Endangered Ayeyawady dolphin population increases

Aye Min Soe & Aung Thant Khaing

FOLLOWING a 14-day survey conservationists said yesterday that they have recorded 65 Ayeyawady dolphins during their trip, but estimated the number could be around 70.

“During the trip, we spotted 65 dolphins including a baby dolphin. But, in Bhamo, we could only see eight dolphins there because the river water rose dramatically with wood and debris floating in the river hindering our work,” said U Kyaw Hla Thein, the project manager of the dolphin conservation team of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in Myanmar. The team recorded 58 in 2015.

The survey in February also found 58 dolphins between Mandalay and Bhamo, which is a drop from 72 in 2004.

The team spotted the baby dolphin while carrying out the conservation efforts in September last year. It became the first baby dolphin recorded in 2015. The team also found three baby dolphins in December 2014.

“The significant part of this trip is that we did not see any illegal battery-shock fishing though we found during last year’s survey,” said Kyaw Hla Thein.

The conservationists from the Fisheries Department and Wildlife Conservation Society (Myanmar) also educated people during the trip at 10 villages, distributing pamphlets, giving educative talks and showing educative movies to villagers.

“Ayeyawady dolphins are on the brink of extinction. All the people are obliged to participate in the conservation as a national duty,” said U Khin Maung Aye, Deputy Minister from Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development, at a press conference yesterday held in Mandalay. The Ayeyawady dolphins are found near sea coasts and in estuaries and rivers around Southeast Asia, especially in Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam.

WCS annual surveys have shown that the number of the dolphins has increased from 17 or 18 in 2005 to 24 in February 2014, along a 72 kilometre stretch of the Ayeyawady River between Mandalay and Kyaukmyaung. Most of the dead dolphins were found near Bhamo and Katha and were caused by illegal fishing, according to the fisheries department.

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FILLING THE BIG CHAIR

Presidential nominations moved forward to 10 March

THE Pyidaungsu Hluttaw announced yesterday that it will hold the meetings of the three presidential electoral colleges on 10 March for making presidential nominations, which was previously scheduled to be held on 17 March.

The original date was set only two weeks before the new government was scheduled to take office on 1 April. On 10 March, each of the two chambers will nominate its vice-presidential candidate, while the military MPs, who are guaranteed a quarter of the seats, nominate the third.

The president then picks the cabinet, which will take over from the incumbent government on April 1. It is unclear if the presidential vote will take place on the same day as the nominations are announced.—GNLM
Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker meets foreign guests

SPEAKER of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw Mahn Win Khai Thaun received United States Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Derek Mitchell, Thai Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Pisanu Suvanajota and Mr. Vijay Nambiar, United Nations Secretary-General’s special adviser on Myanmar, separately in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Also present at the calls were Deputy Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw U Aye Thaung, U Zon Hnyal Htan, chair of Amyotha Hluttaw International Relations, Inter-parliamentary Friendship and Cooperation Committee, and officials of Amyotha Hluttaw Office.

—Myanmar News Agency

Construction of roads in Southern Shan launched

U TIN NGEW, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development, Mr. Weber-Lortsch, the German Ambassador to Myanmar as well Mr. Christian Richter, KfW Country Director to Myanmar, attended the Inauguration Ceremony for the “Rural Development Programme” (RDP) at Taunggyi-Taunglaylone Road in Taunggyi Township in the southern Shan State on 24 February.

The German Government has committed 18 million EUR grant to support the development of rural areas by upgrading and constructing rural roads in the southern Shan State.

German Ambassador Mr. Weber-Lortsch, emphasized in his speech that regional mobility and access to school and markets are essential to improve living conditions and income of rural households. The Department of Rural Development is doing an excellent job by improving and expanding the rural road network but the need is huge. Therefore, Germany - so far as the only Development Partner - is supporting Myanmar in this important area, he added.

The programme is implemented in the framework of German Financial Cooperation by DRD of the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development with support of KfW Development Bank. In its first phase three roads with 30 km will be rehabilitated in 2016. The total programme comprises rural roads of more than 150 km, which will benefit about 100,000 people living close to the roads.

Additionally, the DRD is trained in road maintenance, planning, procurement and supervision to deepen essential capacities for the successful handling of road construction projects.—GNLM

Mandalay chief minister meets scouts from regions, states

Mr. Ahmad Al Muzaini, Charge d’Affaires a.i. welcomes His Excellency U Htin Aung, Deputy Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Security and Madame on the Occasion of the 55th National Day & the 25th Anniversary of the Liberation Day of the State of Kuwait in Novotel Hotel, Yangon. PHOTO: GNLM

The chief minister cordially greeted the scouts, and heard reports on arrangements being made for the camp by officials concerned. The 4th scout camp at Mt. Popa is set to last for five days till 5 March, featuring talks by senior scouts and scouting activities.— Ko Latt (MNA)
Food is a sine qua non

The following is unofficial translation of the message sent by President U Thein Sein of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on the occasion of the Peasants’ Day which falls on 2 March 2016.—Ed

To the esteemed peasantry,

Today is the auspicious Peasants’ Day on which the historic occasion is marked to honour our peasantry across the nation. On this auspicious occasion, I wish all the peasantry physical and mental wellbeing and great success in agricultural farming.

Our government, elected for the first time by the people of the Republic of the Union Myanmar through the multiparty democratic system, will turn 5 years old in a few days. Now preparation works are underway to transfer the duties of the State to the government elected by the people during the second election.

As Myanmar is an agrarian based country which has to rely mainly on the agriculture sector, it is a must for us to focus on the progress of the agricultural sector to improve the socio-economic life of the peasantry which constitutes over 70 per cent of the population.

The duty to ensure the development of socio-economic life of the peasantry has been directly linked to the duty to cement the national strength.

During the five-year tenure of our government, better foundations — providing more agriculture capital, supplying hybrid seeds, disseminating advanced farming technologies to farmers enabling them to use the techniques in the place of conventional methods, transforming conventional farming into a mechanised one implementing river water pumping projects and dam projects — have been laid.

We will develop the duty of ensuring development of the agricultural sector to be carried out throughout the nation by the next government in a systematic manner to meet more success.

As the development of paddy, which is staple food of the country, is related directly with food security which is daily consumption, the government was able to improve the hybrid paddy strains, thereby increasing per-acre yield significantly and doubling the income of farmers.

For the surplus of crops including rice from the domestic consumption to be able to compete in the international market, post harvest technology has been applied to manufacture the value added products.

The basic needs such as the wholesale markets have been opened in the private sector to enable the farmers to sell their products in the nation and export them through price competition.

It is essential for the farmers to have access to modern farming technologies and with this end in view, the tasks of educating farmers are being carried out together with providing weather news and information about markets and prices in a timely manner. For the farmers’ relaxation the entertainment programme namely “Song Competitions to Honour Farmers” has been introduced along with the education programme, “Farmers’ Channel” through television.

Esteemed Peasantry,

No one can deny the fact that food is a sine qua non for human. As the world population has increased year after year, it is estimated that it will reach 9 billion by 2050 from the current number of 7 billion. To satisfy the needs of these populations, more food needs to be produced.

At such a time, attempts are to be made to make sure that world food production is not to be disrupted by natural disasters such as global warming, extreme weathers of heat waves, cold waves, torrential rains, snow storms, tropical storms, earthquakes and Tsunami, and man-made disaster, wars stemming from the greed of mankind.

Having an insight into these problems, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar should pay attention to contributing to the fulfillment of world food needs in addition to domestic food security for the sake of generations to come. To achieve this end, farmers are to be encouraged to accelerate their crop production, thereby penetrating foreign markets.

With favourable land and water resources plus weather condition combined with the fact that Myanmar is in a position to fulfill the needs of the world food security. Feeding the world is not only the noble act in pursuit of the national interest but also committing good deeds.

Esteemed Peasantry,

The long term goal of Myanmar’s national interest is to promote socio-economic gain and enhance the interests of farmers. We firmly believe that the next government will inherit the fine traditions and follow the good examples the current government has set in promoting the agricultural sector during its five-year tenure as these are the relentless efforts of the current government for the national interests.

Let me take this opportunity on this auspicious occasion of the Peasants’ Day, to urge the entire peasantry to strive for the accomplishment of the goal of national interest and of their own hand in hand with the entire citizenship.

President U Thein Sein receives outgoing US ambassador to Myanmar

President U Thein Sein shakes hands with United States Ambassador Mr. Derek Mitchell. PHOTO: MNA

PRESIDENT of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein received a delegation led by United States Ambassador Mr. Derek Mitchell who has completed his tour of duty of Myanmar in a hall at the Presidential Palace yesterday.

