President attends consecration ceremony of Laykyun Marn Aung Pagoda in Sagaing

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Feb — President U Thein Sein and wife Daw Khin Khin Win attended consecration ceremony of Laykyun Marn Aung pagoda in Sagaing, on Sunday, together with officials.

The pagoda was consecrated after the relics were enshrined into the pagoda. The historic pagoda was built by Taninganway goda with 122-foot height in Sagaing Township in SE Sagaing Township donated K30 million and Paing Company Limited donated K5 million each for the families of fallen soldiers in Laukkai conflict and Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) General Hla Htay Win accepted the donated cash. Also present at the ceremony were Union ministers, the chief ministers of Sagaing and Mandalay regions, senior military officers and officials.

Sacred diamond orb and pennant-shape vane were handed over the donated objects on the bank.

The pagoda was damaged by the earthquake in 6th Waxing Day, 1376 ME.

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China asks Myanmar Rice Federation to add more companies to approved rice exporters list

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Sacred diamond orb and pennant-shape vane were carried from Mandalay Karaweik Hotel to Laykyun Marn Aung pagoda along Ayeayawady River, with locals paying homage to the religious objects on the bank.

President and his wife handed over the donated diamond orb, the pennant-shape vane and relics to senior Buddhist monks to share merits.

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Replica tooth relic conveyed from Pathein to Myanaung for public obeisance

Myanaung, 22 Feb — A replica of sacred tooth relic was conveyed from Htoogyi to Myanaung, Ayeyawady Region, on 21 February for public obeisance.

The replica was kept in Kanyingu Village and then conveyed again to Inbin of Myanaung for spending a night.

On 22 February, the replica arrived in Myanaung for enabling the people to pay homage to it.

The conveyance of the replica tooth relic was supervised by township authorities.

The replica took relic was conveyed from the Gandakuti chamber on the hill of Shwenuhtaw Pagoda in Pathein.—Win Bo (Township IPRD)

English proficiency course for immigration officers concludes

Mandalay, 22 Feb — Immigration staff are to pursue English language so as to give better services to not only local people but foreigners, Mandalay Region Minister for Security and Border Affairs Col Aung Kyaw Moe said at the concluding ceremony of English Proficiency Course at Basic Education High School No 16 in Mandalay on 21 February.

Chief Executive Officer U Win Pe Maung of Amarapura Associates Group made a speech and trainee U Than Tun Aung spoke words of thanks.

Officials presented completion certificates to three trainees.

Director of Mandalay Region Immigration and National Registration Department U Thaung Zaw presented gifts to trainers. Altogether 30 officers from the department attended the three-month course.

—Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Literary talks, songs presentation reflect images of Mandalay City

Mandalay, 22 Feb — A literary talk was given at Yadanabon Hall of Myanmar Medical Association (Mandalay) on 21 February afternoon.

Writer Hsu Hnget, winner of national literary award, gave talks on change of images in Mandalay City. Myoma Band presented songs reflecting images of Mandalay’s history to the audiences.

“I recalled significant changes of images in Mandalay which Myanmar kings ruled in Yadanabon monarchical era. Vocalists of Myoma Band presented favorite songs of both Mandalarians and all Myanmar people after the talks,” said the writer.—Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Zabuthiri Township opens six concrete streets

Nay Pyi Taw, 22 Feb — Gangaw Road and 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Gangaw streets were commissioned into service in Thabyegon Ward, Zabuthiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, on 21 February.

Director (Engineer) U Aung Moe of Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee reported on construction of the concrete streets in the township and maintenance of the facilities for durability.

Nay Pyi Taw Council member U Myo Nyunt, Amyotha Hluttaw MP U Khin Maung Htay and Committee member U Kyaw Myint formally opened the new concrete road and strolled along the repaved street.

Six roads in total length are 4,700 feet and 12 feet wide. The concrete streets will contribute to socioeconomic development of the local people.

The council member and officials viewed vaccination of measles and rubella to children under five years in Aungzabu Ward and Thabyegon Ward.

—Shwe Kokko
Military columns capture temporary bases of Kokang insurgents

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Feb — Government ground troops launched attacks in tandem with air strikes against Kokang insurgents stationed on hills in the vicinity of 18th-Mile junction on the Laukkai-Kongyan road on Saturday and Sunday, with the army capturing temporary bases, militarily-strategic hills where the rebels had stationed to cut off main access roads, officials said.

A map shows clashes between government’s troops and Kokang insurgents in Laukkai region

China asks Myanmar . . .

from page 1

China asks Myanmar. The selection of companies to legalize the rice trade between the two countries came after a memorandum of understanding on 100,000 tonnes of rice export to China was signed during a visit of Myanmar’s rice delegation to China last month. The delegation had a discussion with China’s general administration of quality supervision, inspection and quarantine (AQSIQ) on matters including standards set for rice exports to China, said the MRF.

Despite having more than 100 companies that are interested to partake in the legal rice exports, only nine companies were named at the request of Chinese authorities who wanted to trade with less than ten, a MRF official said at a press briefing last month, with the federation announcing the number of firms to begin legal rice trading with China. Earlier this month in Yangon, the federation inked a MoU with COFCO, China’s largest state-run grain-trading company, on purchase of planned tonnage of rice from Myanmar at price in the market during a 12-month period following the completion of China’s AQSIQ process. According to the MoU, the federation will act as a facilitator of rice trading between buyers and sellers. The MRF expects to legally export rice to China at the end of April.

There will be a business matching with Chinese firms that want to buy rice from Myanmar in Yangon next month, said the MRF joint secretary. Over the last couple of years, China has been a major market for rice exported from Myanmar through informal border channels, according to a World Bank report.

If the legal rice exports to China come into reality, it will be of great benefit to Myanmar rice traders, enabling them to boost market share in the country’s existing rice trade market.

Workshop for media on election reporting held in Yangon

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

YANGON, 22 Feb — The Ministry of Information in partnership with International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) Sunday organized a workshop for the media on election reporting here, according to the ministry.

Elections and the role of media, ethics in reporting, interview for story, gathering information from the sources, newsroom management and fundamentals for covering an election, are the main topics of the workshop.

During the one-day workshop, Daw Khin May Zaw, lead trainer of ICFJ, shared her experiences on election reporting, including conversion of the results of polls into stories, voter education and evaluation of the fairness of the electoral process.

The workshop also focused on the importance of social networks and digital media and their advantages and disadvantages.

“The media is responsible for providing citizens with sufficient information on voting procedures,” said the trainer.

She also discussed conducting an effective interview with a political candidate or party leader, reporting on vote counting and talking directly to voters to get their opinions on political parties, candidates and issues.

Around 100 reporters and editors from local broadcast and print media as well as news agencies actively participated in the workshop.

Attendees at workshop for the media on election reporting seen in group discussions.

Photo: KHAING THANDA LWIN

President U Thein Sein sprinkles scented water on diamond orb before hoisting it atop Laykyun Marn Aung Pagoda in Sagaing. (News on page 1) — MNA

China asks Myanmar
Easy Bike Show attracts Mandalarians

Mandaly, 22 Feb — The Easy Bike Show, organized by Mingalar Mandalay, was held at Mandalay Housing on 73th street between Thazin and Ngushwewah streets in Chanayethazan Township on 19 and 20 February.

Enthusiasts visited the show where various types of motorcycles made in Japan, Thailand, China and India were displayed.

Famous vocalists presented songs, and models demonstrated use of motorcycles at the show.

Maung Pyi Thu
(Mandalay)

Readers association to conduct summer courses free of charge

Mandaly, 22 Feb — Summer free training courses will be conducted for youths in West Thiri Marlar Ward, Aungmyethazan Township as of 9 March.

Zartman youth readers association will open the Buddhist culture course.

English grammer course, Mathematics, basic arts and journalism for children at Thitsaya Dhammyan at the corner of 26th and 92st streets.

“The courses will be conducted with the aim of enabling children to efficiently use the summer holidays and developing human resources,” said an official of the association.

The association will provide stationery, teaching aid and uniforms to the attendees.

“Arrangements have been made for those trainees to read so as to raise reading skills,” he added.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Director of Asian Business Development lectures stock market in Myanmar

Mandaly, 22 Feb — With the assistance of Ministry of Commerce, Republic of the Union of Myanmar Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Japan International Cooperation Agency, Myanmar-Japan Human Resources Development Centre conducted the capital market and stock market course at the office of Mandalay Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry at Yadanaon Centre in Chanayethazan Township on 20 February.

Members of the chamber, young entrepreneurs and students of University of Economics were in attendance.

Chairman of the chambers U Aung Than made a speech and an official explained conducting the training course.

Director Akifumi Nakanishi of Asian Business Development gave lectures on capital market in ASEAN countries and stock market in Myanmar.

Thittha Ko Ko
(Mandalay)

Shan State Fisheries Department shares funds to eight villages

Yaungshwe, 22 Feb — Shan State Fisheries Department held a ceremony to allot capital fund to villages of Green Emerald Project in the state and open the financial rules course at Nyaungshwe fishery station on 20 February.

