending the workshop.

The technical assistance aims to strengthen the capacity of the Office of the Auditor General, bringing it into greater compliance with international standards of Supreme Audit Institutions and better-quality public finance audits, in support of its mandate under the Union Auditor General Law of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. These efforts are expected to improve public sector accountability, transparency and good governance in relation to the use of both public and development partner funds.

The technical assistance was approved by the Asian Development Bank in December 2014 with funding from the Government of Japan’s Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction. The supreme audit institutions of the Philippines, Viet Nam and Lao PDR are also included in the R-CDTA programme.—GNLM

Japan funds construction of four Myanmar schools

THE Japanese government has granted US$413,634 in cash assistance to four school construction projects in Myanmar.

Mr Tateshi Higuchi, Japan’s ambassador to Myanmar, signed the four grant contracts on 18 January. Under the contracts, Japan’s Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) Scheme will provide funding to the construction of No. 13 Basic Education Middle School in Kalay Township; Tar Ngote Village Basic Education Primary School in Hinthada Township; Han Thar Wadi Taik Thi Monastic Post-Primary School in Thantbyuzayat Township; and Sin Inn Village Basic Education Middle School in Bilin Township.—GNLM

Round table discussion on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction held

A ROUNDTABLE discussion on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, took place at the Parkroyal Hotel in Yangon Tuesday.

During the discussion, Brig-Gen Ko Ko Lwin of Commander-in-Chief (Army) Office, Director-General U Htin Lin of International Organisation and Economic Department and officials from the United Nations addressed the meeting and held discussions with those present.

Also present at the meeting set to last for two days were senior officials from the United Nations and the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, the ministries concerned and Commander-in-Chief (Army) Office.—Myanmar News Agency
World Buddhist Peace Conference aims to help make world more peaceful

THE World Buddhist Peace Conference will take place on a grand scale at Sitagu International Buddhist Academy in Sagaing Region from 22 to 24 January, focusing on making the world more peaceful, according to the academy.

Tibet Monks will bring relics of Buddha from Himalaya mountain ranges to the conference.

At the conference, participants will discuss peace from the point of the Lord Buddha. Around 700 religious scholars from different faiths and observers will gather at the religious conference which is scheduled to be held from 22 to 25 January, inviting 200 experts from 52 countries plus 500 local scholars.

Altogether 200 delegates from the U.S, England, Russia, Iran, other Asian Buddhist countries already arrived the host country to attend the conference.

Under the supervision of Sitagu Sayadaw, Sitagu Management Team has made necessary arrangement to accommodate the international delegates in Mandalay and Sagaing regions.

The Sitagu International Buddhist Academy has been established since 1994 to provide, teach and train missionary monks.—Khin Yadana

Natural hot spring in Hsipaw crowded with visitors

A NATURAL hot spring situated in Kyankhin Village in Hsipaw Township in northern Shan State has received flock of visitors during these days because of cool weather in the state, locals say.

The hot spring is in Kyankhin Village that is 5 minutes far from Mandalay-Lashio Pyidaungsu Road. Organiser normally stores the hot water from the spring to 30 foot long, 15 foot wide and 4 foot deep concrete tank. And then People who want to take a hot spring bath can swim at two concrete tanks within the area. Hot spring bathing assists them with cardiovascular disease and nervous system imbalances.

An average of 200 people visit the Kyankhin hot spring each day. Organisers collect K200 per visitor to raise funds for preservation of the natural hot spring.—Sai

Crime News

Narcotics & chemicals used in refining opium seized

A local anti-drug squad in Loilem seized 150 litres of Hydrochloric acid, 1,400 litres of Sulfuric acid, 3,600 kilos of white solid materials, 500 kilos of charcoal powder and two mobile phones in a car heading from Taunggyi on Sunday.

Charges have been filed against Aung Myint Win and Aung Toe Win.

Similarly, member of the police searched a tyre shop owned by Ye Myint Aung at Lamadaw and found 2,207 pills of yabbas, 0.24210 kilos of marijuana and three mobile phones. The investigations have lead to 150 litres of yabbas, 0.24210 kilos of marijuana and three mobile phones.

One man seriously injured by gun shot at Myawaddy

ONE man was seriously injured by a gun shot at ward 4, Bayintnaung - Nawady road in Myawaddy on 19 January.

According to the investigation, a Probox car approached to a Caldina car driven by Ko Oo (a) Win Naing Oo with his wife and daughter on board and a man seated in the Probox shot Ko Oo and drove away.

Ko Oo was seriously injured while his wife got minor injuries. The police are still investigating the case.—(District IPRD)

Car accident kills three theatrical artistes, injures 17 others

A six-wheel vehicle with over 40 people on board turned over when the driver lost control on the Pale - Gangaw road on Tuesday. The accident killed three people and injured 17 others.

The driver while trying to avoid falling into a ravine crashed into the tree. If the car plunges down, there would be a lot of causalities. We are very lucky, said a member of theatrical troupe.

Theatrical associations from Monywa and Pale also helped us. We are moving some injured people to Mandalay as they are seriously injured, said U Nan Htay Aung, Secretary of Sagaing Region Theatrical Artistes Association.

Two out of injured 17 have to undergo operation at Monywa general hospital, while the rest 15 people are being given medical treatment at Mandalay general hospital. Those who died on the spot are: Ju Ju, U Lu Bo and U Shwe.— Aung Thant Naing

Kitchen fire kills two, damages three cars

A kitchen fire killed two people and damaged three cars in ward -1, Kyee Khar town, Chwin State on 19 January when the fire started to break out from the kitchen while people inside the house were all sleeping. The fire quickly got out of control and spread the house. The fire killed U Lang Poung and his son, U Taung Swan Khine. The fire also destroyed a PRADO and two trailer vehicles. The fire was put out by the firemen with the assistance of neighbors.—(District IPRD)

Police found gold from stone bags in Bhamaw

POLICE seized ownerless 50 stone bags containing gold near Shwe Mhaw Police station, Some Taw Village, Bhamaw township on 15 January.

Acting on a tip-off, police discovered ownerless stone bags including the gold, digging tools and implements, and five motorbikes. The police brought them all to the Bhamaw police station. The police are still investigating the case.—U Ye (Ka Thar)
US expects China to play ‘special role’ in punishing North Korea

SEOUL — US Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday called for China to play “a special role” in strengthening sanctions against North Korea to punish it for its latest nuclear test in violation of UN Security Council resolutions.

“We believe China has a special role given the special relationship it has with North Korea,” Blinken told reporters after meetings with South Korea’s foreign and defence ministers, as well as senior officials. “China shares our commitment and our conviction that North Korea must denuclearise,” he said, adding that China has “more leverage and more influence” over North Korea than any other country in the world.

Blinken, who arrived in Seoul on Tuesday, is due in Beijing later Wednesday for a series of talks on slapping tougher punitive measures on North Korea over its fourth nuclear test on 6 January, which drew a storm of condemnation from the international community.

Vice Foreign Minister Lim Sung Nam, who also held talks with Blinken, told reporters that they agreed on the need to step up diplomatic efforts to adopt a “strong and comprehensive resolution at the United Nations.”

“We reconfirmed our joint goal that North Korea should be made to pay a corresponding price for its misdeed,” Lim said, standing alongside with Blinken. The senior State Department official is visiting South Korea and China as part of a four-nation swing through Asia that has already taken him to Japan and Myanmar.

—Kyodo News

India start-ups at risk as investors close taps, Modi fund falls short

MUMBAI — After pumping billions of dollars into Indian Internet start-ups in the last 24 months, global investors are cutting that flood back to a trickle as dreams of huge online sales are clouded by soaring valuations and still-distant profits.