During the call, work progress in bilateral relations and further cooperation between the two countries were discussed.

Also present were Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Ministers U Soe Thane and U Ye Htut and officials.—Myanmar News Agency

Endangered Ayeyawady dolphin population increases

Illegal electric-shock fishing is blamed for killing some dolphins, while some were caught in fishing nets. In Myanmar, Ayeyawady dolphins have been known to drive fish toward fishers using cast nets in return for some of the fishers’ catch.

However, now that many fishers on the Ayeyawady river use illegal battery-shock fishing techniques, the dolphins often also fall prey to electrocution.

Illegal battery-shock fishing is the greatest challenge for conservationists and local authorities are trying to save the endangered species, according to Myanmar’s fisheries department. The Myanmar government has banned electrofishing nationwide, punishing violators with a three-year prison sentence and a K300,000 fine.

To prevent electro fishing in the river, government authorities and conservationists held a workshop in Mandalay in September.

“The fisherman who use electrical devices for fishing do not intend to kill dolphins. Unfortunately, the dolphins follow the fish and die when they are shocked or captured,” U Kyaw Hla Thein said. “We will step up our efforts to educate them.” Local fishermen also spotted an Ayeyawady dolphin in the country’s Ayeyawady delta in September last year.—GNLM

>> From page 1

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Mandalay promotes Myanmar martial arts among youth

WITH the aim of promoting and conserving Myanmar martial arts techniques among younger generations, the Mandalay Region Sports and Physical Education Committee held the Myanmar Thaing Bando Competition of All Myanmar Thaing Associations Chairman’s Cup in Mandalay on 28 February. Present at the opening ceremony were officials from the Mandalay Region Sports and Physical Education Department, members of the Regional Myanmar Thaing Subcommittee, members of the Myanmar Thaing Clubs in Mandalay and contestants.

An official from the Mandalay Region Sports and Physical Education Department gave an opening speech, and the joint secretary of Myanmar Thaing Subcommittee elaborated the contest rules. After the contest, officials presented awards to the winners. Sixty participants from 12 central Myanmar Thaing clubs took part in the contest. The contest was held on 28 and 29 February.

Myanmar Thaing, or Myanmar traditional martial arts, originated more than two thousand years ago during the reign of King Okkalapa, who ruled Dagon, the old city of Yangon. Myanmar Thaing has been an official art of self-defence cherished and practised among warriors of the royal army through different eras and dynasties. It was one of the eighteen compulsory specialisations of royal princes in ancient times, and it was used in Myanmar’s early nation building and defence, but it declined during the colonial era, after the country lost its independence.

After independence, Myanmar Thaing was revived by patriotic professionals, and the Myanmar Thaing Institute in Yangon was established in 1958 by the worldclass weight lifter U Zaw Wait.

Several institutions are involved in conserving the practice today.—Thida Ko Ko (Mdy)

Crime NEWS

Car accident kills two, injures one

A VEHICLE collided head on with a 12 wheel car on Hpa-An-Thaton road, Hpa-An township, Kayin State on 28 February, leaving two dead and one injured.

The driver of the first vehicle, Kyaw Myaing alias La Kho, 27, with Than Naing, 33, and Maung Paw Oo, 5, on board, crashed with the 12 wheel vehicle driven by one U Soe Lwin, 53, when the former lost control.

The accident killed Kyaw Myaing and Maung Paw Oo on the spot while Than Naing was injured seriously and is now receiving medical care at Hpa-An general hospital. Charges have been filed against the driver by police.—Tun Tun Htway (Hpa-An)

Drunk mob assault students in Thaton

A GROUP of young drunk men attacked students on Shwesayan Pagoda Road in Thaton, Mon State, on Sunday, seriously injuring one student.

Four students who planned to sit for matriculation examinations in March were assaulted by a mob of eight young people wielding knives and sticks when they returned to their homes after spending the day studying at the Alinyaungnaythit Free Education Services Centre. A student named Moe Pyae Sone sustained serious injuries and is currently being treated at a hospital in Yangon.

Saw Pyaw Phyo Paing, 20, a general staff member at the Thaton Township Hospital, and five others named Nyi Nyi Nyein Maung, 17, Zaw Myo Khang, 18, Wai Yan Aung, 23, Sithu Soe, 18, and Thuraing, 20, were arrested in connection with the case. All of the suspected attackers are facing charges under the law at the Thaton Myoma Police Station.

In the wake of the attack, local residents called for the closing of illegal liquor stores in order to make the region safer.

One police officer said: “We called on security police to arrest illegal liquor store proprietors as part of their nightly duties, inviting public participation in the activities.”—Thet Oo

Yabba seized in Aung Pan

AN anti-drug squad seized 170 yabba pills from a motorbike being driven by one Kyout Yoe Chan on Pan Hone-Lashio road on 26 February.

Similarly, local authorities seized 1000 yabba pills at a house owned by one Pan Sein in Aung Pan town, Hle Yoe ward on 28 February.

Ma Mi Yee was found together with the host.

The police have filed charges against them under the Anti-Narcotic Law.—Ko Ye

Ox-cart race to be held at Sa-lin pagoda festival

THERE will be competitive bidding for theatrical show contracts at the Buddhapunjaya festival of Kuthinayon (Shwepyaingyi) pagoda in Sa-lin Township, Magway Region, which is a new venture this year, said U Aye Han Cho, chairman of pagoda board of trustees.

The Buddhapunjaya festival of Kuthinayon (Shwepyaingyi) pagoda is held annually on the full moon of Kason, lasting for a month.

There will also be ox-cart racing and a fine build competition for the oxen.

The oxen of Sa-lin are famous for having a fine build. Most of the main contestants are from Sa-lin, it has been learned.—Zin Lin Htet

Man charged for bike theft

The police stopped Nyein Ko Ko, 21, at the corner of Bayaintnaung and Kyansittlar roads on 26 February. Police have filed charges against the driver.—The mirror

The mirror

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The mirror

The mirror

The mirror

The mirror

The mirror
MIC cancels tender to turn old building into hotel in Yangon

THE Myanmar Investment Commission yesterday announced the cancellation of the winning tender for turning a four-storey building in Yangon into the Inle Lake View Resort as the tender winner failed to begin operations.

According to MIC, Sandar Hotel Co., Ltd and Cho Zaw Construction Company were selected as the tender winner on 22 October, 2014 to turn the building which was the office of Myanmar Export & Import Enterprise previously at the corner of Merchant Road and Maha Bandoola Panchan Road in Kyauktada Township, Yangon, into a hotel of international standard. Although the commission asked the tender winners to begin the operation on 27 October, 2014, no operation has been seen till now, the commission added. —Myanmar News Agency

Myanmar imports hit all-time high for this fiscal year

IMPORTS to Myanmar reached an all time high of US$13.6 billion this January, up $162 million from the previous year, according to an official from the Ministry of Commerce.

The import volumes for this fiscal year were valued at US$13.6 billion according to figures received this year until the end of January, said Director U Win Myint of the ministry.

“There has been an annual increase in the import of iron and steel, vegetable oil, chemical products and household goods.”

Exports of iron and steel, vegetable oil and chemical products increased to $75 million, $18 million and 17 million respectively, said the director.

According to the MIC, the real estate sector has received the most foreign investment with a volume of $230 million for this fiscal year while the mining sector receiving over $2 million, the manufacturing sector $700 million, energy sector $50 million, Hotels and Tourism $100 million and others $131 million in foreign investment.

Myanmar Shwe Ying selected for Yangon traffic control system project

THE Myanmar Shwe Ying Company has been selected to implement a project that includes the establishment of a control centre and the upgrading Yangon’s traffic lights with CCTV cameras, said Saw Tun Mya Aung, Kayin ethnic affairs minister of Yangon Region government.

According to the regional minister, who is also the chair of the tender evaluation committee, Myanmar Shwe Ying Company was chosen from among four finalists, said the chair.

“We made our final decision based on the project presentations of four finalists,” said the chair.

According to tender evaluation committee, the company will implement the project of fitting traffic lights with CCTV cameras and building a control tower in cooperation with China Railway Construction Company (CRCC).

The committee said that the tender winning company pledged to replace damaged street traffic items with new ones within three years and provide free service for five years.

The project is scheduled to be fully completed within six months and a late fine of K100,000 for each day is also set, added the committee.

According to sources, a budget of K20 billion is set to implement the project, and the company won the tender for implementation of the project with the budget of K18.9 billion.

The tender winning company began project operation following the signing of an agreement with the Yangon region government on 2 February.

According to the project, 154 of 192 traffic lights in Yangon will be fitted with CCTV cameras which are linked to the Centre set to be built in an area of People’s Square in Yangon which is aimed at monitoring congested spots and the violation of traffic rules.

