President U Thein Sein meets Malaysian prime minister

YANGON, 13 March — President U Thein Sein met with Prime Minister of Malaysia Mr Najib Razak at the latter’s office in Putrajaya on Friday morning. They discussed a range of issues including Myanmar migrant workers in Malaysia, visa exemptions between the two countries, investment and trade, and human resources development.

Also on the agenda was aviation, promotion of hotels and tourism, as well as cooperation in the banking, education and energy sectors.

The two sides will later this year hold the first meeting of a joint commission on economics, science and technology, following its establishment at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in January 2014.

Malaysia is the seventh-largest foreign investor in Myanmar, having invested US $1.6 billion in 50 businesses in the country. Trade volume between the two countries reached US $861.97 million this year, an increase of 46.16 percent from last year.

Govt increases annual spending on better health care;
Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham

Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw meets visitors

Myanmar, Indonesia focus on bilateral cooperation

Matriculation students sit mathematics on third day

Commerce Ministry to permit import of wines in March

By Aye Min Soe

NAY PYI TAW, 13 March— The Ministry of Commerce will allow the importation of wines into Myanmar in an attempt to meet rising demand and control illegal trade in the beverage, according to the ministry.

The rules on importation have been written and the ministry will announce the plan in March, allowing local registered companies to apply for import licenses, said Daw Tin San Yi, the Director of the Directorate of Trade of the Ministry of Commerce.

Local registered companies who have export and import licenses, the Foreign Alcoholic Liquor License or FL-11 license from the General Administration Department of the Home Affairs Ministry, and a dealership contract with foreign partner companies are entitled to apply for the wine import license at the Directorate of Trade.

Licenses will be valid for one year and importation will be allowed only via sea and air routes, according to the ministry’s rules, with wines of 7 to 20 per cent alcohol content allowed, the director said.

Academics recommend people-centered ASEAN-India partnership

By Ye Myint

NEW DELHI, 12 March — The second and final day of the forum between members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and India focused on connecting Delhi’s Act East Policy with the ASEAN community, which has a GDP of more than $2.2 trillion and a population of 620 million people.

In his recommendations for the future of strategic partnership between India and Southeast Asia, Tan Sri Rastam Mohd Isa, chairman and chief executive of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia called for people-centric relations between the two sides, highlighting the importance of the business sector’s role.

Recognizing relations with the ASEAN as one of the cornerstones of India’s foreign policy and the foundation of its Act East Policy, which focuses on ties with Southeast Asian nations, Mr. Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East) of India’s Ministry of External Affairs, affirmed that India (See page 2)
Drafting bills must comply with existing laws:
Amyotha Hlutaw’s bill committee

NAI PYI TAW, 13 March — The Amyotha Hlutaw on Friday heard suggestions and opinions voiced by political parties on the national education amendment bill, officials said.

The Bill Committee said the national education bill is concerned with all the people residing in the country and as a result deserves special care and thorough consideration. Drafting bills needs to comply with the constitutional legislation and other existing laws while taking into consideration their practicality and benefits to the country and the people.

The committee explained. Representatives from 11 political parties shared their ideas and opinions on the education amendment bill.—MNA

Myanmar welcomes extension of India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway to link up with Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam

NAI PYI TAW, 13 March — U Tin Oo Lwin, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs arrived back in Yangon on Friday morning after attending the Delhi Dialogue VII held in New Delhi, India, on 11 and 12 March 2015.

The dialogue was officiated by Smt Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs of India. She delivered a keynote address under the theme: “ASEAN-India: Shaping the post 2015 Agenda”, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Minister of Education, Youth and Sport of Cambodia and Foreign Minister of Indonesia also made their keynote addresses.

In DD VII inaugural session, there were two penal discussions on “Building Connectivity between India and ASEAN” and “Future Direction on India-ASEAN Strategic Partnership”. U Tin Oo Lwin, discussed under the connectivity theme.

The deputy minister, in his penal discussion, mentioned how ASEAN Connectivity is playing an important component in the ASEAN Community that will emerge by the end of this year and said that Myanmar serves as ASEAN’s gateway to South Asia and also India’s gateway to ASEAN. He welcomed the extension of India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway to link up with Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam. He stressed that India and Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway will contribute to the Look East Policy, in view of mutual benefits. Lao PDR, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN also exchanged their views and comment respectively on the above-mentioned penal discussions.

After attending the dialogue, the deputy minister met Myanmar Ambassador, military attaché and staff at their offices and explained reform measures taken by the government and development in Myanmar.

The deputy minister also visited Bodh Gaya on 12 March and inspected two stone inscriptions and a guest house for Myanmar pilgrims at Bodh Gaya built by King Bagyidaw and King Mindon and had the meeting with the government of Bihar State for renovation.—MNA

Joint Bill Committee suggests exclusion of microenterprises in SME bill

NAI PYI TAW, 13 March — The Joint Bill Committee at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on Friday put forward its findings with respect to the bill of the development of small and medium enterprises on which two Houses held different opinions.

The bill should exclude the section of microenterprises as it is main-ly for SMEs, the joint bill committee said in its report of findings, suggesting the deletion of its definition of the term ‘worker’ in order not to contradict the existing staff regulations and rules.

The union taxation bill of 2015 came under discus-sion, with union-level officials making clarifications on the bill.

The Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development, the Ministry of Electric Power, the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Mines explained their tax collection systems across the country.

The parliament will meet on 16 March.—MNA

Ceasefire talks likely to resume in a few days

YANGON, 13 March— The Union Peace Working Committee is reported to have its seventh meeting in a few days with the Na-tionwide Ceasefire Coordi-nation Team at Myanmar Peace Centre here, accord-ing to officials at MPC.

The five-day meeting will focus on eight remaining points of the draft nationwide ceasefire deal, including conflict reduc-tion, ceasefire supervision and restrictions of military operations.

The seventh dialogue’s second day, held at the Insti-tute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), in New Delhi on Thursday, comprised of academic sessions on geopolitical, socio-cultural and economic issues and the way forward for ASEAN-India relations.

During the sessions, policy makers, think tanks, academics and opinion mak-ers made their presentations on maritime and cyber security, freedom of navigation, and the peace-ful settlement of disputes in accordance with internation-al law.

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Peace-making process.

Academics recommend...

(From page 1) continues to support ASEAN-India’s central role in the evolving regional architecture. In his keynote address before the academic ses-sions, the secretary stressed the need for India-ASEAN cooperation for maritime and cyber security, freedom of navigation, and the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with internation-al law.

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According to the Ministry of External Affairs of India, the India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement in services and investments will come into force later this year. With the volume of trade and investments increasing at a healthy pace, India-ASEAN trade has grown 20 times in the last 20 years to reach over US $74 billion in 2013-2014. Setting as targets trade worth $100 billion by 2015 and $200 billion by 2020, negotiations for a common ground on the regional comprehensive economic partnership (RCEP) are under-way, the ministry said.

Photo shows recent meeting of peace-making process.
President U Thein Sein...
(from page 1)

Malaysia for short-term courses and human resources development under the Malaysia Technical Cooperation Programme since 2000, with expansion of the programme discussed during the meeting.

The president and party arrived backed in Yangon at 4.20 pm in the afternoon.

The president was welcomed back at Yangon International Airport by Union ministers U Nyan Tun Aung, Dr Daw Khin San Yi, Dr Than Aung, U Kyaw Lwin and U Than Hay, Chief Minister of Yangon Region U Myint Swe, the commander of Yangon Command and officials.

Union Ministers U Wunna Maung Lwin, U Tin Naing Thein, U Zeyar Aung, U Aye Myint, U Hay Aung, U Ye Htut and officials accompanied the president on the trip.

MNA

Govt increases annual spending on better health care:
Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham

NAY PYI TAW, 13 March — Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham met doctors and staff at a 1,000-bed hospital here on Friday, hearing brief accounts of the hospital’s background history, the government’s assistance, the ministry’s guidance and health care services.