Even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi lines up a four-year, $1.5 billion government fund to help startups create jobs, entrepreneurs fear that may prove a drop in the ocean. Venture capitalists have already tightened purse strings as ripples from China’s economic slowdown lap around the world.

According to a new report by CB Insights and KPMG, venture capital investments in India’s start-ups nearly halved to $1.5 billion in fourth-quarter 2015 from $3 billion in the preceding quarter. The report said venture capitalists have already tightened purse strings as ripples from China’s economic slowdown lap around the world.

“While the first phase of funding was about investing in big markets...now investors want to look at how entrepreneurs manage their business and compete while investing,” said Niren Shah, India head of Norwest Venture Partners, said.

Modi’s plan for newly launched companies includes tax breaks on their first three years of profits, as well as their investors. But most of India’s tech startups make losses, not profits. They follow a dis-counted business model aimed at generating revenue from customers that buy and sell goods and services, betting growth in ‘gross merchandise value’ on their platforms as a metric to attract funding.

Two of the country’s best known e-commerce retailers — Flipkart and Snapdeal — have attracted big-name backers like Accel Partners, Singapore state investor Temasek Holdings and Japan’s SoftBank Group Corp, enthused by growth potential in a country where only 252 million of a population of 1.3 billion people have Internet access.

Yet the pair have notched up huge losses as they compete for increasing sales through deep discounts, according to banking and industry sources. Flipkart and Snapdeal did not immediately respond to Reuters’ emails seeking comment.

“In the last few years, people were looking at gross merchandise value (when considering investment),” said Radhika Aggarwal, co-founder and chief business officer of online marketplace Shopclues.com. “I think that changed very quickly in the second half of last year.”

Shopclues.com raised funds last week from investors including Singapore sovereign wealth fund GIC and Tiger Global that valued the firm at more than $1.1 billion — helped by detailed plans to hit profitability by the first half of next year, Aggarwal said.—Reuters

New Zealand to fly two flags in run-up to referendum

WELLINGTON — Visitors to New Zealand over the next two months will be forgiven for not recognising the national flag as the country flies two flags over official buildings and other sites. The government announced yesterday that the proposed alternative to the official flag will fly over 250 sites including the iconic Auckland Harbour Bridge — alongside the current flag until the end of a referendum to choose the preferred flag in March.

The alternative flag, featuring a white stylized silver fern and the Southern Cross star formation against a blue and black background, was selected from five possible alternatives in a referendum in November last year.

“Having the two flags flying side by side around New Zealand will help people compare the designs before making a decision in the final flag referendum, which runs from 3 March to 24 March,” Deputy Prime Minister Bill English said in a statement. However, campaigners for retaining the current flag accused the government and Prime Minister John Key, who early on expressed a preference for a change to a flag featuring a silver fern, of promoting the alternative.

“They have no statutory right to do it — this is just a blatant attempt by the Prime Minister to put his fern flag on the same level as our national flag,” leader of the opposition New Zealand First party Winston Peters said in a statement.

“To fly the referendum flag winner beside the New Zealand flag is an exercise in deception and suggesting that it has the same status. Legally it has none,” said Peters.

“What a ludicrous situation it will be having two flags flying,” in the March poll, the alternative design will go head to head with the current flag, which features the British Union Jack in the top left corner. The winner will become or remain the official New Zealand flag.

The process has been marred by controversy and rancor among the political parties since it was initiated by Key after last year’s general election. Critics of the present flag, including Key, say it is too similar to the Australian flag and that it is a hangover from the country’s colonial past.—Xinhua

— Kyodo News
Nepal constitution talks fail to end protests

KATHMANDU — Talks between the Nepali government and minority groups to resolve a dispute over a new constitution have fallen apart, opposition leaders said on Tuesday, dashing hopes that protests that have led to crippling fuel shortages will end soon.

More than 50 people have been killed since August as government protesters in theTarai region, a narrow strip of plains that runs along Nepal’s southern border with India. A resulting slow down in cross-border traffic has plunged the landlocked nation into a fuel crisis that has hampered aid to survivors of last year’s deadly earthquakes and spawned a lucrative black market.

The ethnic Madhesi groups who live in the Tarai say Nepal’s new constitution, its first since the nation abolished its centuries-old monarchy, alienates their members, granting them low representation in parliament and government bodies.

After talks fell apart on Monday night, dozens of Madhesi activists burned tyres on the road in the southern business town of Birgunj, police said, in continuing protest against the charter’s carving the lowland region into federal states dominated by mountain communities.

Nepal blames India, its largest trading partner, for siding with the protesters near its border and invoking an official blockade on trucks crossing from India into Nepal, a charge that India has repeatedly denied. In the eastern border town of Kakarvitta, a long row of motorcycles and scooters stood in the middle of a bridge marking the border with India, as their owners poured smuggled fuel into their tanks.

“IT’s been good business,” said a woman named Devi, who came from the Indian border town of Raniganj to sell petrol to Nepalese in plastic tubs and bottles. The United Madhesi Front, which wants state boundaries to be redrawn to give their communities more power, said talks with government negotiators that started two weeks ago had become “meaningless”.

Defence Minister Bhim Rawal said the boundary dispute would be settled by a political committee in three months, but Madhesi party leaders were not convinced.

“We can’t trust the government,” Laxman Lal Karna, another Madhesi leader, told Reuters. “We have been betrayed in the past on similar assurances.”

The ethnic Madhesi groups have complained of being squeezed out of political power and economic opportunities. They are fed up with Nepali’s seemingly endless civil wars and corruption and demand that the capital be moved to their region.

Protesters stand near burning tyres as they gather to block the highway connecting Nepal and India, during a general strike called by Madhesi protesters demonstrating against the new constitution in Birgunj, Nepal in November 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS
WASHINGTON — The balance of military power in the Asia-Pacific is shifting against the United States, as China and North Korea challenge the credibility of US security commitments and the Pentagon faces spending limits, according to a study released on Tuesday.

Researchers at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, which conducted the study for the US Department of Defence, were left “concerned” that President Barack Obama’s “rebalance” of US interests toward Asia might not be sufficient to secure US interests in the region.

Congress required the Department of Defence to commission the report under the 2015 National Defence Authorisation Act.

“Chinese and North Korean actions are routinely challenging the credibility of US security commitments, and at the current rate of US capability development, the balance of military power in the region is shifting against the United States,” the study said.

Pentagon leaders and supporters in Congress, say efforts to keep pace with China’s growing military might and other international security threats have been hampered by mandatory “sequestration” budget cuts imposed across the government in 2011 in an effort to address the massive US deficit.

Congress passed a spending bill at the end of 2016 that addressed some of those concerns, but has not come up with a long-term solution.

The report makes four recommendations.

First is that the White House should develop a single rebalance strategy, after finding confusion throughout the government. Among other things, the report said the administration should increase its outreach to Congress and coordinate better with allies.

The second recommendation is that Washington should accelerate efforts to strengthen its allies and partners, including in the area of maritime security.

“Many states are struggling to mitigate regional security risks that range from major humanitarian crises to maritime disputes to missile threats,” the study said.

The third recommendation is that the United States should sustain and expand its military presence in the Asia-Pacific, and the fourth was that the United States should accelerate development of new capabilities for US forces, such as the ability to resist the growing ballistic missile threat to US ships and forward bases.—Reuters

IS releases 270 out of 400 kidnapped in Syria’s Deir al-Zour

DAMASCUS — The Islamic State (IS) group released 270 out of 400 people it had kidnapped, when its militants stormed a town in Syria’s eastern province of Deir al-Zour earlier this week, a monitor group reported yesterday. The 270 released people were kids under 14, and men over 55 years old, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

It added that 130 men between the age 15 and 55 are still held by the IS militants, who will interrogate them on charges of cooperation with the Syrian government in the town of Bughailiyeh. Aside from the originally captured 400 men, the UK-based watchdog group, which relies on a network of activists on ground, said the IS group captured another 50 people over the past 24 hours during raids in Bughailiyeh in the countryside of Deir al-Zour.—Xinhua

Denmark, Greenland sign agreement on uranium

COPENHAGEN — Denmark and Greenland have reached an agreement on the rules for future commercial exports of uranium from the island, local media reported Tuesday.

