President U Thein Sein observes construction of new wholesale market in Singaing Township, Mandalay Region after trip to Chin State

Nay Pyi Taw, 21 Feb—President U Thein Sein arrived at the proposed site of building wholesale market in Singaing Township in Mandalay Region on Saturday after he and his entourage looked into development programmes of electricity supply in Chin State. On Friday evening, the President viewed performance of Chin traditional dance troupes in Haka township to mark Chin National Day. He also joined bonfire celebration held in the compound of Chin State government headquarters.

On Saturday, the President and government officials visited Kaba Nye-in Chan Yae pagoda and Than Thayar Aye pagoda in Haka to offer flowers, water and lights.

He also paid homage to Dr Baddanta Tejo Sara, head of Jetavan Forest Retreat Buddhist Monastery and monks, with donation of offerings.

Dr Baddanta Tejo Sara gave K10 million to General Hla Htay Win, Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) for the fallen soldiers in Laukkai area.

President U Thein Sein also met ministers of Chin State government, MPs and towns elders at the headquarters of Chin State government.

At the meeting Chief Minister of Chin State U Hoang Ngai explained regional development programmes.

Union Minister U Khin Maung Soe, Ministry of Electric Power, presented the 24-hour electricity distribution to Haka Township and Htan Talan Township from national grid.

The capital of state received 66 KV power lines.

Tatmadaw never tolerates attempts to encroach upon Myanmar’s sovereignty: Army holds press conference

Nay Pyi Taw, 21 Feb—A press conference was held in Bayintnaung Yeiktha in Nay Pyi Taw to explain the background history of Kokang insurgents and its attack on Laukkai area on Saturday.

Altogether 27 news agencies at home and eight foreign news agencies based in the country attended the press conference chaired by Lt-Gen Mya Tun Oo of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) together with senior military officers.

Li-Gen Mya Tun Oo said that Phon Kya Shin defected to Burma Communist Party in 1967; in 1989 Kokang group occupied the Northern Bureau in Mongko and seceded from BCP, and on 31 March 1989 Kokang leaders led 2706 troops, under the name of Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, bringing 1345 assorted weapons along with them, returned to the legal fold.

Under the reign of Tatmadaw government, Phon group led by Phon Kya Shin took the lead in politics and administration and Yan group led by Yang Mo Lian took charge in military affairs. As a result of the power struggles among them they became rivals.

Phon Kya Shin cleverly controlled the region and engaged in drug trafficking, gambling and other black market businesses. According to the tip off that Phon Kya Shin was running a weapon factory in Yanglon-kyang village, authorities concerned seized weapons and ammunitions in Laukkai. A notice was issued to transfer four suspects including Phon Kya Shin but he managed to escape. Displeased with the situation, they arrested Myanmar Police Force members and killed them brutally.

On 14 November 2011 U Sai Lin made an appeal to President to grant amnesty to Phon Kya Shin and the President agreed for the sake of national unity. But, Phon Kya Shin invested money received from drug trafficking and other businessnesses in China and Mongla. On 25 April, 2014, a combined team arrested 8 Chinese people together with weapons and ammunitions in 3-mile Checkpoint in Tamu. According to the investigation, they joined the Kokang insurgents because of incentives given by the group. As they were not given salary and allowance and were treated badly, they killed the deputy company commander and fled the group.

Kokang insurgents built their strength to regain their area with the help of UWSA, NDAA, KIA and TNLA. Kokang insurgents were equipped with numerous weapons including Type-81-1 assault rifle said to be manufactured by UWSA (Wa) group.

National Solidarity Army is formed with one unit with the strength of 300 from KIA, one brigade comprising 4 units from UWSA (Wa) group and Kokang insurgents totalling 1000. Their objective is to occupy the whole region of Kokang and then from Myanmar-China border to Myitkyina.

In early 2014, about 1000 troops led by Phon Kya Shin mobilized in Mongla and went under training. With the combined strength of SSA (Wanghai), TNLA and KIA they tried to attack Laukkai and Mongko. But the Tatmadaw got a tip off and combed the area and thus their objective was spoiled and sneaked into villages as ordinary civilians. On 29 December 2014, Phon Kya Shin, in meeting with Global Time news agency, exposed that he had a plan to face Myanmar Tatmadaw.

Li-Gen Mya Tun Oo continued to explain the current situation starting from 9 to 15 February 2015 saying that the Tatmadaw could spoil insurgent’s...
Myanaung Township observes 67th Anniversary of Chin National Day

Myanaung, 21 Feb — A ceremony to mark the 67th Anniversary of Chin National Day was observed in Yayta Village in Myanaung Township, Ayeyawady Region, on 20 February, with an address by Chief Minister of Ayeyawady Region U Thein Aung.

Region Hluttaw MP U Aung Win Swe read out the message sent by Speaker of Region Hluttaw U Tin Soe. Officials explained Asho Chin language, literature, culture and costumes, emergence of Chin National Day and emblem.

Daw Khin Hlay Myint, wife of the Chief Minister, presented mosquito nets and foods to Chin nationals.

On the occasion, region government and political parties made cash donations. Win Bo (Township IPRD)

WAO, MCWSC donate cash for servicemen from Laukkai region

Pyin Oo Lwin, 21 Feb — Mandalay Region Women’s Affairs Organization and Maternal and Child Welfare Supervisory Committee donated cash for injured military servicemen who have been discharged from defence duty in Laukkai region.

The cash donation ceremony was held at the 700-bed Military Hospital in Pyin Oo Lwin on 18 February.

Patron of the Region WAO and MCWSC Daw Myat Ngwe and party presented K1 million for the servicemen, while District WAO Daw Aye Aye Lwin and party gave K800,000. Commandant Col Myo Thant of the hospital accepted the cash donations and returned certificates of honour.

The patron and party comforted servicemen at the hospital and presented K100,000 each to them. Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Health staff gave measles and rubella vaccines to children under 5 years

Nyaunglebin, 21 Feb — Mass immunization for measles and rubella was held at the office of the Myoma Ward 2 administrator in Nyaunglebin, Bago Region, on 19 February.

Deputy Commanding Officer U Soe Win of Township Red Cross Battalion, Ward Administrator U Zarni Lin and Midwife Daw Sanda Moe vaccinated children against the two diseases in the second phase.

The immunization drive being conducted across the nation up to 28 February. Nay Lin (Nyaunglebin)

4th and 8th standard students happily join examinations in Mandalay Region

Mandalay, 21 Feb — The examinations for fourth and eighth standards were conducted in Mandalay Region under the arrangements of No 2 Department of Basic Education for 2014-15 academic year.

Altogether 102,596 students from 28 townships of the region set for the fourth standard examination and 72,202 students in the eighth standard examination as of 19 February.

The examination centres are opened at 398 basic education schools, 16 private schools and 28 monastic education schools. With regard to the eighth standard, 72,202 students of 73,174 joined the examination, accounting for 98.67 percent.

The fourth standard examination will last up to 25 February and the eighth standard, till 26 February.

One male student and one female student sat for the eighth standard examination at Mandalay General Hospital under the arrangements of Ministry of Education and Health Department. Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)
President U Thein Sein observes...
(from page 1)
and sub-power stations at the cost of US$1.68 million and K5.52 billion. Union Minister also said construction of power lines, small scale hydro-power stations and sub-power stations in Falam, Mindat, Matupi, Kanpetlet, Tiddim, Tonzang and Rih townships, while some towns and villages in far-flung areas will receive diesel generators and solar power system.

Union Minister U Hla Tun at President Office also discussed the plans of national unity and regional development.

President U Thein Sein reviewed the activities of government in politics, economy, administration, development of private sector to ensure peace, stability and development of the country. Chief Minister of Chin State then donated K10 million to General Hla Htu Win, Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) for the fallen soldiers at Laukkai area.

President and senior government officials left Haka for Kalay Township, Sagaing Region, and then flew to Mandalay where they inspected the construction site of ancient capital’s new wholesale market in Sagaing Township. The wholesale market is located to the south of Paleik-Sagay road section in Paleik village, Sagaing Township. The purpose of establishing the market is to gather items such as fish, meat, fruits, vegetables, flowers, rice, etc to be put in one place for wholesalers for their convenience and to get more benefits, to conduct farm shows to penetrate international markets, to find technology exchange centres, training schools and quality control centres to promote farming technologies and to ease traffic jams.

Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham comforts locals, workers who fled from Laukkai

Tatmadaw never tolerates attempts to encroach upon Myanmar’s...
(from page 1)
objective. He highlighted that the current situation involved topping the elected government of self-administered zone and it is relating to the sovereignty. This is amounted to attacking the Government and Tatmadaw will never tolerate such a situation and never gives up. The Tatmadaw has warned Mongla group, Wa group, KIA, TNLA and SSA (Wanhai) as they involved in the incidents.

Now, administrative mechanism in Laukkai is paralyzed and Tatmadaw has to control the situation.

On 12 February, Phon Kya Shin spread a propaganda through Chinese online page that they were Han tribes and sought help from the government. On the other hand, he requested the President to show sympathy on them as they are one of the nationalities of 135 national people. On 16 February, he sent an open letter to the president stating that they want to dischage the duty of the state as a family members. Up to this date, seven officers, 48 other ranks sacrificed their lives with 12 officers and 96 other ranks injured. Now, Tatmadaw is engaged in evacuation measures. Enemy’s casualties were about 72 including one with the rank of Brigade Commander and one with the rank of Commanding Officer of Special Attack Force. The Tatmadaw could also seize 115 assorted weapons, ammunition, landmines, and drugs.

Lt-Gen Mya Tun Oo concluded his explanation by saying that Tatmadaw will do its best to safeguard the lives and property of the people and curb the attempts of insurgents to take foothold along border areas.

Senior Officers replied to the queries raised by the journalists and they viewed round the documents displayed at the press conference room.—Myawady

Military columns still combating Kokang insurgents

NAY PYI TAW, 21 Feb—Kokang insurgents still continue their acts of cutting off line of communication to the town of Laukkai, attempting to wreak havoc with the town’s administration, officials said.

In an effort to clear the town on Friday afternoon, the government troops had six engagements with Kokang insurgents stationed in the vicinity of the 18th Mile junction on the Konyan-Laukkai road. The army could take a hill on which the rebels launched temporary defensive. The seizure of the hill resulted in capturing of two bodies and three M-22s with three cartridges and 15 rounds. The army suffered one death, with eight others wounded, all of whom were flown to Lashio for medical treatment.