Shan State Minister for Agriculture and livestock Breeding U Sai Hsa Lu made an opening address. Head of Shan State Fisheries Department U Tin Tun Aung explained a capital fund for implementing the green emerald project.

The project will be implemented in eight villages in Inlay region, Ynaungshwe Township. The department provided K30 million as capital investment each for eight villages.

The department gave a financial rules course to those who will implement the project.

Nay Myo Thein

Thai Expo (Mandalay) promotes Myanmar-Thai friendship relations

Mandaly, 22 Feb — Myanmar-Thai Friendship Association organized the Thai Expo (Mandalay) at Yadanaon Centre at the corner of 78th and 34th streets in Chanayethazan Township, Mandalay, from 20 to 28 February.

The opening ceremony was attended by executives of Mae Hong Son Province of Thailand and Mandalay Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and businessmen in Mandalay.

Tyres of vehicles, car parts, foodstuffs, cosmetics, textiles, shoes and slippers, fancy works, leather products, soaps, soft drinks and traditional medicines of Thailand are put on display at the hall, and Thai businessmen sell the products to customers at special prices.

Thittha Ko Ko
(Mandalay)

Dawei University shares findings in research works

Dawei, 22 Feb — In commemoration of the 15th birthday of Dawei University, a research paper reading session was held at its main hall in Dawei, Taninthayi Region, on 20 February.

Pro-Rector Dr Ba Han made a speech on the occasion.

Resource persons read 10 research papers and replied to queries raised by attendees.

Chief Minister of Taninthayi Region U Myat Ko and ministers, Advocate-General of the region U Soe Myint and faculty members were in attendance.

The university publishes research journals on its findings yearly.

Po Shwe Than
(Dawei)

AMD conducts agricultural machinery driving course

Kyaukpyu, 22 Feb — The agricultural machinery driving course was opened at No 9 Tractor Station in Kyaukpyu, Ayeyawady Region, on 19 February, with an address by Township Administrator U Kyaw Aung Hsan.

Head of Township Agricultural Mechanization Department U Nay Mo Kyi explained the purpose of giving the training to local people and aims of the State to transform manual to mechanized farming.

Altogether 31 trainees from 11 village-tracts are attending the 12-day course.

David
Bangladesh raids militant training camp in remote area of Chittagong

DHAKA, 22 Feb — Bangladesh special forces raided a training camp in the southeastern Chittagong district operated by an Islamist militant network that was planning to carry out attacks in the country, senior officials said.

In their raid on the camp in Banshkhali, a remote, hilly area covered in forest, the elite Rapid Action Battalion arrested five people and found firearms, ammunition and other training material, Lieutenant Colonel Mihafa Uddin said. The operation to raid the camp was launched after police arrested 25 students on 19 February at their madrasa, a school teaching Islamic theology and law, in the town of Hathazari in Chittagong, he said.

Uddin said the detained students had given information on the camp during their interrogation and that people from across Bangladesh went there to receive arms training.

Among the weapons and other items recovered were three AK 22 semi-automatic rifles, seven pistols, more than 750 rounds of ammunition, boxing gloves and ropes. “All arrested persons hailed from different parts of the country, were engaged there as trainers and conducted training of fire arms handling, bomb manufacturing and militants attack to selected militants,” Uddin said. Lieutenant Colonel A K Azad, the director of RAB’s headquarters, said the militants operated a “strong network” and had a plan to attack Bangladesh, but he did not name the group.

Last month, Bangladeshi police arrested four suspected members of Islamic State in the capital, Dhaka, including a regional coordinator for the militant group who told police they had been trained in Pakistan.

“The trainers showed video films on militancy and encouraged the new militants with lectures and books,” Azad said. Young men from poor families and madrasa students had been exploited by the network, he said.

The camp was established under the veil of a cattle training.

Bangkok police detain at least three over street demonstration

BANGKOK, 22 Feb — Thai police plucked at least three people off the streets of the capital on Sunday, after they held a small gathering to “exchange views” with the country’s military junta. Thailand’s military has severely restricted public gatherings since seizing power in a coup last May.

Taking a hard line on dissent, it has detained more than 300 people, including activists, journalists and politicians.

The leader of a group of four people, Akkarakit Noonchan, was dragged away by plainclothes officers shortly after the beginning of the event at Bangkok’s downtown Victory Monument, according to a Reuters witness.

Akkarakit told reporters the event by the group, calling itself Serichon Thailand 58, was not intended as a protest.

At least two other people were seen being detained. They had earlier displayed t-shirts depicting a bird with its beak and claws bound, as dozens of uniformed police stood by.

One person has been questioned by police, said Lieut Col Thepitak Saengla, the head of investigations at the nearby Phayathai police station. He did not give any further details.

Yonaguni holds referendum on hosting GSDF coastal surveillance unit

NAHA, Japan, 22 Feb — The town of Yonaguni on a remote island in Okinawa Prefecture held a referendum on Sunday on whether it should host a coastal surveillance unit of the Ground Self-Defence Force to keep an eye on Chinese maritime activities.

Sunday’s plebiscite is nonbinding but it urges local authorities to respect the vote result, which is expected to be known later in the night.

In light of China’s assertive behaviour in the East China Sea, Japan’s Defence Ministry plans to beef up GSDF forces in the country’s southwestern islands, including the planned deployment of an around 150-member unit on Yonaguni Island by the end of March 2016 to monitor ships and aircraft and detect any signs of abnormal activities.

Construction of a facility for the unit began last April on the island some 150 kilometres south of the Japanese-administered Senkaku Islands, which China claims and calls Diaoyu.

The referendum was called as some Yonaguni residents are concerned that a GSDF presence could make their island a target in the event an emergency situation develops between Japan and China.

Yonaguni Mayor Shu-kichi Hokama is in favour of the planned deployment, saying it would increase tax revenues and pep up the local economy.

There are 1,284 people eligible to vote, including five foreign nationals and 97 minors.

Korea publishes pamphlets to promote claim to isles disputed with Japan

SEOUL, 22 Feb — South Korea has published thousands of new brochures to promote its claim to a pair of islands disputed by Japan, for distribution at diplomatic missions and international schools next month, Yonhap News Agency reported on Sunday, citing the Education Ministry.

About 15,000 copies of the brochure, published in Korean and English and titled “The East Sea and Dokdo Islets Seen in Maps and Photos,” will be distributed next month at schools run by the South Korean embassies abroad and at private international schools for children of Korean parents.

According to the ministry, they will be the first publicity material that extensively describes the history of the small outcropings, which lie in waters between the two countries, for audiences abroad, though a simpler version had previously been circulated.

The release of the news comes on the same day as dozens of South Korean civic group members protested in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul to denounce an annual ceremony held in Shimane to stress Japan’s regional government’s support for the Japanese prefecture of Shimane to stress Japan’s claim to the South Korean-controlled islets, which are known to Japanese as Takeshima.

The ceremony, to which the Japanese government sent a Cabinet Office parliamentary secretary as its representative, has been held by the prefectural government since 2006 after it designated on 22 February as “Takeshima Day” in 2005.

The protesters called for Tokyo to cancel the designation, end the annual event and stop attempting to distort history through textbooks. One man threw “a plastic bottle filled with filth” at the embassy, Yonhap reported, adding that he was taken away by the police.

North Korea also weighed in on the issue Sunday, with its official Korean Central News Agency saying Japan’s sending of an official to the ceremony in Shimane, “reveals “its wild ambition to grab the islets,” which it said “are part of the inviolable territory of Korea recognized by history and international law.”

“The impudent and undisguised moves of Japan to seize Tok islets are a repetition of the Japanese imperialists’ past moves for aggression. It is the ulterior design of Japan to reinvoke Korea with Tok islets as a springboard,” it said, using the North Korean name for the disputed territory.

Bangkok, 22 Feb — Thai police plucked at least three people off the streets of the capital on Sunday, after they held a small gathering to “exchange views” with the country’s military junta. Thailand’s military has severely restricted public gatherings since seizing power in a coup last May.

Taking a hard line on dissent, it has detained more than 300 people, including activists, journalists and politicians.

The leader of a group of four people, Akkarakit Noonchan, was dragged away by plainclothes officers shortly after the beginning of the event at Bangkok’s downtown Victory Monument, according to a Reuters witness.

Akkarakit told reporters the event by the group, calling itself Serichon Thailand 58, was not intended as a protest.

At least two other people were seen being detained. They had earlier displayed t-shirts depicting a bird with its beak and claws bound, as dozens of uniformed police stood by.

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**Japan, US eye Abe address to US Congress during upcoming visit**

Tokyo, 22 Feb — The Japanese and US governments are planning for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to address the US Congress during a visit to the United States this spring, a Japanese government official said on Saturday.

That would be the first time a Japanese prime minister has addressed the US Congress since 1961, when then Prime Minister Haya-to Ikeda spoke before the House of Representatives.