The medical superintendent of the hospital gave clarifications on the use of budget allotment for the construction of new surgical operations theatres, staff accommodations and other facilities.

Officials reported to the vice president on progress of construction of a maternity hospital, an orthopaedic hospital, a children’s hospital, and an eye, ear, nose and throat hospital.

Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham spoke of the government’s efforts to promote health care through annually increased spending on the health sector, calling for collective cooperation in providing better health care.

The vice president urged officials to give greater emphasis on keeping the hospital and its environs clean and pleasant.—MNA

Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw meets visitors

NAY PYI TAW, 13 March — Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann explained parliamentary affairs to faculty members and students of Yangon University of Economics at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Friday.

A total of 136 students and faculty members from YUE, 108 members of Union Solidarity and Development Party and war veterans of Magway Region and 64 from Thongwa USDP visited the Hluttaw complex. From 20 January to date, 7,747 visitors have observed the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

MNA

MRTV re-transmission comes into operations in Hinthada

HINTHADA, 13 March — An MRTV re-transmission station (Hinthada) was commissioned into service in Hinthada, Ayeyawady Region, on Friday, with Deputy Minister for Information U Pike Htway in attendance.

The deputy minister said that Information Ministry gives priority to public service works for serving the interests of the State and the people, adding that DVBT2 set top boxes will be provided to low income families free of charge.

The re-transmission station will cover Thayawady, Kwinkaik and Aingthabyu villages in Letpadan Township, Danubyu, Ingapu and Htugyi townships through digital system.

The deputy minister handed over DVB T2 set top boxes for Ayeyawady Region to the region development affairs minister and books to the region minister for forestry and mines.—MNA
Mon ethnics in Mandalay Region develop language education

Mandalay, 13 March — Under auspices of venerable Mon ethnic Buddhist monks, the Central Mon Ethnic Education Committee held a meeting in Mandalay Region committee on education movements of Mon ethnics, at Khemalawka Monastery in Chamyathazi Township, Mandalay, on Thursday. Chairman of the Mandalay Region committee Nai Maung Myint briefed all attendees on the status of Mon ethnics in the education sector in Mandalay Region. Officials discussed financial statements, the organisational setup of the committee, and the teaching of the Mon language to youths.

Matriculation examination runs smoothly in Mandalay Region

Mandalay, 13 March — A total of 87,057 students, accounting for 95.39 percent of the student body, are sitting the matriculation examination for the 2014-15 fiscal year in Mandalay as of 11 March. Local authorities are providing assistance for the examination centres to ensure the convenience of students sitting the tests. The Mandalay Region education officer said, “District and township supervisors check the exam centres to achieve a smooth examination process. Exam supervisors are assigned duty inside and outside classrooms.”

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Rural area in Tatkon Township illuminated with solar panels

Tatkon, 13 March — Thabyegon, Natmar and Kwantaw villages, 10 miles northeast of Tatkon Township, received supply of electricity through solar panels as of Thursday.

Nay Pyi Taw Council members U Phone Zaw Han and U Myint Shwe and Nay Pyi Taw Council Area electrical engineer U Kyaw Nyein launched supply of electricity to the three villages, while township administrator U Kan Saw Hlaing handed over documents related to the electrification project to the village authorities.

Nay Pyi Taw Council spent K168 million from the 2014-15 additional budget on power supply facilities so as to improve the living standard of local residents, allowing them to use electric lighting instead of oil lamps. Min Yazar Aung Company was assigned duty to install solar panels and related equipment at 840 houses from the village-tract.

“Tin Maung (Mandalay)"

Home for the aged invites donations

Nyaunglebin, 13 March — Cetana social association has established a home for the aged on Setyon Street in Myoma Ward 1, Nyaunglebin, Bago Region.

Members of the association take care of the food, health and social needs of residents with contributions from well-wishers from around the country. On Thursday, U Nay Lin and family of Nyaunglebin donated cash to be spent on serving meals to the aged. Patron of the association Dr. Myint Than (Nyaunglebin) accepted the cash donation.

Well-wishers may donate cash and kind for the home’s 25 aged residents by calling the office of the home on 052-50772, patron Dr. Myint Than on 09-5385689, chairman U Than Aye on 09-5385396, or head of office U Cho Tu on 09-33488051.

Tin Soe Lwin (Tatkon)
Royal Haskoning DGV Co. provides internship awards to MMU students

YANGON, 13 March—Royal Haskoning DGV, a Netherlands-based engineering company, on Wednesday provided internship awards to outstanding students from Myanmar Maritime University, a source reported.

The two female students, who received the Bachelor of Engineering (Port and Harbour) in the 2013-2014 academic year, will attend the six-month internship programme in Vietnam at the branch office of Haskoning DGV Co.

With the aim of developing human resources in education, the Netherlands-based company started its internship programme last year, recognising two outstanding students each year. It has pledged to continue the programme.

Myanmar Maritime University under the Ministry of Transport made necessary arrangements for nearly 1,000 graduates to find employment at shipping companies and international maritime companies.—GNLM

Well-wishers donate cash and kind to nunnery

Mandalay, 13 March—Women’s Affairs Organizations at different levels in Mandalay Region, together with well-wishers, donate rice, edible oil, salt and groceries to nunneries in downtown Mandalay monthly.

On Thursday, Patron of Mandalay Region WAO and officials donated provisions and K410,000 each to Atulawady, Thitsakami, Thitlayanthy and Dhamma Wihayi nunneries.

The cash and kind donations totalled K2.191 million.—Maung Pyi Thu (Mandalay)

Cancer foundation to admit patients at three new building

PATHINGYI, 13 March—A ceremony to inaugurate three new buildings of U Hla Tun Hospice Cancer Foundation was held in Pathingyi Township, Mandalay Region, on Thursday, with Chief Minister of the region U Ye Myint and wife in attendance.

Mandalay Region minister Dr Win Hlaing, Vice-chairman of the Hospice Cancer Foundation Prof Dr Yee Yee Myint, and well-wisher Dr Khin Khin Yi, of Shine Hope Cancer Foundation, cut the ribbon to open new buildings.

Patron of the foundation Brig-Gen Abel (Ret) extended greetings. The chief minister explained the brief history of the foundation and its provision of health care to patients.

On the occasion, the patron of the association donated K2.5 million for the soldiers who are discharging defence duty in Laukkai region and their families through the chief minister.

The foundation spent K150 million on construction of the two-storey “U Hla Phaw Hall” and K175 million on construction of the three-storey “Maykhalar Hall”. Well-wisher Dr Daw Khin Khin Yi donated a three-storey building named for her by spending K175 million on construction.

Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)

Rural road improves living standard of residents

INGAPU, 13 March—The recent completion of a 1.5-mile long concrete road by the Ingapu Township Department of Rural Development will reduce travel time and provide a smoother journey between three villages and surrounding areas that are home to more than 900 people.

Construction of the inter-village road passing Gyirktaw, Alesu and Hsingaung-in villages was a rural development task conducted by the Department of Rural Development under the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development.

Win Bo (TIPRD)

MCDC allows construction of water-throwing pandals around moat

MANDALAY, 13 March—Mandalay City Development Commission on Thursday allotted plots for water-throwing pandals and decorated pandals to be built along the moats surrounding the Mandalay Royal Palace during the 2015 Maha Thingyan festival.

The head of the Revenue Department of the committee said, “The committee allows construction of 10 pandals on each moat, but it allotted five pandals for the western moat and one for northern moat.”

The committee permitted construction of the pandals as of 12 March and ordered the applicants to complete the construction no later than 9 April. The applicants will not be allowed to rename the pandals and hand over or sell them to others.

Applicants must each pay a K500,000 fee to the MCDC for use of water to be supplied by the committee.

Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)
Bangladesh rescuers search factory rubble after collapse kills seven

Rescue workers are seen at the scene of a collapsed cement factory in the port town of Mongla, southwest of Dhaka, on 12 March, 2015.—REUTERS

DHAKA, 13 March — Rescuers in Bangladesh searched through the wreckage of a factory on Friday, a day after it collapsed killing at least seven people, but far fewer people were trapped than an initial estimate of 100. Soldiers and sailors in the port town of Mongla helped emergency services search through rubble of the cement factory warehouse and pull out nearly 50 survivors as well as two more bodies overnight.

Senior district official Mohammad Shah Alam Sardar later told Reuters the search had finished.

“The rescue operation has been called off as no more bodies were found. ” Sardar said by telephone from the scene. Thirty people were injured, some critically, officials said.

The warehouse at the Mongla Cement Factory facility was under construction in the town, 335 km (210 miles) southwest of the capital, Dhaka, when the accident happened. The Mongla Cement Factory is a subsidiary of the Bangladesh army.

The cause was still being investigated but one survivor told media the building’s roof had come down first, adding that there might have been problems in setting up scaffolding.

Bangladesh has a poor record for building safety. A complex of shops and small factories collapsed in 2013 killing more than 1,130 people, most of them garment workers.

The collapse of Rana Plaza, built on swampy ground outside the capital, Dhaka, ranked among the world’s worst industrial accidents and prompted a global outcry for improved safety in the world’s second-largest ready-made garmente exporter of ready-made garments.—Reuters

Stronger ties with ASEAN vital to Japan’s security: ODA paper

TOKYO, 13 March — Japan called for stronger ties with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in an annual report on foreign aid Friday, saying they were vital to ensuring its national security at a time when China’s influence in the region is growing.

Seeing the 10-member regional bloc not only as an “extremely important market” but also “as an extremely important market for investment,” the ODA White Paper for 2014 said, Achieving growth and stability in ASEAN has a great significance as well to Japan’s security when thinking about how the distribution network for goods underpinning the Japanese economy runs through the region.

The report was approved by the Cabinet a month after the country’s Development Cooperation Charter, revised for the first time since 2003, highighted Japan’s stance of using official development assistance to protect its national interests in the wake of the changing global environment.

Ununder the charter, Japan’s ODA can be used to support foreign armed forces or in noncombat operations such as disaster relief, infrastructure building and coast guard activities. Until then, ODA was usually disbursed for projects to build infrastructure and reduce poverty in recipient countries.

Looking back at how Japan has been appreciated by aid recipients over the past 60 years, the white paper said ODA is “not only contributing to reciprocal country link into the international community but Japan’s peace, stability and prosperity too.”

On China, the paper said Japan’s ODA over will be disbursed in “limited” cases such as grants and technical cooperation to tackle issues such as pollution, infectious diseases and food security in China.

The report showed that Japan’s ODA in 2013 totalled about $22.53 billion, up 20.7 percent from the previous year and ranking second after the United States.

With a combined population of over 600 million, Southeast Asian nations are among the key recipients of Japanese ODA, notably Myanmar and Vietnam. The other ASEAN members are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.—Kyodo News

DPRK fires 7 surface-to-air missiles into eastern waters on 12 March

SEOUL, 13 March — The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) fired seven surface-to-air missiles into its eastern waters on Thursday, South Korea’s Defence Ministry said on Friday.

A Defence Ministry official said by phone that the DPRK conducted the missile-firing exercises on Thursday evening.

The seven surface-to-air missiles were launched from Seonduk in South Hamkyung Province between 6 pm and 7 pm.

A Defence Ministry official said by phone that the DPRK conducted the missile-firing exercises on Thursday evening.

According to Nobuto Hirano, co-leader of a support group for atomic bomb survivors living overseas, who were in Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the attacks in 1945, Motoshima visited South Korea in 1992 and met with some of the survivors. He also extended support for a South Korean atomic bomb survivors group.

Sueko Motoshima said by telephone that, while the consular general said he hopes both countries will cooperate in supporting South Korean A-bomb survivors.

Motoshima was shot in 1990 while in office by a member of a right-wing group after saying Emperor Hirohito, posthumously known as Emperor Shōwa, bore responsibility for World War II.

S Korea honours ex-Nagasaki mayor over support for A-bomb survivors

NAGASAKI, 13 March — The South Korean government on Thursday honored the late Nagasaki Mayor Hitoshi Motoshima in recognition of his support for Korean atomic bomb survivors. Park Jin Woong, South Korean consul general in Fukuoka, handed a letter of commendation to Motoshima’s wife Sueko in Nagasaki. Motoshima died last year at the age of 92, in recognition of his support for Korean atomic bomb survivors.—Kyodo News

New Delhi passes first major economic reform with insurance overhaul

NEW DELHI, 13 March — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi passed his first major economic reform almost a year after coming to power, as parliament voted late on Thursday to allow more foreign investment in the insurance sector.

Lawmakers in the upper house agreed to increase the foreign investment limit in local insurers to 49 percent from 26 percent after the opposition Congress party swung behind the bill which cleared the lower house last week.

The passage of the bill represents a rare victory for Modi, who was elected last May on a promise of jobs and economic growth, but has seen other initiatives stymied by clashes with the opposition in parliament.

The opening of the insurance sector — which has languished in parliament for more than six years — is one of a series of measures that Modi hopes will make it easier for overseas firms to bet on India’s growth story.

“There don’t massive inflows into the sector immediately from foreign investors. Nevertheless, it will be a very positive signal,” said Dhirendra Kumar, chief executive of funds and insurance adviser to the Prime Minister of India.

India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi attends an event organized by the Christian community to celebrate the beatification of two Indians by Pope Francis last year, in New Delhi on 17 Feb, 2015.—REUTERS

May 20, 2015

insurers such as Britain’s Prudential — which holds a minority stake in India’s biggest private life insurer ICICI Prudential Life — and others to increase their Indian stakes.

It could also pave the way for the year’s biggest initial public offering, as HDFC Life, a joint venture between India’s HDFC and Britain’s Standard Life Plc, has said it would move towards a listing once the rule change is in place.

Congress sources said that, while the party remained opposed to a land acquisition bill that the government was trying to get through parliament, they had backed the insurance bill as they had first proposed the measure in 2008.

Modi, who needed both houses of parliament to pass the bill in the current session to prevent an executive order he issued in December to implement the insurance measure from lapsing, had backed efforts by former prime minister Manmohan Singh’s government to raise the investment cap were thwarted by rival political parties, including Modi’s, which at the time opposed private companies having greater control over insurance funds.—Reuters
Major nations hold talks on ending UN sanctions on Iran

UNITED NATIONS, 13 March — Major world powers have begun talks about a United Nations Security Council resolution to lift UN sanctions on Iran if a nuclear agreement is struck with Tehran, a step that could make it harder for the US Congress to reject such a deal, Western officials said.

The talks between Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — the five permanent members of the Security Council — plus Germany and Iran, are taking place ahead of difficult negotiations that resume next week over constraining Iran’s nuclear ability.

Some eight UN resolutions — four of them imposing sanctions — ban Iran from uranium enrichment and other sensitive atomic work and bar it from buying and selling atomic technology and anything linked to ballistic missiles. There is also a UN arms embargo.

Iran sees their removal as crucial as UN measures are a legal basis for more stringent US and European Union measures to be enforced. The US and EU often cite violations of the UN ban on enrichment and other sensitive nuclear work as justification for imposing additional penalties on Iran.

US Secretary of State John Kerry told Congress on Wednesday that an Iran nuclear deal would not be legally binding, meaning future US presidents could decide not to implement it.

That was emphasized in an open letter by 47 Republican senators sent on Monday to Iran’s leaders asserting any deal could be discarded once President Barack Obama leaves office in January 2017.