Heavy fighting broke out in the same area on Saturday as the rebels used machine guns, mortars and small arms, which led the army to launch two air strikes and send in reinforcements.

The fighting left the government troops with two dead and eight wounded. The army is reported to go on combating the Kokang insurgents.—Myawady
Australia prepares for floods in aftermath of major cyclones

Rockhampton, (Australia) 21 Feb — Austral- ia braced on Saturday for heavy rains and floods after weather authorities downgraded two cyclones that lashed its north and northeast, damaging homes and snapping power lines, but there were no reports of casualties.

Tropical systems are on standby to help with clean-up efforts in the state of Queensland after heavy rains and winds in excess of 200 kph (125 mph) brought by Cyclone Marcia on Friday.

Weather authorities warned of destructive winds, heavy rainfall and anomalously high tides as rivers swelled, but officials said the storm’s impact had been weaker than expected today.

“At this stage, everyone is breathing a deep sigh of relief that there has been no loss of life,” Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk told reporters in state capital Brisbane.

However, most properties in the northern Queensland towns of Rockhampton and Yeppoon had been left without power, she added.

The worst of the rain would pass by Sunday as the storm is moving quickly back out to sea, the weather bureau said.

In Rockhampton, long queues snaked out of the only fuel station left with the power to run its petrol pumps, as people flocked to refuel cars and get fuel to operate generators.

Residents ducked fallen trees and power lines to get to their home, along with their three children.

“It felt like the whole house was going to crumble,” Demelza Bischoff told Reuters, describing how storm damage had forced the family to move into a room of their home.

“After getting really bad, the tin roof started lifting and the ceiling blew out,” she said. “Then we took shelter under the kitchen table with mattresses all around us.”

After putting furniture and clothing in their garden to dry out in the hot sun, in northern Australia, teams were heading to two communities on the remote islands of Goulburn and Elcho to weigh up damage after Cyclone Lam, packing wind speeds ranging up to 240 kph, began to lash the Northern Territory late on Thursday.

The weather bureau has also downgraded that storm, to a tropical low moving in a south-west- erly direction, with warnings of heavy rainfall, flash flooding and some storm surges.

Indonesia recalls envoy to Brazil amid row over execution

Jakarta, 21 Feb — Indonesia has recalled its new ambassador to Brazil after the South American country postponed a ceremony to mark the appointment of the new envoy, Toto Riyanto, who was chosen to be Indonesia’s new ambassador to Brazil in October, having been invited to present his credentials at a ceremony at Brazil’s presidential palace on Friday which was postponed at short notice, an Indonesian Foreign Ministry statement said.

“The manner in which the foreign minister of Brazil suddenly informed (us) of the postponement … when the ambassador designate was already at the palace, is unacceptable to Indonesia,” the ministry said.

In response, the ministry summoned Brazil’s ambassador late on Friday before recalling Riyanto. Brazil’s embassy in Jakarta could not be reached for comment on Saturday.

“As a democratic sovereign state with its own sovereign, independent and impartial justice system, no foreign country nor party can and may interfere with the implementation of Indonesia’s prevailing laws within its jurisdiction, including in the enforcement of laws to address drug trafficking,” the statement added.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo has pledged no clemency for drug offenders, despite pleas from the European Union, Brazil and Amnesty International.

Singapore’s ex-leader Lee Kuan Yew in intensive care for pneumonia

Singapore, 21 Feb — Singapore’s elder statesman Lee Kuan Yew is hospitalized in intensive care, after having been admitted more than two weeks ago with a severe case of pneumonia, the government said on Saturday.

“His condition has stabilized and he remains on mechanical ventilation in the ICU,” the Prime Minister’s Office said in a short statement.

The 91-year-old, who was admitted to the Singapore General Hospital on 5 February, is “conscious and lightly sedated,” it said.

His son, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, said on Facebook that he visited his father in hospital Saturday morning to wish him a Happy Chinese New Year and a smooth recovery. The 63-year-old junior Lee was himself in hospital earlier this month. He underwent surgery to remove his cancerous prostate gland, with doctors saying the operation was successful and he is expected to make a ‘full recovery.’

The senior Lee was Singapore’s prime minister from 1959 until 1990. He has been credited for the small island state’s transformation from a colonial backwater into Southeast Asia’s wealthiest economy.

Bangladesh opposition calls 72-hour strike from Sunday morning

Dhaka, 21 Feb — Bangladesh’s opposition alliance on Friday called another round of nationwide strike form Sunday morning to press home its demands including fresh election under a non-party caretaker government system. The strike announcement came just a day after it observed a five-day nationwide strike from last Sunday amid violent clashes, vandalism, arson and crude bomb attacks.

Two-time ex-prime minister Khaleda Zia’s Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)’s spokesperson Salma Khatun said the announcement through a Press release on Friday.

Apart from this, the alliance will stage demonstrations across the country on Monday. The BNP and its allies have declared the 72-hour road, rail and waterway strike from Sunday morning amid its ongoing blockade campaign that entered 46th day on Friday.

Another Japanese national temporarily held by Kurds in northern Iraq

Cairo, 21 Feb — Japan’s Foreign Ministry said on Saturday another Japa- nese national has been tem- porarily detained as a suspi- cious person by authorities in the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq earlier this month. The national, whose sex and age were not disclosed, has already been released after the detention in mid-February near Arbil, a major city in the Kurdish region, after entering Iraq via Iran by land.

On 14 February, the ministry said a Japanese national had been detained by the Kurdish authorities near Arbil in early February as a suspicious person after entering Iraq via Turkey by land. A diplomatic source has said that person is male and was apparently a tourist.

The source said he was de- tained for several days but has already returned to Ja- pan. The Kurdistan authorities have become increasingly vigilant toward foreigners visiting to areas controlled by Islamic State militants, according to the ministry.

Kyodo News

Defence Ministry eyes law change to loosen civilian grip on SDF

Tokyo, 21 Feb — A law giving preference to ci- vilians over uniformed per- sonnel in decision-making in Japan’s Defence Min- istry is set to be changed, sources close to the minis- try said on Saturday.

Ministry officials will submit a proposal to amend the Act for Establishment of the Ministry of De- fence to the Diet early next month, the sources said.

The amendment could arouse concern over the erosion of civilian control of the Self-Defense Forces.

According to the sources, pressure to change the law came from SDF personnel and former SDF personnel who are now lawmakers in the Diet.

The amendment would give uniformed personnel more control over SDF tacti- cal operations.

The notion of civilian control was enshrined in the law when the predecess- or to the Defence Ministry law was enacted in 1954, reflecting a history of re- bellion against the govern- ment by military personnel in the lead-up to World War II.

Another check on the SDF’s power was removed in 2009 with the scrapping of a system whereby senior civilian ministry officials directly aided the defence minister — Kyodo News.
Police nab 2 Japanese at Bangkok airport with horde of exotic animals

BANGKOK, 21 Feb — Thai customs officials arrested two Japanese men at Bangkok’s Suvarnabhumi Airport on Friday as they tried to smuggle exotic and endangered animals onto a plane bound for Japan. The officials said the men from Shizuoka Prefecture had pig-nosed turtles, woodchucks, lizards and snakes packed into small boxes, cages and plastic bags inside large suitcases. Among the cache were 110 turtles, four woodchucks, nine lizards and several exotic snakes.

One of the men was booked on a flight to Tokyo, the other on a flight to Nagoya. According to investigators, the men said they had been hired to buy the animals at Bangkok’s weekend Chatuchak Market and carry them to Japan. Police said the men, who have been charged with smuggling wild animals, offered no other information about their plans or potential buyers in Japan. They will also face charges under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Woodchucks, turtles, woodchucks, and snakes are among species listed in CITES’s Appendices 2 and permission is required to export any.

Conviction on the charges could result in fines and/or imprisonment for up to four years, a customs official said.

Kyodo News

Greece secures bailout deal from EU, extended by four months

BRUSSELS, 21 Feb — Eurozone finance ministers agreed on Friday to extend the soon-to-expire bailout deal for Greece by four months, according to the Greek prime minister’s office.

Failure to strike an agreement could have triggered a financial panic forcing Greece into default and a possible exit from the euro common currency. Greece was seeking a six-month extension of the financial aid set to expire at the end of this month. The Greek government had indicated opposition to continuing the existing aid framework, which requires austere fiscal programmes. But it requested an extension on Thursday after the European Union gave Greece until the end of this week to make a decision on a bailout bid.

Kyodo News

New US defense chief in Afghanistan seeking ‘lasting’ success

KABUL, 21 Feb — New US Defence Secretary Ash Carter arrived in Afghanistan on Saturday on his first trip since taking over the job this week, saying he wanted to talk to Afghan and American officials to ensure a “lasting” success as US troops withdraw.

Carter, who was sworn in on Tuesday, suggested he would be open to slowing US withdrawal plans, if necessary. But he did not signal whether he was leaning in that direction in comments to reporters shortly before landing in Kabul. “We’re looking for success in Afghanistan that is lasting, and the last accomplishment of our mission here,” Carter said in his first news conference since taking the job. “How to do that, what the best way to do that is, is precisely what I’m here to assess,” President Barack Obama’s former Pentagon chief said.

A spokesman said the administration was leaning in that direction in comments to reporters shortly before landing in Kabul. But not everyone agreed. “We’re not looking for a lasting success. We’re looking for a lasting, and the last accomplishment of our mission here,” Carter said in his first news conference since taking the job. “How to do that, what the best way to do that is, is precisely what I’m here to assess,” President Barack Obama’s former Pentagon chief said.

A spokesman said the administration was leaning in that direction in comments to reporters shortly before landing in Kabul. But not everyone agreed. “We’re not looking for a lasting success. We’re looking for a lasting, and the last accomplishment of our mission here,” Carter said in his first news conference since taking the job. “How to do that, what the best way to do that is, is precisely what I’m here to assess,” President Barack Obama’s former Pentagon chief said.

Reuters

International team inspects MH17 wreckage at Dutch air base

AMSTERDAM, 21 Feb — International investigators looking into the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 over Ukraine last July met for their first joint consultation this week, examining cracks and impact patterns on the jet’s fuselage, Dutch officials said on Friday.

The Boeing 777 was flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur with 288 passengers and crew aboard when it crashed with no prior warning over the front lines of Ukraine’s conflict between separatists and Kiev government forces.