Abe’s grandfather, former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, also addressed the US Congress in 1957.

A close aide and the brother of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Hossein Fereydoun, will also be part of the meetings, Iranian media reported.

Kerry was due to arrive in Geneva in the early afternoon, then immediately meet with the US delegation, which has been in Geneva since Friday. After that he planned to meet Zarif and the Iranian delegation. The Secretary for State said on Saturday the presence of Moniz reflected the highly technical nature of the current talks and in no way meant “that something is about to be decided.”

However, Kerry said the sides were working with urgency to meet the 31 March target for a political agreement, which would give impetus for further talks.

“There is still a distance to travel,” Kerry said in London where he met British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond.

The negotiations between Iran and “P5+1” powers — the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China — have reached a sensitive point in no way meant “that something is about to be decided.”

However, Kerry said the sides were working with urgency to meet the 31 March target for a political agreement, which would give impetus for further talks.

“Their strength was imperative to be able to come to a fundamental political outcome and agreement within the time space that we have left,” Kerry said. “If that can’t be done, it would be an indication that fundamental choices are not being made that are essential to doing that,” Kerry added, also emphasizing that Obama was prepared to halt the talks if he thought they were not being productive.

US Secretary of State John Kerry reacts during a media briefing at the US Embassy in London, on 21 Feb, 2015.—Reuters

**Sydney siege report signals tighter immigration curbs**

Monis, who sought asylum in Australia within a month of arriving on a business visa in 1996, later received citizenship.

At the time of the siege, the self-styled sheikh, who tried to align himself with the Islamic State group, was on bail on a charge over the murder of his ex-wife. He was killed by heavily armed police who stormed the cafe after he killed a hostage. The New South Wales government adopted new bail laws after the siege. The review wants these laws stiffened to take into account an accused person’s links to terrorist outfits or violent extremism. Monis, convicted in 2012 of sending hate mail to a former Australian soldiers killed in Afghanistan, was well-known to police and security authorities.

He was the subject of counter terrorism discussions several times between 2008 and 2014, the report explained.

It also showed members of the public made 18 phone calls in the week before the siege to a national security hotline over his Facebook posts, but the threat assessment did not change. Agencies following up the calls found Monis was not an imminent threat and missed a threshold for prosecution. The report showed the balance between individual freedom and community protection needed to be reassessed, Abbott said.

“Monis was given the benefit of the doubt every time,” he added. “I gamed the system.” Abbott is expected to announce immigration and welfare curbs in a national security report due for release on Monday. There were 55 welfare recipients among 57 Australians identified last year as having traveled to the Middle East to fight with Islamic State militants.—Reuters

**5-magnitude quake hits Xinjiang**

Beijing, 22 Feb — A 5-magnitude earthquake hit Shawan County, Tacheng Prefecture of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region at 2:42 pm on Sunday, the China Earthquake Networks Centre (CENC) reported.

The epicenter was monitored at 44.1 degrees north latitude and 85.7 degrees east longitude with a depth of four km, according to the CENC.—Xinhua

**Kerry and Iran’s Zarif to try narrow gaps in nuclear talks**

Geneva, 22 Feb — US Secretary of State John Kerry and his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif will try to iron out gaps in another round of nuclear talks in Geneva on Sunday as they press to meet a 31 March deadline for a diplomatic framework agreement.

The talks will be joined for the first time by US Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz, who agreed to attend after Iran’s nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi said he would take part.

A close aide and the brother of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Hossein Fereydoun, will also be part of the meetings, Iranian media reported.

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US Secretary of State John Kerry reacts during a media briefing at the US Embassy in London, on 21 Feb, 2015.—Reuters

**Approval ratings of France’s Hollande and Hollande drop – Ifop poll**

Paris, 22 Feb — The approval ratings of French President Francois Hollande and Prime Minister Manuel Valls, whose Socialist government survived a no-confidence vote last week, dropped in February, an Ifop poll showed.

The opinion poll surveyed for Le Journal du Dimanche newspaper who said they were satisfied with Hollande declined to 24 percent from 29 percent in January, when he was praised for his handling of the Islamist militant attacks in Paris. Those saying they were “very dissatisfied” with the president rose by 8 points to 37 percent, the poll published on Sunday showed.

However, Hollande’s approval rating remains higher than at any time last year, when Ifop data showed it dropped to as low as 13 percent.

Pollster YouGov in November put his rating at 12 percent, the worst score for a French president in modern-day polling. Valls’ approval rating declined by 7 points from 53 percent in January, according to Ifop. This remains above the level for the last six months of 2014, however. Valls was appointed on 31 March.

The government survived a parliament no-confidence vote called by opposition conservatives on Thursday after it resorted to a decree to bypass broad opposition to a flagship economic reform bill. The challenge was made after Valls on Tuesday resorted to the little-used mechanism to push through a package of economically liberal reforms opposed by the left — a tactic widely denounced as anti-democratic.

The Ifop survey was based on the views of 1,972 people gathered via phone and Internet between 12-21 February, Ifop said.—Reuters

French President Francois Hollande and Prime Minister Manuel Valls walk together after the weekly cabinet meeting at the Elysee Palace in Paris on 22 Dec, 2014.—Reuters
**Ukraine, separatists swap dozens of prisoners**

The town of Pesky near Donetsk had seen the most intense fighting, while separatist groups had attempted to “storm” Ukrainian positions in Shyrokyne, east of the strategic port city of Mariupol on the Sea of Azov, it said on Facebook.

Kiev accuses separatists of building up forces and weapons in Ukraine’s southeast and has said it is braced for the possibility of a rebel attack on Mariupol.

Nevertheless, rebel leaders said on Saturday they had signed a document detailing a plan for the withdrawal of heavy weapons, as required by the Minsk agreement, a sign they may be prepared to halt their advance, having achieved their main military objective by seizing Debaltseve.

The rebel press service said rebels had launched 12 separate attacks on government troop positions overnight, using artillery and mortar fire.

**Crimean leader praises peaceful unification with Russia**

Crimea’s leader Sergey Aksyonov said on Saturday that he was confident the annexation of Crimea will be recognized by the international community.

Aksyonov condemned the Ukrainian government for not making efforts to hold talks and trying to settle by force conflicts with pro-Russian separatists in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions of eastern Ukraine.

Aksyonov admitted the economic sanctions imposed by the United States, the European Union and Japan are affecting Crimea’s mainstay tourism industry and logistics operations. But he said it was more important to obtain support because they want “to deal a blow” to the Russian administration of President Vladimir Putin.

In a separate interview, Crimean parliament speaker Vladimir Konstantinov too said the referendum was conducted in accordance with international standards. Furthermore, Konstantinov said economic difficulties stemming from the annexation can be overcome by strengthening ties with Russia.

DAN said Ukrainian troops had been shelling parts of Donetsk, reporting that artillery fire could be heard in the city at around 0730 GMT.—Reuters

**Norway’s Muslims form protective human ring around synagogue**

Oslo, 22 Feb — More than 1000 Muslims formed a human shield around Oslo’s synagogue on Saturday, offering symbolic protection for the city’s Jewish community and condemning an attack on a synagogue in neighbouring Denmark last weekend.

Chanting “No to anti-Semitism, no to Islamophobia,” Norway’s Muslims formed what they called a ring of peace a week after Omar Abdel Hamad El-Hussein, a Danish-born son of Palestinian immigrants, killed two people at a synagogue and an event promoting free speech in Copenhagen last weekend.

“Humanity is one and we are here to demonstrate that,” Zeeshan Abdullah, one of the protest’s organizers, told a crowd of Muslims gathered on Saturday.

There are many more peace mongers than war mongers,” Abdullah said as organizers and Jewish and Muslim community leaders stood side by side. “There’s still hope for humanity, for peace and love, across religious differences and backgrounds.”

Norway’s Jewish community is one of Europe’s smallest, numbering around 1000, and the Muslim population, which has been growing steadily through immigration, is 150,000 to 200,000. Norway has a population of about 5.2 million.

The debate over immigration in the country came to the forefront in 2011 when Anders Behring Breivik killed 77 people and accused the government and the then-ruling Labour party of facilitating Muslim immigration and adulterating pure Norwegian blood.

Support for immigration has been rising steadily since those attacks, however, and an opinion poll late last year found that 77 percent of people thought immigrants made an important contribution to Norwegian society.—Reuters

**Cuba frees Canadian businessman**

HAVANA, 22 Feb — Cuba has freed Canadian businessman Cy Tokmakjian after more than three years in jail, the company said on Saturday, resolving a case that had strained Cuban-Canadian relations and alarmed foreign investors.

Tokmakjian, founder of the Ontario-based company, was convicted of bribery and other charges and sentenced to 15 years in September in what the transportation company had called a “show trial” and a “travesty of justice.”