Denmark’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has signed an agreement with the self-governed Greenland after prolonged discussion, Foreign Minister Kristian Jensen was cited by Danish news agency Ritzau as saying.

“We have had to agree on how we deal with the fact that Greenland has the right to extract uranium, while Denmark is responsible for what happens when it is extracted and to be exported,” Jensen said when briefing the Foreign Policy Committee on Tuesday.—Xinhua

European border checks would cost German trade billions

BERLIN — Reinstating border controls within Europe’s passport-free Schengen zone because of the migrant crisis would significantly increase costs for German trade organisations told German media outlet确认的死亡 of Jihadi John

DUBAI — A media outlet associated with Islamic State on Tuesday released a eulogy for “Jihadi John”, a member of the militant group who gained notoriety for his filmed execution of hostages, the monitoring organisation SITE reported.

The militant was identified as Mohammed Emwazi, a British citizen of Arab origin. The US military said in November it was “reasonably certain” it had killed him in a drone strike.—Reuters

Three died, 53 injured in East China fireworks plant blast

NANCHANG — Three people were confirmed dead and another one remains missing after blasts swept a fireworks plant in east China’s Jiangxi Province early yesterday, according to local authorities.

Fifty-three injured people are being treated in hospital.

The first blast rapped through a workshop of Hongsheng fireworks factory in Kunshan village, Guangfeng district, Shangrao city at around 0:30am yesterday, said the city’s emergency management office. Several blasts followed.

Rescuers have managed to pull out 21 people who were trapped in the dormitory area of the plant and sent them to hospital. More than 1,000 people nearby were evacuated to safe areas after the blasts.—Xinhua

ISIS media outlet confirms death of ‘Jihadi John’
Nationalization: A Grave Blunder

Khin Maung Myint

THE 1963 Nationalization move was a real blunder. I should know it, as I had been actively involved in that process. The Socialist Leaders of the then, Socialist Government, decided to nationalize the businesses. Their concept was: Capitalism and Socialism could never coexist. At first, it was the large industries, businesses and companies that were nationalized, irrespective of their owners’ nationality. Later, for reasons I couldn’t know, small businesses, including even retail shops belonging to FRC (Foreign Registration Certificate) holders were also nationalized.

During the first phase, on 1 June 1963, the major industries; including the export and import trades, rice, banking, mining, textiles and rubber, which were labeled as the capitalist tools were nationalized. According to some records, a total of around 15,000 private enterprises were nationalized. I wasn’t involved in that process, but it was the second phase that I came to bepart of that scheme.

Early one night in August of that year, the staffs of our establishment were gathered in an assembly hall for briefing. We were waiting anxiously for our superior’s arrival. When he arrived he explained at length, the necessity to nationalize the businesses as we were on the path to establishing a Socialist State. No Socialist State could thrive while the businesses were in the hands of the Capitalists, that was what we were told. After his speech, we were convinced we were going on a mission for the good of the country and the people. Everyone was upbeat and raring to leave for our assigned destination. I had to take charge of a team of twelve, who would act as in-charges of the shops we were to nationalize.

Our team’s destination was the Twante township. We left at midnight from the Thixitkyu side with a double decker ship and arrived Twante at a few minutes before 3a.m. We were met at the jetty by the Chairman of the township Social Security Administrative Committee and party. From the jetty we were taken to a State High School, where we were briefed by the Chairman. According to the list prepared by the township authorities, there were ten shops in Twante and one in Kyayiktaw, a few miles by river, to the west. I assigned my men, one each, as in-charge of the ten teams for the shops in the Twante proper. The township authorities attached one volunteer firefighter to each team. By then, the time was 4a.m, still two hours to the appointed time, so I gave detailed instructions to my men as to how to go about their job in taking over the shops.

Half an hour before the appointed time, which was the time to have the ten teams set out, guided by the volunteer firefighters attached to them, to their assigned shops. After an hour, the Chairman and I, along with some township officials, made an inspection round to check the shops taken over.

At the first shop, I was dismayed by what I saw. It was a shanty building, which served as a home and a small grocery store incorporated in it. The commodities stocked there were nothing, compared to an average grocery store at a market in Yangon. The owner was a foreign national and the wife was a Bamar citizen with four kids. The next shop was no better and some shops were even worse, except for one shop, which was a retail and wholesale grocer, that catered the requirements of the whole township. There were two shops, which sell odds and ends, in lower class Twante shops in the old days.

After inspecting the shops in Twante, I left with the two remaining members of my team to visit the Kyayiktaw suburbs. We traveled on a police motor launch accompanied by a team of police officials, as those areas were frequented by the insurgents. The Assistant Township Officer of the General Administrative Department, stationed there, met us and took us to the only grocery shop that was to be taken over. The shop belonged to an old foreign national whose wife was a Bamar citizen. It was also a shop-house like those in Twante.

That evening I was back in Twante. After dinner, I met with some of my team members to make up a short wish list of essential commodities and black marketing emerged and became the livelihoods for many, until recently.

In the event of any outbreak of armed conflict, both sides would assert their right to protect themselves and shift the blame to the other party, thereby widening the gap that undermines peacemaking. It would benefit warring groups to remember that casualties do not incur on a par with human beings who are killed on flimsy pretexts.

In the event of any outbreak of armed conflict, both sides would assert their right to protect themselves and shift the blame to the other party, thereby widening the gap that undermines peacemaking. It would benefit warring groups to remember that casualties do not incur on a par with human beings who are killed on flimsy pretexts.

Instead I told her, we did not have any instruction to confiscate the house. I assured her that it would never happen, just to appease her, though I didn’t know for sure what would come next.

Due to nationalizing, all the industries, the export and import businesses ceased. Even the small retailers and all essential household commodities disappeared from the markets. Everything from food stuffs: such as rice, cooking oil, chilies, sugar, milk tins to clothing materials, umbrellas, even matches and candles became very scarce and were rationed or had to draw ballots if there were not enough to go around. The fuels for the vehicles and for cooking were also rationed and were never enough. Thus hoarding, black marketing and illegal trading in essential commodities and black marketing emerged and became the livelihoods for many, until recently.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the nationalization was a grave blunder, carried out hastily without properly analyzing the situations and considering the consequences. Our country, once considered to be among the prosperous nations in the region, plummeted to the status of the Least Developed Country (LDC) in the world. I am not dwelling in the past by writing thus. However, my intention is to let the new generations and most of my generation who might not have any idea what really took place during the nationalization schemes that totally collapsed our economy. What I had mentioned here was just the tip of an iceberg; the adverse effects were far more profound and widespread. We had learned a bitter lesson, which we should never forget.
World endangered Dugongs spotted off Rakhine coast

DUGONGS, medium-sized aquatic mammals which are included on a list of the world endangered animals, have been spotted along a stretch of Rakhine coastline between Laung Kyaw and Kan Thayar beach in Gwa township, as well as around the Sumpun Kyauk beach of Mann Aung Island, according to the Kyauk Phyu district Department of Fisheries.

“Studies have shown that the dugong species has become an endangered species not just in Asia but in the whole world. There are only two areas along the Rakhine coastline where they still remain. A dugong died in December of last year after it got entangled in a fishing net off the coast of Mann Aung Island. Fishing vessels which encounter dugongs becoming caught in their nets are prohibited from killing them for food and have been instructed to release them back into the ocean. Unfortunately, few follow these regulations,” said U Htun Tin, head of the Kyauk Phyu township Department of Fisheries.