Trial phase of KNU hydropower dam to cost $1 million

IT is anticipated that $1 million will be used in the preliminary trial phase of a Karen National Union (KNU) construction of Baw Ka Hta hydropower dam project, located in Nyanglebin district of Bago Region, says Saw Tar Doh Moo, the chair of the KNU central economic committee.

As well as working to have a positive impact on the economy and society, together with a reduction in damages to the environment, there will be engagement with the public during the preliminary phase of the project.

“This is going to be an international standard project but regardless of how much of a positive impact it will have, if the public want it stopped then we will act in the manner their desire dictates. This preliminary stage is to support the right of public participation and decision making, as local citizens were not allowed such privileges in the past when it came to regional projects,” said Saw Tar Doh Moo.

An MOU was signed between the Ministry of Electric Power and KNU Thoolei company during a meeting between both parties on 18 February for the compilation of a two year report on the preliminary experimental phase of the hydropower project.

“Of course we’ll know the results of the preliminary phase of the project once the report has been released. Since project implementation is yet to even get underway, we’re not in a position whereby we can say whether the report will support the building of the [hydropower] dam or not. What I do know is that there is public concern. This report will evaluate the need for companies, who are looking to expand their business enterprises, to have a harmonious relationship with local citizens so that the resources of the region don’t disappear,” added Saw Tar Doh Moo.

There have been attempts by the State to carry out construction of the Baw Ka Hta hydropower dam three times over the last six years – in 1954, 1964 and more recently 2001 – but they were not successful as the area was plagued by armed conflict.—Myitmakha News Agency
South Korea’s Park says door not shut on dialogue with North

SEOUL — Seoul will not shut the door to dialogue with North Korea, South Korean President Park Geun-hye said yesterday, but warned that Pyongyang, facing new UN sanctions, would be subject to even greater pressure as long as it stuck to its nuclear programme.

The UN Security Council is expected to vote on a resolution drafted by the United States and backed by China, the North’s main ally, aimed at punishing Pyongyang for its recent nuclear test and long-range rocket launch.

“The government will not shut the door to dialogue, but as long as the North doesn’t show the will to denuclearise and reduces to change, pressure from us and the international community will continue,” Park said.

The anticipated adoption of new tough sanctions by the Security Council shows there is broad international support to stop the North’s nuclear programme, Park said.

Her comments came in a speech marking a movement in the 1990s to seek Korean independence from colonial ruler Japan.

Park did not make a proposal for fresh dialogue with the North, which last took place in August last year, when the two sides agreed to make efforts to improve ties.

In February, in a shift from her earlier focus on dialogue to engage the North, Park vowed tough action and suspended operations at a jointly run industrial park as punishment for the North’s recent moves.

The North conducted its fourth nuclear test in January and launched a long-range rocket in February, which the Security Council condemned as a violation of existing resolutions that ban the isolated state from using ballistic missile technology.

The proposed new resolution would require UN member states to inspect for illicit goods all cargo passing through their territory or its way to, or from, North Korea.

Earlier, countries only had to do this if they had reasonable grounds to believe there was illicit cargo.

Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council, has sought more time to review the text of the resolution.—Reuters
**Hong Kong bookseller denies kidnapped by China, says to renounce UK citizenship**

HONG KONG — A Hong Kong bookseller and British passport holder who disappeared last year said he had not been kidnapped by Chinese authorities, as many suspect, but had sneaked into China illegally and that he would renounce his British citizenship.

Lee Bo, a dual British and Hong Kong citizen, and four associates went missing over the past half year, sparking fears that Chinese authorities had abducted some of the men and taken them back to China.

The disappearances provoked concern that China was using shadowy tactics to erode the “one country, two systems” formula under which Hong Kong has been governed since its return to China from British rule in 1997.

At least one of the men faces charges for selling and distributing books critical of China’s Communist Party leaders that are banned in China.

In a 20-minute interview with China’s Phoenix Television late on Monday, Lee gave the first detailed account of his disappearance from Hong Kong in December, saying he had returned to China voluntarily.

“I have always felt that I’m a Hong Kong citizen, a Chinese citizen, and because people have used my British nationality to sensationalize and make the situation more complicated, that’s why I’m deciding to give up my British nationality,” said Lee, who appeared calm in the interview.

“Why have I acted so mysteriously? It’s because I’ve had to assist with a mainland Chinese investigation and it required testifying against some people.”

Since he was afraid of reprisals from those he was testifying against, he said, “I used an illegal means to sneak there and I didn’t use my (Chinese) home return permit.”

Lee didn’t give details on how he’d crossed the border into China, or who helped him or when he might return.

“This case is quite complicated... so I need to be questioned for longer. I am very safe and free in China. My relations with law enforcement officers are very good. They treat me very well.”

Some politicians were sceptical and said Lee may have been pressured to try to erase perceptions of Chinese authorities carrying out illegal cross-border enforcement operations.

“I don’t know who helped him sneak over... Was he forced by Chinese police or state security agents?” said James To, a lawmaker with the Democratic Party. “There is still a big question mark.”

Hong Kong Security Secretary Lai Tung-kwok said Hong Kong police would follow up to further clarify the circumstances of Lee’s case, including how he’d entered China.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei, asked about formal requests, a representative of the British consulate in Hong Kong said on Monday.

There was no immediate response from a British consulate representative in Hong Kong. Lee had been “involuntarily removed” to China, British Foreign Minister Philip Hammond said earlier.

Four of the other Hong Kong booksellers, including Gui Minhai, a Swedish national, confirmed on Chinese television on Sunday that they had been detained for “illegal book trading” in mainland China.— Reuters

**Former comfort women protest Philippines-Japan military cooperation**

MANILA — Six Filipino women who were forced to work in Japanese military brothels during World War II led a protest action yesterday in front of Japan’s embassy in the Philippine capital to oppose enhanced military cooperation between the two countries.

“The agreement of the Philippines-Japan military alliance has been made concrete. So our fear that our children, our grandchildren will fall victims again to another generation war and repeat of the comfort women system is also now concrete,” Rechilda Extremadura, executive director of Lila Pilipina (League of Filipino Grandmothers), said at the rally attended also by more than 20 supporters.

“That’s why we say never again to another generation of comfort women and never again to another generation of war victims,” she said, using a euphemism for Asian women who were forced to work in wartime Japanese military brothels.

On Monday, the Philippine defence department and the Japanese Embassy in Manila signed an agreement on Tokyo’s planned transfer of defence equipment and technology to the Southeast Asian country, substantiating the two countries’ strategic partnership.

Extremadura said her group, which seeks to secure justice for former comfort women, sees Japan’s more active military engagement in Asia as linked with the increasing presence of the US military in the region to counter China’s aggressiveness.

“We were treated like pigs. And yet our cries for justice for more than two decades now just fell on deaf ears. Our government just even connived with the Japanese government,” Narcisa Claveria, 85, one of the comfort women who attended the rally, said in a speech.

“I don’t want my fellow Filipino women or my grandchildren to experience what I went through during the war. So while I’m still alive, I’ll carry on our struggle until we get justice. And my children and grandchildren will pursue this when I’m gone,” she added.

The women seek “official apology and just compensation” from the Japanese government, as well as inclusion of the comfort women issue in history textbooks.

Only around 100 Filipino former comfort women remain alive.— Kyodo News

**Cambodians admit to raping French tourists in Thailand —foreign ministry**

BANGKOK — Five Cambodian fishermen have confessed to raping and assaulting French tourists on an isolated Thai beach, Cambodia’s foreign ministry said in a statement yesterday.

Thai police said four French tourists were attacked late on Saturday on Koh Kood, a remote island near Thailand’s maritime border with Cambodia known for its untamed jungle and pristine beaches.

Thai police investigators said the attackers swam from their fishing boat to assault the group and raped two women at knife-point. They were caught while trying to escape.

Cambodia’s Foreign Affairs Ministry said in a statement that the five fishermen confessed to East Sophea, Cambodian Ambassador to Thailand, that they raped and assaulted the tourists.

“During the interview with the Cambodian ambassador the five fishermen confessed to have really been involved in the cases of rape and assault,” the ministry said in a statement.

“It happened while the five fishermen were in a drunk state.”

The five have been charged with rape and violent assault.