Cuban prosecutors had outlined a pattern in which Tokmakjian wooed Cuban officials and their families with a series of gifts, helping the Tokmakjian Group do business estimated at $80 million annually with Cuba until the company was shuttered and its founder arrested in September 2011.

Tokmakjian “was welcomed home by his family, friends, and thousands of employees,” said the company statement, which also thanked the Canadian government. A spokesman said the 74-year-old was released early Saturday.

The statement made no mention of two Canadian aides from the Tokmakjian Group, Claudio Vetere and Marco Puche, who were also convicted and sentenced to 12 and 8 years. They had been under house arrest pending trial and while their convictions were being appealed.

Fourteen Cubans including the former deputy sugar minister and the former director of the state nickel company were also convicted and sentenced to terms ranging from 6 to 20 years.

Canadian transport executive Cy Tokmakjian is shown in this undated handout photo from Tokmakjian's representative. Reuters

**Members of pro-Russian separatists (L and C) walk after being exchanged for Ukrainian prisoners of war near the village of Zholobok in Luhansk region, eastern Ukraine on 21 Feb, 2015.—Reuters**
S trategic and urbanization reasons were motivating factors of King Mindon’s move to the founding of a new capital city and hurriedly building of a new palace there. Amarapura was strategically too much exposed to naval attack by the British who now already annexed half of Myanmar kingdom. After the rich province of Pegu had fallen into the British hand as a result of the second Anglo-Myanmar war of 1852, the “British Burma” extended up to the town Prome [Pyay]. The hill ranges on the western bank of the Ayeyawady river, facing Prome were fairly demarcated by the British as the border line between the “British Burma” and Myanmar kingdom. The British set up Customs House and military posts to guard. Till today, these hill ranges were known as “A-kauk Taung Tan” in Myanmar [hills ranges of British Customs House and military posts].

Since early days, there were Buddhist monuments, monasteries, recluse, and meditation caves on these pleasant forest hill ranges. Later Myanmar pilgrims and traders embellished the hillsides facing the river with countless sculptures and carvings of high artistic quality, attracting the marvel of visitors and tourists at home and abroad.

The British war boats could come up easily to attack capital city Amarapura which was right on the eastern bank of the Ayeyawady river. Mindon was right in moving to a more secure place like Mandalay. Besides from the viewpoint of urbanization, Amarapura became an exhausted sprawling capital city with a growing population of 19,719 living within its walls. That total figure consisted of (1) King, queens, royal family and relatives numbering 300 [2 percent of the population], (2) Buddhist monks 4,462 [22 percent], (3) king’s servemen, Myanmar and forest, 11,472 [58 percent] and commoners [Ashi] 3,588 [18 percent]. Two percent who were the ruling class occupied one quarter of the space of the capital city. Munks resided in the monasteries surrounding the palace.

Urban planning included residential quarters, road construction, bridge building, bazaars, markets, trade centers, jetties, toll gates and customs houses, military and guard outposts, leper houses, hospitals and cemeteries. But lighting and food cooking were still backward. Either candle or crude earth oil were used at night and charcoal or firewood was used for cooking, causing frequent outbreak of fire.

Mardon thus chose Mandalay area which covers a vast expanse of even land surrounded by hill ranges and individual offshoots of Shan Plateau to the north, north-east and south east, crisscrossed by aquatic bodies of different forms – falls, brooks, springs, streams, lakes and canals and besides, the mighty Ayeyawady flows on the west. As princes, Mindon and his younger brother Kanunaw travelled widely in the shrines and monasteries of Amarapura reaching out to Mandalay and beyond. They visited hills around Mandalay such as Yekkanz shear, Saygin marble hills, Mei U Taung hill, Yaw Kori hill, Yae Taung Taung hill and Mandalay hill of which Mandalay hill was their favourite because of its location, natural environment and a breath-taking panoramic view it offered.

There was an old Myanmar folk song by an unknown composer which bears an oracle of the sacredness and auspiciousness of Mandalay hill. It runs as follows:—

The above old song flows on the west. As princes, Mindon and his younger brother Kanunaw travelled widely in the shrines and monasteries of Amarapura reaching out to Mandalay and beyond. They visited hills around Mandalay such as Yekkanz shear, Saygin marble hills, Mei U Taung hill, Yaw Kori hill, Yae Taung Taung hill and Mandalay hill of which Mandalay hill was their favourite because of its location, natural environment and a breath-taking panoramic view it offered.

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Union Culture Minister visits pagoda construction in Toungoo

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Feb — Union Minister for Culture U Aye Myint Kyu visited construction of pagoda in Toungoo Township, Bago region, Saturday.

With photo records of enshrining relics, local dignitaries and board trustee explained the transfer of relics from original pagoda formerly titled Mya Leindaw into surrounding stupas of newly constructed one named as Mya Neinda.

The Union Minister then arrived at Myasigon Pagoda and looked around cultural edifices in the compound of the pagoda, with inspecting security measures for ancient cultural heritages.

MNA

Communications services inspected in Kayah and Shan states

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Feb — U Myat Hein, Union Minister for Communications and Information Technology, went on inspection tours of the Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications, the Postal, post offices, and the autoexchange office in Shan State on 18 February, officials said.

The union minister oversaw the installation of a network of fibre optic cables linking four towns in Kayah State with three towns in Shan State. On 18 and 19 February, he visited autoexchange offices, post offices, microwave stations and mobile telecommunications stations in Loikaw in Kayah State and Hpekon in Shan State. He also inspected mobile towers being erected by two foreign mobile operators, Ooredoo and Telenor.

Currently, Myanmar has 6,135 mobile stations in 322 townships, with an average mobile density reaching 45.42% — MNA

Association for Protection of Race and Religion calls for more time to draft amendment bill for National Education Law

YANGON, 22 Feb — The Association for Protection of Race and Religion issued a statement on Sunday, saying that it is proud of defence services personnel who are fighting bravely for the sovereignty of Myanmar, who have lost their lives and limbs and who were injured in Laukkai Area. Kokang Self-Administered Zone in Shan State.

In its statement, it association also said that it strongly denounced the Kokang insurgent group led by Phon Kya Shin and other armed groups that threatened the sovereignty of the state and it strongly supported the Tatmadaw. In addition, the statement said that the association will play an assigned role for the country and the people — MNA

The last old Myanmar capital city . . .

(from page 8)

Myanmar chronicles have recorded maintenance, renovations and embellishments carried out on the Mandalay hill by pious Myanmar kings. King Out-tha-baung of Sri Ksetra city kingdom who ascended the throne in 101 Buddhist Era, was in search of his exiled queen “Saw Mya Waddy”. When he came upon a spot not far from Mandalay, he saw a hill. He was so fascinated by its sublime beauty that he built on its summit “Su Taung Pyi” pagoda. He also built rest houses and stairways on the west and south sides of the hill. King Anawrahta of Bagan [1044-1077 A.D.] on his return from a pilgrimage to the Sacred Tooth Relic of Gotama Buddha in Gandala-thaing [China], made a halt on Mandalay hill and built a pagoda on its summit. In 1472 A.D, King Tha-tha Thura of Inwa dynasty renovated Su Taung Pyi pagoda and built some rest houses and stairways. In 1805 A.D, the Crown Prince Maha Upra Raja, the father of King Bagyidaw [1819-1837] renovated Su Taung Pyi pagoda and embellished it with gold and putting a new hti [decorated umbrella] on it. A gift devotional hall and ornately-carved roofed stairways were also built. King Bagyidaw repaired and renovated the monuments and pagodas on the hill. He also built four rest houses, one at each of the four sides of Su Taung Pyi pagoda. At the foot of the east stairway, a water tank was built to supply fresh water for the pilgrims.

When Mindon decided to found a new capital city on the site near the Mandalay hill, it was believed and hailed that the Divine Prophecy of Gotama Buddha had come true. The legendary Ogress Sandra Mukhi was reborn a human prince who became King Mindon. On Friday, the 13th February 1857, the construction of a new palace was begun. King Mindon frequently came from Amarapura to the construction site to supervise the construction works personally. He found time to visit the Mandalay hill and carried out many development and embellishment works there. In May 1859, the construction of the new palace was completed and in May 1859, the battles at the foot of the country, dangerous loopholes, disastrous side-effects and tricks.

The statement also said that the association will give its advice to Hluttaws occasionally.

The association praised the student protestors as well as the government for agreements in four party talks. However, on closer examination at the National Education Law and the amendment bill, dangerous loopholes and disastrous side-effects were discovered in the amendment bill, according to the statement signed by chairman of the association Bhandanta Tilokabhivamsa of Ywama Paryayt Sarthinthak in Insein, Yangon. — MNA

MMPO denounces Kokang insurgent group

YANGON, 22 Feb — Myanmar Motion Picture Organization issued a statement on Sunday, saying that it is proud of defence services personnel who are fighting bravely for the sovereignty of Myanmar, who have lost their lives and limbs and who were injured in Laukkai Area. Kokang Self-Administered Zone in Shan State.