Parts of the aircraft were brought to the Netherlands late last year because heavy fighting between separatist rebels and Ukrainian government forces had for months prevented safe inspection of the crash site in the country’s east.

The United States has said rebels downed the airliner with a ground-to-air missile, while Russia says Ukrainian government forces shot it down from the air. “In the past week the (team) conducted several investigations of the wreckage, including the fractures, failure mechanisms and impact patterns,” the Dutch Safety Board said in a statement.

Investigators will soon begin a three-dimensional reconstruction of parts of the aircraft at the Dutch air force base where the wreckage is stored, the Board said, adding that relatives of victims would be able to visit in early March.

In an initial report, Dutch investigators assessed that the airliner’s fuselage was pierced by “high energy objects” — which could have come from the ground or the air. Prosecutors have said they are open to both possibilities but think it more likely the aircraft was shot down from the ground.

The Netherlands is leading the criminal and air safety investigations into the disaster, since more than two thirds the victims were Dutch. Investigators from Ukraine, Malaysia, Australia, Britain, Belgium and Germany are also taking part.

A spokesman said the safety board’s draft report into the circumstances of the MH17 crash would probably be ready after the summer, at which point the other countries involved could make their own submissions.

But the Dutch team will be under no obligation to change its report even if another country’s authorities disagreed radically with its conclusions, the spokesman said.

Reuters

Yemen’s former leader leaves Sanaa after house arrest

SANAA, 21 Feb — Yemen’s former president Abed-Rabbu Mansour Hadi escaped his official residence after weeks of house arrest by the Houthi militia on Saturday and flew to his home town of Aden, a senior political source and a Houthi official said.

Hadi fled his residence in disguise, Houthi political bureau member Ali al-Qahoum was quoted as saying by the local news website al-Akhbar. But it added that it no longer mattered if the former president remained there or departed. The United Nations, which oversees a new power-sharing agreement between the Houthis and Yemen’s other rival factions on Friday, helped him travel to Aden, a senior political source told Reuters.

Hadi’s Sanaa residence was looted by Houthi militiamen after he left, witnesses said, but that was denied by Qahoum. The former president arrived at his home in the Aden district of Khormaksar, sources told Reuters. Early on Saturday, Houthis militiamen opened fire on protesters in the central city of Ibb, killing one woman and wounding another, activists said.

The crowd had gathered in a square to demonstrate against the Houthis’ role in overturning the government last month.

Following the shooting, thousands more people took to the streets in protest. Witnesses said the Houthis were deploying more security forces in response. Yemen’s rival parties agreed on Friday to create a transitional council to help govern the country and allow a government to continue operating with input from other factions after the effective Houthi takeover.

Western countries are worried that unrest in Yemen and Egypt is drawing opportunities for al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) to plot more attacks against international targets.

Reuters
Iran nuclear talks to continue in Geneva on 22 February — EU

BRUSSELS, 21 Feb — Representatives of Iran, Britain, the United States, Russia, China, France and Germany will hold talks in Geneva on 22 February to seek a solution to Iran's nuclear programme, the European Union's External Action Service (EEAS) said in a statement.

"This meeting will be preceded by a bilateral meeting between the United States and Iran with the participation of EEAS Political Director Helga Schmid who will then chair the E3+3 Political Directors' meeting on Sunday," it said. Reuters

"Self-censoring" scandal at newspaper roils UK press landscape

LONDON, 21 Feb — One of Britain’s most storied newspapers has been accused of self-censoring for commercial gain, raising awkward questions about a centuries-old press culture which has prized itself on its no-holds-barred approach to truth-telling.

The 160-year-old Daily Telegraph strongly denied accusations in a resignation letter by one of its best known writers, who said the paper had soft-pedalled coverage of a banking scandal to avoid a potential no-holds-barred approach to truth-telling.

In his letter, Peter Oborne, known for caustic attacks on politicians as the Telegraph's chief political commentator, said the paper had curbed coverage of reports that the Swiss arm of Europe's biggest bank HSBC helped clients avoid taxes. The Telegraph, he wrote, wanted to keep the bank’s advertising.

"(It) amounts to a form of fraud on its readers," he wrote. "If major newspapers allow corporations to influence their content for the fear of losing advertising revenue, democracy itself is in peril."

"The Telegraph came out fighting, denying it had pulled punches in covering HSBC and saying it had "no apologies" for journalism guided by a pro-business editorial line. "We are proud to be the champion of British business and enterprise," it wrote in an editorial. "In an age of cheap populism and corrosive cynicism about wealth-creating businesses, we have defended British industries including the financial services industry that accounts for almost a tenth of the UK economy, sustains two million jobs and provides around one in every eight pounds the Exchequer raises in tax."

It also lashed out at rival news sources that had criticized it. "None is the paragon of moral or journalistic virtue that their criticisms this week might suggest," it said. "All have their own self-serving agendas, both political and commercial."

Both the accusation and responses of the Telegraph are likely to sting for a newspaper industry struggling to adapt as readership declines and advertisers move online. Fleet Street’s reputation was sorely damaged in 2011 when Rupert Murdoch shut down the News of the World, a Sunday tabloid, after it emerged that its reporters had illegally eavesdropped on voicemails of countless celebrities and a man’s murdered schoolgirl.

Lengthy public hearings were held into journalists’ ethics, revealing uncomfortably close ties between press bosses and those who run

US asst secretary of arms control to visit Asia

WASHINGTON, 21 Feb — The US State Department said on Friday that Frank Rose, assistant secretary for arms control, verification and compliance, will visit Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and India, starting from Monday. He will hold discussions on issues including space security, nuclear deterrence and multilateral arms control to strengthen cooperation with these Asian countries, the department said. His tour comes amid concerns over the development of satellite-killer weapons by China.

But it is the biggest-seller of Britain’s "tabloids", the serious-minded national newspapers that distinguish themselves from the popular "tabloids" traditionally printed on paper half the size. It gained stature in 2009 for an expose of lawmakers’ expense claims that resulted in resignations and prosecutions on all sides in parliament at Westminster.

However the paper, like its rivals, has cut staffing levels in recent years as it adapted to the tightened financial times. In Oborne’s resignation letter he lamented what he described as a loss of standards, saying stories were chosen for the number of online visits they bring rather than the news value. The paper had recently run a story about a woman with three breasts, he complained. "Telegraph readers talk of a "pretty lousy bunch" in terms of the paper’s status. I think it will cause enormous, long-lasting damage," he wrote.

But it is the biggest-seller of Britain’s "tabloids", the serious-minded national newspapers that distinguish themselves from the popular "tabloids" traditionally printed on paper half the size. It gained stature in 2009 for an expose of lawmakers’ expense claims that resulted in resignations and prosecutions on all sides in parliament at Westminster.

However the paper, like its rivals, has cut staffing levels in recent years as it adapted to the tightened financial times. In Oborne’s resignation letter he lamented what he described as a loss of standards, saying stories were chosen for the number of online visits they bring rather than the news value. The paper had recently run a story about a woman with three breasts, he complained. "Telegraph readers talk of a "pretty lousy bunch" in terms of the paper’s status. I think it will cause enormous, long-lasting damage," he wrote.

Biden, in calls with Ukrainian leaders, condemns separatist offensive

WASHINGTON, 21 Feb — US Vice President Joe Biden, in phone calls with Ukrainian leaders on Friday, strongly condemned an offensive by separatists on the town of Debaltseve in eastern Ukraine, the White House said.

In separate calls with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk, Biden discussed options for "effective monitoring" of a ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons from east- ern Ukraine, the White House said in a statement.

Biden also agreed with the Ukrainian leaders that Russia cannot continue to hide behind "the false claim" that the separatists are acting alone, the White House said. — Reuters

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 2 March.

The US official will travel to Jakarta, Indonesia on the following day and from there to Singapore.

The ministers are also expected to discuss Ukraine's reconstruction work following the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant disaster. Ukraine is home to Chernobyl, which experienced a nuclear accident in 1986.

The Ukrainian minister wants to visit the Fukushima plant but a tight schedule means it is unlikely, according to the sources.

Japan and Russia meanwhile are trying to arrange a visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin to Japan. — Kyodo News

Tokyo, 21 Feb — Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin plans to visit Japan for three days from 1 March to meet Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, sources close to the matter in Tokyo and Kiev said on Saturday.

The meeting is aimed at strengthening Ukraine's ties with Japan, after a cease-fire between Ukrainian government forces and separatists in the eastern part of Ukraine took effect on 15 February, although fighting continues in part of the region.

It will be the first visit by a Ukrainian minister to Japan since the Ukrainian revolution in February 2014 and Russia's annexation of Crimea the following month.

Japan maintains its support for Ukraine, and has condemned Russia’s "aggression" for its long-standing support for the Conservative — or Tory — Party, is chided by its critics for appealing to the middle classes and the middle aged.

But it is the biggest-seller of Britain’s "tabloids", the serious-minded national newspapers that distinguish themselves from the popular "tabloids" traditionally printed on paper half the size. It gained stature in 2009 for an expose of lawmakers’ expense claims that resulted in resignations and prosecutions on all sides in parliament at Westminster.

However the paper, like its rivals, has cut staffing levels in recent years as it adapted to the tightened financial times. In Oborne’s resignation letter he lamented what he described as a loss of standards, saying stories were chosen for the number of online visits they bring rather than the news value. The paper had recently run a story about a woman with three breasts, he complained. "Telegraph readers talk of a "pretty lousy bunch" in terms of the paper’s status. I think it will cause enormous, long-lasting damage," he wrote.

Biden, in calls with Ukrainian leaders, condemns separatist offensive

WASHINGTON, 21 Feb — US Vice President Joe Biden, in phone calls with Ukrainian leaders on Friday, strongly condemned an offensive by separatists on the town of Debaltseve in eastern Ukraine, the White House said. — Reuters

In separate calls with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk, Biden discussed options for “effective monitoring” of a ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons from eastern Ukraine, the White House said in a statement. — Reuters

Biden also agreed with the Ukrainian leaders that Russia cannot continue to hide behind “the false claim” that the separatists are acting alone, the White House said. — Reuters

The ministers are also expected to discuss Ukraine’s reconstruction work following the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant disaster. Ukraine is home to Chernobyl, which experienced a nuclear accident in 1986. — Kyodo News

The Ukrainian minister wants to visit the Fukushima plant but a tight schedule means it is unlikely, according to the sources.

