Pan Hlaing river conservation project will benefit 20,833 households

President U Thein Sein inspects waterway conservation of the 35-mile long Pan Hlaing River

YANGON, 14 March — President U Thein Sein on Saturday inspected waterway conservation of the 35-mile long Pan Hlaing River that passes through Yangon and Ayeyawady regions.

In the morning, the President, Union Minister U Myint Hlaing and Yangon region’s chief minister U Myint Swe arrived at Kathabaung village monastery in Twantay Township, Yangon Region, to meet locals and hear their views regarding conservation of the river and rural development programmes.

U Thein Sein also visited the project site of conservation works where the locals, including a 94-year old man, expressed appreciation for the government’s improvement of transport and communication programmes.

The president said the area would be able to triple its crop growth in a year thanks to water management programmes, urging the locals to educate their children for a better community in the future.

The government expects conservation of the river will help promote transportation and prevent flooding, he said.

Union Minister U Myint Hlaing explained the (See page 3)

Govt, MPs seek ways to speed up settling land confiscation issues

By Aye Min Soe

NAY PYI TAW, 14 March — The Land Use Management Central Committee of the government and the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw’s Land Confiscation Investigation Commission held a meeting in Nay Pyi Taw on Saturday to seek ways to improve the settlement of land confiscation disputes.

A total of 186 governmental departments concerned with land confiscations and 11 groups of the parliamentary investigation commission took part in separate meetings in an attempt to speed up the settlement of land confiscation issues.

Vice-President U Nyan Tun, the chairman of the Land Use Management Central Committee, blamed the country’s current land confiscation problems on weaknesses of the rules related to land acquisition and land use laws, as well as insufficient coordination between authorities related to land management.

A lack of accurate statistics and maps had also caused land disputes, including those involving landless and squatters, between the authorities and the people, the Vice-President said.

The British Council helped conduct proficiency tests on the English language last December, with 873 students passing the tests that drew 2773 candidates. The interviews have been scheduled for April.

MNA

Presidential Scholarship Selection Committee meets

YANGON, 14 March — The Presidential Scholarship Selection Committee discussed selection criteria, short- and long-term scholarship programmes, personal interviews to students with a good command of English and scholarships to students who excel in specific subject matters.

CSOs discuss education amendment bill at Amyotha Hluttaw

NAY PYI TAW, 14 March — Civil society organizations offered suggestions on the national education amendment bill at the Amyotha Hluttaw on Saturday, with the chairman of the Bill Committee giving a detailed account of matters related to writing a law on education and participating groups in the process.

Officials said four social organizations—Myanmar Christian Council of Churches, Rakhine Fellowship Organization, Free Funeral Service Society (Yangon) and Myanmar Disabled Leading Group—shared their opinions on the education amendment bill.—MNA
Dy Minister urges increase in library lending

HINTHADA, 14 March — Deputy Minister for Information U Pike Htway on his trip to Hintha
da Township on 12 March instructed officials and
staff of the Information and Public Relations De-
partment to deliver daily newspapers to the town-
ship library, schools and offices, increase subscrib-
ers of dailies and encour-
age borrowing of books at
the library.

At Hinthada District
IPRD Office, the deputy
minister spoke with In-
ternet users and viewed
magazines and a photo
gallery.

He urged staff to em-
phasize increasing the
number of books and pub-
lications at the library and
to take care of electricity
safety.

Win Bo (IPRD)

Rakhine State honours victorious athletes in National Sports Festival

SITTWAY, 14
March—A ceremony to
honour victorious athletes
who participated in the
4th National Sports Fes-
tival 2015 was held at U
Ottama Hall in Sittway
on 12 March, with Chief
Minister of Rakhine State
U Maung Maung Ohn in
attendance.

A total of 308 Ra-
hine athletes bagged
13 gold, 23 silver and
33 bronze medals in 23
sports events, finishing
11th among 14 regions
and states, as well as Nay
Pyi Taw Council Area.

The Rakhine State
Chief Minister presented
awards worth K 9.1 mil-
lion to the victorious ath-
letes. Later, the chief min-
ister and party watched a
video of athletes compet-
ing at the festival.

