ROLLING OUT THE NEW GONGS
16 foot tall metal gongs available in Mandalay

IRON metal gongs standing at a height of 16 feet can be cast in Myanmar where gongs are used as a musical instrument and a craft for decorative purposes as well, said U Than Zaw, a bronze casting specialist in Tamawady, Mandalay.

Following an experiment in which a 16-foot-tall iron metal gong that can make sound was built, we can cast a metal gong with a height of up to 16 feet to be used as a musical instrument or decorative craft, he said.

Only gongs which were three feet high could produce sound previously, he added.

According to the bronze casting specialist, a three-foot gong cast in bronze will cost K1.3 million but a three-foot iron metal gong will cost K350,000 only.

“Traditional gongs are cast in iron metal as tourists are unwilling to buy expensive bronze gongs.”

According to sources, Myanmar successfully tested casting of iron metal gongs last October, and measures are being taken to gain access to foreign markets.

Although bronze gongs have been widely used in Myanmar since days of yore, there has been a sharp decline in the sale of bronze gongs in the market due to the rising bronze price and scarcity of bronze, causing some bronze casting businesses to close their doors, said U Than Zaw.—Maung Pyi Thu (Mandalay)

Yangon Railway Station Complex Project to launch in May next year

THE Yangon Central Railway Station comprehensive development project is expected to launch in May, 2017, according to an announcement from Myanmar Railways (MR).

MR will finalise the selection of winners for the project in May, said U Tun Aung Tin, General Manager of Myanmar Railways (Lower Myanmar).

Fifteen companies including five from Myanmar, two from Singapore, two joint-venture companies with the US, two from Korea and three from China sent Expression of Interest (EOI) for the project when MR invited the tender for the second time in July last year.

For the first time, Myanmar Railways invited Expressions of Interest (EOI) in April, 2014, for the project when MR invited the tender for the second time in July last year.

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Investment in the Yangon Central Railway Station area comprehensive development project will reach US$2-2.5 billion, according to the announcement in April, 2015.

According to sources, the area where Yangon Central Railway Station area comprehensive development is sited is not included in the restricted area of high-rise buildings in which the height of buildings are restricted to 470 metres above the sea level.

So far, the Resettlement Action Plan and the Conceptual Plan for the project have already been drawn, according to MR sources.
Fifteen Yangon townships to receive normal water supply today

WATER supply will return to some wards of 15 townships in Yangon starting from 8 pm today as the leaking Hlawga water pipe is set to be fixed by 9 March, according to Engineering Department (Water & Sanitation) of the Yangon City Development Committee.

The Hlawga water pipeline suffered a leak in Mayangon Township at about 4 pm on Monday, causing water supply disruption in townships in Yangon—Mingaladon, Insein, Shwepyithu, Hlinethaya, Mayangon, Tamwai, Yankin, Bahan, Mingalatunyan, Thakaya, Pazundaung, Botataung, Pabedan, Hline and Kamayut. The pipeline is 66 inches in diameter and the main source of water supply to Yangon.

Waterworks were forced to stop operation following the pipeline leak, according to the department.

Despite water disruption in some townships, other townships are being supplied with water from the Gyo Pyu, Ngamoeikyanta and Pu Gyit dams, added the department. — Ko Moe

National Workshop on ESCAP Transport Facilitation Models held

ORGANIZED by Ministry of Rail Transportation jointly with United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP) the UN regional commission based in Bangkok, a National Workshop on ESCAP Transport Facilitation Models was held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The participants discussed challenges to cross border and transit transport, connectivity in Myanmar. Opening the workshop, Director General of Road Transport Administration Department U Chit Ko Ko thanked ESCAP for organizing the workshop saying that the workshop would be very useful for road transport and other authorities engaged in cross border and transit transport.

Ms Virginia Tanase, Chief of Transport Facilitation and Logistics Section of UNESCAP emphasized importance of having transport and transit rights as a prerequisite for efficient regional and international road transport. Around 50 participants from various ministries including rail transportation, trade, customs department and representatives from private sector attended the workshop.

UNESCAP was requested to provide assistance in enhancing capacity of Myanmar officials in handling and transportation of dangerous goods. Request was also made to help Myanmar in establishing integrated intermodal transport system in Myanmar. — Myanmar News Agency

Golf contest for the disabled to be held

THE 26th Golf Contest for people with disabilities will be held at the Tatmadaw Golf Course on the 13th March at 6 am. The event has been organised by the Myanmar Disabled Sports Federation, Ministry of Sport.

Disabled persons who wish to participate in the contest can register through the following phone numbers: 09 450015794 - U Sein Whet, 0955459666 - U Min Naing Oo and 01 58369, number of the Myanmar Disabled Sports Federation office. Sportsmen need to arrive at the Golf Course by 5:30 am. — Kyawmon

Second Pyithu Hluttaw session continues

THE second Pyithu Hluttaw’s first regular session continued for its 15th day with the presentation of a report on the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) meeting and action taken against a letter of complaint by Defense Services personnel Pyithu Hluttaw representatives to a Member of Parliament’s discussion on an urgent motion.

First, Chairman of the Pyithu Hluttaw Ethnic Affairs and Internal Peace-making Committee U Khan Maung Thaung, who took part in the 8th UPDJC meeting, presented a report to the Parliament, calling for government to seize the moment for peace.

The chairman also suggested that the UPDJC should be formed with parliamentarians—three from the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) and two from the Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House)—in the time of the next government.

Next, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint announced that points related to the Letpadaung-Taung copper mining and property of Defense Industry No (20) included in discussions of MP U Kyaw Aung Lwin on the MP DAW Khin Sann Hlaung’s urgent motion were deleted in accord with the 2013 Pyithu Hluttaw rules and regulations 158 (c).

The second Pyithu Hluttaw session continues for 16th day today. — Myanmar News Agency

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker meets ambassadors

SPEAKER of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw Mahn Win Khai Thaung received Turkish Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Murat Yavuz Ates, Sri Lankan Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. K.W.D Karanaratne and French Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Olivier Richard separately in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Also present at calls were Deputy Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw U Aye Tha Aung and officials of Amyotha Hluttaw Office. — Myanmar News Agency

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives ambassadors

SPEAKER U Win Myint meets French Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Olivier Richard. Photo: MNA

PYITHU HLUTTAW Speaker U Win Myint met French Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Olivier Richard separately in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Also present at the calls were Deputy Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khan Myat and officials of Pyithu Hluttaw Office. — Myanmar News Agency

Speaker Mahn Win Khai Thaung meets Sri Lankan Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. K.W.D Karanaratne. Photo: MNA
**President receives Daewoo delegation**

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein received Mr Kim Young Sang, Chief Executive Officer and President of Daewoo International Corporation of the Republic of Korea, at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the meeting, they discussed matters on investment in hotel, energy, mining, steel and building modern rice mills in Myanmar.

Also present at the meeting were Union ministers U Winna Maung Lwin, U Soe Thane, U Zeyar Aung and officials concerned.—*Myanmar News Agency*

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**Appointment of Ambassador agreed on**

THE Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the appointment of H.E. Mr Francisco Vaz Patto as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Portuguese Republic to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar with residence in Bangkok.

Mr Francisco Vaz Patto was born on 7 October 1966 in Beria, Mozambique. He attained a law degree and a post-graduate degree in European Studies from the Catholic University of Lisbon. He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Republic in 1990. He then served at the respective Portuguese Embassies in Bonn, Berlin and Luanda from 1995 to 1999. He also served as a Head of European Institutions Department, as a chief of cabinet of the Secretary of State for European Affairs and as the Director-General for Administration at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since November 2015, he has been serving as an Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Portugal to the Kingdom of Thailand.—*Myanmar News Agency*

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**Appointment of Ambassador agreed on**

THE Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the proposed appointment of Mrs. Tone Tinnes as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Norway to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in succession to H.E. Mrs. Ann Ollestad.