The Kyauk Phyu township Department of Fisheries started carrying out a series of awareness campaigns during December, 2015 explaining how fishing was not allowed in known grazing areas of dugongs and that fisherman must immediately release a dugong should it become trapped in one of their fishing nets.

“It’s difficult to carry out research on the numbers of grazing Dugongs. There still aren’t any efforts being made to conserve sea-grass in the regions which the dugong habitually settle in for grazing and reproduction,” continued U Htun Tin. As such, there is a need for areas rich in the volume of sea-grass to be designated ‘no fishing’ zones in a bid to prevent the extinction of this endangered species. The Kyauk Phyu township Department of Fisheries has made it known that they will carry out activities to ensure offshore fishing vessels and trawlers avoid such regions so that sea-grass can thrive without being destroyed.

But not all Dugong die as a result of being accidentally entangled in the nets of fishing vessels. “The Dugong have a habit of getting caught up in fishing nets during the start and end of the rainy season. Last June, a Dugong pup was caught in our nets but we released it straight away as it still showed signs of life,” explained U Kyaw Thar, a local fishermen from Mann Aung township.

There are over ten species of animals included on the world endangered species list including the dugong, the manatee and seven species of turtles, while five of those species of turtles come to Thamein Hla Island in Ayeyawady Region to have their young before returning back into the ocean, according to the Kyauk Phyu district Department of Fisheries. — Myitmakha News Agency

Free Medical Services for Eye Patients in Thandwe, Rakhine State

AN eye specialist team led by Professor Kan Nyunt and Professor Ko Ko Tin provided free Eye Care Services to patients with Eye diseases at Sitagu Eye Hospital, Thandwe from 14th to 17th January.

The medical team comprises (11) eye surgeons and (6) nurses. They treat 1265 out patients and operate on 198 patients with cataract. The patients are from Thandwe, Kyaindali, Gua and Taungup Township. The team work is supported by U Tin Lay, President and members of Sitagu Eye Hospital Administration Association.

Overall expenditure for the team is donated by the well wishers U Chit Khine, Daw Khin Soe Wai (Edin Group), U Kyi Lin, Daw San San Win (Silver Beach Hotel), U Mg Mg @ U Kyin Hswet, U Soe Min, Daw Nu Nu Latt, U Mg Mg, Daw Si Si Htay, U Kyaw Kyaw Moe, Dr Kyaw Kay Khine and Daw Cho Cho Win (KTK Co., Ltd.).—GNLM

Creating Youth Employment

There is a need, more employment to create for youth who are not in school for some reason before they seek other countries to illegally migrate for earning their livelihood in a job or occupation commonly known as 3D - Difficult, Dirty, Dangerous jobs for which ‘general labour’ are much in demand and which do not require any skills expeditious, except good health and a willing pair of hands.

Policies could be formulated by the Bodies concerned based on the Employment and Skills Development Law for ‘Employees’ both public and private to provide training on-the-job while working, to such youth who are willing, under a Learnership/Apprenticeship Contract to serve for a fixed period as learners and apprentices, paid during their term of Contract an agreed percentage of wages of skilled workers of the Occupation which would enable them to earn as they learn.

And following the terms of Learnership/Apprenticeship period be assessed and certified against the relevant Occupational Standard and either be employed by the establishment concerned or be free to seek skilled employment locally or overseas. — Lokethar

Eye specialist team gives treatment to patients. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Save the Dugongs

Over half a million acres of forest to be protected in Rakhine State

THE Ministry of Forestry is planning to turn 550,000 acres of wild and uncultivable land located in Min Pya township, Rakhine State, into protected forest this year.

The land is located between the village tracts of Htein Pin and Min Kuu Lan, with plans to demarcate the area as protected forest in order to conserve the environment and protect life. “A submission will be made to the State government this month for the cordon off 450,000 to the 550,000 acres. It has become quite evident how deforestation, from a surge in illegal logging activities, is destroying the natural environment. Our aim is to be able to replant trees in these forests. We are also intent on making it so that those, whether an individual or group, will get permission to plant new trees in parts of forest. Whatever happens, we expect to reduce the extent of deforestation.” explained U Tin Soe, an official from the Forestry Department of Min Pya.

The department of Min Pya has planted 5,700 acres of teak trees, 2,350 acres of ironwood trees and 795 acres of standard timber for village use within the township. Local villagers habitually slash and burn areas of wild forest to prepare the land for cultivation but this often results in forest fires.

U Ba Sein, the administrator of Huyazwgyi village, located within Min Kuu village tract, expressed his mixed feelings about the replanting initiative of the Forestry Department. “I’m glad trees will be replanted in areas that used to be forest. But, it’s made me even more concerned that the trees will fall into the hands for those who carry out logging activities without replanting. It also brings worry that we will encounter difficulties with our livelihoods as we depend upon the forest to provide for us,” he said.

Areas of land within Min Pya township earmarked for protection are dense forest abundant with wildlife and extremely inaccessible. The majority of local residents are farmers who mainly practice shifting cultivation activities and cattle breeding, but also have a habit of seasonally carrying out logging and bamboo cutting, as well as hunting wild animals.

The Forestry Department of Min Pya township made a submission to the Rakhine State government on 31 December 2015 for an area of 283.98 square miles in the area of Than Kyaung and 293.75 square miles in the area of Ko Lone Taung from within Htein Pin village tract, as well as 50.31 square miles from within the area of Ta Yweb and 141.43 square miles in the area of Kar Ma from within the village tract of Min Kuu Lan, to be demarcated as protected forest. — Myitmakha News Agency
Obama, Erdogan speak by phone, vow cooperation against terrorism

ANKARA — US President Barack Obama and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday pledged continued cooperation in the fight against militants, including Islamic State and Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants, the White House and Turkish presidential sources said.

During his phone call to Erdogan, Obama offered his condolences for last week’s bombing in Istanbul, when 10 German tourists were killed in a suicide attack blamed on Islamic State, the White House and Turkish presidential sources said.

Obama also condemned a recent string of attacks by the PKK against Turkish security forces, and he stressed the need for de-escalation, a White House said in a statement.

The two leaders said the fight against terrorism would be among a number of topics on the agenda when US Vice President Joe Biden visits Turkey on Saturday.

NATO member Turkey, a member of the US-led coalition battling Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, has increasingly become a target for the Sunni Muslim militants. Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu blamed Islamic State for the bombing on 12 January in Istanbul’s historic heart. The suicide bomber is thought to have crossed recently from Syria.

Islamic State is also believed to be behind other attacks last year in Turkey, including one in the capital Ankara in which more than 100 people were killed.

Turkey’s predominantly Kurdish southeast is currently engulfed in the worst violence since the 1990s after the collapse last July of a two-year-long ceasefire with PKK militants.—Reuters

Military chiefs gather in Paris to bolster Islamic State fight

PARIS — Defence chiefs from the United States, France, Britain and four other nations meeting in Paris Wednesday to examine ways to accelerate gains against Islamic State, including by potentially ramping up the number of police and army trainers.

US Defence Secretary Ash Carter described the gathering as a chance for face-to-face talks among the core contributors in the US-led coalition, which also includes Germany, Italy, Australia and the Netherlands.

“I’ll be soliciting their views and describing to them my thoughts about how we can accelerate the campaign, including the variety of capabilities, military capabilities, that will be required,” Carter said, predicting increases in the numbers of trainers in the months ahead, including of police who can help hold territory seized from Islamic State.

France was the first country to join US-led air strikes in Iraq. Since the Paris attacks by Islamic State militants in November, President Francois Hollande has stepped up French aerial operations against Islamic State, including in Syria, contributing about 20 percent of coalition strikes. A French defence ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the coalition would discuss ways to broadly intensify the effort.