Win Bo (IPRD)

Central Myanmar farmers turn to CP maize

MYINGYAN, 14
March—A growing num-
ber of farmers in central
Myanmar, especially in
Myingyan Township, have
been growing maize from
Thai multinational CP
Group on a commercial
scale for livestock feed.

Generally, three
members of a family can
grow one acre of maize on
a manageable scale. The
croplands can be used in
cultivation of these plants
three times a year.

A local farmer recounted his experiences on cultivation that “Culti-
vation of CP maize costs
K75,000 per acre including expenses for seeds, plough-
ing, water supply and tractor fuel.

The maize plot can
yield 900 to 1,000
viss per acre. In the
market, farmers can
sell K350 per viss,
so they can earn
350,000 per acre.”

He added, “By-products of
maize plants can be used as foodstuff for cows. So they
can earn surplus income from the
stocks of plants.”

Zaw Min Naing
(Myingyan)

Vets raise awareness of
breeders for avian influenza

YANGON, 14 March—
Yangon North District
Livestock Breeding and
Veterinary Department
and Hlegu Township Live-
stock Breeding Federation
jointly organized a talk on
prevention of outbreak of
avian influenza to breed-
ers at special zones in the
Livestock Breeding Zone
in Nyaunghnapin Village,
Hlegu Township, on 12
March.

Head of the District
Department Dr Kyaw Thu
and Head of Hlegu Town-
ship LBVD Dr Kan Htay
explained efforts of the
Ministry of Livestock,
Fisheries and Rural De-
velopment to develop the
livestock breeding sector,
prevent the outbreak of
bird flu diseases and raise
awareness of bio-security.

Officials and veteri-
narians shared knowledge
about preventive meas-
tures being taken at poul-
try farms at the special
zone and contaminated
diseases.

Later, veterinarians
distributed pamphlets on
avian influenza disease to
attendees.

District IPRD
President U Thein Sein discusses construction of an international standard artistic centre with artists in Yangon—SNA

34 dead as ferry capsizes, search for survivors continues

By Aye Min Soe

Military columns rout Kokang insurgents

Government troops dislodged Kokang insurgents from southwest of Laukkai Township after clashes on Saturday morning.

During the fighting, the troops recovered two bodies in Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army uniform, two pistols and ammunition.

In the afternoon of March 13, military columns raided a building in Laukkai Township, seizing military uniforms and equipment bearing the MNDA logo.

In a separate incident, some members of the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army set fire to a Circle Force mining company project site in the Mong Yang area of eastern Shan State, on the night of 12 March, while also taking captive seven mining workers. The workers were later released by security forces.

Heavy machinery, a 10-wheeled truck, a Toyota Hilux and two shelters were destroyed in the blaze set by the insurgents, who were pursued by the security forces.

Students handed over to parents

LeTPadaN, 14 March—Local authorities have been handing over students detained in LeTPadaN protest on March 10.

Official statement said that a total of 26 students and two reporters have been released from March 11 to 13, with the release of a second-year student Mg Okka Maung Maung from Taunggyi University on Saturday morning, accounting for the release of 29 protesters in total.—GNLM

Mg Okka Maung Maung seen with his parents on March 14.—009

Govt, MPs seek ways...

Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham receives Chinese Ambassador

Nay Pyi Taw, 14 March—Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham on Saturday met Mr Yang Houlan, Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar, at the Presidential Palace here to discuss bilateral relations between the two nations.

Present at the call together with the vice president were Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Thant Kyaw and officials.

The Chinese ambassador was accompanied by Military Counsellor Mr Wang Jingbo.

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Japan offers $4 bil aid to global disaster-control efforts

SNDAIL, (Japan) 14 March — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Saturday Japan will offer $4 billion in aid for global efforts to enhance disaster management over four years through 2018, including support for building infrastructure in developing countries.

Abe made the announcement during a speech at a UN conference on disaster risk reduction, which began in Sendai, a northeastern Japanese city affected by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

Abe also announced Tokyo's plans to help train a total of 40,000 experts across the globe on disaster prevention as well as reconstruction from natural calamities.

"Disaster risk reduction is the most important challenge for both developed and developing countries," Abe said. "For developing countries in particular, where 90 percent of disaster victims are concentrated, disaster risk reduction is a great challenge with a view toward sustainable development and adaptation to climate change."