Mrs. Tone Tinnes was born on 8th November 1961. She obtained a Master of Economics from the University of Oslo in 1988. She served in the Ministry of Industry as an advisor and then as Assistant Director from 1989 to 1996. She joined Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) as an economist in 1996. She served as an Economist/Counsellor in the Norwegian Embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania from 1999 to 2003. She became Head of Unit of NORAD’s public Financial Management and Budget Support from 2003 to 2006. She joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2006 and served as a Senior Advisor in the Development Minister’s Policy Analysis Unit till 2007. She then served as an Assistant Director up to the post of a Director in the International Development Policy Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2007 to 2014. Mrs. Tone Tinnes has been serving as Norwegian Ambassador to South Sudan since 2014. She is married with two children.—*Myanmar News Agency*

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**Ladia Brand painted taxis provide free service to Yangon women on International Women’s Day**

LADIA Brand Myanmar conducted a one-day free taxi service for women in Yangon in commemoration of International Women’s Day yesterday.

A number of Ladia Brand painted taxi cabs kicked off the free taxi service programme at Myakyuntha Park in Bahan Township yesterday morning, and toured around Yangon to provide the service to women.

“I was invited to take part in this programme as a driver by one of my customers”, said a 47-year-old female taxi driver, taking great delight in observing International Women’s Day as a Myanmar woman. Taxi cabs advertising Ladia Brand are set to run on roads and streets in Yangon for one year.—*Win Win Maw*
LOCAL police from Kyunhla township, Sagaing region, on 6 March. Acting on a tip off, the police discovered a 12-wheel vehicle being driven by one Min Min Soe, 28, from Myay Mon village along with Zin Myo Naung, 17, from Hta-nuang Kaine village. They were carrying 24 illegal motorbikes on board. Local police have filed charges against Min Min Soe and Zin Myo Naung. — Myo Win Nyo (Kyunhla)

**Paper toys to be displayed at art exhibition**

**MYANMAR** traditional paper toys will be showcased at art exhibitions to promote artistic skills in the country. “The aim is to show our creations which combine Myanmar traditional paper toy making techniques and fine arts” said U Aung Than, a toy maker. Paper handicrafts are not just simple toys but are created in detail with fine arts like making sculptures. These toys appear colorful but the artist does not paint exclusively. He uses waste paper printed in various colours, he added. It takes four or five days to make the paper carvings especially for unique designs such as the two fighting cocks, a dancing peacock and dancing actor and actress. There is time difference based on the design of toy, he said. — Thi Thi Min

**Twenty four illegal motorbikes seized in Kyunhla**

LOCAL police from Kyunhla township confiscated 24 illegal motorbikes from a 12-wheel vehicle in Thitayarmyaing ward, Kyunhla township, Sagaing region on 6 March. Acting on a tip off, the police discovered a 12-wheel vehicle being driven by one Min Min Soe, 28, from Myay Mon village along with Zin Myo Naung, 17, from Hta-nuang Kaine village. They were carrying 24 illegal motorbikes on board. Local police have filed charges against Min Min Soe and Zin Myo Naung. — Myo Win Nyo (Kyunhla)

**46 illegal Myanmar nationals arrested in Kanchanaburi**

POLICE in Sai Yok district on Sunday arrested a total of 46 undocumented Myanmar migrants in two vehicles. The police at the Phu Noi checkpoint stopped two pickup vehicles for searching. Twenty-one migrant workers including the driver were found in the first vehicle while another 18 Myanmar migrants were found in the second vehicle.

The police searched a bus and found another seven undocumented Myanmar nationals on board. All of the undocumented Myanmar nationals were charged with illegal entry. The two drivers have been charged with people smuggling. Police found that the Myanmar nationals paid 2,000 Bahts each to the traffickers, according to the Bangkok Post. — Kyaw Soe (IPRD)

**Water usage to be reduced in Mandalay Thingyan Festival**

THE water festival management committee in Mandalay will allow only 30 million gallons for this year’s Thingyan Festival in order to raise awareness of water shortages in the moat. The amount of water has been reduced by half the amount from last year for the Mandaly Thingyan, according to Mandalay City Development Committee.

Thanks to the combined efforts of the Tatmadaw, region/state police forces, anti-narcotic drug task forces, the railway police force and the Tatmadaw, region/state police forces, the railway police force and the anti-narcotic drug task force, the railway police force and the anti-narcotic drug task force, the railway police force and the anti-narcotic drug task force, the railway police force and the anti-narcotic drug task force, the railway police force and the anti-narcotic drug task force, it is expected that the festival this year will be strictly held as per the rules.

In 2015, according to Mandalay City Development Committee, there were over 59 million gallons of water at the festival. The amount of water has been reduced by half the amount from last year for the Mandalay Thingyan. According to Mandalay City Development Committee, the authority plans to reduce the usage of water at the festival this year.

A TOTAL of 806 suspects—701 men and 105 women—were arrested under article 557 narcotic drugs, 375 in 201 cases, 8,341,966 yabba pills in 28 cases, 4.1 kilos of heroine in 18 cases, 0.0318 kilos of low-grade opium in three cases, 0.025 litres of opium oil in one case and 10 ecstasy pills were seized, according to the Myanmar News Agency.

All of the suspects were arrested under article 557 narcotic drugs and ammuniton seized in Mae Sot. The vehicle was owned by a former police officer in Kan Phit Ban ward, Kyunhla township, Sagaing region on 6 March. Acting on a tip off, the police discovered a 12-wheel vehicle being driven by one Min Min Soe, 28, from Myay Mon village along with Zin Myo Naung, 17, from Hta-nuang Kaine village. They were carrying 24 illegal motorbikes on board. Local police have filed charges against Min Min Soe and Zin Myo Naung. — Myo Win Nyo (Kyunhla)

**Ammunition, weapons seized in Mae Sot**

WEAPONS and ammunition, including ten M-16 assault rifles and seven AK-47’s were seized in Mae Sot by Thai authorities on 5 March. The guns belonged to a Thai police officer who fled the authorities, according to Thai media.

According to an investigation, a suspicious-looking vehicle drove away when Thai police asked them to stop at the Mea Sot entrance gate. Police later stopped the vehicle in Kan Phit Ban ward in Mae Sot. The vehicle was owned by a former police officer who was recently expelled from the force. Police are in hot pursuit of the suspect. — Tin Win Hlaing (Kawkareik)

**Arrest of suspects, seizure of narcotic drugs in February**

A TOTAL of 806 suspects—701 men and 105 women—were arrested under article 557 narcotic drug-related cases in February 2016, according to the Myanmar Police Force.

The police searched a bus and found another seven undocumented Myanmar nationals on board. All of the undocumented Myanmar nationals were charged with illegal entry. The two drivers have been charged with people smuggling. Police found that the Myanmar nationals paid 2,000 Bahts each to the traffickers, according to the Bangkok Post. — Kyaw Soe (IPRD)

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**Crime NEWS**

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Yangon’s organic produce lacks own market

A worker waters muskmelon plants in an organic farm in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: AYE MN SOE

ORGANICALLY cultivated produce is failing to reach consumers because of a lack of a separate market, according to sellers of organic produce.

It is known from U Kyaw Htin Win, CEO of Agarwin Keystone, that commerce of organic produce is mainly conducted through consumers picking their own produce in the organic crops fields themselves as there are good connections between agriculture produce companies and those consumers wishing to purchase organic products.

“There are people out there wishing to purchase and eat [organic food] having come to a real understanding of what organic food means. There are also those who want to sell organic produce. There’s still some discrepancies between consumers and traders—consumers are only from one class of society. There isn’t an established area of trading yet and one can’t go and sell produce in the outskirts of town. A bundle of watercress can be bought for K100-200 but if it’s organic then whatever the vegetable, it’s not going to cost less than K500,” he said. With this, there is currently neither educational awareness, on the health benefits of cultivating crops sprayed without chemicals or pesticides, nor the market to directly sell organic produce to consumers in Yangon, it is known.

Furthermore, as organic produce is over thirty percent more expensive than regularly cultivated crops, despite an interest from consumers, high prices have prevented the market from expanding, according to U Hla Min, chair of the Myanmar Organic Organization.