But a Security Council resolution on a nuclear deal with Iran could be legally binding, say Western diplomatic officials. That could complicate and possibly undercut future attempts by Republicans in Washington to unravel an agreement.

Iran and the six powers are aiming to complete the framework of a nuclear deal by the end of March, and achieve a full agreement by 30 June, to curb Iran’s most sensitive nuclear activities for at least 10 years in exchange for a gradual end to all sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

So far, those talks have focused on separate US and European Union sanctions on Iran’s energy and financial sectors, which the Tehran desparately wants removed. The sanctions question is a sticking point in the talks that resume next week in Lausanne, Switzerland, between Iran and the six powers.

But Western officials involved in the negotiations said they are also discussing elements to include in a draft resolution for the 15-nation Security Council to begin preparing in early April.

The negotiations are taking place at senior foreign ministry level at the six powers and Iran, and not at the United Nations in New York.

45 immigration offenders arrested for overstaying in Singapore

SINGAPORE, 13 March — A total of 45 immigration offenders (IO) were arrested for overstaying in a three-day multiple enforcement operations in Singapore, the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) said in a press release on Friday.

The operation, conducted from 10-12 March, arrested 28 males and 17 females, ages between 20 and 50 years old. Among those arrested, most were from Bangladesh, China and Nepal, ICA said.

All the IO had overstayed in Singapore, the release said, adding that a 31-year-old Bangladeshi national who had sublet his room to other IO was arrested for converting and harboring offences. Investigations are ongoing. Under Singapore’s Immigration Act, the penalties for overstaying or illegal entry is a fine of up to six months plus a minimum of three strokes of the cane, while the penalties for illegal departure is a fine of up to 2,000 Singapore dollars (1,440 US dollars), a jail term of up to six months, or both.

Japanese police antiterror, defence cooperation

Tokyo, 13 March — Japan and France will hold a meeting of their defence and foreign ministers Friday evening in Tokyo at which they are expected to affirm increased cooperation between their defence forces and in their fight against terrorism.

In the so-called two-plus-two security meeting, the four ministers were expected to agree to start talks with a view to reciprocal provision of supplies and services between the Self-Defence Forces and French armed forces as Japan moves to give the SDF a greater role in its pursuit of contributing more proactively to world peace, according to Japanese officials.

In the wake of Japan’s easing of the ban on the overseas transfer of arms and military technology, the two sides are also likely to reach agreement on the transfer of defence equipment and technology, sources familiar with bilateral relations said.

The meeting, a second of its kind following the inaugural session in January last year in Paris, brings together Japanese Defence Minister Gen Nakatani and Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and their French counterparts Jean-Yves Le Drian and Laurent Fabius.

Given that Japan and France were both hit by terror incidents earlier this year, the four ministers are likely to agree to boost efforts in partnership with the international community to curb extremism and activity by the Islamic State group that killed two Japanese nationals it took hostage.

According to the Japanese officials, the Japanese ministers are expected to call for France’s increased engagement in the Asia-Pacific region. The two sides are likely to affirm continued cooperation in the training for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief being organized by French forces units stationed in the South Pacific and attended by SDF observers.

They are to compare notes on regional issues such as the crisis in Ukraine, the security situation in East Asia and developments in Africa and the Middle East, according to the officials.

Japan also plans to explain its efforts to develop seamless security legislation.

Attacker of US envoy in S Korea targeted symbolic American figure

SEOUL, 13 March — The man who assaulted and injured US Ambassador to South Korea Mark Lippert in Seoul last week has told South Korean police that he targeted the envoy as a “symbolic act” marking the reuniting of the United States, the police said on Friday.

Kim Jong also said he thought of attacking the envoy as he believed the United States was to blame for the deterioration in inter-Korean relations that prevented the reunion of family members separat ed between the North and South from taking place in February to coincide with the Lunar New Year holidays, the police said.

The suspect, however, denied having had the intention to kill or having worked with any accomplices in implementing the attack on Lippert with a knife on 5 March, they said.

Kim, a South Korean ultranationalist and pro-Pyongyang civic activist, arrested over attempted murder and other charges, has expressed opposition to South Korea-US joint military exercises that began 2 March as a factor that caused the relations between the two Koreas to sour.

The police have confiscated material that praise North Korea from Kim’s residence and are investigating whether the suspect planned its efforts to develop seamless security legislation.

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The meeting, a second of its kind following the inaugural session in January last year in Paris, brings together Japanese Defence Minister Gen Nakatani and Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and their French counterparts Jean-Yves Le Drian and Laurent Fabius.

Given that Japan and France were both hit by terror incidents earlier this year, the four ministers are likely to agree to boost efforts in partnership with the international community to curb extremism and activity by the Islamic State group that killed two Japanese nationals it took hostage.

According to the Japanese officials, the Japanese ministers are expected to call for France’s increased engagement in the Asia-Pacific region. The two sides are likely to affirm continued cooperation in the training for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief being organized by French forces units stationed in the South Pacific and attended by SDF observers.

They are to compare notes on regional issues such as the crisis in Ukraine, the security situation in East Asia and developments in Africa and the Middle East, according to the officials.

Japan also plans to explain its efforts to develop seamless security legislation.

US Secretary of State John Kerry (L) and foreign ministers, Laurent Fabius of France (2nd L), Philip Hammond of Britain (R) and Frank-Walter Steinmeier of Germany (2nd R), meet in Paris on 7 March, 2015. —Reuters

NORWAY, 13 March — Norway will ban all dime bags of cocaine and other harmful drugs in schools, minister of health and social affairs Bent Høie said Thursday, following a government committee’s advice on the matter.

It’s not clear whether the move will mean Norway is now the only country in Europe to ban dime bags, but Høie said it would prevent the “negative consequences that have been seen in other countries.”

Norway, where female drug use has been growing and cocaine sales are now common, has recently introduced a law that makes it illegal to buy or sell a drug “for the purpose of use.” The law came into effect on January 1.

In other news, police in southern Norway have arrested a 16-year-old因 threatening a gun, according to police.

A 16-year-old boy has been arrested in southern Norway on suspicion of threatening to shoot people with a gun, police said Thursday.

Norway’s police force said the boy was arrested on Saturday after he showed a gun in the town of Eidsvoll, which lies about 200 kilometers (125 miles) south of the capital, Oslo.

Norway Today
Rote learning is not for entire life

By Myint Win Thein

Rote learning means memorisation of basic facts through repetition. It is a good way of learning new words and spelling for children, but it is not a learning method appropriate for their entire lives.

JAPAN grants US$228,659 for monastic school, rural health branches in Mon and Kayin States

YANGON, 13 March—The Japanese Government, under its Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) Scheme, has extended assistance of US$228,659 for two humanitarian assistance programs. It shared US$121,025 for construction of a two-storey R.C building with full furniture. The project will benefit 286 students of the school.

There were no rural health branches in Pa-on village and Paw-Htaw village of Hpa-an Township prior to this project. The medical staff had to provide medical healthcare services in rented residential houses. Under such conditions, the Japanese Government supported construction of a two-storey R.C building with full furniture. The project will benefit 7,745 people from four villages.

When they become students of upper primary, middle or high school levels, they need another learning method known as critical thinking. This is because in everyday life, they will face challenges and problems that require them to formulate their own solutions. To do so, they need to understand concepts and principles and apply them to the given problem.

Without critical thinking, students are not able to apply what they have learnt to real-life situations. It can be seen clearly that rote learning alone is not an appropriate method for higher education institutions. Emphasizing it too much produces so many graduates who just do what they are told.

COMPETENT Workers

Kyaw Win (Labour)

Competency is the ability to perform a task, in a job or occupation to the required standards. It is therefore an essential element of high labour productivity. Economists have maintained that increasing labour productivity is the key to sustained economic and social development.

At any level of technology, workers of course need to acquire the functional competencies in order to perform a task to required standards in their jobs or occupations. In addition, generic competencies which are applicable to a range of jobs or occupations are in demand by employers with a progressive workforce in mind.