The five-day conference is partly aimed at showcasing Japan's initiative to foster international cooperation in disaster reduction as a quake-prone country that has learned a lot from past disasters, including the 2011 catastrophe that also triggered meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

Japan is specifically planning to send experts around the world to give advice and other help in introducing relevant legislation and drawing up plans for disaster prevention, and offer technological support on disaster prediction.

"Japan will contribute to the international community with our knowledge and technology," Abe said, promising to "further advance our cooperation for disaster risk reduction."

The Japanese government says international cooperation in preventing disasters would also help the world adapt to the fallouts of climate change, such as rising temperatures, the retreat of glaciers and sea-level rises. It aims to offer strong support especially for countries seen vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

Delegates from over 160 countries are gathering in Sendai for the third UN Disaster Risk Reduction conference through Wednesday.—Kyodo News

Cambodia rebukes "labour abuse" report

PHNOM PENH, 14 March — Cambodia has rejected a US-based Human Rights Watch’s "labour abuse" report, saying the report is groundless, according to a statement released by the Ministry of Labour late on Friday.

"Currently, Cambodia has been closely cooperating with the International Labour Organization’s Better Factories Cambodia to inspect and assess labour conditions in addition to the ministry's existing inspection mechanism on labour conditions, safety and hygiene," said the statement.

"The international community, buyers, and International Labour Organization have supported and recognized that labour conditions in Cambodia have improved in line with international standards," it said.

The statement said last year, the ministry's working groups inspected more than 900 factories for 7,191 times and had fined 128 factories for violating labour law.

"Therefore, the report of this organization is unacceptable," it said.

The rejections came after the Human Rights Watch issued a 140-page report on Thursday, claiming that systemic labour violations, union busting and corruption are the norm in Cambodia's 7.5 billion US dollars garment sector.

Japan, China eye maritime crisis management mechanism talks in May

TOKYO, 14 March — Japan and China envision holding a meeting in Singapore around May to discuss a maritime crisis management mechanism aimed at avoiding clashes around East China Sea islands, diplomatic sources said on Friday.

At the meeting of senior officials, Japan and China will aim to agree on how it should operate, with an eye to putting the mechanism into practice by year-end, the sources said.

In November, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to set up a mechanism to ease tensions over the Senkaku Islands — uninhabited islets in the East China Sea controlled by Japan but also claimed by China, which calls them the Diaoyu.

No casualties were reported. —KYODO

Pakistan successfully test-fires missile from indigenous drones

ISLAMABAD, 14 March — Pakistan has successfully test-fired laser-guided missiles from indigenously developed drones, the Defence Ministry announced on Friday.

The ministry’s spokesman Lt Gen Asim Bajwa said in a statement posted on Twitter that Chief of Army Staff Gen. Raheel Sharif witnessed the firing of the missiles from the drones, but his tweet did not say where the tests took place.

"Missiles were fired at moving and static targets and results were impressive with pinpoint accuracy," the spokesman said.

The test indicated the capability of the drones to be used for carrying out drone attacks against the militants, which has led many Pakistanis to accuse it of violating their country’s sovereignty.

Pakistan has sought the transfer of drone technology from the United States and the sharing of intelligence information about militants' hideouts so as to enable it to effectively carry out its own strikes against them. —KYODO
UN forum calls for more investment to reduce disaster risks

SENDAI, (Japan), 14 March — Amid growing concern that climate change may bring more natural calamities, the international community highlighted the need to boost measures and investment on disaster risk reduction at a UN conference that began Saturday in the northeastern Japan city of Sendai.

More than 5,000 participants, including government leaders and high-level officials from around the world, are expected to attend the five-day meeting in Japan’s Tohoku region hit hard by the 11 March, 2011, earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disasters, three days after the country marked their fourth anniversary.

During the once-in-a-decade UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, delegations from over 160 countries are slated to adopt a new action plan aimed at halving the impact of disasters to replace the Hyogo Framework for Action that covered the past 10 years.

“Climate change is intensifying the risks for hundreds of millions of people particularly in small island developing states and coastal areas...Disaster risk reduction is a frontline defence against the impacts of climate change. It is a smart investment for business and a wise investment in saving lives,” UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon told the opening session.