“Organic produce is rarely found in supermarkets or food stores because of few consumers. A lack of purchasers of organic produce because of price differences means that sellers have to sell to customers directly.” he said.

The Myanmar Organic Organisation has made it known that they will strive to make a submission to the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) for space to be provided for the establishment of a separate organic-only produce market in a bid to resolve the issue of a lack of connection between consumers and traders. It is known that organic produce are currently sold every Saturday in Yangon on Myay Padya Than Island.

Organic produce is not sprayed with chemicals or fertilizers during cultivation, resulting in a short shelf life after purchase of just a couple of days. Natural fertilizers, animal manure and bio polymer are used while mulch acts as an organic pesticide, it is known.—Myitmakkha News Agency

Flower market on Mandalay-Pyin Oo Lwin motorway booming

SALES of Chrysanthemum is gaining higher demand than Eugenia and Mesua Ferrea at floral market near Thalekone village on Mandalay-Pyin Oo Lwin Road, Pathein-gyi Township, Mandalay Region. The market is crowded daily with sellers and purchasers.

There are many Chrysanthemum sellers in the market because the flower gains a better price, from about K500 to K1300 per flower bouquet. Farmers selling directly with motorbike can be seen in the market. They provide the flowers at a wholesale price for resellers in the wards, said a wholesale purchaser from Mandalay.

There are various varieties of Chrysanthemum such as Kway-phyu, Pale-phyu, Chat-sein and Dahlia. With the better price of Chrysanthemum, farmers are doing well with their daily income, said one growing Chrysanthemum in Ywarshay village, Pathein-gyi Township.—Than Zaw Min (IPRD)

Metro Group considers entry into new markets

METRO Group has announced yesterday it is considering entry into two markets, Myanmar and Iran. Metro’s Cash & Carry business has been performing well, enjoying its 10th consecutive quarter of positive growth, with same store sales increasing by 0.2% in Q1 2015/16.

Following this, the Group is studying the feasibility of launching in Iran and Myanmar via its Cash & Carry banner, and will make this decision by the end of 2016. CEO, Olaf Koch said “Myanmar is benefiting from opening up politically and has high growth potential. We’re also examining what opportunities Iran will offer with the end of Western sanctions.” Both markets could offer significant long term growth opportunities for the retailer, with Asia an important growth region for the Group. However, Metro has recently recommitted to strengthening on its core markets, and disposing of anything superfluous to this, i.e. its exit of Vietnam in 2014. In order to remain focused on its core markets, it will need to consider this move carefully.—Metro

Metro Group considers entry into new markets
China says South China Sea among world’s freest shipping lanes

BEIJING — The South China Sea is one of the world’s freest and safest shipping lanes, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Tuesday, arguing that Beijing’s control over the disputed waters was justified because it was the first to “discover” them.

China has come under fire from the United States and its allies in recent months for its reclamation activities in the South China Sea, through which $5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes annually.

The US Navy has carried out freedom of navigation exercises, sailing near disputed islands to underscore its rights to operate in the seas.

Those patrols, and reports that China is deploying advanced missiles, fighters and radar equipment on islands there, have led Washington and Beijing to trade accusations of militarising the region.

The freedom of navigation does not equal the “freedom to run amok”, Wang told a press briefing on the sidelines of China’s annual parliament meeting.

“In fact, based on the joint efforts of China and other region al countries, the South China Sea is currently one of the safest and freest shipping lanes in the world,” Wang said.

“China was the earliest to explore, name, develop and administer various South China Sea islands. Our ancestors worked diligently here for generations,” Wang said.

“History will prove who is the visitor and who is the genuine host,” he said, adding that China would “consider inviting” foreign journalists to islands under its control when the conditions are right.

Beijing claims almost all of the South China Sea, but Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam have overlapping claims.

US Defence Secretary Ash Carter has warned of “specific consequences” if China takes “aggressive” action in the region. He has said the US military was increasing deployments to the Asia-Pacific region and would spend $425 million through 2020 to pay for more exercises and training with countries in the region that were not revered by China’s actions.—Reuters

Indonesian province declares emergency as forest fires flare

JAKARTA — Indonesia’s western province of Riau has declared a state of emergency over forest and land fires blazing on the island of Sumatra, a government official said on Tuesday.

The fires, which send choking smoke over Southeast Asia every year, raged uncontrollably across several provinces last year, costing an estimated $16 billion, and pushed average daily greenhouse gas emissions above those of the United States.

“The governor has declared an emergency now, to be able to prevent a repeat of the haze that occurred in 2015,” said provincial government spokesman Darusman.

About 500 military and police personnel and a water-bombing helicopter have been deployed to help fight the fires but the haze had not yet reached urban areas, he said. The fires are often set by plantation companies and smallholders to clear land, and were particularly bad in 2015 because of a prolonged dry season caused by the El Niño weather pattern.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo has urged authorities to contain so-called hotspots, where fires start and spread to their surroundings. This year, Widodo set up an agency to restore around 2 million hectares (5 million acres) of carbon-rich peatlands which typically produce more smoke than forest fires. But past efforts by Indonesia and neighbouring countries to prevent the fires, or put them out once started, have shown little success. Last year’s fires ended only when the rainy season arrived to douse them.—Reuters

Top Philippine court allows embattled senator to run for presidency

MANILA — The Philippine Supreme Court ruled on Tuesday to allow an embattled senator to run for the presidency in an election on 9 May, dismissing questions on her citizenship and residency as required by the Constitution.

With a 9-6 result, the 15-member high tribunal rejected petitions, earlier affirmed by the Commission of Elections, to disqualify Sen. Mary Grace Poe-Llamanzares, popularly known as Grace Poe, from the presidential race for her alleged failure to meet the minimum 10-year residency and natural-born citizenship requirements.

Poe, 47, has been leading pre-election independent polls despite being an independent candidate and her being a neophyte in politics. Her first elective position was as a senator, which she won in 2013. Prior to that, she was appointed by President Benigno Aquino as chairman of the Movie and Television Regulatory and Classification Board.

“I thank the Supreme Court for giving recognition to the truth, justice, and most of all, protection for all the oppressed among our countrymen,” said Poe, whose citizenship issue is anchored on her being a “naturalized US citizen 10 years later.

In July 2006, she reacquired her Philippine citizenship, and four years later, renounced her US citizenship. At least one of the petitioners said an appeal on the decision will be filed before the Supreme Court.

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago for a six-year term in the presidency that Aquino will vacate on 30 June. Aquino’s appointed candidate is Roxas.—Kyodo News

South Korea issues new sanctions against North, bans ships via North ports

SEOUL — South Korea said on Tuesday it would impose new sanctions against North Korea’s weapons programme and would ban vessels that had stopped at North Korean ports in the past 180 days from operating in the region.

The new measures are designed to discourage shipping firms and trading companies from doing business with the North to further isolate it, South Korea said.

The decision to issue more unilateral sanctions against the North follows a UN Security Council resolution triggered by the isolate state’s fourth nuclear test in January and a long-range rocket launch last month.

Tension in the region is high as South Korean and US troops began military exercises on Monday in an annual test of their defences against the North, which called the drills “nuclear war moves” and threatened to respond with an all-out offensive.

The individuals subject to financial sanctions announced on Tuesday include a Singaporean and a Taiwan national who are heads of a shipping firm and a trading company, the government said.

South Korea also blacklisted a Thai shipping firm called Master’s Shipping & Trading and Taiwan company Royal Team Corporation.

South Korea will ban those on the list from engaging in financial transactions with South Korean entities and freeze assets that are held in the country, the government said.

The North’s rocket launch last month, South Korea suspended operations at the Kaesong industrial zone, just on the North Korean side of their common border, which had been run jointly with the North for more than a decade.—Reuters
**KUALA LUMPUR — Family members who hoped an international investigating team would shed light on missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 were disappointed by a much-anticipated statement released Tuesday to mark the second anniversary of its disappearance.**

“It’s three pages of nothing! It tells us nothing that we have not heard before. It’s disappointing,” said Grace Nathan, 28, who lost her mother Ann Daisy in the tragedy.