In its statement, it association also said that it strongly denounced the Kokang insurgent group led by Phon Kya Shin and other armed groups that threatened the sovereignty of the state and it strongly supported the Tatmadaw. In addition, the statement said that the association will play an assigned role for the country and the people. — MNA

The last old Myanmar capital city . . .

(To be continued)
US weighs slowing Afghan withdrawal to ensure ‘progress sticks’: Carter

**KABUL, 22 Feb** — The United States is considering slowing a planned withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan to ensure that “progress sticks,” after more than a decade of war, new Defence Secretary Ash Carter said during an unannounced visit to Kabul on Saturday.

Under the current plan, the United States will halve the number of troops in Afghanistan to just over 5,000 this year, gradually winding down to a “normal” US embassy presence by the end of 2016.

That schedule could now change, at least in part, suggested Carter on his first trip abroad since swearing in as the Pentagon chief on Tuesday, as the United States also rethinks the future of its counter-terrorism mission in Afghanistan.

His remarks set the stage for talks next month when the Afghan president is expected in Washington.

“Our priority now is to make sure this progress sticks,” Carter said at a joint conference with President Ashraf Ghani, hours after landing in Kabul.

“That is why President (Barack) Obama is considering a number of options to reinforce our support for President Ghani’s security strategy, including possible changes to the timeline for our drawdown of US troops,”

Ghani said he expected to discuss US troop numbers with Obama “in the context of the larger partnership.”

US General John Campbell, who leads international forces in Afghanistan, suggested his focus for now was sustaining enough US trainers, advisors and counter-terrorism forces in Afghanistan during 2015 and 2016, not what happens later.

“Right now I think we’re comfortable looking at ’15 and ’16,” Campbell told reporters travelling with Carter.

Carter said there was a strong strategy has drawn sharp criticism from Republicans in Congress, who say that hard-won gains made against the Taliban could be lost in much the same way that sectarian violence returned to Iraq after the US withdrawal.

Carter said that “progress sticks” after withdrawal of US troops.

US Secretary of Defence Ash Carter (L) listens to remarks by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani (R) during a joint news conference at the Presidential Palace in Kabul on 21 Feb, 2015. —Reuters

Afghanistan’s national army and police suffered heavy losses last year, the bloodiest since the war against Taliban militants began in 2001.

The emergence of a small number of militants in Afghanistan aligning themselves with Islamic State, which swept into northern Iraq last summer, has underscored anxieties about the dangers for foreign forces withdraw.

Carter said Islamic State’s presence in Afghanistan appeared “aspiration-al”.

But he also acknowledged the future of the US counter-terrorism mission was also under review.

“We are discussing and rethinking the details of the counter-terrorism mission and the Koran environment has changed here with respect to terrorism, since we first laid out our plans,” Carter said.

Discussion about the way forward in Afghanistan, Carter said, were possible thanks to political progress in Kabul, where Ghani’s pro-Western unity government succeeded former president Hamid Karzai last year.

Once the darling of the international community, Karzai made fervently anti-Western speeches in his later years in power and resisted US pressure to sign a crucial security treaty.

Carter, who this week became Obama’s fourth defence secretary, is a former Pentagon No 2 with deep roots in US policy on Afghanistan. He said Saturday marked his tenth official visit to the country, even though it was his first at the helm of the Department of Defence.

President Ghani made predictions about peace efforts with the Taliban, after senior Pakistani army, Afghan and diplomatic officials said the Afghan Taliban signaled they were willing to open peace talks.

But Ghani sounded upbeat. “The grounds for peace have never been better in the last 36 years. Our approach is productive. We’re hopeful,” Ghani said.

“But categorical answers in a peace process are dangerous.” —Reuters

**Qatar tried to help free Japanese hostages**

**SENGAI, 22 Feb** — Qatari Foreign Minister Khalid bin Mohammed al-Attiyah said on Saturday during a visit to Japan that Qatar’s government tried to mediate the release of Japanese hostages ultimately killed by the Islamic State militant group.

In an interview with Kyodo News, Attiyah said, “The Japanese government was very serious about this matter, and they engaged their friends in the region and tried their best to save the two Japanese.”

Attiyah refrained from saying whether the Japanese government directly said whether the Japanese government.

“Qatar doesn’t have direct contact with ISIS,” he said, using an acronym for the group.

According to Attiyah, Qatar has a specialist team dedicated to hostage negotiations. The team has previously helped secure the release of a US journalist and others held in Syria.

In the case of the Japanese hostages, the Qatari government “tried to engage with good people on the ground, who always try through other mediators to reach out and to try to see if they can get to this group,” he said.

Attiyah expressed condolences over the deaths of Haruna Yukawa and Kenji Goto, who were killed in the crisis. He criticized Islamic State for not any negotiations, and killing the men “in cold blood in a very short time.” —Kyodo News

**Turkish tanks enter Syria to evacuate soldiers guarding tomb**

**ANKARA, 22 Feb** — Turkish tanks backed by drones and reconnaissance planes entered Syria overnight to evacuate several dozen Turkish soldiers guarding a tomb consid-

ered sovereign territory by Ankara and surrounded by Islamic State insurgents.

Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said around 100 military vehicles, including 39 tanks, were involved and that the 38 soldiers guarding the tomb of Suleyman Shah, grandfather of the founder of the Ottoman Empire, had been brought safely home.

The military said there had been no clashes during the operation, the first such ground incursion by Turkish troops into Syria, but that one soldier had been killed in an accident.

Flanked by the chief of the military and the defense minister, Davutoglu told a news conference that Turkey had not sought permission or assistance for the mission but had informed allies in the coalition against Islamic State once it began.

He said on his Twitter account that the remains of Suleyman Shah would be moved to a different area of Syria which had been brought under Turkish military control.

There was no immedi-

ate reaction from the Syrian authorities.

The Turkish government said late last year that Islamic State militants

ANCARA, 22 Feb — Turkish soldiers guarding the tomb of Suleyman Shah in Syria have been successfully evacuated to Turkey in a military operation overnight, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said on his Twitter account on Sunday.

Davutoglu said the remains of Suleyman Shah, grandfather of the founder of the Ottoman Empire, would be moved to a different area of Syria which has been brought under Turkish military control.

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**Turkish PM says soldiers evacuated successfully in Syria mission**

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Ireland says second major tobacco firm threatens legal action

CASTLETAR, (Ireland), 22 Feb — Ireland said a second major cigarette manufacturer, Imperial Tobacco Group (IMTL), has threatened legal action against the government over plans for a law requiring them to sell cigarettes in plain packets.

Ireland said in 2013 it wanted to become the first country in the European Union to ban branding on cigarette packages and reiterated its plans this week after the legislation prompted a threat of legal action from Japan Tobacco International (2914.T).

The minister who has designed the legislation, James Reilly, said Japan Tobacco and Imperial Tobacco had written to his department and that one of the firms demanded he tell them in writing by this week that Dublin would not proceed with the law.

“Anyone at Imperial Tobacco, whose cigarette branding includes Davidoff, Gauloises and John Player in Ireland, was immediately available for comment. In a response last year to WHO over complaints the laws infringe international law, could threaten future foreign direct investment into Britain and set a dangerous precedent for other sectors.

Australia introduced a ban a few years ago as a way to reduce smoking and facing challenges at the World Trade Organization over complaints the laws create illegal obstacles to commerce.—REUTERS

Young fighting ‘superbug’ infection from Los Angeles outbreak

LOS ANGELES, 22 Feb — An 18-year-old man who was one of seven patients infected with a drug-resistant bacterial “superbug” during a medical procedure in Los Angeles was under 24-hour monitoring at a hospital as he fought a severe infection, his attorney said.

Infection by carbapenem-resistant enterobacteria, or CRE, during endoscopies at a large teaching hospital in the University of California at Los Angeles system has contributed to two deaths among the seven patients.

Officials warned that as many as 179 people who had endoscopies at the UCLA Ronald Reagan Medical Centre may have been exposed to the so-called superbug. The procedures were done between 3 October and 28 January.

All five of the confirmed infected patients who remain alive are under treatment, said UCLA spokeswoman Dale Tate.

The infections all occurred during procedures in which a specialized scope, known as a duodenoscope, was inserted down the throat to diagnose and treat pancreatic and biliary duct diseases. The outbreak has raised questions about whether methods for cleaning the endoscopes were adequate.

The 18-year-old man, whose name has not been released, was among those infected by CRE, said attorney Kevin Boyle, a member of his legal team.

The man went to the medical centre in mid-2014 for a pancreatic ailment and received an endoscopy, Boyle said. The man became ill and was hospitalized a short time later.

By November, he had been diagnosed with CRE. The youth spent 83 days in the hospital, mostly in the intensive care unit, the attorney said.

“It’s definitely a severe infection,” he said, adding that the infection had landed the young man back in a Los Angeles hospital. The 18-year-old was not in the intensive care unit but was under 24-hour monitoring.

“The (man’s) prognosis is unknown,” Boyle said. He would not give the name of the hospital where the young man is being treated.