According to a report by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, global economic losses from disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones and flooding are estimated at $280 billion on average each year and will increase to as much as $314 billion in the future, highlighting the need for more disaster-related measures and investment.

“We can watch that number grow as more people suffer. Or we can dramatically lower that figure and use the savings to invest in development.” Ban added.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced that Japan will provide $4 billion in aid for global efforts to enhance disaster management over four years through 2018, including support for building infrastructure in developing countries.

“Our nation, which has accumulated knowledge and technologies of disaster prevention as we experienced many natural hazards, has promoted cooperation with international society to reduce the number of victims of disasters,” Abe said in his speech delivered at a plenary session of the conference.

“It is important that we place disaster prevention as our highest-priority in the post-2015 Development Agenda as well as the new framework on climate change,” Abe said.

The UN conference is also seen as an important opportunity to highlight the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and to prod many countries to prioritize addressing such risk to ensure sustainable economic growth, especially in developing economies. About 90 percent of disaster victims around the world are from those countries.

The world has experienced a number of natural disasters in the past 10 years — including a massive earthquake in Haiti in 2010 that killed more than 300,000 people and super typhoon Haiyan that hit the Philippines in 2013.

Around 700,000 people were killed and 1.7 billion affected by disasters between 2005 and 2014, with the economic damage totaling an estimated $1.4 trillion during the period, according to the United Nations.

The new action plan to be adopted in Sendai is expected to set numerical targets for the first time for reducing the number of victims and economic losses so progress in international efforts against natural hazards can be assessed, conference officials said.

A total of seven targets will likely be laid out, including for reducing disaster damage to infrastructure, raising the number of countries with anti-disaster strategies and enhancing financial aid for developing economies. On the sidelines of the plenary meetings, ministerial roundtables will be held with over 30 working sessions as well as high-level dialogue sessions covering a wide range of disaster issues.

About 350 symposiums and seminars organized by international nongovernmental bodies and others will also take place during the conference.

Russia rejects US concerns over Vietnam base role in bomber flights

MOSCOW / WASHINGTON, 14 March — Russia on Friday rejected US concerns about its use of a former American base in Vietnam for the refueling of Russian bomber flights around US territory in the Pacific, dismissing recent US statements as “puzzling” and “strange.”

Reuters reported on Wednesday that the United States had asked Vietnam to stop letting Russia use Vietnam’s Cam Ranh Bay for tanker aircraft that have refueled nuclear-capable bombers engaged in shows of strength over the Asia-Pacific region.

“It is strange to hear such statements from representatives of the state whose armed forces are permanently stationed in a number of Asia-Pacific countries and which continues to increase its level of military activity in the region,” Russia’s Defence Ministry said.

It said US statements that the refueling of Russian bombers from Vietnam could lead to increased regional tensions was “puzzling.”

The ministry said Russian Air Force activities and cooperation with Vietnam were “carried out in strict accordance with international norms and bilateral agreements are not directed against anyone whatsoever and shall not be a threat to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.”

General Vincent Brooks, commander of the US Army in the Pacific, told Reuters last week the planes had conducted “pro-vocative” flights, including around the US Pacific Ocean territory of Guam, home to major American bases.

Russia’s Defence Minister said on 4 January that Russian Tu-95 bomber aircraft had used Cam Ranh Bay in 2014, enabling the refueling of nuclear-capable Tu-95 “Bear” strategic bombers, a statement also reported in Vietnam’s state-controlled media.

On Thursday, US State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said the United States did not want Russia to use Cam Ranh Bay.

“We have urged Vietnamese officials to ensure that Russia is not able to use its access to Cam Ranh Bay to conduct activities that could raise tensions in the region,” she told a regular news briefing.

The Voice of America radio station quoted a spokeswoman for the US embassy in Hanoi as saying on Thursday that the US request was conveyed to Vietnamese officials last week and that she was unaware of a Vietnamese government response.

The Vietnamese government has not responded to requests by Reuters for comment.—Reuters

Kerry says unclear whether deal with Iran can be reached by end March

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, (Egypt), 14 March — US Secretary of State John Kerry said on Saturday on Iran over its nuclear-power programme that it was unclear whether an interim agreement could be deal reached by the end of the month.