This is true of all occupations whether in the agriculture, industry or service sectors.

Many key competencies have been suggested by academics and practitioners. They are spelled out under various headings such as Basic, Generic and Specific competencies. The acronym ‘COMPETENT’ would perhaps describe in a nutshell, the most needed competencies:

- Communication & Cooperation Competency- Ability to communicate and cooperate with people in a constructive way.
- Organizational Competency- Ability to organize and coordinate work and group activities.
- Methodological Competency- Ability to apply appropriate procedures to assigned tasks.
- Participatory Competency- Ability to work in a team, take decisions and assume responsibility.
- Environmental Competency- Ability to comply with environmental requirements.
- Teaching & Learning Competency- Ability to impart knowledge and skills as well as acquire new knowledge and skills.
- Ethical Competency- Ability and willingness to observe professional and occupational ethics.
- Negotiation Competency- Ability to negotiate in resolving conflict situations or solving problems at work.
- Technical Competency- Mastery of the task and content of the work and the knowledge and skills necessary to perform it.

Given of course, there may be some other competencies, for example Social Competencies, which may be added to the above list.

The ‘level’ of the required competencies would vary with the type and hierarchy of the jobs or occupations in the organization. From semi-skilled workers up the scale to management level personnel.

Training and certification based on competency standards can ensure that the worker has the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities required for adequate performance in the job or occupation concerned.

Acquiring technical competency, particularly in occupations that require a range of ‘hands-on’ performance, entails not just knowing how to do the job (as can be learned during a demonstration of the job by a skilled person or instructor) but an adequate period of practice either on-the-job or in a simulated situation under supervision of an Instructor, till the practical skills are developed to the level required. It may also involve, after the completion of the training, a period of actual performance ‘on-the-job’ under supervision.

Training should also include the ‘generic skills’ which are required for adequate performance in the occupation at the competency level concerned.

Employers will benefit by employing trained and/or certified COMPETENT workers through enhanced productivity of labour and improved quality of their products or services. At the same time by being certified as COMPETENT, workers can enhance their own employability, incomes and upward mobility.

At the root of the problem is a teaching method that emphasises studying for examinations that only test rote learning skills. It is necessary to train teachers on how to help children think critically, and to adopt examination systems that test this ability.

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email wallace.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.
Myanmar, Indonesia focus on bilateral cooperation

NAV PYI TAW, 13 March — Union Minister at the President Office U Hla Tun received Abdurrrahman Mohammad Fachir, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, and party at the President Office, here, on Friday. They discussed bilateral cooperation between Myanmar and Indonesia. Also present at the call were officials of the President Office and members of the Indonesian delegation.— MNA

Authorities return nine students to parents

NAV PYI TAW, 13 March — Authorities on Friday released nine students and two reporters engaged in recent protests at the National Education Law in the township of Letpadan, Bago Region, according to officials. Considering their pursuit of education, authorities pardoned their offences and returned them to their respective parents. On 12 March, authorities returned 17 students to their parents, making a total of 28 including two reporters.— MNA

Mitsubishi becomes first private sector donor to the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund in Myanmar

TIKYO, 13 March — The Mitsubishi Corporation has signed an agreement with UNOPS to provide funding to improve food security and livelihoods for rural communities in Myanmar. The agreement, signed by United Nations Under-Secretary General and UNOPS Executive Director, Ms. Grete Faremo, and Mitsubishi’s Executive Vice President, Mr. Yasuhito Hirota, is the first private contribution to the multi-donor Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT), which is managed by UNOPS. LIFT has been working in Myanmar since 2009 to assist the country in its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. “Despite good progress, poverty and food security continue to be major challenges in Myanmar,” said United Nations Under-Secretary General and UNOPS Executive Director Ms. Grete Faremo. “One in four people live below the national poverty line. The challenge is immense. The new agreement between UNOPS and Mitsubishi will help LIFT continue its crucial work to reduce rural poverty in the country, which remains one of the poorest in Asia,” she added.

With a contribution of $200,000, Mitsubishi is the first private sector donor to LIFT, which is also funded by the European Union and the governments of Australia, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. To date, donors have committed $205 million to LIFT. In the spirit of aid effectiveness, funds are pooled to allow for better programme coherence. “We believe that agriculture is, and will continue to be, a key industry in Myanmar. It is our pleasure to contribute to LIFT, which works for the livelihoods of farmers and supports the development of agriculture in Myanmar. We are proud to be able to become the first private sector donor to LIFT,” said Mitsubishi’s Executive Vice President, Mr. Yasuhito Hirota. Since 2009, LIFT has reached nearly three million people, or roughly five percent of Myanmar’s population, improving the food security of over 1.3 million people. An estimated 60,000 households have reported an increase in their incomes as a result of LIFT support, and 183,000 households have accessed LIFT-funded microfinance loans for both farming and non-farming purposes. Women represent 87% of people taking microfinance loans. For more information please contact LIFT’s Communication Officer, Jacquetta Hayes jacquetta@unops.org or visit www.lift-fund.org www.unops.org.

Huawei gives scholarships to 50 Myanmar students, donates new ICT curriculum

By Khin Yadana; Photo: May Oo Moe

YANGON, 13 March— Chinese telecom giant Huawei Technologies on Friday awarded scholarships to 50 students at four Myanmar universities to assist their further study of information and communication technology. The students from West Yangon Technological University, Technological University (Hmawby), Technological University (Thanlyin) and National Management College were recognised at a ceremony at the Sedona Hotel.

At the ceremony, Huawei also signed a donation agreement with Technological University (Thanlyin) to implement a new curriculum (Huawei Authorized Network Academy-HANA) aimed at raising the skill level of graduates and increasing the number of ICT practitioners and trainers. Huawei Managing Director Mr. Li Zhao said the “scholarships and HANA programmes are a key part of our continued investment in the educational development of Myanmar”.

“We are confident that the Huawei HANA programme will serve students and faculty members in the universities in growing their expertise in the ICT field,” Mr. Li Zhao said. The investment builds on a memorandum of understanding signed in November, 2014 with the Ministry of Science and Technology to train young people in the country’s ICT Excellence programme and collaborate on regional telecommunication development in order to prepare the next generation of ICT professionals.

“Huawei recognizes that in the rapidly growing field there is an increasing need to support talented graduates who can take on the responsibilities of shaping Myanmar’s industry,” Mr. Li Zhao said.

Ma Thiri Wai was one of the students awarded a scholarship through the Huawei Programme. Currently in her final year at the information technology department at West Yangon Technological University, she plans a career in ICT upon graduation.

“Throughout all my school days, I was passionate to pursue a career in technology. It was my dream to become an ICT professional. I am very happy to receive a scholarship from Huawei, as it will be a stepping stone for me to achieve my goals. I want to contribute to the development of technology in Myanmar,” Ms. Wai said.

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Centre-left opposition rides a solid lead into Israeli election

jerusalem, 13 March — Israel’s centre-left opposition is poised for an upset victory in national elections next week, with the last opinion polls before the 17 March vote giving it a solid lead over Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s party.

Polls in two of Israel’s leading newspapers predicted the Zionist Union would secure 25 or 26 seats in the 120-seat Knesset, against 21 or 22 for Likud. All polls in the past three days have given the same margin of victory.

No party has ever won an outright majority in Israel’s 67-year history, making coalition-building critical to the formation of a government. Because there are more parties on the right and far-right of the political spectrum, Netanyahu was expected to be able to cobbled together a coalition more easily than the center-left, even if he narrowly loses the vote.

But there was positive news for the Zionist Union on that score too, with a poll of Israeli-Arabs showing the overwhelming majority would favour their united Arab party joining a center-left coalition government.

The survey showed 71 percent thought the Joint Arab List, which groups four Arab parties and enhances their electoral clout, should sign up with the Zionist Union, while 16 percent said it should support the coalition from the outside.