The interim statement was prepared by the Malaysia-led “safety investigation team” that includes representatives from seven international air disaster investigation bodies from Australia, Britain, China, France, Indonesia, Singapore and the United States.

Under International Civil Aviation Organisation regulations, an interim statement must be issued on each anniversary detailing the progress of the investigation and any safety issues raised.

The three-page, seven-paragraph statement, which can be accessed at www.mh370.gov.my, compares with a nearly 600-page report issued one year ago on the first anniversary of the plane’s disappearance, which gave a detailed look at the events leading to the disappearance of the Boeing 777 and the search that ensued.

Then and now, however, the team failed to shed light on what caused the plane, carrying 239 people from 14 nationalities, to vanish in the early hours of 8 March, 2014.

Family members have long been unhappy over what they claim to be lack of transparency displayed by authorities over the tragedy, as well as shoddy treatment by the government and the airline company.

According to the interim statement, “A final report will be completed in the event wreckage of the aircraft is located or the search for the wreckage is terminal, whichever is earlier.”

It said the team is working on finalizing its analysis and safety recommendations on eight areas: diversion from filed flight plan route; air traffic services operations; flight crew profile; airworthiness and maintenance and aircraft systems; satellite communications; wreckage and impact information (following the discovery of a flaperon of the aircraft); organisation and management information of the Department of Civil Aviation and MAS; and aircraft cargo configuration.

The Boeing 777, carrying 227 passengers and 12 crew, vanished while flying above the South China Sea en route to Beijing from Kuala Lumpur. Based on satellite and radar data, experts calculate that the flight ended in the southern Indian Ocean.

After a two-year search led by Australia in an area spanning 120,000 square kilometres, the only confirmed evidence was a wing part known as the flap- eron that washed ashore on the French island of Reunion, east of Madagascar, last July, some 3,700 km away from the designated search site.

The find, experts said, is consistent with the drift pattern analysis.

In the past week, another wing fragment was found on Reunion Island, while a tail part was discovered on the coast of Mozambique.

Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai said Malaysian officials sent to Mozambique had taken custody of the part and will work with their Australian counterparts to identify if it belongs to MH370.

As for the new find on Reunion, he said they are waiting for the French court to decide within the next two days who should get custody of the debris, Malaysia or France.

Meanwhile, Malaysia marked the second anniversary of the plane’s disappearance with lawmakers in the lower house of Parliament observing a minute of silence.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak issued a statement earlier reaffirming Malaysia’s commitment to find the jumbo jet.

“The disappearance of MH370 was without precedent, and the search has been the most challenging in aviation history,” he said, “We remain committed to doing everything within our means to solving what is an agonizing mystery for the loved ones of those who were lost. On this most Malaysian, last July, our thoughts and prayers are with the families of those who will never be forgotten.”

The current search operation is expected to end in June.

“We remain hopeful that MH370 will be found in the 120,000 square kilometres not, there, Malaysia, Australia and China will hold a tripartite meeting to determine the way forward,” Najib said.

Meanwhile, Malaysia’s central bank said its US account had been hacked and money was stolen, but that some of the funds were traced to the Philippines and recovered.

The New York Fed, which manages the account, denied that its systems were breached but did not say whether funds had been drained from the account, citing confidentiality.

Bangladesh Bank said it was working with anti-money laundering authorities in the Philippines. It did not say how much money had been stolen and a spokesman declined to comment.

Bangladesh’s central bank has around $28 billion in foreign currency reserves.che was influenced and has been receiving orders from the IS network in Syria,” he added.

Muslim-majority Malaysia has not experienced any significant attacks, but it has arrested at least 160 people since January 2015 suspected of being involved in militant activities, including seven believed to have been part of an IS cell.

The country has been on high alert since IS-linked militants carried out an armed attack in Jakarta, Indonesia on 14 January.

Zahid said between September 2014 and May 2015, IS members had planned four major attacks across the country, including in the capital Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, and the state of Kedah.

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The targets for attacks included entertainment centres and religious buildings including a Shite mosque, a Buddhist temple and a Freemasons’ lodge.

**Victims’ families fault MH370 probe statement for lacking detail**

**Bangladesh central bank says US account hacked: Fed denies breach**

DKHAKA/New York—Bangladesh’s central bank said on Monday its account at the US Federal Reserve had been hacked and money was stolen, but that some of the funds were traced to the Philippines and recovered.

The New York Fed, which manages the account, denied that its systems were breached but did not say whether funds had been drained from the account, citing confidentiality.

Bangladesh Bank said it was working with anti-money laundering authorities in the Philippines. It did not say how much money had been stolen and a spokesman declined to comment.

Bangladesh’s central bank has around $28 billion in foreign currency reserves.

**Malaysia says Islamic State militants plotted to kidnap PM Najib last year**

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysian police foiled a plot by the Islamic State (IS) militant group to kidnap Prime Minister Najib Razak and other senior ministers last year, the country’s deputy premier said on Tuesday.

Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who is also the home minister, said the militants also planned to carry out attacks in the administrative capital, Putrajaya, for which explosives had been prepared and tested.

On 30 January, 2015, there were plans by 13 people linked to Daesh (Islamic State) to kidnap the country’s leaders including the prime minister, the home minister and the defence minister,” Ahmad Zahid said in response to a question about the government’s efforts to tackle the threat posed by IS.

“There was also a plan to carry out an attack in Putrajaya. To this end, the group had prepared and tested explosives,” Zahid said.

“Although there is no proper Daesh (IS) establishment in the country, those here (in Malaysia) were being influenced and have been receiving orders from the IS network in Syria,” he added.

The country has been on high alert since IS-linked militants carried out an armed attack in Jakarta, Indonesia on 14 January.

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**The Traveller’s Guide**

**A Brief History of Yangon**

**Dr. Khine Khine Win**

_The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing marked a significant turning point for the global agenda for gender equality. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action continue to play a crucial role in realizing gender equality and human rights of women._

**1948:** Burma gained Independence from the British. Aung San led the struggle against British colonialism with the aim of attaining independence for Myanmar.

**1949:** Burma expanded its independence movement with the formation of the Burma National Army (BNA).

**1950:** Aung San was assassinated, leading to a power vacuum and the formation of a military regime.

**1962:** The military coup led by General Ne Win established a one-party state, lasting until 1988.

**1988:** The pro-democracy protests, known as the 8888 Uprising, took place, leading to the military’s crackdown.

**1990:** The first free multiparty elections were held, but the results were annulled by the military regime.

**1997:** Myanmar officially changed its name to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

**1999:** The first national elections were held, and the National League for Democracy (NLD) emerged as the winner.

**2001:** The government began implementing economic reforms, including opening the economy and encouraging foreign investment.

**2008:** The NLD, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won the general elections, but the results were annulled by the military.

**2010:** Myanmar held its first general elections in 25 years, with the NLD winning a majority of seats.

**2012:** The military handed over power to a civilian government led by Thein Sein.

**2015:** Myanmar held its first non-military-led elections since the 1960s, with the NLD winning a clear majority.

**2016:** Myanmar joined the International Criminal Court.

**2017:** Myanmar faced international condemnation over the Rohingya crisis.

**2019:** Myanmar’s economy grew by 6.2%, marking its fastest pace in five years.

**2021:** Myanmar experienced a military coup, leading to widespread protests and the imposition of a state of emergency.

**2022:** Myanmar continued to face international pressure to resolve the crisis and restore democracy.

**2023:** The international community continues to push for a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Myanmar.
Russia, Philippines have most female business leaders, Japan ranks lowest

The number of businesses with no women in senior management has increased to 33 percent from 32 percent in 2015, the report, which surveyed 5,520 businesses in 36 countries, said.

“Companies across developed nations have talked the talk on diversity in leadership for long enough,” Francesca Lagerberg, global leader for tax services at Grant Thornton International, said in a statement.

“This poor performance seems to be at least partly a result of entrenched societal norms. In the UK and US in particular, there are still plentiful examples of a ‘command and control’ approach to leadership which is not necessarily attractive to women.”