“It’s not just about adding more planes, but also trainers to accelerate the speed with which local forces can retake territory against Daesh,” the official said, using a colloquial term to describe Islamic State.—Reuters

Three attackers from Burkina al Qaeda assault still at large

PARIS — Three suspected al Qaeda attackers involved in an assault on a hotel and cafe in Burkina Faso’s capital that killed 30 people at the weekend were still being sought on Tuesday, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls said.

Three gunmen were killed in a French and US-assisted operation by Burkina security forces to retake the Splendid Hotel and surrounding buildings following the Friday night attack, which targeted an area popular with foreigners.

Eight Burkinabes, six Canadians, three Ukrainians and three French citizens were among the dead. Other bodies are still in the process of being identified.

“Of the six assailants, three were killed and three others are still being sought,” Valls said in remarks before the French parliament, adding that the attack on Ouagadougou was a reminder of a similar attack in Paris in November.

“This attack was claimed by AQIM. This is further proof that this group is dangerous.”

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) on Monday identified three fighters it says were responsible for the attacks, giving their names as al-Batatar al-Ansari, Abu Muhammad al-Buqali al-Ansari and Ahmed al-Fulani al-Ansari.

The French troops involved in the operation against the attackers were part of a 200-strong force stationed in the country as part of a regional anti-militant operation.

AQIM claimed a similar attack on the Radisson Blu hotel in Mali’s capital Bamako that killed 20 people in November.

Some witnesses however reported seeing more attackers. Security forces responding at the scene of events initially believed they were facing a team of 12 gunmen. Gendarmes at the time said they believed at least two assailants were women.

“The investigation is moving forward. Eleven French police and gendarmes are assisting Burkinabe experts with the identification of bodies. There are also five American FBI agents,” Burkinabe Security Minister Simon Compaore said.

Authorities in Ouagadougou have already made a number of arrests though some had since been released, said Foreign Minister Alpha Barry.

“In this kind of situation we pick up everyone who could resemble the suspects and then, bit by bit, we verify,” he said.

Leaders from Burkina and Mali have agreed to work more closely to fight jihadists by sharing intelligence and conducting joint security patrols.

Heavily armed security agents on Saturday raided the Ouagadougou home of Mossa Ag Attaher, spokesman for the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) — a Malian Tuareg rebel group. He was questioned but later released.

“What kept coming up was ‘Do you have information on imminent threats to Burkina?’” Ag Attaher told French radio RFI, adding that he had denied any connection to the attack.—Reuters

Children on Syrian refugee route could freeze to death: UN

GENEVA — Thousands of refugee children travelling along the migration route through Turkey and southeastern Europe are at risk from a sustained spell of freezing weather in the next two weeks, the United Nations and aid agencies said on Tuesday.

The UN weather agency said it forecast below-normal temperatures and heavy snowfall in the next two weeks in the eastern Balkan peninsula, Turkey, the eastern Mediterranean and Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan.

“Many children on the move do not have adequate clothing or access to the right nutrition,” said Christophe Bouluerac, spokesman for the UN children’s agency UNICEF. “Asked if children could freeze to death, he told a news briefing: “The risk is clearly very, very high.”

Children were coming ashore on the Greek island of Leros on Saturday wearing T-shirts and soaking wet after travelling on unsavoury rubber dinghies, the charity Save the Children said in a statement.

“Aid workers at the border reception centre in Presevo say there is six inches of snow on the ground and children are arriving with blue lips, distressed and shaking from the cold,” it said.

It said temperatures were forecast to drop to -20 degrees Celsius (-4°F) in Presevo in Serbia and -13 degrees (9°F) on the Greek border with Macedonia.—Reuters
Transgenic mosquito ready to join Brazil’s war on Zika virus

BRASILIA — A genetically modified mosquito has helped reduce the proliferation of mosquitoes spreading Zika and other dangerous viruses in Brazil, its developers said on Tuesday.

The self-limiting strain of the Aedes aegypti mosquito was developed by Oxitec, the UK-subсидary of US synthetic biology company Intrexon. The male mosquitoes are modified so their offspring will die before reaching adulthood and being able to reproduce.

Oxitec, which produces the mosquitoes in Campinas, announced it will build a second facility in nearby Piracicaba, Sao Paulo state, following strong results there in controlling the population of the Aedes vector that also carries the dengue virus.

Zika virus, first detected in Africa in the 1940s, was unknown in the Americas until last year when it appeared in northeastern Brazil. The virus has quickly spread through Latin America.

Brazilian health authorities have linked the Zika outbreak to a surge in the number of babies born with unusually small heads, a damaging neurological condition called microcephaly.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a travel advisory last week warning pregnant women to avoid 14 countries and territories in the Caribbean and Latin America affected by the virus.

With Brazil’s rainy season underway, authorities are scrambling to fight the seasonal surge in mosquito populations.

Two weeks ahead of Carnival celebrations, a highlight of Brazil’s tourism calendar, officials want to stem international concern about the virus. They also want to reassure travellers who plan to attend the opening ceremonies of the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

There is no vaccine or treatment for Zika, which causes mild fever and rash.

Oxitec said its proprietary OX513A mosquito succeeded in reducing wild larvae of the Aedes mosquito by 82 per cent in a neighborhood of Piracicaba, where 25 million of the transgenic insects were released between April and November. Authorities reported a big drop in dengue cases in the area.

“This is a powerful and versatile tool that can dramatically reduce the levels of infection, which is the core of Brazil’s prevention strategy right now,” said Oxitec business development director in Brazil, Glen Slade.

The transgenic mosquito known as OX513A was approved by Brazil’s National Technical Commission for Biosafety (CTNBio), but needs authorisation from health surveillance regulator Anvisa to move to commercial production.

Oxitec began as a spin-off from Oxford University and was acquired in September by Intrexon, which has provided resources to invest in an expansion to fight the mosquito causing Brazil’s public health emergency, Slade said.

CDC issues guidelines for pregnant women during Zika outbreak

CHICAGO — The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Tuesday issued guidelines for doctors caring for pregnant women who might have been exposed to Zika virus, a mosquito-borne infection that can cause brain damage in a developing fetus.

The new guidelines, first reported by Reuters, lay out recommendations for doctors whose pregnant patients have traveled to areas with Zika virus transmission.

They follow a travel advisory issued by the CDC on Friday warning pregnant women to avoid travel to 14 countries and territories in the Caribbean and Latin America affected by the virus.

In Brazil, Zika has been linked to a rising number of cases of microcephaly, a condition associated with small head size and brain damage. Tourism officials in that country have tried to play down the risks as the country gears up for Carnival and the 2016 Olympics, the first in South America.

On Saturday, health officials confirmed the birth of the first baby born with microcephaly in the United States attributed to the virus. The child was born in Hawaii to a mother who had become ill with Zika virus while living in Brazil last May.

There is no vaccine or treatment for Zika, which causes mild fever and rash. An estimated 80 per cent of people infected with the virus have no symptoms at all, making it difficult for pregnant women to know whether they have been infected.

In its latest to doctors, the CDC urges providers to ask pregnant women about their travel history. Women who have traveled to regions in which Zika is active and who report symptoms during or within two weeks of travel should be offered a test for Zika virus infection.

Those who test positive should be offered an ultrasound to check the fetus’s head size or check for calcium deposits in the brain, two indicators of microcephaly. These women should also be offered a test of their amniotic fluid called amniocentesis to confirm the presence of Zika virus.

Slow heart rate not linked to increased risk of heart disease

WASHINGTON — A slower than normal heartbeat, known as bradycardia, does not increase the risk of developing heart disease, a US study said Tuesday.