Further details on the conditions of the five infected patients have not been released, and details on the circumstances of the two deaths have not been made public.

Officials have said there is no broader threat to public health, and that hospital officials have called and sent letters to all-risk factor patients. All of them are at home, rather than at a hospital, Tate said.

No further infections have been reported.

Corey Egel, a spokesperson for the California Department of Public Health, said the short-term risk window for additional CRE infections among the patients who came into contact with the scopes was over.

There remains, however, a possibility of future infections if the organism was able to colonize inside any of the patients.

“Any person who is colonized with any multidrug-resistant organism is at some increased risk in the future of developing an infection with that organism,” Boyle said.

The medical centre has said that it had been sterilizing the duodenoscopes implicated in the infection, which it began using in June, according to manufacturer standards. It has been an expensive, rigorous process that exceeds national standards.

The two infected scopes were immediately removed from use for return to the manufacturer, Olympus Medical Systems Group. Olympus did not return requests for comment.

Hospitals across the United States have reported exposures from the same type of medical equipment in recent years. The US Food and Drug Administration has said it was working with other government agencies and scope manufacturers to minimize risks to patients.

California’s public health department said no other hospitals in the state have seen a similar outbreak.

Tokyo market bulls face hurdles to sustained rise

Tokyo, 22 Feb — Growing optimism that Japan’s economy is on track to return to growth is pushing the Nikkei Stock Average to levels unseen in nearly 15 years, but market watchers say there are hurdles to achieving a sustained rise.

Investors have been encouraged by the country’s exit from recession working to push up corporate sector amid aggressive easing by the Bank of Japan, with some speculating that the Nikkei is within reach of the 20,000 level eyed in Europe, mixed signals about the US economy and the slowing fall in the yen is impinging on the market’s bulls.

On Friday, the Nikkei ended above 18,300 for the first time since May 2000 in Tokyo, closing with more optimist than at a hospital, Tate said.

Overseas stock markets have also helped lift sentiment. Wall Street’s Dow Jones Industrial Average and S&P 500 as well as Germany’s DAX are all continuing their record-breaking streak.

China’s ADB can tap “belt and road” potential

BEIJING, 22 Feb — The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and China can make use of the huge potential in infrastructure and energy along the belt and road, said ADB’s President Zvi茵. "Belt and road" refers to the Silk Road economic belt and the 21st century maritime Silk Road.

Proposed by China in 2013 for improved cooperation between countries in Asia, Europe and Africa. The belt and road will result in increased investment that will improve connectivity across Central Asia, Zhang said in an interview with Xinhua.

The ADB can work with China to translate the concept into concrete action through the Central Asia Regional Economic Co-operation (CAREC) programme, Zhang said. The CAREC programme is an ADB initiative launched in 2001 to promote regional cooperation in transport, energy and trade between its 10 members, including Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

“China can contribute to the economic corridor development in the CAREC region by sharing its experience in logistics, infrastructure, economic zones, spatial economic agglomeration, urbanization and public-private partnerships,” he said.

All CAREC countries have substantial needs in energy development, Zhang added. An ADB study in central Asia found that investment of about 36 billion US dollars is needed before 2022 for power infrastructure in four countries.

Xinhua
**Marshall Islanders seek attention for “ignored” nuclear victims**

**Tempo Alfred (R) from the Marshall Islands atoll of Ailuk talks about his experiences in the wake of the 1954 US hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll. Seated to his left is his niece Rosania Bennett.** — KYODO NEWS

Peru recalls ambassador from Chile over spying suspicions

**Kyodo News**

**Indian aid worker freed by Taliban after 8 months in captivity in Afghanistan**

**Kyodo News**

**N Korea FM to attend UN human rights session amid scrutiny**

**Kyodo News**

**Tempo Alfred, 74, said in a symposium in Tokyo held ahead of the 61st anniversary of the Bravo test on 1 March, referring to an atoll located 525 kilometres away from where the United States conducted its largest hydrogen bomb test.**

Alfred said he was out in the ocean on the day of the test and saw light that looked “white and red,” followed by a “great sound like thunder.” He thought maybe another world war had started and did not realize that he had been exposed to nuclear radiation.

Ailuk people say they subsequently started suffering from unfamiliar illnesses and cancer, women began giving birth to deformed babies, and food crop production declined.

**The United States, however, has recognized only four atolls in the island nation as “exposed,” namely Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap and Utrik, offering compensation payments or health checks to the people in those areas.**

Rosania Bennett, a 44-year-old niece of Alfred who also attended the symposium, said she wants people to know that “when you talk about the victims of nuclear testing, we are not just talking about the four atolls.”

The level of radiation fallout on Ailuk Atoll was “comparable, or very close to that of other islands” whose people were evacuated by the United States after the Bravo test, Bennett said. But the US government apparently decided “it would be too much of an inconvenience” to move the 401 people living on Ailuk Atoll at that time, she added.

“I imagine a simple person not knowing the dangers of radioactive dust falling from the sky that covered all our islands, our drinking water, our food crops and our homes. The people of Ailuk Atoll now forget this great injustice, and neither will we rest in our quest to right this particular wrong,” Bennett said. — Kyodo News

**UNHCR repatriates over 1,400 Somali refugees from Kenya**

**Kyodo News**

The UN refugee agency said on Sunday it has so far repatriated 1,473 refugees from Kenya to Somalia under the current voluntary return pilot project, which kicked off late last year.

The current repatriation process follows a tripartite agreement which was signed by Kenya, Somalia and UNHCR in 2013 that establishes a legal framework and other support for Somali refugees in Kenya who might be willing to return. — Xinhua

**Ice Monsters attract skiers**

**Kyodo News**

**People enjoy skiing among so-called “Ice Monsters” at Zao hot spring ski resort in Yamagata, northeastern Japan, on 21 Feb, 2015. Ice Monsters are formed by ice and snow coating pine trees, and are now in the last stage of their best time to view.**

**Kyodo News**

**N Korea FM to attend UN human rights session amid scrutiny**

The first group of refugees travelled to Somalia from Dadaab refugee camps on 8 December, 2014, when the pilot project was launched. According to UNHCR, the refugees who have been living at the Dadaab complex, the world’s largest refugee settlement in northeastern Kenya, use prearranged bus transport.

So far, the agency said 13 convoys have departed since then with Kenyan police providing security to ensure a safe and secure journey, adding that most of the refugees have returned either to Baidoa or Kismayo in Somalia. According to UNHCR, before their departure, the refugees underwent counseling by UNHCR and partners on conditions in Somalia, especially with regard to security.

Kenya hosts more than 500,000 refugees from 36 nationalities who flee conflicts from the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region. Somali refugees in Kenya are estimated at 500,000 and the number has increased due to turmoil and recurrent droughts in the Horn of Africa nation.

The current repatriation process follows a tripartite agreement which was signed by Kenya, Somalia and UNHCR in 2013 that establishes a legal framework and other support for Somali refugees in Kenya who might be willing to return. — Xinhua

**Lima, 22 Feb — Peru’s President Ollanta Humala said on Saturday that he was recalling the Peruvian ambassador from Chile and would not accept “unfriendly acts” from the neighbouring Andean country amid suspicions of spying.**

Humala told reporters on the sidelines of an event that Chile had said in a statement on Friday that it does not promote or accept spying. Humala, who previously warned that confirmation of the spying would damage ties, said his evaluation of the Navy’s evidence merit- ed a firmer position towards Chile. “This government is not going to accept unfriendly acts of this nature,” Hu- mala said. “And even less so from countries with which we’ve been working in a sustained way.” — Reuters

**Kyodo News**

**Tempo Alfred (R) from the Marshall Islands atoll of Ailuk talks about his experiences in the wake of the 1954 US hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll.**

Seated to his left is his niece Rosania Bennett. — KYODO NEWS

**Kyodo News**

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**Kyodo News**
Another winter storm to pummel eastern United States with snow and sleet

New York, 22 Feb — A fresh band of winter weather that churned up the East Coast on Saturday, pummeling the storm-weather region with snow, sleet and freezing rain, was expected to gradually taper off Sunday morning, forecasters said.

Six inches or more of fresh snow was forecast for parts of the Northeast by early Sunday, according to the National Weather Service (NWS). Bitter cold is also expected, but conditions should start to ease in many areas by mid-morning, the service said.

Boston, which had already been hit by 98.7 inches (251 cm) of snow going into the weekend, saw only about an inch Saturday, but local weather watchers there were forecasting the total tally to hit 100 inches by midnight. The city’s total is well above the average yearly total of 31 inches (79 cm).

The new round of harsh weather is part of a system that has cut a curving, 2,000-mile path from southern Missouri to Maine.

Snow and ice contributed to major delays at John F Kennedy International Airport in New York on Saturday, with some arriving flights delayed more than two hours, and flights destined for Newark International Airport in New Jersey were delayed more than three hours, according to a Federal Aviation Administration advisory.