“I can’t tell you whether or not we can get a deal,” Kerry told a news conference.

The United States and five other major powers will resume negotiations with Iran in Lausanne, Switzerland on Sunday ahead of a deadline at the end of March for a framework deal, with a final agreement in June.—Reuters

India’s pre-independence icon Mahatma Gandhi’s statue unveiled in Britain

NEW DELHI, 14 March — India’s pre-independence icon Mahatma Gandhi’s statue was on Saturday unveiled in London’s Parliament Square by British Prime Minister David Cameron and Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley.

The nine-foot bronze statue now stands alongside a statue of Britain’s wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill in a rare honour given to the Mahatma by Britain, local TV channels reported.

The statue has been funded by donations of over 1 million pounds to the Gandhi Statue Memorial Trust, headed by an Indian-origin Labour Party peer.

Gandhi helped India gain independence from Britain in 1947 through his non-violence movement.—Xinhua
Japan, Thailand to speed up talks on railway development

SENDAI (Japan), 14 March — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his Thai counterpart Prayut Chan-o-cha agreed on Saturday to speed up bilateral talks on developing high-speed railway in the Southeast Asian country.

Abe was quoted by Japanese officials as telling Prayut, when they met on the sidelines of the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, that Japan wants to “proactively cooperate” in the railway project.

Last month the two countries signed a memorandum of intent on cooperation in developing three routes, including one connecting Bangkok and Chiang Mai, and they are now discussing the specifics of the cooperation.

Japan is offering support for infrastructure development in Thailand as part of efforts to increase regional connectivity, as Thailand and nine other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations are trying to establish a more integrated ASEAN.

The other ASEAN members are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam.

Prayut had arrived in Sendai using the Tokohu Shinkansen bullet train, the officials said. Japan has been pitching its technology for high-speed rail to the developing world.

The leaders’ meeting was the second in a month. During the 40-minute talks, Abe also urged Thailand to abolish at an early date the country’s restrictions on Japanese food imports due to fears of radioactive contamination following the 2011 nuclear crisis in Fukushima.

Prayut said, in response, that his country is accelerating work to consider easing the restrictions, adding he hopes to give Japan “good news soon,” according to the Japanese officials.

Prayut also said Thailand will create an environment that will help attract more investment from Japanese firms, the officials said.

Abe and Prayut reiterated their cooperation over the development of the Da-wei Special Economic Zone in southern Myanmar, a joint project between Thailand and Myanmar.

On reducing natural disaster risks, the two leaders agreed their countries will cooperate under a memorandum of intent on discussions likely to be held in Sendai, northeastern Japan, on 14 March, 2015. The two leaders agreed to speed up bilateral talks on developing a high-speed railway in the Southeast Asian country.—Kyodo News

Senior US diplomat to return to Havana for new Cuba talks

WASHINGTON, 14 March — The US government is moving as quickly as possible to decide whether to remove Cuba from the list of terrorism-sponsoring countries, a senior State Department official said on Friday ahead of a new round of talks in Havana next week.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, offered no timetable for a decision but said that Washington disagreed with Havana’s effort to link the issue to broader negotiations on reopening embassies and restoring diplomatic relations that were severed more than 50 years ago.

Assistant Secretary of State Robert Jacobson will travel to Havana on Sunday for discussions likely to begin on Monday aimed at normalizing ties, the official told reporters on a conference call.

The US and Cuban diplomats have met twice this year, the last time in Washington in February, since President Barack Obama and President Raul Castro made a breakthrough announcement on 17 December that upended decades of hostility.

“Greece ‘catastrophe’, urges euro solidarity

EU executive warns of Grexit ‘demise’, urges euro solidarity

BRUSSELS, 14 March — The European Commission warned of “catastrophe” if Greece has to abandon the euro and its chief executive, Jean-Claude Juncker, urged EU governments to show solidarity as Athens struggles to secure more credit.

A day after German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble said Greece might stumble out of the euro zone because new, left-wing leaders failed to negotiate new borrowings, Juncker’s economics commissioner said EU hardliners underestimated the risk that this would start a fatal domino collapse of the common currency.