“For a large majority of people with a heart rate in the 40s or 50s who have no symptoms, the prognosis is very good,” lead author Ajay Dhurdo, instructor in internal medicine at the Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, said in a statement.

“Our results should be reassuring for those diagnosed with asymptomatic bradycardia,” Dhurdo said.

The heart usually beats between 60 and 100 times a minute in an adult at rest. But with bradycardia, the heart beats fewer than 50 times a minute. The condition can cause light-headedness, shortness of breath, fainting or chest pain due to the heart not pumping enough oxygen-rich blood through the body.

However, until now, there had not been any research to determine if a slow heart rate contributed to the development of cardiovascular disease.

In the new study, researchers looked at 6,733 participants aged 45 to 84 who did not have cardiovascular disease when first recruited into this study, but who may have been on heart-rate-modifying medications frequently used to treat hypertension.

Study participants were followed for more than 10 years to monitor cardiovascular events and mortality.

East China Province reports 1st H7N9 case this winter

XIAMEI — East China’s Fujian Province on Tuesday confirmed its first human infection of H7N9 bird flu virus this winter.

The patient from Zhangpu County was confirmed to have the virus on Saturday. The patient is being treated and is in stable condition, the local publicity department said.

The county authorities have ordered to halt livestock sales in three townships in a bid to reduce the risk of infection.

On Tuesday, health authorities in Shanghai said that one of the city’s two confirmed H7N9 patients has basically recovered and another is no longer critical.

The two are a 59-year-old man and a 58-year-old woman.
Venezuela Congress plans to investigate PDVSA, China loans

CARACAS — Venezuela’s new opposition-led Congress plans to investigate state-run oil company PDVSA’s [PDVSAUL] financial health and hefty Chinese loans, a lawmaker said on Tuesday.

The OPEC member country depends on oil for nearly all of its export revenue. With the political opposition in control of the National Assembly since this month, rivals of leftist President Nicolas Maduro want to use their new perch to push for greater transparency and accountability at PDVSA.

“We want to know the real state of PDVSA’s books,” Elias Matta, an opposition lawmaker and vice president of the energy and oil commission, told Reuters on the sidelines of the National Assembly.

“The country wants to know how much oil came from the Chinese funds were spent. We also want to investigate what the real cost of production is. And why haven’t they done the output increases they talked about so much? We’re going to have a lot of work in this commission,” he added with a smile.

Venezuela has received some $50 billion in financing from China through an arrangement under which it pays loans in shipments of crude and fuel.

The financing, whose fine print is not disclosed, is a crucial boost to a country that hails from the traditional oil-producing state of Zulia, on the border with Colombia.

Congress may also seek to call in Rafael Ramirez, who presided over PDVSA for a decade and is now Venezuela’s envoy to the United Nations in New York, according to Matta.

“We want a healthy oil industry, an oil industry that can generate the income we so badly need right now,” he added before slipping into the legislative session.— Reuters

Argentina court triggers search for Franco-era victims in Spain

GUADALAJARA (Spain) — Spanish campaigners dug up a mass grave on Tuesday in a search for victims of the country’s civil war and the fascist dictatorship that followed.

A historical memory that has been a crucial boost to the country’s economy is the fascist dictatorship led by Francisco Franco, who ruled from 1939 civil war and the subsequent 36-year dictatorship of General Francisco Franco, until his death in 1975.

But building legal cases in Spain has met with mixed success, and the court’s investigation, which helped to new political alternatives resonate, even as many turn to new political alternatives that represent a break with the transitional-era forces.

For Spaniards born since their country’s return to democracy after Franco’s death, the civil war divisions and stories still resonate, even as many turn to new political alternatives that represent a break with the transitional-era forces.

A historical memory association, which helped to identify, warn, locate and deal with mass graves, arguing such efforts were long overdue.

Campaigners hope the latest exhumation could open the door to more of such efforts to new political alternatives that represent a break with the transitional-era forces.

Experts say drugs enter Mexico to the north. Smuggling routes narrow the closer the shipments get to Rosario, increasing violence among gangs that want to control the final steps toward the shipping lanes of the South Atlantic.— Reuters

Argentina, citing emergency, authorises force against drug flights

BUENOS AIRES — Argentina decreed measures on Tuesday designed to help fight drug trafficking, vowing to crack down on smugglers using the country as a transshipment point for Bolivian and Peruvian cocaine destined for the lucrative markets of Europe.

Declarations of a widespread public security emergency, the country’s new president said the army would be allowed to “identify, warn, intimidate and use force” against drug flights.

“The resolution includes strong control of air space,” said a statement from Mauricio Macri, who won the presidency in November promising to straighten out Argentina’s troublesome economy and step up anti-narcotics efforts after what he called years of inaction by his predecessor, Cristina Fernandez.

The measure overturns Argentina’s border security network, promising efficient coordination of customs and law enforcement.

It came days after the end of a two-week manhunt for three criminals convicted of drug-related killings, whose escape from prison gripped the country and pointed to corruption in the security forces. Argentina is a major soy, wheat and corn exporter. International drug enforcement officials have called the country’s main grains port city, Rosario, the “Tijuana of Argentina,” comparing it to the Mexican border city used to move cocaine into the United States.

Experts say drugs enter Argentina from Andean cocaine-producing countries to the north. Smuggling routes narrow the closer the shipments get to Rosario, increasing violence among gangs that want to control the final steps toward the shipping lanes of the South Atlantic.— Reuters

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Argentina’s President Mauricio Macri. Photo: Reuters

Argentina’s envoy to the United Nations in New York, according to Matta.

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Congo cobalt mined by children may be in your mobile phone

KINSHASA — Cobalt used in batteries for phones, laptop and electric vehicles could come from mines in Democratic Republic of Congo that use child labour, an Amnesty International report said on Tuesday.

Working with campaign group African Resources Watch (Afrawatch), Amnesty accused technology giants including Apple, Samsung SDI and Sony of lax oversight of the supply of cobalt from mines in Congo to smelters and on to battery-makers.

As a result, consumer products sold across the globe could contain traces of the metal produced each year by informal Congolese mines without companies knowing, the report said.

“It is a major paradox of the digital era that some of the world’s richest, most innovative companies are able to market incredibly sophisticated devices without being required to show where they source raw materials for their components,” Afrawatch executive director Emmanuel Umpula said.

In a statement issued in response to Amnesty’s research, Apple said it had a “zero tolerance policy” towards child labour and was evaluating ways to improve its “identification of labour and environmental risks”.

Samsung SDI said it conducted written evaluations and on-site inspections of all suppliers to certify compliance with human rights, labour, ethics, environment and health standards. Sony did not respond to emailed requests for comment.

Millions of Congolese work in informal mining, with rudimentary tools and usually without legal authorisation. They often scavenge in the waste heaps of larger mines.

The report, based on research in Congo’s mining heartland, singled out a smelter in southern Congo owned by Congolese mining company, International Cobalt Mining (ICM), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Chinese mineral giant Hejiang Huayou Cobalt Ltd.

The report alleged that ICM did not check the source of the cobalt it purchased from local buying houses, leaving to a “high risk” that it came from mines where children and other workers were exposed to hazardous conditions.

The researchers interviewed 17 children at five mines where they said children as young as seven scavenged for rocks containing cobalt. The researchers said they saw workers from the mines queuing to sell cobalt to buying houses that claimed to sell to CDM. Huayou Cobalt is the largest cobalt chemicals producer in China and sold almost $235 million of the metal in 2013, according to the report.

Once smelted, the cobalt is exported to China before being sold to battery manufacturers who claim to supply top-end electronics companies including Apple, Samsung, Sony and 13 others, the report said.