Winter weather advisories and winter storm warnings were in effect until Sunday for parts of West Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, Maine and New Hampshire, the NWS said.

The system dropped steady snow on Washington, D.C., and Baltimore as it pushed up the East Coast Saturday. West Virginia saw 18 inches of snow, according to state officials. NWS warned that “structural collapses” are possible for rooftops overloaded with the persistent snowfall.

Maryland State Police said people had abandoned their vehicles along interstate roadways.

Nearly a week of cold and ice has contributed to 18 weather-related fatalities in Tennessee since Monday, according to the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency. They include nine people who died of hypothermia and five victims of motor-vehicle accidents.

And in Kentucky, 10 people have died since Monday in weather-related incidents, said Buddy Rogow, a spokesman for Kentucky Emergency Management.

Pennsylvania authorities said Friday at least two people had frozen to death outside.

A 119-year-old record low temperature for 20 February was broken in Washington, with a temperature of 5 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 15 degrees Celsius) recorded at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

The system also is expected to bring snow and freezing rain, was expected to gradually taper off Sunday morning, forecasters said.

A terrible accident occurred on Saturday in southern Westland, a city on of Sea of Japan coast, said he hopes local police will press charges over the CTV building collapse that claimed the lives of 115 people.

Police have launched a criminal investigation as the six-story building was found not to have met construction standards.

WEATHER REPORT

BAY INERENCE: 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 23rd February, 2015: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagar and Taninthayi Regions, Kachin, Chin and Mon States and weather will be partly cloudy in Lower Sagar and Mandalay Regions, Northern Shan and Kayin 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.

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General

The One World Trade Centre tower is pictured in the background as ice floes are viewed along the Hudson River in New York on 20 Feb, 2015.—REUTERS

A woman walks in front of one of the finished murals of the Binational Garden project, in the Friendship Park, at the border between Mexico and the US, in the nortwestern Mexican city of Tijuana, on 21 Feb, 2015.—REUTERS

Kazuo Horita (R) and his wife, whose daughter Megumi was among 28 Japanese victims of an earthquake that killed 185 people in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2011, attend a memorial service in the city on 22 Feb, 2015, to mark the fourth anniversary of the disaster.—Kyodo News

Christchurch, (New Zealand), 22 Feb — Relatives of some of the Japanese victims of an earthquake that killed 185 people in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2011 attended a memorial service in the city on Sunday as it marked the fourth anniversary of the disaster.

Christchurch Mayor Lianne Dalziel paid respects to the victims in a speech at the event in the city’s Botanic Gardens.

More than 1,000 participants offered a minute of silence at 12:51 pm, the time the earthquake took place on 22 February, 2011.

Twenty-eight Japanese students at a language school in the collapsed Canterbury Television Building were among the victims.

“It has already been four years, and it has only been four years,” Kazuo Horita, 60, one of the six Japanese relatives to attend the event, said. He lost his daughter Megumi, 19.

Horita, from Toyama, a city on of Sea of Japan coast, said he hopes local police will press charges over the CTV building collapse that claimed the lives of 115 people.

Police have launched a criminal investigation as the six-story building was found not to have met construction standards.

Kyodo News

Cargo train arrives in China’s small commodities hub from Madrid

HANGZHOU, 22 Feb — A cargo train with 64 containers completed its maiden journey from Madrid, Spain, to China’s eastern city of Yiwu, on Sunday.

The train travelled for 24 days along the Yixin’ou cargo line, the longest of all China-Europe freight lines, officials said.

The train was carrying famous Spanish products including wine and olive oil.

The 13,000-km line passes through China, Spain, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany and France.

The service opened at the end of 2014. The first train from China to Spain, carrying stationary, craft products and products for the Christmas market, left Yiwu on 18 November, 2014, and arrived in Madrid after 21 days.

The line is a more efficient export channel for Yiwu’s commodities, as the city previously relied heavily on air and sea transport.

“The cargo train will boost economic exchange between Yiwu, the world’s largest small commodity market, and Madrid, Europe’s largest small commodity market,” said Li Huilian, manager of Yiwu CF International Logistics Co Ltd.

According to Yiwu customs, Yiwu’s import and export volume in 2014 was 158.6 billion yuan (23.7 billion US dollars), an increase of 28.6 percent year on year.

Xinhua

Kin of Japanese victims attend NZ quake anniversary ceremony

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Xinhua
‘Birdman’ versus ‘Boyhood’ Oscar battle heats up after Spirit Awards

SANTA MONICA, (Calif), 22 Feb — Dark showbiz satire “Birdman,” and coming-of-age tale “Boyhood,” took the top honours at the Independent Spirit Awards on Saturday, a day before Hollywood’s biggest night when both will face off in the top Oscars categories.

“Birdman,” nominated for nine Oscars on Sunday, won three Spirit Awards, including the top prize of best feature.

“We’re threatened as a species into extinction,” Alejandro Inarritu, director of “Birdman,” said of independent filmmakers in his acceptance speech. “These kinds of awards are where we can celebrate the cinema that is being forgotten.”

“Birdman” led the nominees with five nods along with jazz drama “Whiplash,” which won two accolades, and civil rights drama “Selma,” which left empty handed.

“Boyhood,” filmed over a span of 12 years and nominated for six Oscars, won the best director award for Richard Linklater and best supporting actress for Patricia Arquette.

All four acting categories were won by Oscar-nominated frontrunners, including Michael Keaton for best actor for “Birdman.” In his acceptance speech, he called the film “bold cinema,” and a “game-changer.”

Julianne Moore was named best actress for her portrayal of a woman suffering from Alzheimer’s disease in “Still Alice.”

“I was lucky enough to come in at the beginning of the independent film movement and its really shaped my life and career,” she said in an emotional acceptance speech.

The 30th annual Spirit Awards, hosted by Film Independent, honours the best achievements across movies made under $20 million and are often an indicator of Academy Award winners, with drama “12 Years a Slave,” taking top honours at both the Spirit Awards and Oscars last year.

Unlike the formal glitz of the Oscars, the Spirit Awards opt for a relaxed, boozy lunch in a Santa Monica tent on California’s coast. The show, hosted by Kristen Bell and Fred Armisen, was broadcast live for the first time on cable network IFC.

“Hollywood movies may be keeping the industry afloat, but the people in this room are keeping the industry alive,” said “Boyhood” star Ethan Hawke as he presented the best supporting female award to Arquette.

JK Simmons won best supporting actor for “Whiplash,” and thanked his fellow nominees in the category.

Poland’s “Ida” won best international film, while “CitizenFour,” about National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden, won best documentary. Both were nominated for Oscars. Dan Gilroy, nominated for the best original screenplay award for “Nightcrawler,” was left empty handed.

Los Angeles, 22 Feb — One Direction star Zayn Malik had to miss the last minutes of his band’s concert in Australia after he fell ill.

The British singer, who’s along with his bandmates was in the country for their “On the Road Again” tour, left the stage at Perth’s Patersons Stadium early before Niall Horan announced Malik was too sick to perform, reported Ace Showbiz. Numerous fans then took to social media to wish their idol speedy recovery.

Malik had reportedly sung around 17 tracks before he gave up. The concert continued with the rest of the band, Horan, Liam Payne, Harry Styles and Louis Tomlinson, singing the remaining three songs on the setlist without their friend. Details on the 22-year-old heartthrob’s illness are still unavailable, although his representative said it was “nothing serious.” He was expected to perform at the next “On the Road Again” show in Osaka, Japan on 24 February.—PTI

Zayn Malik falls ill during concert

London, 22 Feb — The Horrors, Simian Mobile Disco and John Grant are to play this year’s Blissfields Festival, it has been announced.

Others acts performing at the festival include Public Service Broadcasting, Grandmaster Flash and Eton Messy, reported Digital Spy.

The Horrors will close Friday night (2 July) on the main stage, while Saturday (3 July) ends with John Grant followed by a live set from Simian Mobile Disco.

A second wave of artists playing the 5,000-capacity event is still to be announced.

This year’s Blissfields Festival will take place on 2-4 July in Woodmancott, Hampshire.
Japan’s Ito wins women’s jump silver at Nordic Worlds

Japan’s Yuki Ito celebrates after winning the silver medal in the women’s ski jumping at the Nordic Skiing World Championships in Falun, Sweden, on 20 Feb, 2015.

Kyodo News

 Falun (Sweden), 22 Feb — Yuki Ito provided the highlight for Japan on Friday at the Nordic Skiing World Championships with a silver medal in women’s ski jumping.

Japan’s Sara Takanashi, the two-time defending World Cup champion, was fourth, unable to overcome a poor first jump. Sochi Olympic champion Carina Vogt of Germany won with 236.9 points, with Ito earning 235.1 from jumps of 89 and 93 meters. World Cup points leader Daniel Irauschko of Austria was third with 233.8, while Takanashi earned 228.