It is the latest high-profile case to hit the popular holiday destination, raising serious questions about tourist safety in the Southeast Asian country.— Reuters
Analysts and troubleshooters of the concept of democratic governance have warned of the potential- and at the same time looked for- the same reason looked vertical rock cliffs on both sides. What I learned from the museum was, the cuttings were done with bare hands using basic hand tools. The poor people had to toil away for months with only rice and salted vegetables for food. Some and at the same time looked for very sinister. PRs were forced labourers, who died during the construction of the railway line that lied inside the valley, where the old rail bed had been cleared to provide a passage for the trains to pass through the pass. The cutting of the pass took 12,621 PoWs and about 90,000 civilian forced labourers, who died during the construction of the Death Railway. In the aforementioned article, I made a blunder by stating the number of PoW casualties to be 123621. My sincere apologies to all those who had read that article.

The Hellfire Pass was one of the most difficult and deadly construction site along the Death Railway that linked Thanbyuzayat and Bangkok in the past. There could be many such interesting places along the old rail track, which lied 111 kilometers or 69 miles inside our country. Such places should also be made accessible for those who are interested to visit for various reasons. Some who were involved in the construction of the said railway or their descendants, relatives, friends and countrymen or those with historical interests, like me, may want to visit those places. They would make interesting tourist attractions.

Opinion

Good governance versus democratic governance
Khin Maung Aye

As argued by the neoliberalocrats, good governance depends on marketisation to promote efficiency and overcome corruption. The definition of good governance is extended by the neoliberalocrats to incorporate the diversified democratic principles and practices. They often suggest that principles like freedom and choice are served better by market mechanisms than by voting. Such being the case, the first wave of reforms attempted to roll back the state by means of contracting out and privatisation. Neoliberaloters, in general, contend that the new public management (NPM) is an example of good governance. In contrast, their critics highlight a tension between NPM and democratic ideas. In the view of the critics, when the state contact out, it lost the ability to administer and control public sectors. The second wave also seems to have been driven fundamentally by ideas of promoting efficiency. Its advocates did not reject marketisation but they really emphasise networks, partnership, and joined-up government. Nevertheless, some critics argue that the reforms undermine democracy. In their opinion, the reforms are creating a system of governance that is too complicated for proper, meaningful accountability. Even policy actors whose main concern is efficiency are troubled by the thoughts that falling rates of participation and civic engagement point to a decline in legitimacy that ultimately will undermine the effectiveness of public policy.

It is worth noting that, there is no unanimous agreement on how to reconcile representative democracy with the new governance. It has, therefore, become important to understand the concept of democratic governance, a condition under which the promise of justice, liberty and equality is realised in a democratic political framework, where the government provides opportunities and where people feel secure and contended. In a nutshell, democratic governance can be understood as the capacity of a society to define and establish policies and solve their conflicts in a peaceful manner and within the framework of law.

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@gmail.com with your name and title.

Due to limited 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.

The Hellfire Pass

Khin Maung Myint

The Hellfire Pass must be the worst nightmare of their lives, for those who were involved in the construction of the notorious Death Railway, linking Thailand and Myanmar, during the Second World War (WWII). I had read many interesting, emotional and tragic stories of the hardships and the ordeals of the prisoners of war (PoWs) who had to endure during their constructions. According to many accounts, the working conditions there were the harshest and most difficult along the whole section of the railway line that lied inside Thailand. Those memories of the hardships, the ordeals and the maltreatments they had suffered would never be forgotten and carried with them to their graves.

I was familiar with the Hellfire Pass since my younger days and had some ideas about the hardships, the ordeals and the maltreatments, which the PoWs and the civilian forced labourers had suffered. Those facts became more profound after my visit to the Hellfire Pass as I had an opportunity to observe, firsthand, the rugged and difficult terrain at the location. Also, the museum, close to the site of the Hellfire Pass, provided vivid insights into the atrocities committed on the PoWs and the civilian labourers.

The location of that place is at the Sai Yok township in the Kanchanaburi Province, about 190 kilometers west of Bangkok. It is on a high mountain, which is part of the Tenessian Range or the Tanintharyi Yoma, that straddled our two countries. The place is only reachable by motor vehicles as there are no rail tracks beyond Nam Tok, a few kilometers away. That place might be remote in those days, but it was at the rear of a military establishment, through which it could be easily accessed.

When we arrived at the museum close to the Hellfire Pass, dedicated to those who died and those who had suffered during its construction, there were a few tour buses and many private cars already parked. The museum was crowded with tourists, most were from Australia, America, UK, Europe, Japan and a few locals.

As the museum was too crowded, we decided to look at the notorious Hellfire Pass first. We descended the steep cliff behind the museum, to where the old rail track bed that runs through the pass is located. The height of the cliff is about 200 feet above the rail bed and its sheer face would be almost impossible to descend, if there weren’t the timber boardwalks and stairways mounted on steel frames, zig-zagging down along the cliff face. It was learnt that the museum and the boardwalk stairways were donated by the Australian government. They are situated on the precipice safe and easy descent even for persons of my age. However, the ascent was very challenging for me.

At the bottom of the boardwalk stairways, we set foot directly on the old rail bed. After walking about a hundred meters or so along the trail, the Hellfire Pass came into view. At first glimpse, it gave me a novel mixed feeling—it was very awe-inspiring and at the same time looked very sinister.

Except a short length of rail track inside the pass there was no intact rail line. That short trail that was left in the pass is surrounded by forest and the survivors with the materials from the original rail tracks, to demonstrate how it was done in those days. The narrow gorge cut in the rocky mound obstructing the route, just wide enough to afford a passage for the trains to pass through.

Apart from the section inside the pass, the rail bed is only a few feet from the sheer drop in many places. I was unable to guess the height of that drop, due to a dense jungle of bamboos and large trees covering the slope and the bottom was out of view. However, I assume it must be quite high, judging from the sounds of motor cycles and cars down below in the valley, where there are some villages.

It was learnt from the information on a sign posted there, that the old rail bed had been cleared to about four and a half kilometers beyond the pass along the hiking trail. However, there is a warning sign about rockfalls that are frequent along the trail and advised the tourists to do the trekking at their own risk.

Some younger visitors took the risk, but for me, as my interest is to have a close look at the pass, I walked for a monument erected by the Australian government, just beyond the pass, dedicated to those who died and those who suffered. Beyond that point a shallow gorge cuts across the trail. Those who want to continue further had to pass that gorge with some difficulty.

The Hellfire Pass resembles a narrow deep gorge with sheer vertical rock cliffs on both sides. What I learned from the museum was, the cuttings were done with bare hands using basic hand tools. The poor people had to toil away for 18 hours a day on meager rations of two meals a day that consisted of only rice and salted vegetables. Many died due to cholera, dysentery, malaria and from starvation and exhaustion. Some were beaten to death. After the visit, I came to realize what those poor souls had been subjected to, were beyond human endurance and human dignity. It was surprising that anyone could have survived.

The cutting of the pass took 12 weeks and the casualties were immense. In some rare photographs, the PoWs were seen to be reduced to skin and bones and clad only in narrow pieces of loin cloth barely covering their dignities. Those emaciated prisoners and labourers clad only in loin cloths and toiling laboriously in the dark with flame torches must have resembled a scene from hell and thus it was dubbed the “Hellfire Pass”.

Inside the narrow pass, there are brass plaques fixed on the rock surface, dedicated to some individuals and the members of certain military units. Just reading the inscriptions on those plaques gave me an impression of their sufferings during those darkest days of their lives. At one place, I came upon an A4 size photo copy pinned to a tree. It displayed an album page illustrated with a young Australian soldier who died at the site in 1943, and below that photo was one of a lady who was the sister of the soldier, who passed away in 2006. The caption below read: “At last the brother and sister are together again”. There are many more such mementos written on small wooden crosses and small flags of Australia and Britain, which are stuck into the rock crevices.

While reading all those sentimental writings and dedications to those who died and those who suffered, I was greatly touched and overwhelmed with emotions. They also made me understand why that Hellfire Pass was so much dreaded by those who had been there during its construction.

After visiting the Wang Pho timber viaduct, the museum in Kanchanaburi, the Hellfire Pass and its museum, I came to realize that the sights were so high, as I had mentioned in my previous article, “A Train Ride on the Death Railway Line” (15-02-16 GNLM). Here, I would like to recall the number of deaths for those who hadn’t read the said article and also to get the records straight. There were 12,621 PoWs and about 90,000 civilian forced labourers, who died during the construction of the Death Railway. In the aforementioned article, I made a blunder by stating the number of PoW casualties to be 123621. My sincere apologies to all those who had read that article.
Expectations high for Ma-U bridge becoming a tourist destination

THE Ma-U Bridge in Yesagyo Township, Mgyaw Region is expected to become a place of tourist interest, said locals. The wooden bridge joins Ma-U Nge village and Ma-U Ahlai village.

Ma-U Bridge is not as famous as U Pein Bridge in Amarapura Township, Mandalay Region, which attracts many tourists and is crowded with visitors during peak season although the bridge was built in the same period of U Pein Bridge, according to a memorial stone inscription, it has been learned.