In a written response quoted in the report, Huayou Cobalt said it had “reasonably presumed that the behaviours of suppliers comply with relevant regulations of the DRC and taken the corresponding social responsibilities”. A woman who answered the phone at Huayou Cobalt this week and identified herself as Ms. Yang told Reuters the information in the report was not true as far as she knew but added that she was not very familiar with CDM’s operations.

The report also said none of the 16 companies linked to the CDM smelter provided enough detail to researchers to independently verify the origins of the cobalt used in their products. Only one acknowledged the link with the smelter plant.

Reuters could not independently verify any link between the companies and the smelter plant.

Samsung said Amnesty was “very accurate” and “it was very hard to trace the source of the cobalt due to non-disclosure by suppliers and the complexity of supply chains. It denied to Reuters that CDM or Huayou Cobalt were in its supply chain.

Congo’s supply of the metals such as tantalum, tin, tungsten and cobalt has been under scrutiny since 2010, when laws in the United States required US-listed companies to ensure their supply chain was free from these so-called “conflict minerals”.

But cobalt has received scant regulatory attention, although stringent Congo is the source of more than half of global supply. Amnesty and Afrawatch said they hoped the research will trigger action.—Reuters

REFERENCE PAGE

GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

WORLD

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (CONSULTING SERVICES — FIRMS SELECTION)

Country: MYANMAR

Project: Ayearywady Integrated River Basin Management (AIRBM) Project

Credit No.: IDA 55590

PROJECT ID: PJ14648

Assignment Title: Preparation of Detailed Designs and Construction Supervision of PMU building at DWR Compound

Reference No. C1.4.21

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, National Water Resources Committee (NWRC) has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Ayearywady Integrated River Management (AIRBM) Project Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems (DWR). MOI is the implementing agency of the AIRBM through the Project Management Unit (PMU) established under the supervision of the secretariat of NWRC and DG of DWR, and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services.

The consulting services (“the Services”) include:

1) Preparation of detailed engineering designs required for construction of the new building of approximately 1200 m² located at DWR Compound, Yangon. Terms of Reference (TOR) and the Preliminary designs are available in the PMU Office at the address given below for review of the interested consultants.

2) Preparation of associated technical specifications and BOQs

3) Assistance in preparation of bidding documents

4) Supervision of the construction activities during the construction period.

Designs are expected to be completed approximately within 2 months and, following the tender of the construction works, construction of the building is expected to be completed in approximately 15 months.

The PMU now invites eligible consulting firms (“Consultants”) to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services.

The short listing criteria are:

• Reputable Architect / Architectural firms with combined experience in the provision of Engineering and planning and/or construction supervision services with at least 10 years of experience with a demonstrable track record of rendering architectural concept / design and construction supervision services.

• Architectural and Engineering Design Consultancy firms shall have a Team Leader/Civil Engineer a Graduate in Civil Engineering with at least 5 years of Experience in designing and preparing construction Design.

• The Consultancy firm should have completed and worked for at least 3 projects in the last 5 years at the same level.

The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to paragraph 1.9 of the World Bank’s Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants [under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants] by World Bank Borrowers dated July 2014 (“Consultant Guidelines”), setting forth the World Bank’s policy on conflict of interest.

Consultants may associate with other firms in the form of a joint venture or a sub consultancy to enhance their qualifications. Consultants may associate with other firms in the form of a joint venture or a sub consultancy to enhance their qualifications.

A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the Selection Based on the Consultants’ Qualifications (CQS) method set out in the Consultant Guidelines. Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours (8:30 – 16:00 hours).

Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by mail, or by e-mail) by 12 February 2016.

Ayearywady Integrated River Basin Management (AIRBM) Project, CO DWR, Ministry of Transport

Attn: U Win Hlaing, Project Director

AIRBM Mailing Address: Room (7) Building (1), MICT Park, Hlaing Campus, Yangon, Myanmar

E-mail: dwr.airbm@gmail.com, componentldr@gmail.com

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV YANGON STAR VOY NO (049 7JR)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV YANGON STAR VOY NO (049 7JR) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MLP where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: M/S CMA CGM

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV SINGAPORE BRIDGE VOY NO (125N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SINGAPORE BRIDGE VOY NO (125N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P.A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: M/S SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINE

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV DYNAMIC OCEAN 03 VOY NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV DYNAMIC OCEAN 03 VOY NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.I.P.T-1 where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: M/S BAY LINE SHIPPING PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301186
LOS ANGELES — For the first time ever, this year’s Grammy Awards will be aired live in the Pacific and Mountain time zones.

Stations that choose to participate in the live broadcast will air the 58th annual award show from 5-8:30pm PST and 6-9:30pm MST. Last year’s Grammys received 24.8 million viewers, reported Billboard.

“We’ve discussed this with CBS for years, but a variety of factors came together this year, and we collectively agreed that we had the perfect opportunity to try a new model and see how viewers respond,” said the Recording Academy and GRAMMY Foundation president Neil Portnow.

“I’m very pleased to share that, for the first time, west coast TV viewers will be able to watch the GRAMMY Awards live.”

The CBS awards show will join the Oscars, the Emmys and the Golden Globes in being broadcast live coast-to-coast.

Jack S. Cohen said that the upcoming Grammy Awards at the Staples Centre in Los Angeles on 15 February, now airing live across the country via participating CBS affiliates and owned stations at 8pm EST.—PTI

Lady Gaga to perform tribute to David Bowie at Grammys?

NEW YORK — Pop star Lady Gaga will reportedly perform a tribute to legendary musician David Bowie, who died last week after battling cancer, at the upcoming 2016 Grammy Awards.

Organisers are planning a tribute to Bowie at the upcoming ceremony and are considering Gaga to be part of it, reported the New York Post.

“Lady Gaga is quietly mourning David Bowie and will pay tribute to him at the Grammy Awards,” sources said.

Another source close to the 29-year-old songstress added, “There’s been discussions about a Bowie tribute, but nothing is confirmed yet.”

Since she began working in the music industry years ago, Gaga has made no secret of her love and admiration for Bowie.—PTI

Grammys to air live on West Coast for first time
TOKYO — Novelists Yukiko Motoya (C) and Yusho Takiguchi (R), winners of the Akutagawa Prize, hold up their award-winning works while posing for a photo at a hotel in Tokyo on January 19, 2016. The awards will be presented at a ceremony in Tokyo in late February. Photo: Kyodo News

Bollywood A lister’s off-beat on screen pairing in 2016

MUMBAI — The year 2016 will see Bollywood top stars, from the three Khans — Shah Rukh, Aamir and Salman to Hrithik Roshan and Ajay Devgn, pair opposite relatively younger and fresh faces on screen.

Shah Rukh, who in the past has given a dream start to the career of actresses like Anushka Sharma and Deepika Padukone, will be seen opposite newcomer in his upcoming two films “Fan” and “Raees”.

Popular face of Pakistan entertainment industry, Mahira Khan will be making her Bollywood debut opposite the 50-year-old actor in “Raees”.

While in Maneesh Sharma’s “Fan”, Shah Rukh will share screen space with debutantes Waluscha De Sousa and Shriya Pilgaonkar, daughter of Marathi actor Sachin.

Aamir will be seen opposite popular TV actress Sakshi Tanwar in his sports-drama “Dangal”. Sakshi, best-known for playing the role of Parvati in the hit TV show, “Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki”, is playing the “Dhoom 3” actor’s wife in the film. Salman, too, will be seen for the first time opposite actress Anushka Sharma in Yash Raj Film’s “Sultan”.

Anushka previously worked with Shah Rukh and Aamir in “Jab Tak Hai Jaan” and “PK” respectively.

Superstar Akshay Kumar, who has earlier enjoyed successful on-screen pairing with Sonakshi Sinha, Katrina Kaif and Priyanka Chopra, will be seen with actress Nimrat Kaur in “Airlift”.