With the Joint Arab List expected to win 13 to 15 seats, it has become an important player in the election — it could end up being the third largest group in parliament, giving a powerful voice to Israel’s 20 percent Arab minority.

OSCE will extend Ukraine mission one year, may expand its size

Vienna, 13 March — The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) will extend its observer mission to Ukraine for one year, until March 2016, and may double its size to 1,000 observers, a spokeswoman said on Thursday.

Ukraine’s military said on Tuesday pro-Russian rebels were amassing heavy weapons in depots around separatist-held Donetsk city despite last month’s ceasefire deal, which calls for the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the front line.

The OSCE said then that it could not confirm the withdrawal of weapons by either side, because it had not been given access to all locations where weapons might be stored. The OSCE monitoring mission to Ukraine was first deployed a year ago following a request from Ukraine. It delivers public reports on fighting between pro-Russian groups and Ukrainians loyal to Kiev as well as on movements on border crossings between Russia and Ukraine. The OSCE currently has around 470 civilian monitors on the ground in Ukraine, the spokesman said.

OSCE will extend Ukraine mission one year, may expand its size

US Army helicopter crash off Florida kills 11; most bodies recovered

Pensacola (Florida), 13 March — Search teams found the wreckage of an Army Black Hawk helicopter that crashed off Florida’s Gulf Coast and have recovered the bodies of most of the seven Marines and four soldiers on board, authorities and local media said on Thursday.

A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter plunged into the Santa Rosa Sound along the Florida Panhandle during a training exercise in foggy conditions Tuesday night. Officials said they had not determined the cause of the crash. The Louisiana National Guard said on Thursday that two of the soldiers’ bodies had been recovered and the other two were likely still in the submerged aircraft.

US Army helicopter crash off Florida kills 11; most bodies recovered

EU unlikely to agree next week to prolong Russia sanctions

Brussels, 13 March — European Union leaders are unlikely to reach agreement at their summit next week to prolong economic sanctions on Russia that expire in July, a senior EU official said on Friday.

New sanctions on Russia are also off the table for now because EU governments want to give a chance to a fragile ceasefire in eastern Ukraine.

But some of the EU’s 28 member states had pushed for an early decision on extending sanctions on Russia’s financial, energy and defence sectors adopted in July last year over Russia’s annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in eastern Ukraine. While leaders will discuss sanctions at next week’s summit, the senior EU official said a majority would probably want to hold over discussion of renewing the economic sanctions on Russia until July.

“What will be the final point we will see in the Council (summit) but I don’t think there is unanimity at all for the rollover of sanctions, the sanctions that are due in July,” the official, briefing reporters on condition of anonymity, said.

Involving “helicopter and boat insertion and extraction” with an experienced Army air crew providing the helicopter support, a Marine Corps spokesman said. The soldiers and the helicopter were part of the Louisiana National Guard assigned to an Army unit based in Hammond, Louisiana. Grieving families have started sharing the names of the dead, whose identities have not yet been released by the military. Among the dead Marines were Marcus Bawol, of Warren, Michigan, and Jeremy Kemp, formerly of Port Washington, Wisconsin, local media reported. Bawol was engaged to be married in October, the Detroit Free Press reported. Kemp was the married father of a baby girl, according to WISN-TV in Milwaukee.

EU unlikely to agree next week to prolong Russia sanctions

If the Zionist Union, jointly led by Labour party leader Isaac Herzog and former justice minister Zviyi Livni, wins, it is expected to team up with the far-left Meretz party (5 or 6 seats) and the centre-left secular Yesh Atid (13 seats). With the Arab list on side too, it would need the support of just one more party with around 5 or 6 seats to cross the threshold of 61 and form a coalition.

That said, while the arithmetic is possible, it is still challenging. Israel’s coalition-building is a messy and convoluted game that can spring surprises at the last minute.

EU unlikely to agree next week to prolong Russia sanctions

EU governments did agree on Friday to prolong sanctions against Ukrainians and Russian people and companies accused of undermining Ukraine’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

The asset freezes and travel bans on 150 people and 37 organizations were extended for a further six months, until 15 September. Details will be published in the EU’s Official Journal on Saturday.

The decision was a legal formality after EU foreign ministers agreed in January to extend these sanctions.— Reuters

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UK girls helped by spy from anti-Islamic State coalition — Turkish minister

African states want UN trust fund for Boko Haram force

Indonesia confirms another group of citizens try to cross into Syria

African states want UN trust fund for Boko Haram force

United Nations, 13 March — African states want the United Nations to set up a trust fund to finance a force to fight Boko Haram in Nigeria and called on the international community to supply intelligence and equipment, according to a draft UN resolution.

The draft UN Security Council text endorses the creation of a force by Nigeria and its neighbours Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin to take on Boko Haram. The 54-nation African Union has already approved a force of up to 10,000 troops.

Boko Haram has killed thousands of people in northeastern Nigeria in its six-year insurgency and has also pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, which has created a self-declared caliphate in parts of Iraq and Syria.

The text drafted by Chad, Nigeria and Cameroon, and obtained by Reuters, has not yet been circulated to the 15 Security Council members.

Chad’s UN Ambassador Mahamat Cherif has said he hoped the council could vote on a resolution by end-March. The draft is under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, allowing decisions to be enforced with economic sanctions or force.

A UN diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, said once negotiations begin among the 15 council members some of the key issues would likely be how to finance the operation and whether or not it needs to be a Chapter 7 resolution.

The draft resolution “requests the Secretary-General to establish a trust fund… which shall be managed by the LCBC (Lake Chad Basin Commission) Member States and Benin under the supervision of the AU (African Union), and encourages Member States to contribute to such a fund”.

It “calls upon donors to support (the force) through the provision of funding for troop stipends, equipment, technical assistance, and uncaveated funding for the force) to the United Nations trust fund”.

The text calls for international support for the council’s capability of the force by providing equipment and sharing intelligence and urges states “to provide personnel, equipment and services required, for the successful deployment (of the force)”.

The draft resolution also cites situations on anyone supporting Boko Haram. Chad’s military is already spearheading an operation against the Islamist militant group that in recent months has mounted an increasing number of cross-border raids.
Police hunt suspects after officers shot in Ferguson, Missouri

FERGUSON, 13 March — The shooting of two police officers at a protest in Ferguson, Missouri, triggered a sweeping manhunt for suspects on Thursday and ratcheted up tensions in a city at the centre of a national debate over race and policing.

US President Barack Obama said there could be no excuse for the attack on the officers, who were released from a hospital after being treated for wounds. Attorney General Eric Holder called it a “pure ambush.”

“This was not some one who was trying to bring healing to Ferguson; this was a demonstrator,” Holder told reporters.

The pair were hit by gunfire outside the police headquarters in the St Louis suburb during a rally by protesters demanding comprehensive changes after a scathing US Justice Department report detailed deep-rooted racial bias within Ferguson’s mostly white police force.

It was the latest in many rallies held in the city since the killing in August of an unarmed black teenager by a white police officer, which also fuelled protests around the country, and the federal investigation.

About 100 people demonstrated again outside the police station late on Thursday, some banging drums while others chanted “If we don’t get no justice, they won’t get no peace!”

One woman wore a T-shirt that read: “Is my son next?”

The crowd blocked traffic at times and was told to clear the road by police using loudspeakers, but there were no arrests and by midnight local time the protesters were gone.

Activists who condemned the shooting had also earlier held a candle-light prayer vigil for the victims, and warned that “the bullets shouldn’t detract from the issue,” he said.

“Don’t know who did the shooting ... but somehow they were embedded in that group of folks,” he told a news conference.

Demonstrators at the scene insisted the shooter had been behind them, on a street leading away from the police station.

“The shooter was not with the protesters. The shooter was atop the hill,” activist DeRay McKesson tweeted.