The bridge was renovated for the first time on the 6th waxing of the second Waso in Myanmar Era 1310, according to the inscription. It was again renovated at a cost of K2 million in Prime Minister U Nu’s period. Retired Colonel Thike Htn, Deputy Minister for Forestry contributed teak pillars with the aim of renovating the bridge for the third time, it has been learned.

Ma-U village is an ancient site said to have been owned by Queen Ma-U. There are four Ma-U villages: Ma-U Ahlai village, Ma-U Nge village (now called it Ma-U Outeik village), Ma-u Taung village and Ma-u Myauk village.—Phay Hun Zaw (Yesagyo)

C-in-C of Defence Services opens library, donates bell in Dawei

COMANDER-in-Chief of Defense Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attended a ceremony to open a library and to hand over a garbage truck in Dawei, Taninthayi Region, yesterday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Senior General stressed the importance of reading to catch up with the modern age.

Knowledge, which is necessary for the rule of law, can be gained from reading, he said, that is why Shwe Wai Thiri Panma Bekman Library has been established to bring knowledge to the people in Dawei.

The democratic system in Myanmar shows that working hard within the framework of the law and in line with the constitution can contribute much to the development of a country, he added.

The library was established at the cost of more than K260 million.

In the morning, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hta also attended a ceremony to donate a great bell to Shwetaungsar Pagoda in Dawei, marking the 250th anniversary of the construction of the pagoda.—Myawady

Tractors in high demand in Ngathayauk

TRADITIONALLY, local farmers in Ngathayauk Township, Mandalay Region have earned their living through the use of traditional farming methods like the harrowing of farm land by cattle that are bred by the land owners. Recently, however, these farmers have turned to tractors, saving time and energy. Motorised tractors are in high demand at the moment among farmers in Ngathayauk, it has been learned from locals.

“In the old days there was no one who used tractors on their farms. Now, farmers in the upcountry villages are promoting their agricultural business by purchasing tractors.

There are two or three tractors in each village of our town, and I think there is no village left which doesn’t have a tractor,” said a farmer from upcountry.

“Tractors bring more productivity and benefits to our farmers than cattle because we find it hard to harrow the dry land with cattle in summer.

Farmers have now come to realise the advantages of mechanised agriculture,” said a farmer from Myaynelgyi village, Ngathayauk Township.—Ye Win Naing (Nyaung-Oo)

A tractor seen driving ploughing the field.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing visits e-library after the library is opened. PHOTO: MYANADY

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor

Thanks for the report, Taninthayi earning R1.8 billion from edible birds nest enterprise trend (GNLM, Feb 24). It is always important for any nation to make economic progress based on her natural resources and to find employment through that. However, a point of concern is how well this harvesting of bird’s nest is monitored by local government agencies and related forest, environment and conservation departments. Unless the process is placed under proper monitoring and surveillance; the push for profit may have detrimental impacts on the population dynamics of the nesting species and could threaten their population base which in turn may impact the cash flow and jeopardize local employment. Hence, it is very important that the entire process of harvesting bird nests is well recorded and monitored by government agencies for sustainability, viability and for long term protection of the bird species concerned as well as the local ecosystem.

Thanking you
Sincerely yours
Saikat Kumar Basu
Apt 6-409, 43 Street South,
Lethbridge AB Canada T1J 4B3
WASHINGTON — The credibility of the Minsk peace deal for eastern Ukraine will come under threat under both sides in the conflict make faster progress in implementing the agreement, Germany’s foreign minister said on Monday.

Speaking at a news conference in Washington with US Secretary of State John Kerry, Frank-Walter Steinmeier conceded that the readiness of the government in Kiev and pro-Russian separatists to move forward with Minsk was “very limited.”

“Implementation must continue. The credibility of the whole process rests on this,” Steinmeier said.

Kerry said “both sides need to perform”, and that Russia must ensure that the separatists do their part.

Kiev’s struggles to get an election law for eastern Ukraine through parliament and an increase in ceasefire violations in the region have raised fears that the deal, sealed one year ago in the Belarus capital, could collapse, sparking a new wave of fighting.

European countries have tied the removal of sanctions against Russia to the implementation of Minsk. Germany and its allies worry that if Ukraine does not implement its side of the agreement, pressure could rise to ease those sanctions when they expire in July.

Earlier on Monday, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán warned the European Union against extending the sanctions against Russia to the implementation of Minsk, saying that a meeting of the foreign ministers of Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine scheduled to take place on Thursday in Paris would lead to progress on planned elections in eastern Ukraine.

“If elections take place, and everyone says this, then we need two things: first an election law and second security conditions which allow an election to be held,” he said. “I hope that we make a small step forward on Thursday.”

Reuters

Portugal nominates ex-refugee chief for UN secretary-general

LISBON — Portugal’s government has proposed Antonio Guterres, a former UN high commissioner for refugees, as a candidate for secretary-general of the United Nations, it said on Monday.

Guterres was Portugal’s prime minister between 1995 and 2002 and served two terms as UN high commissioner from 2005 until last year.

“With this step, Portugal actively contributes to the selection process by presenting a candidate who is exceptionally well qualified to the five suspected terrorists who were arrested on 19 February to the department in 2014, including 261 such emails released on Monday. That information is obscured with white boxes in the public copies.

The government forfords sending or storing classified information outside secure, government-controlled channels. The FBI has taken the server and is investigating with US Justice Department attorneys whether laws were broken in the unusual arrangement.

The State Department’s inspector general and at least two Republican-led congressional committees are conducting similar inquiries.—Reuters

Egypt’s tourism revenues down $1.3 billion since Russian plane crash

CAIRO — Egypt’s tourism revenue has declined by roughly $1.3 billion since a Russian plane crash in the Sinai last year, Prime Minister Sherif Ismail said in a televised interview on Monday.

Egypt’s president last week that a Russian plane that crashed in Sinai last October, killing all 224 people on board, had been downed by terrorists seeking to damage its tourism industry and ties with Russia, echoing a position already taken by Western countries and Moscow. “After the plane crash, over the past three or four months, we lost around $1.2 billion or $1.3 billion in revenues,” Sherif said.—Reuters

No 2 US Senate Republican voices unease over Trump candidacy

WASHINGTON — The No 2 Republican in the US Senate said on Monday he was worried that Donald Trump could be an “albatross” for Republicans running in other races if he were to win the party’s nomination for president, CNN reported.

“We can’t have a nominee be an albatross around the down-ballot races,” John Cornyn, the Senate majority whip, said when asked if he had concerns about the possibility Trump could win the nomination, according to CNN. “That’s a concern of mine.”—I think he certainly is a controversial figure,” the Texas senator told CNN. “I think we need someone who can unify the party, as opposed to divided the party.”—Reuters
Dear farmers, members of farmers’ group and association and all the staffs in the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MOAI);

As you know, the second of March is the Myanmar Farmers’ Day. I would like to extend my warmest greetings to all of you, and to congratulate your recently accomplished performances in agricultural sector through your efforts and cooperation.

Agriculture is an important sector sharing great portion in Myanmar GDP, and large portion of the population is engaged in agriculture. It means that agriculture has a great role to develop the Myanmar.

During last few years, all of you have made a great effort to increase agricultural productivity actively. Although the sector is not yet satisfactory state, it has been grown remarkably in production and marketing activities.

Agricultural production is for self-sufficient, of course and for selling the products to the consumer through the marketing activities finally. Consumers’ concerns on the quality and safety of the products increase year by year for their health. Thus, farmer should consider the ways to increase productivity as well as quality and safety of the products to give satisfaction to consumers in the market.

Therefore, the products should be delivered to consumer without the loss in quality and safety through appropriate handling, packaging and transportation after harvesting. Such the management skill after harvest, which is named as postharvest technology, is also very important to make products to be sold out in the market.

MOAI has been conducting the cooperative projects with Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) to reduce post-harvest losses in quantity and quality of agricultural products through introduction of postharvest technology to enable the delivery of high-quality and safe agricultural products to consumers since 2011.

As the first achievements of the cooperation between KOICA and MOAI the Postharvest Technology Training Centre had been established in Mandalay.

This Centre is being operated for farmers, member of farmers’ association and group, students of SAI and YAU and MOAI staffs from February 2015. The training Centre has a variety of programs to prevent postharvest losses and to add value of agricultural products.

In addition, MOAI and KOICA is carrying out another cooperation project of ‘Establishment of Postharvest Technology Institute’ for sustainable operation and activation of the Centre through supplying appropriate technology for Myanmar situation from 2015. The project is expected to be completed in the end of 2017, and Myanmar researchers will develop technologies needed for Myanmar in the Institute by themselves. Myanmar has vast farmland with the blessed climatic conditions suitable for cultivation of the various exotic fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables have many advantages over other crops in terms of productivity and farm income.