Japan and Russia meanwhile are trying to arrange a visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin to Japan. — Kyodo News

Tokyo, 21 Feb — Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin plans to visit Japan for three days from 1 March to meet Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, sources close to the matter in Tokyo and Kiev said on Saturday.

The meeting is aimed at strengthening Ukraine’s ties with Japan, after a cease-fire between Ukrainian government forces and separatists in the eastern part of Ukraine took effect on 15 February, although fighting continues in part of the region.

It will be the first visit by a Ukrainian minister to Japan since the Ukrainian revolution in February 2014 and Russia’s annexation of Crimea the following month.

Japan maintains its support for Ukraine, and has condemned Russia’s “aggression” for its long-standing support for the Conservative — or Tory — Party, is chided by its critics for appealing to the middle classes and the middle aged. — Kyodo News

The ministers are also expected to discuss Ukraine’s reconstruction work following the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant disaster. Ukraine is home to Chernobyl, which experienced a nuclear accident in 1986. — Kyodo News

The Ukrainian minister wants to visit the Fukushima plant but a tight schedule means it is unlikely, according to the sources.

Japan and Russia meanwhile are trying to arrange a visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin to Japan. — Kyodo News
WASHINGTON, 21 Feb

A senior Republican lawmaker has told President Barack Obama she was prepared to block foreign aid money if the administration did not provide fighter jets and tanks to Egypt and arms to other regional allies fighting Islamic State militants.

In a letter to Obama, Kay Granger, chairwoman of the House of Representatives State and Foreign Operations Appropriations subcommittee, said Egypt needs F-16 aircraft, M1A1 Abrams tanks and other weapons that have been held up since 2013. Granger has the power to place holds on foreign aid, including general assistance and weapons shipments.

Granger urged the administration to give Iraqi Kurds tools and training to fight Islamic State and to make providing weapons to Jordan a priority, according to the letter, seen by Reuters on Friday. Dated February 19, the letter criticized the administration as Congress is about to consider Obama’s request for formal authority for a military campaign against Islamic State.

Republicans, who took control of the US Congress in January, have pressed for more robust US military involvement in fighting the militants, who have killed thousands of civilians while seizing territory in Iraq and Syria. “As Egypt, Jordan, and the Kurds retaliate and defend themselves against ISIL’s heinous acts, US security assistance is being held or delayed by bureaucratic processes and ill-advised policy decisions by your administration,” Granger wrote, using an acronym for Islamic State.

The US State Department referred requests for comment to the White House, where officials did not immediately respond.

Granger said she was calling on the White House to “immediately release” remaining weapons and funds to Egypt, provide Jordan with weapons it had requested and ensure the Kurdish Peshmerga have equipment they need. “I am prepared to do everything within my power to make sure this occurs, including placing holds on Congressional Notifications (spending plans) and drafting legislation to hold your Administration accountable,” Granger wrote.

Egyptian warplanes bombed sites in Libya on Monday in response to the beheading of 21 Egyptian Christians by Islamic State militants there. Lockheed Martin Corp (LMTN), which makes the F-16, said the aircraft built for Egypt were part of a foreign military sales agreement between the United States and Egypt. The Abrams tanks are made by General Dynamics Corp.

Twelve of 20 F-16s built by Lockheed beneath its last contract with Egypt are in storage at Lockheed’s Fort Worth, Texas, facility. They have been formally transferred to the US government, which is paying Lockheed to store and maintain them. The current US policy on Egypt is to hold up many shipments of big-ticket weapons until Cairo has made progress andWashington can certify that Lockheed’s facility is based, the company would not necessarily profit from a move to release the planes since the US government has already paid Lockheed for them. US officials said last week that planning was under way to help replenish Jordan’s supplies of ordnance, Jordan’s King Abdullah visited Congress earlier this month, the same day Islamic State released a video of the murder of a Jordanian pilot. The administration has said it is supplying guns and ammunition to the Kurds, who are fighting Islamic State in northern Iraq, but it is channelling them through Baghdad. Some Republicans have said the supplies should go directly to the Kurds.—Reuters

US lawmaker pushes Obama to aid allies in Islamic State fight

Death toll from attack on Somali hotel rises to 25

Mogadishu, 21 Feb

The death toll in Friday’s bombing of a hotel in the Somali capital has risen to 25, including two lawmakers and deputy Mogadishu mayor, the government said. “Among the dead are also officials and workers from the prime minister’s office.” Some 40 people were wounded in the two blasts, including two ministers who were lightly injured.

The cabinet met in the wake of the attack to discuss security and set up a committee to investigate the attack, the government said in a statement.

Abdisirak Omar Mohamed, Somalia’s Internal Security Minister, told Reuters soon after the blast it was unclear how a car laden with explosives managed to breach hotel security to park inside the compound. “(National intelligence) are going to interrogate the management of the hotel,” he said on Friday.

State run Radio Mogadishu on Saturday said 12 hotel staff had been arrested in connection with the attack.

Al Shabaab once dominated much of Somalia but it has been slowly pushed out of strongholds across the country. However, its guerrilla-style gun assaults and suicide bombings continue to exert pressure on the government to improve security.—Reuters

Photo taken on 20 Feb, 2015 shows the debris of a car outside the Central Hotel in Mogadishu, capital of Somalia. At least 20 people were killed including a minister and several others injured in double explosions that hit Somalia’s capital Mogadishu on Friday, according to police and witnesses.—Xinhua
**A small plant cannot bear fruit overnight**

By Aung Khin

A certain length of time is needed for any changes or developments. Smooth transition is not like a revolution. Most of global society prefers evolution to revolution. The seeds of change must slowly grow to undermine the development of their society.

Evolution, however, needs a sound and sincere foundation for a better future of every society. Transition is a transformation process in which society changes in a fundamental way over a generation or more. Society fundamentally chooses the goals of a transition, governments take crucial role in bringing about structural change in a stepwise manner. Governments have to make adjust of goals to overcome concerns of local interests and short-term concerns resulting from transition.

Change is everywhere. Within the contest of an organisation, the challenge is learning to handle change effectively, while adjustment and fine-tuning is inevitable. However, it is be better for change to occur through evolution.

Evolutionary change is incremental and takes place step by step, over time. Commonly, it can ensure the survival of an organisation. However, such practice may happen in the political arena.

Supporters of revolutionary change envision complete overhaul, renovation and reconstruction. In addition, such type of change may lead to reshaping and realigning strategic goals and to radical breakthroughs in beliefs or behaviours. It may be followed by radical transformations of products or services.

The second type of change is very difficult for a fledgling democratic society. It requires maturity, especially in knowledge and experiences, to be able to manage and control the impacts. Efforts and endeavours must be adjusted with the existing situations.

A small plant cannot bear fruit overnight no matter how many buckets of water it receives.

---

**Transition in Indonesia and Myanmar: Variations in Regime Outcome**

*Sonu Trivedi*

Regional variations in regime outcome have provided enormous opportunities for studying the process of democratization in Southeast Asia. One of the most important issues facing this region is that, the pattern of political development and economic growth has not been uniform for all the countries. While some have shown considerable level of political stability and growth (such as Indonesia in the past two decades) but, few on the other hand, still remain in the transition stage (like Myanmar). What explains variations in regime outcome and how do different groups weigh this? This is the critical question that this article tries to explore.

Indonesia has been chosen as a model for comparing political developments in Myanmar because the latter’s experience parallels that of former in a number of respects. In both Indonesia and Myanmar, the struggle for independence and later military campaigns against various insurgents led their armies to see themselves as “saviour” of their respective countries. This enabled them to play an active role in determining the fate of their nations. In both countries the military entered politics gradually, and assumed power only when civilian leaders appeared to be unable to provide sufficiently strong government. Another major similarity is that both countries are multi-ethnic states in which one ethnic group dominates. Problems of ethnic nationalism and quest for identity have been common in both countries, and for some of the smaller ethnic groups colonialism brought security against larger ones. Moreover, in both these countries it was armies—not civilian bureaucrats—that

---

**Opinion**

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email waluc.tun@gmail.com with your name and title.

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish “Letter to the Editor” that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.
Competency Based Training and Assessment

Kyaw Win (Labour)

Competency is the ability to perform duties and tasks within an occupation to the standard of performance expected in the workplace. Occupational Competency Standards, usually drawn up with the involvement of employers, governments and labor unions, set the standards of expected levels of performance within an occupation.

Occupational Competency Standards comprise five components. The first is a description of the Occupation concerned. This is followed by ‘Units of Competencies’ which relate to the ‘duties’ to be performed in the occupation. The ‘Units’ are divided into ‘Elements’ or ‘tasks’ and the performance expected in the workplace. The ‘Performance Criteria’ for each ‘Unit’ describes the performance expected to meet the criteria. ‘Evidence Guides’ detail the procedures to meet the criteria.

The structure of the Standard may sound rather complicated. However, the Standards incorporate all that is required to ensure competent performance and assessment of that performance.

Competency Standards are usually structured to correspond to levels of performance. Competency Standards for skilled occupations are usually divided into four levels. Level 1 relates to a less-skilled worker who may be required to perform under supervision, in jobs requiring routine tasks and low levels of skills of the occupation. Level 2 relates to skilled workers who are able to perform a wide range of tasks in the occupation with minimal supervision. Level 3 relates to high skilled workers who require to perform independently, in jobs requiring a wide range of occupational skills including problem solving. Level 4 relates to workers who attain supervisor/technician status from the ranks of the skilled workers.

Competency Based Training is training imparted in accordance with curricula and teaching/learning materials developed based on the Competency Standards. It may be undertaken through modular courses of suitable duration for each level. Dividing the training programs into levels according to the competency attainment of trainees enables trainers to acquire employable skills step by step with intervening periods of wage employment after each level. Also, Competency Based Training and Certification contributes to the process of life long learning.

Competency Based Assessment is in accordance with Competency Standards laid down for the various levels of competency attainment. Competency based assessment and certification ensures that the certificate holder is competent at the level certified. Usually a period of experience is required after the course of training at each level for taking the assessment at the next level. Competency Standards could also be used for assessment and certification of skilled workers who had acquired skills in an occupation through on-the-job training and have no formal recognition of their skills.