The film marks Nimrat’s second full-fledged role after her breakthrough movie “The Lunchbox”.

Amitabh Bachchan will be seen in Ajay Devgan’s upcoming movie “Shivaay”.

Another Khan to be seen with a new female face will be actor Aamir Khan. The “Talvar” actor will be playing husband to Iranian-French actress Golshifteh Farahani in Anup Singh’s “The Song of Scorpions”.

Ashutosh Gowariker’s next “Mohenjo-Daro”, Hrithik will share screen space with former beauty pageant contestant Pooja Hegde, who makes her Bollywood debut with the period drama.

This will be the second time the “Bang Bang!” star will be paired with a new face after his own debut “Kaho Na... Pyar Hai!” which also marked the Bollywood inings of actress Ameesha Patel.

Grand-niece of legendary actor Dilip Kumar and Saira Banu, Sayesha Saigal, will be paired opposite Ajay in his much-ambitious Diwali release “Shivaay”.

Aamir Khan is being described as the most watched actor of 2016. The actor’s wife in the film.

Novelists Yukiko Motoya (C) and Yusho Takiguchi (R) winners of the Akutagawa Prize for up-and-coming authors, and Bumpei Aoyama, winner of the Naoki Prize for popular fiction, hold up their award-winning works while posing for a photo at a hotel in Tokyo on 19 January 2016. The awards will be presented at a ceremony in Tokyo in late February. Photo: Kyodo News

Snow disrupts traffic in central Japan

NAGOYA — Heavy snow hit wide areas of the Japanese archipelago yesterday, with traffic disrupted in the Tokai region of central Japan which is usually accustomed to snowfall.

The cities of Nagoya and Gifu saw up to 9 centimetres of snow. Bullet train services on the Tokaido Shinkansen Line were delayed by up to about 70 minutes, inconveniencing around 110,000 people, according to Central Japan Railway Co.

At Chubu airport in Aichi Prefecture, two international flights bound for Seoul and China’s Tianjin and six domestic flights to such destinations as Sapporo and Kyushu were canceled, the airport operator said.

JR Nagoya Station was crowded with passengers affected by the traffic disruption due to the snow.

In the city of Naktasugawa in Gifu Prefecture, two people in a light truck hit sustained minor injuries when they collided with an oncoming snowplow, police said.—Kyodo News

A woman walks her bicycle on a snow-filled road near Nagoya Castle in central Japan on 20 January. Heavy snow and stormy winds were expected to continue on the day in wide areas of the country, mainly along the Sea of Japan coast. Photo: Kyodo News

Takiguchi, Motoya share Akutagawa award, Aoyama wins Naoki prize

TOKYO — Novelists Yusho Takiguchi and Yukiko Motoya have jointly won the prestigious Akutagawa Prize for emerging authors, while Bumpei Aoyama has won the Naoki Prize for popular fiction, the selection committee said Tuesday.

Takiguchi, a 33-year-old native of Tokyo, won the 154th prize for his work “Shindeinai Mono” (Those Who Are Not Dead), about the memory of renowned Japanese writer Izu Ojima and his family. The work depicts a picture of society in the Edo period.

Motoya, a 36-year-old playwright and theater producer hailing from central Japan’s Ishikawa Prefecture, won with “Irui Konin” (The Tale of a Different Sort). The humorous work describes a married couple whose faces come to resemble each other.

Motoya had been nominated for the prize three times in the past.

Aoyama — a 67-year-old native of Yokohama near Tokyo, who began writing historical fiction in his 60s — was awarded the Naoki Prize for his work “Tsuma o Motoreba” (Taking a Wife), a collection of stories depicting a cross-section of Japanese society in the Edo period.

The awards will be presented at a ceremony in Tokyo in late February, with each carrying a million yen ($8,500) in prize money.

The Akutagawa Prize was founded in 1935 in memory of renowned Japanese novelist Ryunosuke Akutagawa, while the Naoki award, also created in 1935, is named after popular writer Sajiro Naoki.

Nominations for both prizes are received twice yearly.—Kyodo News

Prime Time

(11:00 Am - 03:00 Pm) - Wednesday Repeat (07:00 Am - 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Pm - 07:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (07:00 Am - 11:00 Am)

Prime Time

(07:00 Pm - 11:00 Pm) - Monday Repeat (07:00 Am - 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Am - 03:00 Pm) - Wednesday Repeat (07:00 Am - 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Pm - 07:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (07:00 Am - 11:00 Am)

From 21.1.2016 (Thursday) 06:00 Pm To 22.1.2016 (Friday) 06:00 Pm

This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.
Villa put league troubles aside to advance in FA Cup

LONDON — Aston Villa forgot their Premier League woes and moved into the fourth round of the FA Cup with an unconvincing 2-0 win over fourth tier Wycombe Wanderers in their third round replay at Villa Park on Tuesday.

A 75th minute header from Ciaran Clark and a last minute strike from Idrissa Guaye settled the tie as Villa, beaten finalists last season but currently bottom of the Premier League, won for only the fourth time this season to set up a home meeting with Manchester City.

West Bromwich Albion, the only other Premier League team in action, were also made to battle for victory over lower league opposition, seeing off Championship (second tier) struggling Bristol City 1-0 at Ashton Gate.

The home side, who sacked manager Steve Cotterill last week, kept the Baggies out until the 52nd minute when Venezuela international Salomon Rondon, West Brom’s record 12.0 million pounds (£17.00 million) signing, trapped the ball on his chest before sweeping it home.

West Brom will face third tier Peterborough United at home in the next round. Like Villa, debt-ridden Bolton Wanderers are another club whose glory days seem long gone but they also enjoyed a first round replay at Villa Park on Tuesday.

Wanderers in their third round 2-0 win over fourth tier Wycombe moved into the fourth round of their Premier League woes and manager Steve Cotterill last week, City 1-0 at Ashton Gate.

Costa Rica’s international Salomon Rondon, 52nd minute when Venezuela international Salomon Rondon, West Brom’s record 12.0 million pounds (£17.00 million) signing, trapped the ball on his chest before sweeping it home.

West Brom will face third tier Peterborough United at home in the next round. Like Villa, debt-ridden Bolton Wanderers are another club whose glory days seem long gone but they also enjoyed a first round replay at Villa Park on Tuesday.

MELBOURNE — Defending champion Serena Williams ramped up her bid for a 22nd grand slam title with a dominant 6-1, 6-2 win yesterday over unseeded Taiwanese Hsieh Su-wei to charge into the Australian Open third round yesterday.

The top seed had to survive a tough opening match against Italian Camila Giorgi but destroyed the 90th-ranked Hsieh in exactly one hour in glorious sunshine at Rod Laver Arena.

Hsieh, a two-time grand slam doubles champion, prised her seventh ace of the match from the back of her hand, and stood first in the Myanmar Chess players as our players are well experienced and they have enough time to prepare,” U Myo Zaw Min of the MCF said. According to the MCF, Win Zaw Tun beat international grandmasters and stood first in the Myanmar International Open Chess Tournament 2015. Likewise, other Myanmar chess players did well in the tournament.

“Shaparovich has been working on mixing up her game, which some pundits have seen as too one-dimensional to beat top seed Williams, who has long dominated the Russian. “When I’m aggressive and I have depth on my shots, it’s just good to have that variety to bring (players) in, to move forward myself,” said Sharapova, who next faces American Lauren Davis.

“I mean, I had a couple of good (drop-shots), I had a couple of really crappy ones. I’d say it was pretty mediocre today. “It’s actually something that I had to add, because I was getting really frustrated losing to my hitting partner all the time.”

“Just stood so far back behind the baseline, I was like, just can’t handle him beating me so often. “I have to just change things around. That’s kind of when I started getting into that little bit.” “He was a little surprised (laughter). But it started working, so that was good.”