The demand for fruits and vegetables of safe and good quality is growing steadily in domestic and in international markets. Therefore, the future of the horticultural sector in Myanmar is very bright.

To expand the market in domestic and abroad, the farmers are requested to put a lot of effort into production of high-quality and safe crops rather than quantity in the field. In addition, to get a good response from consumers, agricultural products cultivated with farmers’ great effort have to be delivered to the market without losses in quantity and quality by applying appropriate postharvest handling and technology.

MOAI and KOICA postharvest technology cooperation program has been progressed for supporting the technology needed for horticultural product marketing of farmers to decrease postharvest losses and to increase income.

I would like to ask for your deep interest and active participation in the postharvest technology program.

Once again, I would like to send my sincere greetings from Korea to you to congratulate the Farmers’ Day, and I wish all of you are more peaceful in your body and mind, and more successful in your agricultural activities.

Thank you for your attention.

Dr. Dongman Kim
Manager, Myanmar-KOICA Postharvest Technology Cooperation Project
Principal Researcher, Korea Food Research Institute

Congratulations on the Myanmar Farmers’ Day!

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Brazil’s Petrobras corruption investigation targets Lula

BRASILIA — Federal prosecutors who uncovered a huge corruption scheme at oil company Petrobras are looking into whether Brazil’s former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva received undue favours from a huge corruption scheme at oil company Petrobras.

In a letter to the Supreme Court made public on Monday, the head of the investigation, Deltan Dallagnol, argued for a federal probe because some of the alleged gifts were made while Lula was still looking into whether Brazil’s Petrobras.

The opposition Brazilian Labour Party (JLP) was declared the victor of Thursday’s closely fought election but after a second count authorities stripped it of one seat, reducing it to 32 of 63 seats. One more constituency remains to be recounted.

The tight election reflects division about Jamaica’s economy, with the winners promising less tax and regulation and lower spending.

The JLP leader Andrew Holness had been due to be sworn in as prime minister on Tuesday, local media said.

The JLP spokesman said on Monday the party would call for a magisterial review of the results in the constituency of South East St. Mary, where its victory was overturned. The final count showed the party losing by just nine votes, after 74 votes were rejected. Such a review would lead to more delays.

The country’s military, the Jamaican Defence Force (JDF), called out to ensure security during the election, will now stay on the streets throughout this week, with additional help from its reservist force.

The JDF is acutely aware of the current political situation. Like all law-abiding citizens, we want a speedy, safe, and peaceful resolution,” said spokesman Major Basil Jarrett. A JLP win could signal a move away from the ruling party’s wage freezes and spending cuts. The JLP has instead promised jobs and sharply lower taxes.

On Monday, the party’s spokesman said it had told the IMF of its reservations about the austerity programme, which includes a target of a 7 per cent of GDP primary surplus.

“The relationship is quite positive and one which we expect to continue,” JLP spokesman Kamina Johnson-Smith said, but added that the party had communicated its concerns to the IMF.

“We have always believed and do continue to believe that the primary surplus target is too high,” she said. The elections have been largely free from the political violence of past decades and the Organization of American States lauded the process as a good example for the rest of the Caribbean. ---Reuters
UK to send troops to Tunisia to help stop ISIS crossing Libyan border

LONDON — Britain is to send troops to Tunisia to help prevent Islamic State fighters from moving into the country from Libya, the British defence minister has said.

“A training team of some 20 troops from the 4th Infantry Brigade is now moving to Tunisia to help to counter illegal cross-border movement from Libya in support of the Tunisian authorities,” Michael Fallon told Parliament on Monday.

The move comes after growing Western concern that Islamic State (IS) is seeking to use Libya as a base to plan and carry out attacks. Last June, 30 British holidaymakers were killed when an Islamist gunman attacked a beach at a hotel on Tunisia’s Mediterranean coast.

“I ... am extremely concerned about the proliferation of Daesh (IS) along the Libyan coastline, which is why we have been urgently assisting the formation of a new Libyan government,” Fallon said.

Jihadist groups have taken advantage of political chaos to expand their presence in Libya, and fighters loyal to Islamic State have taken control of the coastal city of Sirte.

Western officials say they are discussing air strikes and special forces operations in Libya against the group that is seeking to set up a cross-border Islamic caliphate and has already seized large areas of Syria and neighbouring Iraq.

Fallon said Britain was not currently planning to deploy ground troops to Libya in a combat role.

“Before taking any military action in Libya, we would seek an invitation from the new Libyan Government,” he said.—Reuters

Israeli troops kill Palestinian after soldiers attacked in West Bank

RAMALLAH, (West Bank) — Israeli forces shot dead a Palestinian in the occupied West Bank as troops fought to rescue two soldiers who the army said yesterday were attacked after straying into a refugee camp.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said a 22-year-old man died of gunshot wounds and six were wounded in the violence that began late on Monday at Qalandia refugee camp. The Israeli military and police said five soldiers and five paramilitary border policemen were hurt.

The incident came during a period of heightened tensions in which Palestinian stabbings, shootings and car rammings have killed 28 Israelis and a US citizen since October. Israeli security forces have killed at least 170 Palestinians, 112 of whom Israel says were assailants, while most others were shot dead during violent anti-Israeli protests.

A military spokesperson said the soldiers’ vehicle inadvertently entered Qalandia where they and later their rescuers came under a hail of rocks and petrol bombs.

Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon said the two soldiers got into trouble because they had relied on satellite navigation on their mobile phone.

“I have always said that if even if you use a navigation programme, you still need to know how to navigate with a map,” Yaalon said in a speech near Tel Aviv.

The Qalandia camp lies north of Jerusalem and on the outskirts of Ramallah, the Palestinian seat of government. It is a point of frequent violence between Palestinian protesters and Israeli troops.

The past five months of bloodshed have been fuelled by various factors, including a dispute over Jerusalem’s al-Aqsa mosque compound and the failure of several rounds of peace talks to secure the Palestinians an independent state in Israeli-occupied territory.

Omar Soltan, a Palestinian analyst in Ramallah, said that “we have been urgently seeking to use Libya as a base to plan and carry out attacks.”

US, Russia to set mechanism for Syria ceasefire violations

WASHINGTON — US Secretary of State John Kerry said on Monday he had agreed with his Russian counterpart not to discuss alleged violations of a cessation of hostilities plan in Syria and intensify work with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Amman to “litigate ... a public fashion” the reports of violations on both sides. Teams in Geneva and Amman will look into the reports, he said. “We are going to track down each alleged violation and work more even now to put in place a construct which will help us to guarantee that missions are indeed missions against Nusra or missions against Daesh,” Kerry said, using an alternative name for Islamic State.

The two militant groups are not part of the cessation of hostilities deal led by the United States and Russia that has halted much of the fighting in Syria since Saturday.—Reuters
China navy launches first self-propelled floating dock

BEIJING — China’s navy has launched its first self-propelled floating dock, giving it the ability to repair warships far from the coast, the official People’s Liberation Army Daily said yesterday, Beijing’s latest move to modernise its navy.

The newspaper said the dock, the Huachuan No. 1, would enable the navy to return damaged ships to the repair yard in rapid time “and was designed to be sent into combat zones.”

“The ship’s launch marks a further breakthrough in shifting repairs to our military’s large warships from set spots on the coast to mobility far out at sea,” it added, showing a picture of a warship inside the floating dock.

The use of the dock means that ships with minor damage will not have to be taken out of service, while those with severe damage will not have to return to a shipyard, the paper said.

The dock can handle cruisers, destroyers and submarines, but not aircraft carriers, and cope with waves up to 2 metres (6.6 ft) high, it added.

Beijing has invested billions developing its homegrown weapons industry to support its growing maritime ambitions in the disputed South China Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific.

China claims most of the South China Sea, through which more than $5 trillion in global trade passes every year. Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines and Taiwan have rival claims. Beijing has also cast an eye towards foreign markets for its comparatively low-cost technology. Its total military budget in 2015 was 886.9 billion yuan ($141.45 billion), up 10 per cent from a year earlier.— Reuters

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**INVITATION ON REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR THE FIXED BROADBAND NETWORK PROJECT**

Yatanarpon Teleport Public Co., Ltd. (YTP) is a registered public company providing ISP services in Myanmar, located at Hlaing Universities’ Campus, Yangon. Currently holding NFS (I) license, YTP provides broadband Internet, IP-VPN services and data center facilities and is now in progress to utilize FTTx technology as the main platform to offer high speed, comprehensive Internet services in near future. Anticipated the successful launch, YTP hereby invites eligible bidders for the supply of equipments, installation and associated services for the “Fixed Broadband Network Project” in Yangon and Mandalay Regions.