“I know, now, I really felt more satisfied than I did,” Ito said. “I think because I was aiming for the gold medal, I got the silver. The question, however, is whether or not I cut down on my mistakes.”

The medal was Japan’s first at this year’s worlds. In other events, Sochi Olympic silver medalist Akito Watabe and his younger brother Kuniaki, finished sixth and seventh, respectively, in the Nordic combined normal hill event.

Kyodo News

Athletics: Ethiopia’s Negesse wins Tokyo Marathon

Nadal’s play and a in the sixth Olympic Championships in Falun, Sweden, on 20 Feb, 2015.

Kyodo News

TOKYO, 22 Feb — Ethio-

pie’s Endeshaw Negesse held off world and Olympic champion Stephen Kiprot-

ich of Uganda to win Sun-

day’s Tokyo Marathon, part of the six-race World Marathon Majors series.

The 26-year-old Ne-

gesse took the tape in 2 hours, 6 minutes flat ahead of a group of three Japanese runners.

Negesse’s compatriot Birhane Dibaba won the women’s competition in 2:23:1 which put him third in 2:20:34.

“I think it was a good race but a bit windy,” Negesse said. “I had hoped for a faster time but wasn’t possible given the conditions.”

There were many good runners in the field with fast times from big meets like the Olympics and the world championships. But I didn’t lose any sleep over it. “I knew if I put in the work and ran the race I’m capable of running. I was good enough to win it.”

Negesse failed to match Chumba’s record from last year by 18 seconds, but his time was still his second best after a 2:04:52 at the Dubai Marathon in January 2013.

But after Dubai, Ne-

gesse, who dropped out of school in 2012 to run professionally, injured his left leg and didn’t enter another marathon until Dusseldorf in April

Now that he’s won his second marathon, Negesse’s goal is to challenge the world record of 2:02:57 held by Kenya’s Dennis Kimetto.

“That is a dream of mine,” Negesse said, referring to the only sub-2:03 time in history. “I’m not saying I will do it in my next race, but it is a big goal of mine to eventually do it.”

“I spent almost four months getting ready for this race. I won today because I trained hard and worked to overcome an injury that kept me out a while.”

“I’m very happy to have won this race because to win a majors race, you need a combination of talent, strength and the will to work.”

Chumba was in the lead as late as the 38-kilometre mark, but faded after feeling pain in his stomach. By 40 km, Negesse had seven seconds on Chumba and coasted the rest of the way.

“It was cold,” said Chumba, who was passed by Kiprotich over the last strides to the finish. “There was wind from 18 km up to 30-something km. When I was at 38 km, I had an upset stomach.”

“The race was not like last year.” — Kyodo News

Nadal stunned by Fognini in Rome semi-final

RIIO DE JANEIRO, 22 Feb — Fabio Fognini pulled off a huge upset, stunning top seed and holder Rafa Nadal 6-1, 6-2, 7-5 in the Rio Open semi-final on Saturday.

The Italian’s spectacular victory ended world number three Nadal’s 32-match winning streak in semi-finals on clay and earned him a place in the fi-

nal against another Spaniard David Ferrer.

“Tn really happy about this match, I beat best player on this surface,”

said the world number 28, who has been in good form this year since winning the Australian Open doubles title with Simone Bolelli last month. ‘Rafa is always difficult.’

From the second set I played really well, and tried to change a little bit to be more positive on court,”

he was quoted as saying on the ATP Tour website.

Nadal had complained of poor scheduling after Friday’s quarter-final win over Argentine Pablo Cuevas finished at 3.30 am on Saturday. Fognini played a long last eight match that lasted more than three hours on Friday before he over-

came Argentine Federico Delbonis.

Reuters

Rafael Nadal of Spain returns to Fabio Fognini of Italy during their men’s singles tennis semi-final match at the Rio Open tournament in Rio de Janeiro, on 21 Feb, 2015. — Reuters

Barcelona’s run of 11 straight wins ended by Malaga

Barcelona, 22 Feb — Barcelona’s 11-match win-

ning streak came to an end on Saturday when Malaga pounced on a bad mistake by defender Dani Alves to score a shock 1-0 win that cost the Catalans top spot in La Liga.

Elsewhere, Antoine Griezmann struck twice as Atletico Madrid produced a devastating performance to sweep Almeria aside 3-0 and move within four points of leaders Real Madrid who play their game in hand at Elche on Sunday.

Barcelona’s Neymar is challenged by Malaga’s Roberto Rosales during their Spanish First division soccer match at Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on 21 Feb, 2015. — Reuters

The stage was left clear for a Barca victory to take them two points ahead of Real but they were unable to reproduce the slick football that has seen their peers dominate recently.

In football we know anything can happen. You are on a good run and then suddenly you lose,”

defender Gerard Pique told reporters.

“We are playing well and just because we have lost one game doesn’t mean that everything is now bad.” — Reuters
**Body-building, traditional boxing, football events continue**

**NAY PYI TAW, 22 Feb —** Union Minister for Sports U Tin Htun visited the sports venues of 4th National Sports Festival in Nay Pyi Taw on Sunday.

The union minister viewed men’s and women’s body-building contest at Paunglaung sports ground in Pyinmana Township and traditional boxing contest at Wunna Theikdi boxing hall. In the boxing event, Saw Sa Wah of Kayin State met with Ah Mann of Yangon Region in the 67-kilo event while Thway Thut Aung of Kayin State fought against Ye Aung Aung of Taninthayi Region in 71-kilo event.

At Wunna Theikdi Training Ground No 1, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area routed Bago Region 10-0 in the women’s event. Nay Pyi Taw Council Area beat Kayin State 4-2 in the men’s quarterfinal in the ground No 3.—MNA

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**Chelsea held in Bridge storm, five-star City cut gap**

**LONDON, 22 Feb —** Chelsea were held to a 1-1 draw by lowly Burnley as rivals Manchester City thrashed Newcastle United 5-0 to leave Jose Mourinho’s smouldering with rage after the title race was injected with new life on Saturday.

Leaders Chelsea offered a chink of light to City after they came from behind at Stamford Bridge where Nemanja Matic was sent off for retaliating to an awful challenge from Burnley’s Ashley Barnes and the hosts were denied two strong penalty claims.

City made the most of their lifeline, emphatically exposing Newcastle’s failings with two goals from David Silva among the highlights of a crushing victory that reduced their deficit at the top of the Premier League to five points.

It was another ominous display from second-placed City who have scored nine goals in their last two games and look back to their very best.

In typical fashion, all of Saturday’s action, that included a 2-1 win for Arsenal at Crystal Palace and defeat for Manchester United at Swansea City by the same scoreline, was largely overshadowed by the simmering Mourinho.

It began so brightly for Chelsea as Branislav Ivanovic’s knock of scoring crucial goals looked to have set the hosts on the way to a routine win after 14 minutes.

Then an Ivanovic shot struck Michael Kightly’s arm and Diego Costa was pushed over by Jason Shackell but both penalty appeals were waved away by referee Martin Atkinson who then became public enemy number one.

Barnes flew into an ugly challenge on Matic, catching the Serbien enforcer on the shin. The Burnley player escaped without a booking while Matic, who chased the striker before throwing him to the floor, was dismissed with 20 minutes left.

Any sense of injustice may have been mitigated had the home side clung on but Ben Mee rose to power in a header at the back post and Mourinho was left to see the red card.

“I am punished when I refer to these situations and I don’t want to be punished,” he told the BBC.

His mood would not have improved when Manchester City took the lead in Saturday’s late game after two minutes, with Sergio Aguero coolly converting from the spot.

Samir Nasri fired into the roof of the net for the second and Edin Dzeko, felled for the penalty, added a third after being fed by Silva.

The Spanish playmaker then scored twice in three minutes at the start of the second half.

Manchester United will be sick of the sight of Swansea who completed the double over Louis van Gaal’s side, having also won on the opening day of the season.

There was an element of role reversal at the Liberty Stadium where United, who have frequently five league wins out of six by beating Palace. A Santi Cazorla penalty and an eighth league goal of the season for Olivier Giroud allowed Arsene Wenger’s side to survive a late scare when Glenn Murray reduced the deficit in stoppage time.

Tim Sherwood’s first match as Aston Villa manager ended in disappointment as his new charges squandered a first-half lead to lose 2-1 at home to Stoke City who scored an injury-time penalty from Victor Moses to snatch the points.

At the bottom of the table Hull City moved four points clear of the relegation zone with a 2-1 win over fellow strugglers Queens Park Rangers who had midfielder Joey Barton sent off in the first half.

Sunderland and West Bromwich Albion drew 0-0.

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**Medal tally in 4th National Sports Festival 2015 on 22-2-2015**

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**Participants in best body postures in men’s body-building contest and a boxer lands a punch on an opponent in traditional boxing event of National Sports Festival 2015.**

MNA

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**Chelsea v Burnley, Barclays Premier League, Stamford Bridge, Ben Mee scores the first goal for Burnley on 21 Feb, 2015.**

—Reuters