Obama offered a $3,000 reward for information leading to the culprit.

The shooting left a 41-year-old St Louis County police officer with a shoulder wound, and a 32-year-old officer from nearby Webster Groves Police Department with a bullet lodged near his ear, St Louis County Police Chief Jon Belmar said.

Belmar said the shooter used a handgun and that shell casings were recovered, and he said the bullets came from the middle of the crowd of protesters.

“We demand, via all global diplomatic channels, that President Obama rectify and repeal the immoral decree declaring Venezuela a threat to the United States,” Maduro said.

In the worst flare-up between the ideological enemies since Maduro took power in 2013, Washington earlier this week declared a “national emergency” over “the unusual and extraordinary threat” from Venezuela and sanctioned seven officials over allegations of rights abuses and corruption.

The Maduro government has demanded evidence of how it threatens US security. Conversely, it accuses Washington of rights abuses and corruption.

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New Zealand, India still face significant gap on FTA: Kiwi trade official

TEGUCIGALPA, 13 March — Honduran military police arrested on Thursday Jose Miguel “Chepe” Handal, the alleged leader of a drug trafficking organization that coordinated the shipment of tons of Colombian cocaine via Mexican cartels to the United States.

Handal, a prominent Honduran businessman, was taken into custody without a struggle in the northwestern city of San Pedro Sula near a hospital where his father was receiving treatment, President Juan Orlando Hernandez said in a television interview. Hernandez said Honduran judges have not yet been an extradition request from the United States.

“As it moves southwards it is expected to take real time and commitment to close that gap,” said McClay. “Our sense is that whilst India has an active economic reform agenda on its plate — and is actively taking measures to reform its economy — trade policy as an instrument of reform does not yet seem central to the government’s thinking. For that reason, making progress is simply pertaining to a New Zealand-India FTA before we see the government of India feeling comfortable entertaining the sorts of reforms changes required by New Zealand to land this FTA,” he added.

Manhunt underway after jewelry shop shooting in HK

HONG KONG, 13 March — Hong Kong’s police have launched a manhunt for a gunman who shot a salesman and got away with 5.5 million HK dollars worth of watches in Hong Kong’s TsimShaTsui Area. The injured salesman was sent to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital on Thursday night and was still fighting for his life on Friday morning. According to the police, the suspect entered one watch and jewelry shop on Perking Road at around 10 pm local time on Thursday night. He requested to see a selection of nine luxury watches, but suddenly shot a staff member in the left chest and got away with the nine watches. Police are now searching for the suspected robber, described by one source as being about 1.6 metres tall, well-dressed, in a silver grey suit and wearing a surgical mask on his face. Staff said the suspect had visited the shop twice on Thursday afternoon, and had appeared suspicious.

Cyclone Olwyn’s 200km/h winds hit west coast of Australia

SYDNEY, 13 March — The west coast of Australia was hit with 200km/h winds on Friday morning as Tropical Cyclone Olwyn smashed into the town of Exmouth. More than 1,400 local residents were without power and the heavy winds had ripped down fences, and uprooted trees.

The Bureau of Meteorology said the cyclone, which has remained as a powerful Category Three storm, would continue down the west coast.

“The centre of Severe Tropical Cyclone Olwyn is tracking very close to the coast as it moves southwards across the Coral Bay area. The system is expected to remain a severe tropical cyclone until later this morning before slowly weakening,” the BoM said in a statement. “As it moves southwards it is expected to take heavy rain and squally winds into southern parts of Western Australia.”

“A very destructive winds with gusts over 200km/h are likely near Exmouth, Coral Bay and surrounding areas on Friday morning.”

A motorcycle built by students of Chelsea High School is seen at in Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum in Birmingham, Alabama, the United States, on 12 March, 2015. With a collection of over 1200 motorcycles, the Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum was named the largest motorcycle museum in the world by the Guinness Book of World Records in 2014.—Xinhua
**Entertainment**

### Mariah Carey officially signs with Epic Records

**Los Angeles, 13 March** — Pop star Mariah Carey has officially signed with Epic Records, a division of Sony Music Entertainment. The diva had reunited with LA Reid for a multi-album deal that would start with a greatest-hits set she announced last January. The compilation, titled “#1’s”, coincides with Carey’s upcoming residency at the Colosseum at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. The record will include 18 of the singer’s chart-topping singles, reported Billboard.

There might be duets of her classic songs. Carey started her career as a signee of Sony’s Columbia Records. Under the label, she released six LPs and one holiday set that were all huge success. She then joined Island Records in 2003 and dropped several albums including “The Emancipation of Mimi” and “E=MC2” before moving with Def Jam when the label split.

Through Def Jam, she put out last year’s “Me. I Am Mariah... The Elusive Chanteuse” which didn’t perform too well commercially. Carey’s Las Vegas residency starts on 6 May. While she’s gearing up for the upcoming shows and for the “#1’s” compilation, she has reportedly started working on another project for Epic. According to a source, the 44-year-old star is already recording new music in Los Angeles.—PTI

### I’m quitting action movies in two years: Liam Neeson

**Los Angeles, 13 March** — Irish actor Liam Neeson has confessed he plans to quit action films in another two years. The 62-year-old actor, who has become famous for starring in action-thrillers such as the ‘Taken’ trilogy despite having starred in films such as ‘Schindler’s List’ and ‘Star Wars’ in the past, said he wants to move on from the genre in the next couple of years, said the Hollywood Reporter.

“Maybe two more years — if God spares me, and I’m healthy. But after that, I’ll stop the action, I think,” he said.

Neeson reprised his role as former secret agent and security expert Bryan Mills in ‘Taken 3’ earlier this year and admits the success of the action franchise has seen him inundated with offers for other movies but that he’s well aware it can’t go on forever.

“I’m in a very, career-wise, great place. The success certainly of the Taken films, Hollywood seems to see me in a different light. I get sent quite a few action-oriented scripts, which is great. I’m not knocking it. It’s very flattering. But there is a limit of course.”—PTI

### Kanye West’s rep denies his laptop was stolen in Paris

**Los Angeles, 13 March** — Rapper Kanye West’s laptop was not stolen in Paris, despite multiple reports, says his representative. After the rapper’s song “Awesome” was leaked online, reports surfaced that a sex tape involving West and his wife Kim Kardashian had been compromised as well, reported Us magazine.

“The stories circulating that Kanye West’s laptop has been stolen are completely false,” said West’s rep.

“His laptop has never been out of his possession. Hence, the laptop has not been hacked, and there has been no leak of personal data such as unreleased music, photographs, designs, videos or any other personal files. The leak today of the unreleased track ‘Awesome’ was unrelated and completely coincidental,” the rep added.

### Visegrad Film Forum kicks off in Bratislava for the 4th year running

**Bratislava, 13 March** — The Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava is hosting the Visegrad Film Forum for the fourth year, with Oscar-winning Christopher Newman as the main guest. The forum runs from 11 to 14 March.

Newman, a famous director who won three Academy Awards and worked as a sound engineer in the 1972 film, The Godfather, is opening with a screening of the legendary movie.

Newman is also screening the documentary The Ambassador, a film by Danish director Mads Brugger who was made famous for directing and starring in the documentary as himself.

Brugger won an award at the Sundance Film Festival for his work wherein he posed as a fake Liberian diplomat and investigated the corruption of Western businessmen.

The forum’s main goal is to foster a creative dialogue amongst film and television industry professionals, and as a networking and educational platform for emerging film professionals, notably students majoring in film, media or audiovisual studies.—Xinhua

### Tom Cruise sells Colorado home for USD 59m?

**Los Angeles, 13 March** — Superstar Tom Cruise is reportedly selling his Colorado home for USD 59 million. Cruise, 52, bought the 298-acre property back when he was married to Nicole Kidman and this week the “Mission Impossible” star finally listed the Colorado home for sale at a cool USD 59 million, reported Inquisitr online.