The schedule is:

**Newspaper Announcement**: 1~3 March 2016

**Availability of RFP**: 3~9 March 2016

**Last date of written queries by interested companies**: 10 March 2016

**Response to the queries**: 16 March 2016

**Deadline of submission of proposal**: 24 March 2016

**Evaluation of proposals**: 25 March ~ 28 April 2016

**Announcement of winning bidders**: 29 April 2016

Interested companies can submit proposal for one or more lots as mentioned below:

- **Lot 1**: Supply and Installation of Metro IP Core Equipment and Services
- **Lot 2**: Supply and Installation of DWDM System
- **Lot 3**: Supply and Installation of OLT and ONT
- **Lot 4**: Supply of Optical Cable
- **Lot 5**: Supply of ODN Equipment
- **Lot 6**: Supply of Accessories for Optical Cable
- **Lot 7**: Supply and Installation of Mechanical and Electrical Equipment

Please be requested that to observe all instructions, terms and conditions and project requirements. Documents will only be available at Tender Committee Office, Yatanarpon Teleport Public Company Ltd. (YTP) and queries will be responded as mentioned in the schedule. Failure to furnish the correct and complete information will be void and incomplete submission of documents after the deadline is not exchangeable.

For queries and submission of documents, please contact “Tender Committee Office”

Tel: +95 4421109 Fax: +95 652300

Monday to Friday (10am to 3pm)

Yatanarpon Teleport Public Co., Ltd. (YTP)
No. 25, Universities’ Hlaing Campus; Hlaing Township, Yangon Region, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, P.O Box 909.

Phone: 09 250107962, 09 251022355

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**CLAIMS DAY NOTICE MV MOROTAII VOY NO (283)**

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MOROTAII VOY NO (283) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 2.3.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.L.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to 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.

**CLAIMS DAY NOTICE MV PACAO VOY NO (2)**

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PACAO VOY NO (2) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 2.3.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of 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 to 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.

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**GREEK PM SAYS LENDERS COULD RETURN FOR BAILOUT REVIEW IN EARLY MARCH**

ATHENS — International lenders could return to Greece within the first 10 days of March to complete a bailout review, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras said yesterday, a move desperately needed by Athens to move on to debt relief talks.

“We should have a clearer picture of when they will return next Monday (7 March),” Tsipras said. “My assessment is that they will return in the first 10 days of March,” he told a live interview on Greece’s Star TV.

Tsipras, who has a fragile parliamentary majority, wants to conclude the review swiftly to start talks on debt relief hoping to convince an angry public that their sacrifices are paying off after six years of austerity and huge investment. Greece signed up to a new bailout agreement worth up to 86 billion euros ($93.6 billion) last year, staying off the immediate threat of the country topping out of the euro zone.

But differences among the lenders over an estimated fiscal shortfall by 2018, which may force the left-led government to cut pensions despite its pre-election promises, have delayed the EU/IMF mission chiefs’ return, casting a cloud on Tsipras’ plans.

Athens puts the fiscal gap at 1 per cent of economic output while EU lenders estimate it will be around 3 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) sees a gap of at least 4.5 percent of GDP, according to sources.

“There must be agreement among lenders so that we can progress,” Tsipras said calling on the IMF to “return to realism.”

Pressed on whether the assessment would be concluded in March, Tsipras answered: “I think Easter will bring a resurrection of the economy.” He did not specify if he meant Western Easter, celebrated on 27 March or the Eastern Orthodox Easter, marked on 1 May. The inspectors of all four institutions comprising the so-called “quartet” — European Commission, European Central Bank, European Stability Mechanism and IMF — will return after they reach a consensus on the projected fiscal shortfall and other fiscal targets, a source close to lenders said.— Reuters
Lady Gaga holds hands with survivors of sexual abuse after singing her Oscar-nominated song "Til It Happens to You" at the 88th Academy Awards in Hollywood, California, on 28 February. Vice President Joe Biden made a special appearance at the Oscars ceremony on Sunday to advocate for victims of sexual assault and introduced a powerful performance by Lady Gaga that featured survivors of sexual abuse. 

**Lady Gaga, US Vice President Joe Biden call for end of rape culture at Oscars**

LOS ANGELES — Singer Lady Gaga, herself a victim of sexual assault, used her Oscar performance as a medium to bring attention to rape culture.

The 29-year-old singer brought sexual assault survivors to Oscars stage for performance of anti-rape culture anthem from documentary “The Hunting Ground,” an expose of the institutional cover-ups and failings of colleges and police to investigate a spate of rapes on campuses in the US.

The performance by pop star, who recently opened up about being assaulted as a teenager, was introduced by US Vice President Joe Biden. He was promoting the White House’s “It’s On Us” campaign to help stop sexual assault.

“Despite significant progress over the last few years, too many women and men on and off college campuses are victims of sexual abuse. “We must and we can change the culture so that no abused woman or man — like the survivors you see here tonight — ever feel like they have to ask themselves, ‘What did I do?’ They did not do anything wrong,” Biden said in his introduction piece.

The survivors made their way to the stage halfway through Gaga’s performance with messages like “survivor”, “it’s not your fault”, “we believe you” and “unbreakable,” scribbled on their wrists. The singer continued her act singing to a piano as the abuse survivors stood hand-in-hand on stage.

The performance of the song co-written by Gaga and Diane Warren, also a sexual assault survivor, scored a standing ovation from the audience.—PTI

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**Armani’s black velvet, Missoni’s knits wrap Milan fashion**

MILAN — Giorgio Armani wrapped Milan Fashion Week on Monday with a fall collection for his main line dedicated to luxurious black velvet.

The 81-year-old Italian, whose designs were worn by Oscar winner Leonardo DiCaprio and nominee Cate Blanchett at Sunday’s Academy Awards, made the material the protagonist of his autumn/winter 2016/2017 line, using it in trousers, tops, coats and glittering evening wear.

Models stepped onto the catwalk in round-collared black velvet jackets paired with wide leg trousers.

Show notes said Armani has “always loved this material for its subdued, intense splendour”.

Jacquard jackets with dabs of pale pink and blue added colour, as did a selection of floral designs — knit suits, silky trousers, tunic tops and chiffon dresses — later sequined with sparkles for the evening.

Armani also mixed other textures to all black outfits, including satin, fringes and ruffles on jackets worn with velvet trousers.

Black lacquer collars were added to velvet evening jackets while strapless gowns fit for the red carpet mixed black velvet with lace and sparkling black embroidery. Among footwear, there were nude fishnet ankle boots with black toe caps.

For the finale, Armani, who also used black as the basis colour for his Emporio Armani line unveiled on Friday, presented a black halter neck top, slit at the waist with black trousers under a black tulle cape.

At Missoni’s show on Sunday night, designer Angela Missoni presented plenty of colourful knits that were layered together — jumpers, short dresses, floor-length scarves and hats in the brand’s well-known bold stripes and zigzag patterns.

In a collection described as “lean, long and leggy”, there were chunky cardigans in plaid and colourful stripes over similarly kaleidoscopic short dresses and leggings. There were also similar outfits in black and white.—Reuters

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**Adele performs at the BRIT Awards at the O2 arena in London, on 24 February. Photo: Reuters**

**Adele’s ‘25’ continues reign atop Billboard 200 chart**

LOS ANGELES — British singer Adele once again kept her reign at the top of the weekly US Billboard 200 album chart on Monday, holding off albums by Rihanna and Justin Bieber.

Adele’s “25,” the top-selling album of 2015, notched another 100,000 units last week in album and song sales and streaming activity, according to figures from Nielsen SoundScan.

Her album has sold more than 8.3 million copies in the United States since its November release and has spent ten non-consecutive weeks at the top of the Billboard 200 chart.

The singer last week also swept the BRIT Awards, the top music honors in Britain, with four wins including album of the year.

R&B singer Rihanna’s latest album “Anti” climbed one spot to No 2 with 80,000 units sold, while Canadian pop star Bieber’s “Purpose” dropped one spot to No 3 with 63,000 units sold.

Rapper Yo Gotti’s “Art of Hustle” at No 4 was the only new entry to debut in the top ten of the Billboard 200 chart this week.

On the Digital Songs chart, which measures online song sales, Rihanna’s steamy duet with Drake on “Work” climbed one spot to No 1 with 169,000 copies sold.—Reuters
KATHMANDU — Mountain climbers who were unable to climb Nepal’s mountains in the spring can use their climbing permits this year or next spring, government officials said Tuesday, the beginning of this year’s spring climbing season.