Meanwhile, 39 percent of businesses in G7 countries (Canada, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Britain, and the United States) had no women in senior management positions.

“Despite considerable efforts by governments and campaigners across the world’s best-developed economies to ensure best practice they continue to lag behind emerging markets in (the diversity) area,” Lagerberg said.

“Women in Business” published yesterday said.

The test was intended “to show Iran’s deterrent power and also the Islamic Republic’s ability to confront any threat against the (Islamic) Revolution, the state and the sovereignty of the country”, ISNA said.—Reuters

US first lady Michelle Obama to attend funeral for Nancy Reagan

WASHINGTON — First lady Michelle Obama will attend the funeral on Friday of Nancy Reagan, who will be buried next to her husband, former President Ronald Reagan, at his presidential library in California, officials said on Monday.

Reagan will lie in repose at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library on Wednesday and Thursday. A private funeral is planned for Friday, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation said.

“First lady Michelle Obama will be attending Mrs. Reagan’s funeral,” a White House official said on Monday.

Reagan, the former actress who was fiercely protective of her husband through a Hollywood career, eight years in the White House, an assassination attempt and his Alzheimer’s disease, died on Sunday at age 94.

The cause of death was congestive heart failure, said a spokeswoman for the Reagan presidential library. She died at her Los Angeles home.

In Washington, President Barack Obama ordered that US flags be flown at half-staff at the White House, public buildings, military posts and other facilities as a mark of respect, the White House said on Monday.

Reagan became one of the most influential first ladies in US history during her Republican husband’s presidency from 1981 to 1989.

Her husband, who affectionately called her “Mommy”, while she called him “Ronic”, died in 2004 after a long struggle with Alzheimer’s, the progressive brain disorder that destroys memory.

Obama, a Democrat, and his wife, Michelle, said Nancy Reagan redefined the role of first lady. “Nancy Reagan once wrote that nothing could prepare you for living in the White House,” the Obamas wrote in a joint statement on Sunday. “She was right, of course. But we had a head start, because we were fortunate to benefit from her proud example, and her warm and generous advice.”—Reuters

Netanyahu says declined to meet Obama due to US election campaign

JERUSALEM — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday that he had declined an offer to meet US President Barack Obama at the White House later this month because of the heated US election campaign.

The White House first announced on Monday that Netanyahu had turned down the meeting — a move that was seen as the latest episode in a fraught relationship that has yet to recover from deep differences over last year’s US-led international nuclear deal with Israel’s foe Iran.

A White House spokesman said on Monday Israel had requested a meeting and that two weeks ago Netanyahu was offered a 18 March encounter, but US authorities later learned from media reports that Netanyahu had canceled the visit.

A statement issued by the Prime Minister’s office said that while Netanyahu “appreciated Obama’s willingness to meet him”, he decided “not to go to Washington at this time, at the height of the primary election campaigns in the United States”.

Netanyahu was widely seen as favouring Republican challenger Mitt Romney in the 2012 US election, and Israeli political sources said he was eager to avoid giving any impression of favouritism in the current race.—Reuters

Emergency declared in 15 municipalities, 710 homes flooded

BELGRADE — About 710 households have been flooded and 118 people have been evacuated amid heavy rainfall which caused a state of emergency to be declared in 15 municipalities, the Ministry of Interior (MIA) said in a release on Tuesday.

A state of emergency has been declared in the municipalities of Cacak, Novi Pazar, Kraljevo, Aridje, Lucani, Topola, Pozega, Bajina Basta, Ivanjica, Raksa, Lijig, Kraga, Kosjeric, Trenk and in parts of the municipality of Prijepolje.

A total of 118 people have been evacuated, the release said. Overfowing rivers have flooded around 710 homes in Serbia — in Ivanjica (20), Lucani (45), Geroczi Milanovac (5), Aridje (9), Bajina Basta (9), Pozega (35), Cetinjska (2), Bajina Basta (35), Novi Sad (70), Uzice (3) and Kraljevo (360).—Tanjug
Now you’re talking: human-like robot may one day care for dementia patients

SINGAPORE — With her brown hair, soft skin and expressive face, Nadine is a new brand of human-like robot that could one day, scientists hope, be used as a personal assistant or care provider for the elderly.

The 1.7-metre tall Nadine was created in the likeness of its maker, Nadia Thalmann, a visiting professor and director of Singapore’s Nanyang Technological University’s Institute of Media Innovation who has spent three decades researching into virtual humans.

Nadine’s software allows the robot to express a range of emotions and recall a previous conversation. Nadine is not commercially available, but Thalmann predicted robots could one day be used as companions for people living with dementia.

“If you leave these people alone they will be going down very quickly. So these people need to always be in interaction,” Thalmann said, adding Nadine could provide conversation, tell a story or play a simple game.

Thalmann and her team are also working on emotive robots that can play with children. The project is still in the early development stage and no prototype is available yet.

The child robot would be able to respond to questions, display emotions and recognize people. Aside from being a social companion, the child robot could supervise unattended children and inform a parent or nanny if something went wrong. Thalmann said.

There are plans to program the child robot to speak different languages so that it can serve as an educational tool for children, she said. “A child has toys but they are usually passive. This robot will be an active toy which interacts with the child,” said Thalmann. “It will be able to remember what the child likes.”

BioCryst’s Zika drug shows promise in mice

NEW YORK — BioCryst Pharmaceuticals Inc said on Monday that a dose of its experimental antiviral drug improved survival rates in mice infected with the Zika virus in a preclinical study. Two doses of the drug, BCX443, were tested against a placebo and an oral antiviral called ribavirin for their effect on survival of immune-deficient mice infected with Zika.

Seven out of eight mice that received the “standard” dose survived but none of the other mice that received either a low dose, the placebo or ribavirin were alive after 28 days.

The study was conducted at Utah State University under an ongoing programme run by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), which is part of the National Institutes of Health. The mosquito-borne Zika virus has been linked to brain damage in thousands of babies in Brazil. There is no proven vaccine or treatment for the virus.

Being ‘out of shape’ ups diabetes risk regardless of weight

NEW YORK — For adolescents, low cardiorespiratory fitness and poor muscle strength increase their risk for type 2 diabetes later in life, regardless of body weight, according to a study of young men in Sweden.

“The risk factors had a synergistic effect. In other words, the combination of low aerobic and muscular fitness increased diabetes risk more than the sum of the two individual risks,” Crump told Reuters Health by email.

The researchers used data on more than one million 18-year-old military conscripts in Sweden between 1969 and 1997, without a history of diabetes.

The researchers followed these men until 2012, identifying type 2 diabetes diagnoses using national hospital and outpatient registries.

About 2%, or 34,000 men, were diagnosed with diabetes during follow-up, which lasted into middle age for most. Half were diagnosed after age 46.

Those who were least fit as 18-year olds were three times more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes than those with better measures of aerobic capacity and strength, even for young men with a healthy body mass index, as reported in the Annals of Internal Medicine, 7 March.

“Young people should maintain regular exercise and both aerobic and muscular fitness, and avoid barriers to this such as screen time,” Crump said.

“More studies will be needed to measure physical fitness as well as diet and BMI at other time points across the lifespan to examine age windows of susceptibility to these factors in relation to diabetes,” he said.

These should include women and other populations, he said.

“People need to maintain regular exercise and both aerobic and muscular fitness, and avoid barriers to this such as screen time,” Crump said.

Current guidelines recommend 60 minutes of exercise daily, most of which should be aerobic activity, but should also include muscle-strengthening activities at least three days per week, he said, but only about half of US children and youth meet these guidelines.

First US woman with uterus transplant looks forward to pregnancy

NEW YORK — A 26-year-old woman who received the first transplanted uterus in the United States said on Monday she was looking forward to getting pregnant next year.

“I was told at 16 I would never have children. From that moment on I prayed that God would allow me the opportunity to experience pregnancy,” said Lindsey, who did not give her last name to protect the privacy of her three adopted sons.