The Employment and Skills Development Law enacted by the current Government in 2013, advocates Competency Based Training and Assessment for the development and certification of skills of the workforce.
**Mitsubishi Heavy, 4 others to build Qatar's 1st subway system**

Tokyo, 21 Feb — A consortium of companies led by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd said on Friday they have clinched a deal to build Qatar’s first subway system. Sources close to the matter said the deal to build the subway system in Qatar’s capital of Doha is worth 400 billion yen ($3.37 billion). The consortium, which also includes Mitsubishi Corp, Hitachi Ltd, Kinik Sharyo Co and French defence contractor Thales Group said they have received the order from Qatar Railways Co to build “Doha Metro,” with construction scheduled to be completed by October 2019.

The subway system will run through major areas of Doha including Hamad International Airport, which opened in 2014, and is hoped to be a vital transport link between stadiums and facilities during the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, who will host the consortium said.

The deal on Qatar reflects Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s goal to triple Japanese firms’ receipt of orders for infrastructure overseas to 30 trillion yen by 2020 as part of his country’s economic growth strategy. — Kyodo News

**Incorrect tax forms sent to 800,000 US health exchange enrollees**

WASHINGTON, 21 Feb — The Obama administration said on Friday that 800,000 people who signed up for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act received incorrect tax forms and should wait to receive new ones before filing their taxes.

“Roughly 95 percent of those who received the erroneous 1095-A forms have yet to file taxes, officials said. New forms will be issued in early March.”

The Treasury Department said it is weighing what to do about people who have already filed and will provide additional information “shortly.”

Republican lawmakers pounced on the mistake. “The White House tells us in a classic on Friday news dump that nearly one million Americans could see their tax refunds delayed because of this president’s inability to implement his own law,” Tennessee Representative Diane Black said in a statement.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest said the glitch should have no impact on the ability of people to file their taxes by the 15 April deadline. He also said the issue affects “less than 1 percent of people who file taxes.”

The administration also said it would extend a special enrollment period for tax filers who were unaware they could face penalties for missing the 15 February deadline to obtain health insurance through the federal marketplace at HealthCare.gov. The one-off special enrollment period will be extended from 15 March to 30 April. If consumers do not have health insurance during this period, they will have to pay a penalty when they file their 2015 taxes. Eligible filers must live in one of the 37 states with a federally facilitated insurance marketplace. State-based insurance exchanges can set their own policies, officials said.

To qualify for the special enrollment, consumers must attest that when they filed their 2014 tax return they paid the fee for not having health coverage that year and that they first became aware of the implications of not enrolling in a timely manner after they began preparing their 2014 taxes.

The IRS has estimated 2 percent to 4 percent of tax filers are out of six million people, may pay a fee for not having coverage in 2014, which is $95 or 1 percent of income. The fee increases to $325 per adult or 2 percent of income for 2015. Those who enroll during the special period will still owe fees for the months they were uninsured in 2014 and 2015. The special period is to allow people to avoid additional fees for 2015.

**US health officials push for stricter ‘superbug’ defence**

New York, 21 Feb — The US government is close to finalizing instructions to prevent medical devices responsible for transmitting resistant bacteria from spreading the potentially fatal pathogens between patients, the scientist leading the effort said. The new protocol for the reusable devices, called duodenoscopes, is being developed by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to seven patients at a University of California at Los Angeles hospital, contributing to two deaths.

The CDC’s guidance would not mandate that the US Food and Drug Administration has authority to require a manufacturer to include more stringent safety instructions for medical devices. The FDA can also order products be redesigned.

The FDA has not taken either step, despite knowing since at least 2009 that duodenoscopes have spread pathogens among patients. But this week it warned the medical community that the devices can transmit superbugs. Though CDC guidelines are not mandatory, they carry considerable weight because hospitals that ignore them could be vulnerable to lawsuits. Experts in infectious-disease control welcomed the CDC’s involvement, though they said it raised a larger question about the FDA. “If the CDC, which does not have regulatory authority, is doing more (to make duodenoscopes safe) than the FDA, which does have that authority, it raises the question of who’s running the ship here,” said Lawrence Muscarella, an endoscopy consultant and author of a 2014 paper on the device’s pathogen-transmission risk.

FDA spokeswoman Leslie Woolridge said the agency is “actively engaged with the manufacturers of duodenoscopes” and with the CDC “to develop solutions to minimize patient risk associated with the devices.”

Duodenoscopes are inserted down the throat during gastrointestinal procedures. Problems arise when the devices, which sell for upwards of $40,000, are not properly disinfected before being used on subsequent patients.

The CDC is close to unveiling a detailed procedure aimed at preventing more cases, said infectious disease expert Dr Alexander Kallen of the CDC. Called a “surveillance culture,” the procedure involves swabbing the device after it has supposedly been disinfected and then allowing any microbes to grow into detectable colonies, much as doctors take throat swabs to determine if a patient has a strep infection.

The protocol has undergone pilot testing at Virginia Mason Hospita  l and Medical Center in Seattle with good results, Kallen said. The Seattle hospital reported a duodenoscope-related superbug outbreak last month.

“We feel right now that we have a protocol people could use,” Kallen said. “Our goal is to have this available very soon if people think this is the right way to go.”

The duodenoscopes are made by Olympus Corp (7733.T), Fujifilm Holdings Corp (4901.T) and Pentax, the manufacturers have been criticized for failing to redesign the scopes six years after their potential to transmit infections came to the attention of physicians and regulators. Olympus and Fujifilm did not immediately respond to detectable colonies. Pentax spokesman Mariano Franco said the company is working with the FDA and others “to determine potential approaches that would contribute to the mitigation of pathogen transmission with duodenoscopes,” but had not identified one “that would address these concerns.”

In an ironic twist, the CDC guidelines could likely increase sales of the devices, according to Muscarella. Waiting for the results of the surveillance culture could take several days, so a hospital would likely need to have extra ones on hand to meet demand for the procedures.
Sunbathers take heed: skin damage continues hours after exposure

WASHINGTON, 21 Feb — Here’s a warning to sunbathers everywhere. Scientists have found that the skin damage caused by UV rays does not stop once you get out of the sun.

Researchers said on Thursday much of the potentially cancer-causing damage wrought by ultraviolet radiation from sunlight or tanning beds occurs up to three to four hours after exposure thanks to chemical changes involving the pigment melanin.

But there is some good news. The researchers said it may be possible to develop sunscreen that protects against this type of damage. Melanoma, closely linked to UV exposure, accounts for most skin cancer deaths. The role of melanin, responsible for our skin, eye and hair colour, in promoting DNA damage was a surprise because melanin was previously known to play a protective role by absorbing much of the UV energy before it penetrates the skin. “But the unusual chemical properties of melanin that make it a good UV absorber also make it susceptible to other chemical reactions that just happen to have the same end result as the UV,” said Douglas Brash, a dermatologic radiology and dermatology professor at the Yale School of Medicine whose study appears in the journal Science. The researchers revealed this aspect of melanin in experiments involving human cells in a lab dish as well as lab mice and mouse cells in a dish.

UV exposure can cause DNA damage that may spur carcinogenic mutations in melanin-producing cells called melanocytes.

The researchers exposed mouse and human melanocytes to radiation from a UV lamp.

The cells experienced DNA damage immediately but the damage also continued for hours. In fact, half of the damage occurred in the hours after exposure.

After a type of chemical reaction called chemiexcitation, also witnessed in bioluminescent creatures including fireflies, energy gets transferred to DNA to potentially cause mutations.

“People should be aware of the chemistry initiated in the skin after the UV exposure so that they can take proper care of themselves whenever going out in the sun or to the beach,” said Yale School of Medicine researcher Sanjay Premi.

“We’d like to find new ingredients for sunscreens that will block these reactions,” Brash added. “But in the meantime, I tell people to enjoy the sun but just don’t lie on the beach between 10 am and 2 pm, and wear a hat. Sunscreens are useful, too, so long as they block both UVB and UVA,” two kinds of ultraviolet rays.— Reuters

Apple hiring big brains in car battery space

by Apple, Google Inc (GOOGL.O), Korea’s Samsung (005930.KS), electronic carmaker Tesla Motors Inc (TSLA.O) and ride-sharing startup Uber—Apple hired at least another seven A123 employees and at least 18 employees from Tesla since 2012.

The former A123 employees have expertise primarily in battery cell design, materials development and manufacturing engineering, according to the LinkedIn profiles and an analysis of patent applications. A123, which filed for bankruptcy in 2012 but has since reorganized, supplied batteries for Fisker Automotive’s now-discontinued hybrid electric car.

“Looking at the people Apple is hiring from A123 and their backgrounds, it is hard not to assume they’re working on an electric car,” said Tom Gage, Chief Executive of EV Grid and a longtime expert in batteries and battery technology. — Reuters

US urges removing Superfish programme from Lenovo laptops

WASHINGTON, 21 Feb — Last October’s explosion of Orbital ATK Inc’s Antares rocket may have triggered when debris inadvertently left in a fuel tank traveled into the boosters’ main engine, two people familiar with investigations into the accident told Reuters.

The sources said the preliminary findings suggest that a simple assembly mishap—triggered by Orbital ATK’s failure to properly handle the propellant—caused the explosion, which destroyed a cargo ship bound for the International Space Station.

Orbital initially linked the explosion to a problem with the turbo pump in one of the two Soviet-era NK-33 engines that power the rocket. GenCorp Inc’s Aerojet Rocketdyne unit refurbishes the old motors and resells them as AJ-26 motors. Orbital ATK on Friday acknowledged that so-called “foreign object debris” was one of more than a dozen credible causes of the explosion, but said it was not a “leading candidate as the most probable cause of the failure.”

Orbital spokesman Barry Benesi said the company- led “accident investigation board,” which includes officials from NASA and the Federal Aviation Administration, had not identified any evidence of mishandling of the flight hardware by Orbital.

He said Orbital continued to compare data from the October explosion with a May 2014 test stand failure of a different AJ-26 engine, and prior failures involving AJ-26 ground tests in 2009, 2011 and 2012. No details have been released on the May 2014 test stand incident, but sources familiar with the earlier investigation said it was linked to faulty “workmanship” on the original motor, and additional inspections had been mandated to prevent mishaps with other engines. Orbital also successfully launched one Antares rocket in July 2014, after the May accident.— Reuters

Orbital explosion probe said to involve debris in engine

Sunbathers take heed: skin damage continues hours after exposure

WASHINGTON, 21 Feb — Here’s a warning to sunbathers everywhere. Scientists have found that the skin damage caused by UV rays does not stop once you get out of the sun.