The estate agent, Bill Fandel, said he wants to sell the house because he “doesn’t use it very often”.

The 298-acre property is complete with four bedrooms and six bathrooms, and boasts stunning woodwork throughout, as well as a log fires to heat up the home during those winter months. There’s also a stunning 1,600-square-foot guesthouse attached to the property, which will be perfect for a large family as it is complete with three big bedrooms and three bathrooms.

The Telluride mansion, which is just a 12-minute drive from downtown and the local ski resort, is nestled in a secluded spot for those who require the utmost privacy but gives off some of the most spectacular views of the mountains.—PTI

### Comedian Andy Samberg chosen to host 2015 Emmy Awards

**New York, 13 March** — Andy Samberg, a star of the comedy TV show “Brooklyn Nine-Nine,” will host the 2015 Primetime Emmy Awards, the highest honours in US television, organizers of the show said on Thursday.

The comedian, actor, writer and producer, whose breakthrough came on late-night sketch show “Saturday Night Live,” will emcee the show from the Nokia Theatre in Los Angeles that will be broadcast live by Fox TV on 20 September.

“Andy has excelled in all aspects of the television universe, both from behind and in front of the camera,” said Bruce Rosenblum, the chairman and CEO of the Television Academy.

Samberg, 36, performed on “SNL” for seven seasons before joining Fox police sitcom “Brooklyn Nine-Nine” to play Detective Jake Peralta, a role that earned him a best comedy actor Golden Globe last year.

Samberg shared an Emmy for outstanding original music and lyrics in 2007 for an SNL sketch song “Dick In A Box,” along with pop singer Justin Timberlake.

The Television Academy announced new rules last month that will increase the number of contenders in comedy and drama categories to seven nominees from six in previous years. Comedy series will also be defined as shows that are 30 minutes or shorter per episode and drama will be shows over 30 minutes. The mini-series was renamed “limited series” and changes were also announced in the variety series category.

Nominations for the 67th Primetime Emmy Awards will be announced on 16 July.

**Reuters**
FALLS CHURCH, March 13 — A condolence letter from President Lyndon B. Johnson to the widow of slain civil rights leader Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was sold for $60,000 at auction on Thursday after a legal battle over the item.

Quinn’s Auction Galleries in Falls Church, Virginia, set a minimum price at $60,000, the sum an online auctioneer had predicted the item would fetch, though the item had been expected to fetch at least twice that amount, according to the company’s website.

Auctioneer Matthew Quinn said the letter had special resonance given the 50th anniversary this month of the “Bloody Sunday” protest march at Selma, Alabama, a turning point in the US civil rights movement, and the release of the King-centered movie, “Selma.”

Coretta Scott King held on to the letter until 2003, then gave it to singer and social activist Harry Belafonte. She died in 2006. When Belafonte tried to auction it off in 2006, King’s children objected, and the sale was canceled. The two sides became embroiled in a legal battle. In 2014 settlement allowed Belafonte to keep the letter and Belafonte gave it to his half-sister, Shirley Cooks. She and her husband, Stoney Cooks, a staff member of King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference, put it up for sale with other memorabilia.

Stoney Cooks said the letter was remarkable because Johnson, who had signed landmark civil rights legislation into law, wrote it while grappling with the unrest unleashed by King’s murder.

“I thought that quick response showed something about the nature of the relationship between the two men,” Cooks said. “It was bittersweet.”

Sixteen MLK items in all sold for a total of $99,668.

**Reuters**
Bale’s Spanish adventure turning sour at Real

MADRID, 13 March — Gareth Bale may have been warned by his new employers about how fickle the Real Madrid has become. He is now finding out the hard way.

Real Madrid has suffered a recent slump and has been whistled along with captain and goalkeeper Iker Casillas in recent outings at the Bernabeu.

Bale has not scored for the European champions in nine matches since he converted a penalty against the Netherlands on 27 March.

Higuain lifts Napoli, De Bruyne cheers Wolfsburg

LONDON, 13 March — Napoli’s Gonzalo Higuain grabbed a treble for a 3-1 win over Dynamo Moscow while Kevin de Bruyne’s double gave VfL Wolfsburg the same victory over Inter Milan in Europa League last 16, first leg ties on Thursday.

Sevilla midfielder Vitolo recorded the fastest goal ever scored in the competition (13.2 seconds) to lead the holders to a 3-1 triumph at La Liga rivals Villarreal and Fiorentina drew 1-1 with AS Roma in an all-Serie A tie.

Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk beat Ajax Amsterdam 1-0 in Ukraine thanks to Roman Zozulya’s goal on the half-hour.

Torto had Marco Benassi sent off in the 28th minute as Zenit St Petersburg won 2-0 in Russia with goals from Axel Witsel and Domenico Criscito to target.

Real Madrid’s Gareth Bale celebrates after scoring against Cordoba during their Spanish First Division soccer match at El Arcangel stadium in Cordoba, on 24 Jan, 2015. REUTERS

Women’s Olympic Football Tournament Rio 2016-Asian Qualifiers

India 4-0 Sri Lanka

Takayama to make 1st IBF minimumweight title defence in April

OKA, 13 March — IBF minimumweight champion Katsunari Takayama announced on Thursday he will make his first title defense against Thailand’s Fahlan Saksonerin Jr in Osaka on 22 April.

The fight at Osaka’s Bodymaker Colosseum will be part of a world doubleheader, with Kazuto Ioka taking on WBA flyweight champion Juan Carlos Rebeco of Argentina in a bid to claim a title at his third weight category. Takayama stopped Go Odaara with a seventh-round, technical knockout for both the IBF and WBO minimumweight vacant crowns to become the first Japanese to succeed in capturing titles in all four major boxing sanctioning bodies.

The 25-year-old, who barely made an impact in Tuesday’s 4-3 Champions League reverse at home to Schalke 04, has a chance to set things right when second-placed Real host Levante in La Liga on Sunday. By the time the game kicks off, they could find themselves four points behind leaders Barcelona.

Barca leapfrogged their great rivals, who reach the ‘Clasico’ on 22 March, into top spot last weekend and play at Eibar on Saturday.

Real centre back Pepe defended Bale, who he described as “shy”, in an interview with Spanish radio on Thursday.

Benitez is aiming to win the Europa League for the second time in three seasons, having guided Chelsea to a 2-1 final victory over Benfica in Amsterdam in 2011.

Triple former European champions Inter went in front against Wolfsburg in Germany when Rodrigo Palacio slipped the ball under keeper Diego Benaglio in the sixth minute.

The hosts, who are second in the Bundesliga, hit back in the 28th when Naldo levelled from a De Bruyne corner.

“Bruyne put Wolfsburg in front with a first-time finish from a Vierinha cross early in the second half before making sure of victory with a curling free kick.”

The former Chelsea forward almost made it a hat-trick when he missed an open goal in the closing stages.

“It’s a shame,” Inter coach Roberto Mancini told reporters. “We knew it was going to be a tough game but we keep giving away cheap goals and in doing so we’re making life difficult for ourselves.”

“We dropped off too deep after taking the lead, then we left Naldo completely unmarked and let him have a free header two yards from goal.”

25 tentatively selected players of Myanmar start training

YANGON, 13 March — Myanmar national football team formed with 25 tentatively selected players is under training on 12 March as preparations for taking part in the international tune-up matches as well as the 2015 World Cup Qualifiers.

The team will play tune-up matches some domestic football clubs before meeting Indonesian national team in Indonesia on 30 March.

After 20 finalists have been chosen, Myanmar team will leave for Indonesia on 27 March.

Just how fickle is perception that he neglects— Gareth Bale may have been warned by his new employers about how fickle the Real Madrid has become. He is now finding out the hard way.

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Bale has not scored for the European champions in nine matches since he converted a penalty against the Netherlands on 27 March.