Lindsey, who was born without a uterus and received a womb from a deceased donor in her 30s, read a brief statement to reporters at a news conference. She was in a wheelchair and is still staying at the hospital for monitoring. The transplant, done in a nine-hour surgery on 24 February, was the first of 10 uterine transplants planned as part of a clinical trial at the Cleveland Clinic, which has screened 250 potential recipients.

The Cleveland team of surgeons who are conducting the trial said they worked closely with doctors in Sweden, where five babies have been born since 2014 to mothers with transplant-ed wombs.

Women who get a womb transplant in Cleveland will stay in the hospital one to two months following surgery, then return home and lead a fairly normal life on immunosuppression medications to keep their bodies from rejecting the transplanted organ, doctors said at the news conference. Lindsey must wait a year to get pregnant, until she is on a lower dose of anti-rejection drugs, the doctors said. After one or two babies, the uterus will be removed so that she does not have to spend her whole life on anti-rejection drugs, the doctors said. Embryos from her eggs and her husband’s sperm will be implanted in her uterus. She cannot conceive through intercourse because the uterine transplant does not include the fallopian tubes.

The baby will be delivered by cesarean section as close as possible to its due date, the doctors said. “Uterus transplant is not just about a surgery and moving a uterus from here to there. It’s about having a healthy baby and that goal is still a couple of years away,” said obstetrics and gynecology surgeon Rebecca Flyckt, referring to the year-long wait before trying to get pregnant, and the nine-month pregnancy.

The women who will participate in the trial include some born without a uterus — which happens to one in 5,000 women — and others who had a hysterectomy due to cancer or other problems.
EU welcomes Turkey plan to stop migrants, defers decision

BRUSSELS — European Union leaders welcomed Turkey's offer on Monday to take back all migrants who cross into Europe from its soil and agreed in principle to Ankara’s demands for more money, faster EU membership talks and quicker visa-free travel in return.

However, key details remained to be worked out and the 28 leaders moved more work by officials with a view to reaching an ambitious package deal with Turkey at their next scheduled summit, on 17-18 March.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and British Prime Minister David Cameron, among others hailed the surprise Turkish proposal at an emergency summit in Brussels as a potential breakthrough in Europe’s politically toxic migration crisis.

More than a million people fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East and beyond have flooded into the EU since early 2015, most making the perilous sea crossing from Turkey to Greece, then heading north through the Balkans to Germany.

Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu told EU leaders that Ankara was willing to take back all migrants who enter Europe from Turkey in future, including Syrian refugees, as well as those intercepted in its territorial waters.

“With this game-changing position in fact our objective is to discourage illegal migration, to prevent human smugglers, to help people who want to come to Europe through encouraging legal migration in a disciplined and regular manner,” he told a news conference after the summit. In exchange for stopping the influx, he demanded doubling EU funding through 2018 to help Syrian refugees stay in Turkey and a commitment to take in one Syrian refugee directly from Turkey for each one returned from Greece’s Aegean islands, according to a document seen by Reuters. He also asked to bring forward EU visa liberalisation for Turks to June from end-2016 and to open five more negotiating chapters in Turkey’s long-stalled EU accession process.

The EU leaders agreed to the earlier target date for visa-free travel provided Ankara meets all the conditions including changing its visa policies, reopening border crossing points and introducing harder-to-fake biometric passports.

They left open how much additional aid they would provide for refugees in Turkey and made only a vague reference to preparing for a decision on opening more areas of membership talks — a particularly sensitive issue for Cyprus.

European Council President Donald Tusk, who chaired the summit, said the outcome would show migrants that there was no longer a path into Europe for people seeking a better life.

“The days of irregular migration to Europe are over,” he told a joint news conference with Davutoglu.

Merkel, who requested the special summit to show results before regional elections in Germany next Sunday, said: “The Turkish proposal is a breakthrough, if it is implemented, to break the chain from getting into a boat to settling in Europe.”

Desperate to end the influx of Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans and others, EU leaders backed off warnings from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees that the EU should not shut its doors and should be willing to take in hundreds of thousands of refugees from Turkey.

Davutoglu said the summit showed how indispensable Turkey was for Europe, and Europe for Turkey.

At a preparatory meeting with Merkel and Rutte on Sunday night, he demanded double the 3 billion euros (2.30 billion pounds) earmarked so far to support Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Diplomats said Merkel and Rutte pressed hard for a deal on the Turkish plan but met resistance from central European states opposed to taking refugee quotas, as well as from Greece and Cyprus, which have conditions for the Turkish accession talks.

Three days after the Turkish government seized the best-selling opposition newspaper Zaman, the leaders said they had discussed the situation of the media in Turkey with Davutoglu.— Reuters

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**27 arrested for toxic waste dumping in north China**

SHIJIAZHUANG — Police in north China’s Hebei Province busted two groups responsible for discharging toxic waste, with one responsible for the death of a restaurant owner.

Twenty-seventy suspects who dumped more than 3,400 tonnes of toxic waste were arrested and 20 companies were implicated as local procurators prepared a lawsuit, a spokesman with the provincial public security department said.

On 18 May, 2015, the owner of the restaurant near a parking lot in Lianxian County, Baoding City died after inhaling poisonous gas from his kitchen sewer. Investigations found that the parking lot operator allowed illegal dumping of waste liquids, such as acid, in the lot.

The police first broke up a gang responsible for dumping waste at the lot on 17 and 18 May.

But investigations found they were not involved in the restaurant owner’s death.

Later, the police captured another group of people who dumped waste acid at different venues in the county, including the parking lot, between August, 2014, and May, 2015, and identified their waste dumping.

The spokesperson said Hebei has increased efforts to crack down on polluters. In 2015, 2,025 people were arrested for environmental pollution.— Xinhua

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**Swiss arrest 15 in suspected mafia case, plan extradition to Italy**

ZURICH — Swiss authorities arrested 15 Italian citizens on Tuesday and plan to extradite them to their home country, where law enforcement officials accuse them of membership in the ‘Ndrangheta mafia organisation.

Switzerland’s Federal Office of Justice said in a statement that Tuesday’s raid was carried out by agents in three cantons: urban Zurich and rural Thurgau, in the country’s north, and mountainous Valais, in southern Switzerland.

Two of the people taken into custody have already been sentenced in Italy to prison terms of six and nine years, it added.

Two other people have been invited for questioning by Swiss authorities but are not subject to extradition unless they agree to it because they previously obtained Swiss citizenship, authorities said.

Italy had requested the extradition of the 15 individuals starting a year ago. Since then, Swiss federal officials said a review of the Italian documents led them to determine that activities of the group’s members broke Swiss laws, fulfilling a requirement for their extradition. The crimes carry Swiss jail terms of up to five years.

Based in Calabria, or the toe of Italy’s boot-shaped peninsula, the ‘Ndrangheta crime families have also set up criminal activities in northern Italy and in dozens of countries around the world.

Late last year, Italian police arrested nine people and seized 130 kg of cocaine, smashing a major smuggling ring run by the Calabrian mafia that had monopolised sales of the drug in Venice.— Reuters
Female farmers in 90 nations face discriminatory land laws

TORONTO - Women in more than 90 countries still lack equal rights to own land, hurting food production and efforts to tackle poverty, Rwanda's former agriculture minister said.

Nations in eastern and southern Africa have considerably improved their laws to grant land ownership rights to female farmers, Agnes Kalibata said.

But many states in North Africa and South Asia continue to treat women as second-class citizens when it comes to land ownership, she said. “In Africa, six out of 10 women depend on the land for their livelihoods,” Kalibata told the Thomson Reuters Foundation ahead of International Women’s Day on Tuesday.

“They must have access to the means of production — the land itself. If we are going to have development across the globe, women need equal access to the land.”

Up to 30 per cent of women have land access in eastern and southern Africa, compared to less than 10 per cent in northern and central Africa, she said.

Without formal land titles, women have a harder time feeding and educating their children.

Agricultural productivity also suffers as female farmers are less likely to invest in improving the land without formal ownership, making it harder to feed the 795 million hungry people worldwide.