Researchers said on Thursday much of the potentially cancer-causing damage wrought by ultraviolet radiation from sunlight or tanning beds occurs up to three to four hours after exposure thanks to chemical changes involving the pigment melanin.

But there is some good news. The researchers said it may be possible to develop sunscreen that protects against this type of damage. Melanoma, closely linked to UV exposure, accounts for most skin cancer deaths. The role of melanin, responsible for our skin, eye and hair colour, in promoting DNA damage was a surprise because melanin was previously known to play a protective role by absorbing much of the UV energy before it penetrates the skin. “But the unusual chemical properties of melanin that make it a good UV absorber also make it susceptible to other chemical reactions that just happen to have the same end result as the UV,” said Douglas Brash, a dermatologic radiology and dermatology professor at the Yale School of Medicine whose study appears in the journal Science. The researchers revealed this aspect of melanin in experiments involving human cells in a lab dish as well as lab mice and mouse cells in a dish.

UV exposure can cause DNA damage that may spur carcinogenic mutations in melanin-producing cells called melanocytes.

The researchers exposed mouse and human melanocytes to radiation from a UV lamp.

The cells experienced DNA damage immediately but the damage also continued for hours. In fact, half of the damage occurred in the hours after exposure.

After a type of chemical reaction called chemiexcitation, also witnessed in bioluminescent creatures including fireflies, energy gets transferred to DNA to potentially cause mutations.

“People should be aware of the chemistry initiated in the skin after the UV exposure so that they can take proper care of themselves whenever going out in the sun or to the beach,” said Yale School of Medicine researcher Sanjay Premi.

“We’d like to find new ingredients for sunscreens that will block these reactions,” Brash added. “But in the meantime, I tell people to enjoy the sun but just don’t lie on the beach between 10 am and 2 pm, and wear a hat. Sunscreens are useful, too, so long as they block both UVB and UVA,” two kinds of ultraviolet rays.— Reuters

Apple hiring big brains in car battery space

by Apple, Google Inc (GOOGL.O), Korea’s Samsung (005930.KS), electronic carmaker Tesla Motors Inc (TSLA.O) and ride-sharing startup Uber—Apple hired at least another seven A123 employees and at least 18 employees from Tesla since 2012.

The former A123 employees have expertise primarily in battery cell design, materials development and manufacturing engineering, according to the LinkedIn profiles and an analysis of patent applications. A123, which filed for bankruptcy in 2012 but has since reorganized, supplied batteries for Fisker Automotive’s now-discontinued hybrid electric car.

“Looking at the people Apple is hiring from A123 and their backgrounds, it is hard not to assume they’re working on an electric car,” said Tom Gage, Chief Executive of EV Grid and a longtime expert in batteries and battery technology. — Reuters

US urges removing Superfish programme from Lenovo laptops

WASHINGTON, 21 Feb — The US government on Friday advised Lenovo Group Ltd customers to remove “Superfish,” a programme pre-installed on some Lenovo laptops, saying it makes users vulnerable to cyber attacks.

“Systems that came with the software already installed will continue to be vulnerable until corrective actions have been taken,” the agency said. Adi Pinhas, chief executive of Palo Alto, California-based Superfish, said in a statement that his company’s software helps users achieve more relevant search results based on images of products viewed. He said the vulnerability was “inadvertently” introduced by Israel-based Komodia, which built the application described in the government notice.

Komodia CEO Barak Weichselbaum declined comment on the vulnerability, Lenovo apologized late on Friday in a statement for “causing these concerns Among our users” and said that it was “exploring every action we can” to address the issues around Superfish, including offering tools to remove the software and certificate.

“We ordered Superfish pre-loads to stop and had server connections shut down in January based on user complaints about the experience. However, we did not know about this potential security vulnerability until yesterday (Thursday),” the Lenovo statement said.— Reuters

Orbital explosion probe said to involve debris in engine

WASHINGTON, 21 Feb — Last October’s explosion of Orbital ATK Inc’s Antares rocket may have triggered when debris inadvertently left in a fuel tank traveled into the boosters’ main engine, two people familiar with investigations into the accident told Reuters.

The sources said the preliminary findings suggest that a simple assembly mishap—triggered by Orbital ATK’s failure to properly handle the propellant—caused the explosion, which destroyed a cargo ship bound for the International Space Station.

Orbital initially linked the explosion to a problem with the turbo pump in one of the two Soviet-era NK-33 engines that power the rocket. GenCorp Inc’s Aerojet Rocketdyne unit refurbishes the old motors and resells them as AJ-26 motors. Orbital ATK on Friday acknowledged that so-called “foreign object debris” was one of more than a dozen credible causes of the explosion, but said it was not a “leading candidate as the most probable cause of the failure.”

Orbital spokesman Barry Benesi said the company- led “accident investigation board,” which includes officials from NASA and the Federal Aviation Administration, had not identified any evidence of mishandling of the flight hardware by Orbital.

He said Orbital continued to compare data from the October explosion with a May 2014 test stand failure of a different AJ-26 engine, and prior failures involving AJ-26 ground tests in 2009, 2011 and 2012. No details have been released on the May 2014 test stand incident, but sources familiar with the earlier investigation said it was linked to faulty “workmanship” on the original motor, and additional inspections had been mandated to prevent mishaps with other engines. Orbital also successfully launched one Antares rocket in July 2014, after the May accident.— Reuters
### Italy’s Benetton to join fund for Rana Plaza victims

**Milan, 21 Feb** — Italian fashion retailer Benetton will pay into a fund set up to compensate victims of the 2013 Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh that killed more than 1,100 people, the company said on Friday.

Benetton’s decision to contribute to the Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund came following a petition organized by international advocacy group Avaaz and containing more than 1 million signatures calling for such action.

The Donors Trust Fund was set up to pool resources from a number of public institutions and private companies to compensate 5,000 people affected by the Rana Plaza disaster. Benetton earlier said it did not want to take part in compensation funds among companies that sourced clothes from the factory due to a “lack of clarity” around objectives and a lack of involvement by key stakeholders.

But in a statement on Friday, Benetton said it was working with "an independent and globally recognised third party" to work out a “fair and proportionate” compensation. It said it would announce how much it would pay into the fund before 24 April, which will mark the second anniversary of the Rana Plaza’s collapse.

Known the world over for its colourful sweaters, Benetton said it had set up an aid programme one month after the disaster in May 2013 that had helped 280 victims and their families.—Reuters

### Fukushima Pref to accept delivery of radioactively contaminated waste

**Fukushima, Japan, 21 Feb** — The Fukushima prefectural government may approve next week the delivery of radioactively contaminated soil and other waste, collected during decontamination work following the 2011 nuclear crisis, to interim storage facilities under construction in the prefecture, sources familiar with the matter said on Saturday.

Fukushima Gov Masao Uchibori may declare the acceptance during a meeting with Environment Minister Yoshiho Mochizuki, who plans to visit the prefecture around next Wednesday, according to the sources.

The prefectural government has yet to approve the delivery, saying decisions on the two issues are separate.

The central government aims to begin such transportation by 11 March this year on the fourth anniversary of the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station of Tokyo Electric Power Co. Under the government plan, the radioactively contaminated waste will be kept in the interim facilities in the towns of Futaba and Okuma in Fukushima Prefecture and will be permanently disposed of outside the prefecture within 30 years, as requested by the Fukushima prefectural government in accepting the storage.

The prefectural government has called on the state for legislation ensuring the waste will be put to final disposal outside Fukushima Prefecture within 30 years.—Kyodo News

### Hundreds evacuated after fire at Dubai skyscraper

**Dubai, 21 Feb** — Hundreds of people in Dubai were evacuated from one of the world’s tallest residential buildings on Saturday when fire swept through The Torch, a 79-story skyscraper, residents said.

Dubai’s police chief, General Khamis Mattar, said the fire appeared to be the result of an accident and did not suspect it was caused by any deliberate criminal act, in comments carried by state news agency WAM.

He added that an investigation had started to determine the cause of the blaze, WAM reported.

A witness said flames shot out from two sides of the building as glass and metal rained down from near the summit of the structure, which stands more than 330 metres (1,082 feet) tall.

Mattar said four people had suffered minor injuries. At least a dozen fire trucks extinguished the blaze several hours after the fire alarm went off around 2 am. (2200 GMT Friday).

Residents said the fire had been fanned by high winds, dislodging chunks of metal and glass onto the area below, including a nearby road more than 100 metres (330 feet) away.

Traffic in the area was diverted and residents of two other nearby buildings in the emirate’s Marina district, home to thousands of expatriate professionals, were also evacuated, the witness said.

Many of those standing outside the building were dressed in pyjamas, with others in evening dress as they returned from the city’s many bars and restaurants on a weekend.

One woman, who did not give her name, stood on the street crying, saying she had rushed back fearing for her belongings after a friend contacted her about the fire. The lower floors where she lived were not affected.

Residents of neighbouring towers were returning to their homes around 4:30 am, but residents of The Torch were told they would not be allowed back into the building until the fire officials gave approval later on Saturday.

Residents of upper floors that were most affected were told it would be days before they could return.

Dubai is one of seven emirates that make up the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a Gulf Arab trade and investment hub.—Reuters

---

**A woman holds a picture of her relative, a garment worker who went missing in the Rana Plaza collapse, as she waits for a mass prayer on the first year anniversary of the accident, at a school in Savar on 24 April, 2014.** —Reuters

---

**Fire engines are seen after a fire broke out at “The Torch”, a residential high-rise tower, in Dubai on 21 Feb, 2015.** —Reuters

---

**French President Francois Hollande walks on the tarmac as he arrives for a visit about nuclear deterrence and strategic Air Force at the military base in Istres, southern France on 19 Feb, 2015.** —Reuters

---

**France’s Hollande says there is no Greek exit scenario**

**Paris, 21 Feb** — Greece belongs in the euro zone and there is no scenario envisaging its exit from the single currency union, French President Francois Hollande said after talks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

“Greece is in the euro zone and it must remain in the euro zone,” Hollande told a joint news conference with Merkel.