Last year, the spring climbing season through May was interrupted by massive earthquakes – the biggest to hit Nepal since 1934 and which caused an avalanche on Mt. Everest, killing 18 people there. The quakes left close to 9,000 people dead across the country.

The government has taken a decision to allow mountaineers to use permits they acquired for last year’s spring season until the end of the 2015 climbing season. But they can climb the mountain for which they have permits just once during this period.

Officials are skeptical, though, that the 2016 spring season would attract many climbers.

“The climbers may not have enough time to get funding and to manage logistics to climb mountains this spring,” Govinda Karki, director general of the ministry’s Tourism Department, told Kyodo News.

The spring season of 2014 was also rattled by an avalanche that hit Mt. Everest, leading to cancellations of expeditions on the mountain with Sherpas, or Nepali guides who accompany foreign climbers to the top, walking away. The avalanche cost the lives of 16 experienced Sherpas.

Karki, however, said the disasters of 2014 and 2015 have little to do with his prediction of low climber turnout this season.

“Mountaineers are risk-takers. They are not deterred by disasters. The only reason I think this spring will not be as bad as last year’s is the time factor,” he said, adding, “I am confident that by autumn season this year, Nepal’s mountain climbing industry will fully bounce back.”

Spring is the popular climbing season for Mt. Everest and other mountains higher than 8,000 meters because of favorable weather conditions.

Mountains less than 8,000 meters in height are usually climbed in autumn too, which is the peak trekking season.

Nepal is home to eight of 14 mountains in the world that are over 8,000 meters high.

Nepal witnessed a 32 percent drop in tourist arrivals in 2015, according to Rajendra Sigdel, spokesman of the tourism ministry. About 800,000 tourists visited Nepal in 2014.

The steep drop in 2015 was mainly because of the quakes in April and May and a political crisis precipitated by a new Constitution adopted in September. The political crisis also led to a humanitarian crisis due to a blockade by India from late September to February.

Kyodo News

Gaza audiences enjoy first night out at the movies in 20 years

GAZA — Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are enjoying their first night out at the movies since Israeli political tensions led to the torching of cinemas in the enclave 20 years ago.

Hollywood blockbusters have yet to return to Gaza, and Hamas Islamists, who now rule the strip, are looking out for anything they consider unmodest.

Nevertheless, the projectors are rolling again, in a newly-opened cinema whose shows have been limited so far to films about the Palestinian struggle for statehood.

About 150 people took their seats last week in the Red Crescent Society hall, usually a venue for celebrations or traditional performances, to watch “Oversized Coat.” The 2013 film by Jordan-based Palestinian director Nawras Abu Saleh examines Palestinian life between 1987 and 2011, a period of failed peace efforts and two anti-Israeli uprisings.

Tickets cost 10 shekels ($2.50) each.

In the audience, Ala Abu Qassem, a Gaza student who had never been to the movies before, revealed in the new experience.

“I am very happy,” said Qassem, just a toddler when the last Gaza cinemas were burned to the ground during fighting between rival Palestinian factions. “But where is the pop corn?”

Cinema once flourished in Gaza. Back in the 1950s, when Egypt ran the enclave, residents used to frequent movie houses to watch Arab, Western and Asian films. Those cinemas were set on fire by Israel in 1987, when the first Palestinian uprising erupted. All were re-opened, but were torched again during Israeli violence in 1996.

Faded movie posts, some in Hebrew and dating back two decades, when Gaza was under Israeli occupation, still hang on the charred walls of what had been one of the territory’s biggest cinemas.

Its windows were smashed long ago and graffiti either glorifying the fight against Israeli or advertising local businesses have been sprayed on building.

The picture was dramatically different last Thursday’s screening in the Red Crescent Society hall.

Families came for a night out and once the lights dimmed, some in the audience used their cellphones to make a movie of their own event.

Most are hungry for a cinema  — depriving people of cinemas and theatres in Gaza is a violation of their humanity, said Basel Al-Awtawa, a Gaza theatre director who had in the past watched movie houses.—Reuters
Alonso is hero and villain as Fiorentina hold Napoli

MIAMI — The victory celebration over, new FIFA president Gianni Infantino’s first major decision in charge of the troubled world football organisation will be to appoint a secretary general, effectively a chief executive, to run day-to-day operations.

Since FIFA was founded in 1904, it has had 10 secretaries general, all from Europe, the game’s strongest continent.

At an event in London during his campaign for Friday’s presidential election, Infantino said: “I am convinced the general secretary of FIFA should not be a European. Why not an African?”

A source close to Infantino said on Monday that this “did not necessarily mean that an African would be chosen, more than he had not ruled out an African”.

That said, there would be a strong African contender in the shape of the Moroccan Hicham El Amrani.

The Paris-educated 36-year-old became general secretary of the African confederation (CAF) on an interim basis in 2010 and was confirmed in the role in September 2011.

He had previously been deputy general secretary at CAF and worked for the Asian Football Confederation in competitions marketing. He graduated in 2004 from the FIFA Masters course, which was created to train future football administrators from around the world.

Infantino begins search for non-European chief exec

El Amrani won the Young Leader of the Year award in 2015 from the ‘Leaders in Sports’ organisation partly in recognition of the way he handled the switch of the African Nations Cup to Equatorial Guinea after Morocco withdrew two months before the tournament because of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

“He is very, very capable,” said Swiss-based sports business consultant Joao Frigerio, who knows El Amrani from the FIFA Masters alumni association.

“There is no doubt in my mind that he can be a great general secretary.”

El Amrani could not immediately be reached for comment.

Infantino said on Sunday that he would not rush into a decision about the secretary general, whose role takes on added importance in FIFA’s new, reformed structure.

Although some of FIFA’s reform documents refer to a “CEO”, a source within FIFA indicated that for “tradition reasons” the title of secretary general is likely to continue to be used. Infantino might also look to North America, whose administrators played a key role in swing voting the Swiss at Friday’s FIFA Congress in Zurich.

US Soccer president Sunil Gulati is an economics professor at Columbia University and well connected politically in the United States.

This could be attractive to FIFA as it tries to improve relations with the US Department of Justice, which has charged dozens of football officials in the Americas with corruption, and is investigating allegations of bribery and corruption at FIFA itself.

A tweet from sports marketing executive Ricardo Fort suggesting Gulati would be a good choice sparked speculation in Zurich over the weekend.

Fort was until recently a senior vice-president for sponsorshiop marketing with Visa Inc, one of FIFA’s global sponsors. Fort said his tweet reflected only his personal view, and Gulati was also not reachable for comment.

Although there is no obvious candidate for the role from Asian football, an Asian candidate might also appeal to Infantino as he seeks to build bridges with other confederations, especially after he beat Asian confederation president Sheikh Salman Bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa to the FIFA presidency.

The earliest Infantino could present a nomination would be an Executive Committee meeting in Zurich on March 17, but he may decide to wait until closer to May’s FIFA Congress in Mexico City. — Reuters

Froome prepared to help Thomas win gold in Rio

LONDON — Chris Froome says he would work for British team mate Geraint Thomas at this year’s Olympic Games if his own gold medal ambitions falter in Rio.

Froome is targeting a third Tour de France before setting his sights on an unprecedented two Olympic golds on the twisty streets of Rio if he rides to the road race and time trial — a formidable undertaking even for a rider of his all-round ability.

Welshman Thomas, 29, has started the season in style by retaining the Tour of the Alps title and will be among the leading contenders for the road race in Rio where they will ride in British colours rather than those of Team Sky.

Thomas usually works tirelessly as one of Froome’s most trusted support riders, as he did so impressively last year’s Tour de France, but the roles could be reversed in August.

“If G is flying and I’m struggling, then definitely (I’d support him), absolutely,” Froome, 30, said at Team Sky’s training camp in Mallorca this year.

“I’d be happy playing a role if it meant we could have an Olympic champion.”

Froome, who won a bronze medal in the London 2012 time trial under the flag of his native Kenya, said his close bond with Thomas would help when the pressure builds up during an Olympic road race and personal ambition rises to the surface.

“The key to all of this is communication. Especially with G. We’ve been able to get together now for coming up to 10 years,” he said. “At the Olympics it will be a very honest, open discussion between us out on the road. ‘Who’s feeling good? Can we get the job done today? Will you pull? Will you not pull?’ It’s that team dynamic.” — Reuters

Football Soccer - Fiorentina v Napoli - Italian Serie A - Artemio Franchi stadium, Florence, Italy 29/02/16 Fiorentina’s Marcos Alonso celebrates after scoring against Napoli. PHOTO: REUTERS