During her tenure as Rwanda’s agriculture minister which ended in 2014, Kalibata helped enact legal changes that give a woman ownership of half the land her family owns. In many other developing countries, land titles are kept in the husband’s name.

She also made it easier for widows to inherit family plots when their husbands died. “Incredible things are going on in Rwanda when it comes to women’s land rights,” said René Singer, spokeswoman for the Washington-based rights group Landesa.

“If women can’t inherit the land, we see the continuation of inequality between genders. The only way most poor people get resources in their lifetime is to inherit - they don’t have the money to purchase land.”

Even in countries like Rwanda with good land laws, lax enforcement and patriarchal customs can make it harder for female farmers to control their incomes, Kalibata said.

Governments need to invest in education, so rural women understand they have the right to own valuable land assets, she said, as many remain unaware of new laws granting them access.

Data on women’s land ownership is limited, but statistics from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization indicate women control less than a quarter of agricultural land holdings in developing countries — Reuters

Lawsuit over Flint, Michigan, crisis says 17 children have high lead levels

DETROIT - A group of Flint, Michigan, parents and their children filed a class action on Monday alleging that gross negligence by Michigan Governor Rick Snyder and others caused the city’s drinking water to become contaminated with lead.

The lawsuit was filed in Detroit federal court and seeks damages for a proposed class of “tens of thousands” of Flint residents and property owners who have suffered physical or economic injuries. The named plaintiffs are seven residents and their 17 children who lawyers say have heightened lead levels.

The state’s slow response to the water crisis drew sharp rebukes from Democratic presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton on Sunday. Both called for Snyder’s resignation. A spokesman has said the Republican governor has no intention of stepping down.

Flint, a predominantly black city of 100,000, was under the control of a state-appointed emergency manager when it switched its water source in April 2014 to the Flint River from Lake Huron. The more corrosive river water caused lead to leach from city pipes and into the drinking water.

The city switched back last October after tests found high levels of lead in blood samples taken from children, but the drinking water has not returned fully to normal. Flint began replacing lead pipes running to homes on Friday.

Attorneys Hunter Shkolnik and Adam Slater allege in Monday’s lawsuit the governmental defendants failed to take measures required by federal law to eliminate the dangers and downplayed the severity of the contamination to residents.

Children are especially vulnerable to lead exposure, as even small amounts can stunt development, leading to lifelong academic and behavioral problems. Current and former officials and workers in Flint and Michigan are named as defendants, along with engineering firm Lockwood, Andrews & Newnam, which was hired to assess the feasibility of using Flint River water. A firm representative said the lawsuit mischaracterized its role and it would vigorously defend its position in court.—Reuters

Invitation for Application

Myanmar Carbonix Ltd. (the “Company”) is a joint venture between Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise (“MPE”) and Air Liquide Industrial Services Ptd Ltd (ALIS) incorporated in 1996 to engage in production and distribution of gases in Myanmar. With 20 years of experiences in Myanmar, the Company is serving local public and private sectors through various industries such as food and beverages, healthcare and others. Currently the shareholders of the Company are considering to restructure the joint venture requiring the valuation of its business and shares. The Applicants shall be “Applicants”) to submit a proposal to provide financial advisory service in regard to restructuring the joint venture requiring the valuation of its business and shares. The Applicants shall be

**Sr.No** | **Tender No** | **Description** | **Remark** |
---|---|---|---|
(1) | IFB-085(15-16) | Spares for ATLAS COPCO Compressor (8) Items | US$ |
(2) | IFB-086(15-16) | Spares for 50 Ton QY 50K Mobile Crane (53) Items | US$ |
(3) | IFB-087(15-16) | Assorted Sizes of Hot Bend (1) Lot | US$ |
(4) | IFB-088(15-16) | Mixer with Microprocessor (2) Items | US$ |
(5) | IFB-089(15-16) | Auto Voltage Regulator and Constant Speed Mixer with Microprocessor (2) Items | US$ |
(6) | IFB-090(15-16) | Projector, Computer, Printer, Amplifier, Sound Box and Cordless Mic (5) Items | US$ |
(7) | DMP/L-016(15-16) | Core Drilling Machine/Atomic Absorption Spectrometers & Binocular Microscope (3) Items | KS |
(8) | DMP/L-017(15-16) | Dell Server and Accessories (1) Set | KS |

**Tender Closing Date & Time** - 4-4-2016, 16:30 Hr

Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 7th March, 2016 at the Finance Department, Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

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Rock band AC/DC halts 10 tour dates because lead singer risks hearing loss

Los Angeles — Veteran rock band AC/DC has been forced to reschedule 10 dates on its US leg of its “Rock or Bust” world tour because lead singer Brian Johnson could lose his hearing if he takes the stage, the band’s publicist said on Monday.

“The band known for its blazing guitars and full-throated vocals on songs like “Back in Black” and “Highway to Hell” will reschedule dates starting with a Tuesday show in Atlanta through an April 4 date in New York,” the band’s publicist said. The band will perform the shows later in the year, likely with a guest vocalist, it said.

Johnson, 68, joined AC/DC in 1980, taking over lead vocals just after former frontman Bon Scott died. The band, formed in the early 1970s, and was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2003.

British band The 1975 score first No. 1 album on Billboard chart

Los Angeles — British alt-rock band The 1975 scored its first chart-topping album on the weekly US Billboard 200 chart on Wednesday, ousting Adele from the top spot.

“I Like It When You Sleep, For You Are So Beautiful Yet So Unaware Of It,” the second album from The 1975, sold 108,000 units across album and song sales and streaming activity in the past week, according to figures from Nielsen SoundScan.

British singer Adele’s hit “25” album slipped one spot to No. 2 this week with 74,000 units sold. R&B singer Rihanna’s album “Antis” dropped one spot to No. 3 this week while rapper-producer duo Macklemore & Ryan Lewis’ latest record “This Unruly Mess I’ve Made” debuted at No. 4 with 61,000 units sold.

In ‘60 Minutes’ gaffe, actress Kim Cattrall depicted as Canadian PM’s mother

Toronto — A gaffe by the CBS show “60 Minutes,” which mistakenly aired a photo of the actress Kim Cattrall implying she was the mother of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, was cheerfully accepted by Cattrall, who said she couldn’t be more proud.

The episode broadcast late Sunday of the widely watched television news magazine featured a profile of Trudeau, who is due to visit Washington this week and attend a state dinner hosted by US President Barack Obama.

While a reporter on the show talked about Trudeau’s father, Pierre Trudeau, who was prime minister of Canada a generation earlier, and his mother Margaret Trudeau, a black-and-white image of the elder Trudeau and Cattrall depicted together was shown on screen.

Pierre and Margaret Trudeau each dated a string of celebrities after their marriage broke up, and the sometimes high-profile relationships often made news in Canada, where the prime minister and his young sons were celebrated in the media. The photo of Trudeau and Cattrall was snapped by a photographer of the Toronto Star newspaper in 1981, the paper said on Monday. That was long before the Canadian actress became best known for her role in the hit HBO show, Sex and the City.

Calvin Harris feels working with Taylor Swift will ruin their relationship

Los Angeles — DJ Calvin Harris is reportedly in no mood to collaborate with his girlfriend Taylor Swift.

The 32-year-old Scottish record producer politely denied the offer to join hands with the Grammy-winning songstress, reported Aceshowbiz.

“Calvin’s next single is ready but the label is keen for him to get a big female US star to collaborate on it. They floated the idea of him working with Taylor but he politely declined it. “Calvin has seen how sour things can turn when working with someone he’s dating. He’s very serious about Taylor and doesn’t want to rock the boat. He’s smitten,” a source said.

Jury finds Nashville hotel liable in Erin Andrews stalker video case

Los Angeles — A jury on Monday found a Nashville hotel liable for a nude video of sportscaster Erin Andrews that went viral and awarded her $55 million in damages to be paid by the hotel and the man who shot the video. Andrews sued the Nashville Marriott at Vanderbilt University over a 2008 video of her that was taken by a stalker in an adjoining room and posted on the Internet in 2009.