“I know of no scenario today involving a euro zone exit.” Hollande, who was talking ahead of a crunch meeting of euro zone finance ministers, said Greece must meet its commitments but its euro zone partners must also take into account the election that brought to power anti-austerity parties.—Reuters
Sunday, 22 February, 2015

BOMB THREAT GROUNDS SWISS AIRCRAFT IN ZURICH

An A330 aircraft was seen at a de-icing pad after a bomb threat was made against an aircraft operated by Lufthansa’s Swiss International Airlines at Zurich airport, a spokesman for the airport said on 20 Feb, 2015.—Reuters

ZURICH, 21 Feb — A bomb threat was made on Friday against an aircraft operated by Lufthansa’s (LHAG.DE) Swiss at Zurich airport, a spokesman for the airport said.

Swiss flight LX 146 had been due to depart for New Delhi at 12:45 pm (1145 GMT).

“The aircraft has been moved to a de-icing pad,” the spokesman said, adding that the aircraft’s passengers and crew were inside the terminal.

Police declined to confirm they were investigating a bomb threat, saying only that police operation was in progress. Swiss was not immediately available for comment.— Reuters

THAI F-16 JET FIGHTER CRASHLANDS, PILOT KILLED

BANGKOK, 21 Feb — A Thai air force F-16 fighter crashedlanded, killing the pilot, in Lopburi Province on Friday.

The F-16A Fighting Falcon pilot, identified as Flight Lieutenant Noppanon Nivasanond, had just finished an air-to-air surface attack exercise and was returning to base in Nakorn Ratchasima Province when the incident occurred, according to air force spokesperson ACM Monton Sat Chukorn.

The United States-made jet fighter caught fire as it crashedlanded into a tarmac field in Kosamrong district of the northeastern province, about 150 kilometres north of the Thai capital.

The authorities have inspected the wreckage of the fallen jet and are yet to find out the cause of the fatal mishap, ACM Monton said.

An air force command for tactical air exercises is about four kilometres from the crash site. Villagers were kept out of the area where air force personnel thoroughly inspected and collected pieces of the aircraft’s wreckage scattered in all directions.

The deceased pilot and his jet fighter belonged to the Wing 1 air base, the country’s biggest.

In one last incident of its kind four years ago, two of the Thai air force’s F-16 jet fighters crashedlanded during a combat exercise in Chaiyapum Province four years ago, with both pilots managing to jettison to safety.—Xinhua

WEATHER REPORT

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 22nd FEBRUARY, 2015: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagain and Tinabhiyi Regions, Kachin State and weather will be partly cloudy in Chin, Kayin and Mon States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters.

Invitation of Expression of Interest (EOI) for Pharmaceutical Plants for No (1) Pharmaceutical Factory (Yangon), Pharmaceutical and Foodstuff Industries, Ministry of Industry

No (1) Pharmaceutical Factory (Yangon) under the Pharmaceutical and Foodstuff Industries, the Ministry of Industry intend to cooperate for Pharmaceutical Plants with Local and Foreign Entrepreneurs Companies.

As a first step, Companies who interest in those cooperation are required to submit their Expression of Interest (EOI) not later than 4 PM (Myanmar Standard Time), on March 5th, 2015 to Planning Department, Pharmaceutical and Foodstuff Industries, Ministry of Industry, Office No (37), Nay Pyi Taw, The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Interested entities can take over the (EOI) Form and other indications at above office commencing from (23-2-2015) by presenting complete documents of company profile. Document of Company Profile

- Valid Certificate of Incorporation
- Records and Regulation of Company
- Name of Foreign’s Technical Cooperate

(For more information : Phone no : +95 +67 408140, 408275 Fax no : +95 +67 408195)

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV SHIBA VOY NO (ISC1002E)
Consignees of cargo carried on MV SHIBA VOY NO (ISC1002E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 22.2.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: M/S WAN HAI LINES PTE LTD Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV SILVER FERN VOY NO (0001S)
Consignees of cargo carried on MV SILVER FERN VOY NO (0001S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 22.2.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.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 Claims Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: M/S CHINA SHIPPING LINES Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV KUO HSUING VOY NO (1029W)
Consignees of cargo carried on MV KUO HSUING VOY NO (1029W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 22.2.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: MS CHINA SHIPPING LINES Phone No: 2301185

WEATHER REPORT

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 22nd FEBRUARY, 2015: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagain and Tinabhiyi Regions, Kachin State and weather will be partly cloudy in Chin, Kayin and Mon States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters.

Invitation of Expression of Interest (EOI) for Pharmaceutical Plants for No (1) Pharmaceutical Factory (Yangon), Pharmaceutical and Foodstuff Industries, Ministry of Industry

No (1) Pharmaceutical Factory (Yangon) under the Pharmaceutical and Foodstuff Industries, the Ministry of Industry intend to cooperate for Pharmaceutical Plants with Local and Foreign Entrepreneurs Companies.

As a first step, Companies who interest in those cooperation are required to submit their Expression of Interest (EOI) not later than 4 PM (Myanmar Standard Time), on March 5th, 2015 to Planning Department, Pharmaceutical and Foodstuff Industries, Ministry of Industry, Office No (37), Nay Pyi Taw, The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Interested entities can take over the (EOI) Form and other indications at above office commencing from (23-2-2015) by presenting complete documents of company profile. Document of Company Profile

- Valid Certificate of Incorporation
- Records and Regulation of Company
- Name of Foreign’s Technical Cooperate

(For more information : Phone no : +95 +67 408140, 408275 Fax no : +95 +67 408195)
Emmy Awards to feature more contenders in comedy, drama categories

LOS ANGELES, 21 Feb — New rules will expand the number of contenders for top honours in the comedy and drama categories in television’s annual Emmy Awards this year, organizers said on Friday.

The Television Academy said it was making numerous revisions to the awards in order to reflect a changing television landscape. Both the comedy and drama series categories will now include seven nominees, up from six in previous years.

Comedy series will be defined by shows that are 30 minutes or shorter per episode, while drama series will be for shows over 30 minutes.

That means shows such as Netflix’s “Orange Is the New Black” will no longer be considered in the comedy series category. Producers will be able to petition for eligibility in an alternative category, the Television Academy said.

“Our over 17,000 voting members represents a dramatically changing television industry and we want to continue to make sure we honour their creativity in the most relevant and fair ways possible,” Bruce Rosenblum, chairman of the Television Academy, said in a statement.

After switching the Primetime Emmy awards show from a Sunday in late September to a Monday in late August last year, the Television Academy is going back to its late September weekend slot with this year’s awards on 20 September.

The mini-series category will be renamed “limited series,” and will reflect any shows that have two or more episodes running for at least 2-1/2 hours, that tell a complete, non-recurring story and will not continue the story or characters in following seasons.

This will mean shows such as BBC America’s ‘Luther’ and PBS Masterpiece’s ‘Sherlock’ will not be eligible in this category, as both feature same characters in ongoing seasons.

Other changes include splitting the variety series category into Outstanding Variety Talk, to be awarded during the live Primetime Emmy telecast, and Outstanding Variety Sketch, which will be awarded at the separate Creative Arts Emmy awards.—Reuters

Scott Free to produce ‘The Burning Woman’ with ‘Anne Hathaway’

LOS ANGELES, 21 Feb — Scott Free has been signed on to produce ‘The Burning Woman’, which is expected to star Oscar-winning actress Anne Hathaway.

The film, a drama with thriller elements, is based on an original idea by Brad Ingelsby, who developed the script with Prais, and wrote it with Hathaway in mind, reported Deadline.

The story shows that the teen daughter of a 32-year-old woman in Pennsylvania goes missing and she is left to raise her infant grandson alone. The story is told over the course of 11 years, from the time her daughter vanishes, through the trials and tribulations of subsequent years looking for closure, leading up to the long-awaited discovery of the truth.—PTI

I lost a friend: Amy Poehler remembers Harris Wittels

LOS ANGELES, 21 Feb — ‘Parks and Recreation’ actress Amy Poehler, while mourning over the show’s producer Harris Wittels’ untimely demise, says she is pained at losing a ‘dear friend’.

Wittels died yesterday at his home. He was 30. The executive producer died of an apparent drug overdose, reported Variety. Poirier, 43, while remembering Wittels at an event, which happened just hours after he was found dead, said, “Today, I lost a friend. I lost a dear, young friend in my life who was struggling with addiction. “I’m sharing it with you because life and death live so close together, and we walk that fine line every day. When things happen in our lives, we turn to the people that we love, and we lean on people, in a hope that we will ease our pain,” she said.—PTI

‘American Horror Story’ actor Ben Woolf taken to hospital after accident

LOS ANGELES, 21 Feb — “American Horror Story” actor Ben Woolf was rushed to a hospital in critical condition after being struck in the head by the side mirror of a passing car in Hollywood, police said on Friday.

Woolf, who stands about four feet four inches (132 cm) tall and plays the character Meep on the FX channel show, was hit around 9 pm on Thursday, Los Angeles Police Department spokeswoman Jane Kim said.

He was rushed to a hospital in critical condition, Kim said, though his current condition was not known. The driver remained at the scene after the accident, Kim said.

The Emmy-nominated “American Horror Story,” by “Glee” creators Ryan Murphy and Brad Falchuck, takes on an anthology miniseries format, exploring a new storyline and cast of characters each season.—Reuters

Misunderstanding led to my arrest: Vanilla Ice

LONDON, 21 Feb — Robert Van Winkle, better known as rapper Vanilla Ice, says his arrest in an alleged burglary, was due to a misunderstanding, which will soon be cleared. Ice, 47, faced arrest over accusations of breaking into and stealing from an abandoned Florida home sometime between December and February. He was released from custody on Wednesday, reported BBC.

The 47-year-old said it had been a misunderstanding and “it will all be cleared up”. Lantana police said Ice had been renovating the house next to the property where items had been stolen.—PTI

Singer Bruce Dickinson undergoes cancer treatment

LOS ANGELES, 21 Feb — Bruce Dickinson, the lead singer of heavy metal English band Iron Maiden, has undergone a seven-week course of chemotherapy and radiology treatment for tongue cancer.

The 56-year-old English singer was treated after doctors found a small cancerous tumour at the back of his tongue, reported Aceshowbiz. The course finished yesterday.

The band announced the news in a statement posted on its website yesterday.

Just before Christmas, Maiden vocalist Bruce Dickinson visited his doctor for a routine check-up. This led to tests and biopsies which revealed a small cancerous tumour at the back of his tongue. A seven week course of chemotherapy and radiology treatment was completed yesterday.