Andrews, a Fox sportscaster who used to work for ESPN, had sought $75 million in damages. “We’re disappointed with the outcome,” defense attorney Marc Edelman told reporters. He said he would consult with his clients — the hotel owners and its former operators — on whether they would appeal.

Jurors began deliberating on Monday morning after the two-week trial concluded on Friday. “I’ve been honored by all the support from victims around the world. Their outreach has helped me be able to stand up and hold accountable those whose job it is to protect everyone’s safety, security and privacy,” Andrews said in a brief statement on her Twitter feed.

Andrews testified for two days during the trial, saying that since the video was seen by millions of people, she experienced serious mental injury, including depression, crying spells and sleeplessness. Her lawyers argued that the hotel was negligent and could have prevented the incident.

The video was taken by Michael David Barrett, who pleaded guilty in 2009 to stalking Andrews and making the video. He was sentenced to 30 months in prison.

Barrett asked the hotel to put him in a room next to Andrews’ after an employee confirmed to him that she was staying there on a certain date. He rigged a peephole to shoot the video of Andrews while she was changing.

Lawyers for the hotel argued that the responsibility was solely Barrett’s and there was no way the hotel could have foreseen what he did.

In 1975, the band scored its first No. 1 album on the Billboard chart, which measures weekly sales and streaming activity. The album was titled “25,” and it was produced by the group’s usual producer, R&B singer R. Kelly. The album sold 74,000 copies the first week and 210,000 copies the second week.

The album featured the hit single “Kiss the Rain,” which reached No. 1 on the Hot Digital Songs chart and spent 17 weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. The album also featured the singles “Kiss You” and “Just a Girl,” which reached No. 1 on the Hot Dance Club Play chart.

By Piece” climbed from No. 35 to No. 11 and “The Price of Love” climbed from No. 35 to No. 9 on the Digital Songs chart.

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Gaza marvels at new Samson

Gaza — A modern-day Samson is performing feats of physical strength in Gaza.

“Go Samson go!” yelled a crowd in the Palestinian enclave cheering on Mohammad Baraka as the 20-year-old with the Biblical nickname used a rope around his chest to pull a 15-tonne petrol tanker.

Baraka, who prefers to be known as “The Incredible”, perhaps because he lacks the original Samson’s long hair, has been putting on displays in his hometown of Deir al-Balah for the past two years, earning a reputation as the strongest man in the Gaza Strip.

“I was confident there was power inside me and I started to develop it,” said the body-builder and hotel management student.

Traffic came to a halt in Deir al-Balah during the weekend performance as motorists and children on their way to school stopped to watch Baraka tow the yellow fuel truck. As an encore, he dragged a water tanker by his teeth for about 50 metres (yards).

Baraka also wowed his audience by lying on his back and having knives dropped on his bare stomach from a height of one meter (three feet). Some friends used hammers to shatter bricks placed on his chest.

“At the beginning, some people believed in him, others had their doubts — but everyone was amazed,” said his father, Kamal, a philosophy teacher.

“Mohammad’s power is hidden inside him, it has nothing to do with muscles and training.”

The Biblical Samson was an Israelite warrior who, the Old Testament says, toppled a Philistine temple in Gaza, killing thousands of a crowd that had demanded their captured and blinded enemy be brought from prison to entertainment.— Reuters

Shipwreck found off North Carolina believed to be Civil War-era steamer

WINSTON-SALEM, (N.C.) — A shipwreck discovered off the coast of North Carolina is likely one of three Confederate blockade runners known to have been lost in the area, archaeologists said on Monday.

The remains of the iron-hulled steamer were located on 5 March. Palestinian Mohammad Baraka, 20, nicknamed by people as Gaza Samson, pulls a water tanker by a rope attached to his teeth as he exercises in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on 5 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

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LOS ANGELES — Russian tennis star Maria Sharapova said on Monday she had failed a drug test at the Australian Open due to a substance she was taking for health issues, leading longtime sponsor Nike to announce it was suspending ties.

The 28-year-old Sharapova, a five-time grand slam champion and the highest paid woman in sports, will be provisionally suspended starting 12 March, the International Tennis Federation (ITF) said.

She is the seventh athlete in a month to test positive for meldonium, which is used to treat diabetes and low magnesium, and was only banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) as of 1 January.

“I made a huge mistake. I let my fans down and I let the sport down,” said Sharapova, a teenage tennis prodigy who became the third-youngest Wimbledon champion. “I take full responsibility for it.”

“I know that with this I face consequences and I don’t want to end my career this way. I really hope that I will be given another chance to play this game,” former world number one Sharapova told a news conference in a downtown Los Angeles hotel.

Nike, the world’s largest sportswear maker, said it was “saddened and surprised” by the news and released a statement saying it was putting ties on hold with the player.

“We have decided to suspend our relationship with Maria while the investigation continues,” it said.

The ITF’s anti-doping programme calls for a four-year suspension for a positive test, but that ban can be reduced in various circumstances, such as for first-time offences or if the player shows no significant fault or negligence.

If a player bears no fault or negligence, there is no suspension.

According to Forbes, she earned $29.5 million in 2015, mostly from endorsements.

Sharapova said her family doctor had been giving her meldonate, which is also called meldonium, for 10 years after she frequently became sick, had irregular EKG results, a magnesium deficiency and a family history of diabetes.

“It is very important for you to understand that for 10 years this medicine was not on WADA’s banned list and I had been legally taking the medicine. But on January the first, the rules changed and meldonium became a prohibited substance.”

WADA declined to comment until ITF issues a final decision.

Sharapova is the most prominent tennis player to test positive for a banned substance in recent years.—Reuters

Premier skills comes to a close in Myanmar

YANGON — The Premier Skills initiative in Myanmar, run by the Barclays Premier League and British Council, came to a close last week with SAFC’s head of international football development hailed the success of the programme.

SAFC’s Graham Robinson, who delivered the final stages of the Premier Skills initiative in Myanmar, was impressed by the development of the global grassroots programme in the country that saw all 11 coaches certified fit to deliver Premier Skills training in the country.

The 11 coaches who have become qualified Premier Skills coach educators, were only the second group in Premier Skills’ history and the first in Asia, to qualify with Level 1 and Level 2 certifications.

Graham, who led the final stages of the programme, said: “The planning and execution from the coaches was impeccable throughout the week. The sessions were of a fantastic standard on planning, delivery, structure and content.

“I am pleased to say we had nine Level 1 and two Level 2 certified coach educators at the end of this programme, which is a great achievement, with Myanmar only the second country to have all their candidates achieving coach educator status and the first Asian country to accomplish this.

“I have been very impressed with every aspect of football in this vibrant ever developing country and I am confident with this cohort of coach educators in Myanmar that the Premier Skills initiative is in very safe hands and will continue to thrive and grow.

The Premier Skills initiative began in 2007 and now works in 28 countries around the world.

It draws upon the Premier League’s global appeal and expertise in delivering community programmes in the UK, alongside the British Council’s global network, track record of delivery and world class expertise in English.

The visit to Myanmar further strengthens Sunderland AFC’s long-held commitment and reputation for investing in community and education programmes.—SAFC

Carneiro demands public apology from Mourinho over departure

LONDON — Former Chelsea team doctor Eva Carneiro has called for a public apology from Jose Mourinho as part of her constructive dismissal and sex discrimination claim against the Premier League champions and the club’s former manager.

Carneiro’s barrister also said the club and the Gibraltar-born doctor were nowhere near agreeing compensation over her departure ahead of a hearing at an employment tribunal on Monday.

“We’re not expecting a resolution today. The two sides are so far apart financially. And we want Mr. Mourinho to make a public apology,” Carneiro, representing Carneiro, told ITV News.

Carneiro, who worked for Chelsea for six years until she left in September, and Mourinho clashed in the closing minutes of the opening league match of the season against Swansea City at Stamford Bridge in August.

The 42-year-old ran on to the pitch with physio Jon Fearn after being called on by referee Michael Oliver to treat winger Eden Hazard.

After the game Mourinho described the pair as “impulsive and naive”. Carneiro was relieved of her match-day duties soon afterwards.—Reuters