“As the tumour was caught in the early stages, the prognosis thankfully is extremely good. Bruce’s medical team fully expect him to make a complete recovery with the all clear envisaged by late May. It will then take a further few months for Bruce to get back to full fitness,” the statement said.

The band asked for privacy in this matter until May. “In the meantime we would ask for your patience, understanding and respect for Bruce and his family’s privacy until we update everyone by the end of May. Bruce is doing very well considering the circumstances and the whole team are very positive,” the band said.—PTI

Actress Anne Hathaway

Bruce Dickinson, the lead singer of heavy metal English band Iron Maiden, has undergone a seven-week course of chemotherapy and radiology treatment for tongue cancer.—Reuters

I lost a friend: Amy Poehler remembers Harris Wittels

LOS ANGELES, 21 Feb — ‘Parks and Recreation’ actress Amy Poehler, while mourning over the show’s producer Harris Wittels’ untimely demise, says she is pained at losing a ‘dear friend’.

Wittels died yesterday at his home. He was 30. The executive producer died of an apparent drug overdose, reported Variety. Poirier, 43, while remembering Wittels at an event, which happened just hours after he was found dead, said, “Today, I lost a friend. I lost a dear, young friend in my life who was struggling with addiction. “I’m sharing it with you because life and death live so close together, and we walk that fine line every day. When things happen in our lives, we turn to the people that we love, and we lean on people, in a hope that we will ease our pain,” she said.—PTI

‘American Horror Story’ actor Ben Woolf taken to hospital after accident

LOS ANGELES, 21 Feb — “American Horror Story” actor Ben Woolf was rushed to a hospital in critical condition after being struck in the head by the side mirror of a passing car in Hollywood, police said on Friday.

Woolf, who stands about four feet four inches (132 cm) tall and plays the character Meep on the FX channel show, was hit around 9 pm on Thursday, Los Angeles Police Department spokeswoman Jane Kim said.

He was rushed to a hospital in critical condition, Kim said, though his current condition was not known. The driver remained at the scene after the accident, Kim said.

The Emmy-nominated “American Horror Story,” by “Glee” creators Ryan Murphy and Brad Falchuck, takes on an anthology miniseries format, exploring a new storyline and cast of characters each season.—Reuters

Misunderstanding led to my arrest: Vanilla Ice

LONDON, 21 Feb — Robert Van Winkle, better known as rapper Vanilla Ice, says his arrest in an alleged burglary, was due to a misunderstanding, which will soon be cleared. Ice, 47, faced arrest over accusations of breaking into and stealing from an abandoned Florida home sometime between December and February. He was released from custody on Wednesday, reported BBC.

The 47-year-old said it had been a misunderstanding and “it will all be cleared up”. Lantana police said Ice had been renovating the house next to the property where items had been stolen.—PTI
London, 21 Feb — Eden Hazard has asked Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho to find him shin pads that also protect the back of his legs after suffering a record number of fouls in the Premier League and European competition this season.

Mourinho, who urged referees to offer the tricky Belgium forward more protection, said Hazard suffered from dangerous fouls and from sneaky, tactical challenges to prevent him racing away from defenders on the counter-attack.

“Told me to speak with my friends that make carbon so pads to try to make some for the back like a horse that does jumping because he also gets fouled from behind,” the Portuguese told reporters ahead of Saturday’s home game against Bournemouth.

Hazard, 24, holds the record for the most fouls suffered in the Premier League, at 74 a full 14 more than second-placed Raheem Sterling of Liverpool.

Against Paris St Germain in the Champions League on Tuesday the Chelsea player was crunched nine times.

Mourinho bemoaned the fact that because Hazard was an honest player who tried to stay on his feet, opponents often escaped sanction.

“He should be the player that creates more yellow cards from opponents but he doesn’t,” Mourinho said.

Edward Hazard of Chelsea in action against Aston Villa during their English Premier League soccer match at Villa Park, Birmingham, on 7 Feb, 2015. — Reuters

“Eden wants to play. Eden doesn’t want people to get a red card ... did you see a referee give a penalty for a player that didn’t go (down)?”

Mourinho said Hazard attracted strategic fouls because of his skill and quick feet. “Referees have to understand exactly that. Sometimes little fouls are big fouls in the context of the game ... it can be a small foul but it stops the counter-attack,” he added.

“I think Eden is punished in both ways. He’s punished by aggression. In Paris he had nine fouls but three of them are very bad fouls, very dangerous fouls and he can do nothing.”

Mourinho said it was perfectly normal that some players attracted more attention from defenders and were double-marked.

Eden Hazard of Chelsea in action against Aston Villa during their English Premier League soccer match at Villa Park, Birmingham, on 7 Feb, 2015. — Reuters

**Tiger Woods will not play Honda Classic**

Washington, 21 Feb — Tiger Woods has confirmed that he will not play next week’s Honda Classic after he announced an indefinite leave from the PGA Tour.

Woods said last week he would leave the tour indefinitely because his game was not acceptable for tournament golf and that he would not play again until he felt like it was.

Woods has played only two tournaments this year.

He shot the worst round of his professional career in January, an 11-over-par 82 in the second round of the Phoenix Open.

The following week at Torrey Pines, he withdrew after 11 holes because of tightness in his back.

Woods is No 66 in the world and will not be eligible for the World Golf Championship at Doral. Woods has 14 major titles in his career.

**Philippines pledges to strengthen efforts to ensure conviction of drug suspects**

Manila, 21 Feb — The Philippine government vowed on Saturday to intensify efforts to ensure that those charged for illegal drugs get convicted as the number of drug cases filed in courts significantly increased last year.

Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Director General Arturo Cacdac Jr cited in the agency’s consolidated report that a total of 17,074 drug cases were filed in different courts nationwide in 2014 compared to 10,502 in 2013, an increase of 62.57 percent.

He said internal support mechanisms have been institutionalized to strengthen PDEA’s aggressive campaign against illegal drugs.

Capability enhancement trainings, such as anti-drug investigation courses, are regularly provided to enable agents to prepare air-tight cases in coordination with PDEA lawyers, he said.

“Most cases are used to prepare PDEA agents and chemists who will stand as prosecution witnesses. Also, case monitors have been permanently assigned to all PDEA regional offices to regularly monitor status of drug cases,” Cacdac said.—Xinhua

**Resurgent Halep ousts Wozniacki to reach Dubai final**

Simona Halep of Romania returns the ball to Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark during their women’s singles semi-final match at the WTA Dubai Tennis Championships on 20 Feb, 2015.—Reuters

Dubai, 21 Feb — Simona Halep beat Caroline Wozniacki 2-6, 6-1, 6-1 in the semi-finals of the Dubai Championships on Friday as the indefatigable Romanian pounded her foe from the baseline.

The Romanian top seed will be favourite to overcome Karolina Pliskova in Saturday’s Aviation Club final after the Czech baseliner subdued Spaniard Garbine Muguruza 6-4, 5-7, 7-5 in the other semi. “Day by day, I’ve played better. I tried to be aggressive. I’m playing good tennis, I’m feeling relaxed,” Halep said in a court-side interview.

Halep, wearing a mauve skirt, white top and white headband, struggled to find her range in the opening exchanges as she surrendered the first set with a double fault.

But the Romanian, who feels she now has the big game experience to win grand slams following a breakthrough 2014, began the second set re-energized.

She broke Wozniacki immediately, taking advantage of a short second serve to grab a forehand double fault.

Halep’s finesse, power and speed over the court allowed her to leverage much as Wozniacki, suffering from illness and a troublesome knee, wilted under pressure. The Romanian ended up claiming 12 of the last 14 games as she secured a place in the final.

Halep is the firm favourite to win her third title on the desert circuit in Dubai.

A man works in a tobacco leaves plantation, in San Luis municipality of Pinar del Rio Province, western Cuba, on 20 Feb, 2015. — Xinhua
Mayweather to clash with Pacquiao in mega fight

LOS ANGELES, 21 Feb — The long awaited mega bout between Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao, which has been more than five years in the making, will take place in Las Vegas on 2 May, Mayweather announced on Friday.

A duel between the defence-minded Mayweather and the aggressive Pacquiao, the biggest drawcards of their generation, has been savoured by boxing fans, if only to decide the mythical title of the world’s best pound-for-pound fighter.

Showtime and HBO will jointly broadcast the bout, which is one of the most eagerly anticipated in boxing since the classic 1975 ‘Thrilla in Manila’ between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier. However, both Mayweather, 37, and Pacquiao, 36, are in the twilight of their respective careers and most pundits say they have lost some of their skills in the ring.

“What the world has been waiting for has arrived,” American Mayweather, who has a perfect record of 47-0 with 26 knockouts, said on the social networking website Shots. “Mayweather vs. Pacquiao on 2 May, 2015 is a done deal.”

“I promised the fans we would get this done, and we did. We will make history on 2 May. Don’t miss it!”

Mayweather made a late-night trip to Pacquiao’s hotel in Miami last month to discuss the possibility of a showdown, and the Filipino southpaw, an eight-division world champion, signed the contract for the bout on Thursday.

Manny Pacquiao (C) of the Philippines poses on the scales during an official weigh-in for his World Boxing Organization (WBO) 12-round welterweight title fight against Chris Algieri of the US at the Venetian Macau hotel in Macau on 22 Nov, 2014.

“I am glad my decision to meet with Manny and discuss making this fight happen helped get the deal done,” Mayweather said in a statement. “Giving the fans what they want to see is always my main focus.”

“This will be the biggest event in the history of the sport. I am the best ever … and this fight will be another opportunity to showcase my skills and do what I do best, which is win.”

“Manny is going to try to do what 47 before him failed to do, but he won’t be successful. He will be number 48,” Pacquiao, who has a 57-5-2 record with 38 knockouts, said in a statement: “I am very happy that Floyd Mayweather and I can give the fans the fight they have wanted for so many years. They have waited long enough and they deserve it.”

“It is an honour to be part of this historic event. I dedicate this fight to all the fans who wanted this fight to happen and, as always, to bring glory to the Philippines and my fellow Filipinos around the world.”

The welterweight showdown in Vegas is projected to be the most lucrative ever in boxing with Mayweather expected to have a 60-40 split advantage on revenues, earning a minimum of $120 million and Pacquiao at least $80 million.

“Everyone involved, including Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao, knows this fight simply had to happen,” Stephen Espinoza, general manager for Showtime Sports, said in a statement.— Reuters