“All of us in Europe probably agree that a Grexit would be a catastrophe — for the Greek economy, but also for the euro zone as a whole,” Pierre Moscovici told Der Spiegel — a view not in fact shared by some conservative allies of Chancellor Angela Merkel who favour amputating the bloc’s troubled Greek limb.

Moscovici, a French Socialist, countered the argument that protective mechanisms put in place in the three years since the last major debt crisis meant Grexit — or an inadvertent “Grexit” — could be contained, or even strengthened the euro.

“If one country leaves this union, the markets will immediately ask which country is next,” Moscovici told the German magazine.

And that could be the beginning of the end.

Moscovici’s comments reflect alarm in the new Commission formed under Juncker in November that brinkmanship by leaders on both sides of the dispute in the euro zone risks getting out of hand, and a fear governments underestimate the potential damage.

Pledging to help find a compromise, Juncker spent some 90 minutes hosting Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, reinforcing a relationship that has irked some in Berlin who fear the new executive, which is not itself a lender to Greece, may muddy the debt negotiations and try to water down the lenders’ terms.

An EU official told Reuters that Juncker urged Tsipras, 20 years his junior, to do much more to show creditors he was meeting their demands for savings and free market reforms. If he did not, he told Tsipras, there was “a distinct danger” Greece could find itself shut out of the euro monetary system.

In public, Juncker sounded a note of urgency to other EU governments: “This is not a time for division,” he said.

“This is the time for coming together.”

Tsipras is trying to satisfy conditions from lenders who last month extended until June a 240-billion-euro ($250 billion) bailout deal while also retaining the support of voters who elected him to end years of austerity. He said Greece was doing its bit and others must now help ease its “humanitarian crisis.”

The price Kiev must pay for IMF rescue: tackling vested interests

KYIV, 14 March — With the first billions of dollars foreign aid in its pocket, Ukraine’s government can now afford long enough to embark on its radical reform drive, but the hard part is only just beginning.

Ukraine received the first $5 billion (3.4 billion pounds) on Friday of $17.5 billion in aid promised by the International Monetary Fund. But to receive the rest, it must implement reforms that mean taking on vested interests, including pensioners, public sector workers and some of the country’s most powerful oligarchs.

Even if it manages to placate those groups and can start turning around the economy, all its work could by undone by another nosedive in the hryvnia currency, or by a renewal of fighting with separatists in eastern Ukraine.

“Without reforms today we will not have a tomorrow. Our government is fighting for tomorrow. The government isn’t fighting for an approval or popularity rating,” Prime Minister Arseniy Yatseniuk said on Wednesday.

Restructuring the energy sector is probably the most urgent task, but also potentially the trickiest in an economy still built on cheap fuel from its days as part of the energy-rich Soviet Union. Energy-intensive industries are owned by powerful businessmen who influence political parties and the media. They are very reluctant to carry out reforms as there will be conflicts of interests,” said Mykhaile Gonchar, the director for energy programmes at the Nomos Centre thinktank.

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Two placed under investigation for links to Paris killings

PARIS, 14 March — Two suspects have been placed under formal investigation by French magistrates for alleged links to the Paris attacks of January, the Paris prosecutors’ office said in a statement on Friday.

Named only as Amar R, 33, and Said M, 25, the two men had been detained for questioning since Monday along with two other people, a man and a woman, who were released earlier this week, the prosecutors said.

In French law, the opening of a formal investigation means that magistrates have grounds for suspicion but does not necessarily mean that a trial will result.

Amar R met in prison and exchanged over 600 text messages with Amedy Coulibaly, one of the perpetrators of the January attacks in which 17 people were killed at French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo and a Jewish supermarket. Said M’s DNA was found on a taser electroshock weapon retrieved from the Paris foodstore where Coulibaly was killed by French security forces after a siege that claimed the lives of four hostages. — Reuters

Canada PM’s anti-Islam talk is a Putin-like tactic

OTTAWA, 14 March — A Canadian opposition leader on Friday compared Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s handling of Islam to Russian President Vladimir Putin’s crackdown on gays, ratcheting up political rhetoric over the religion as Harper’s ruling Conservatives seek re-election in October.

Harper said this week that the niqab, a face-covering veil worn by some Muslims, was “rooted in an anti-women culture” as he defended the government’s desire to ban women from wearing a niqab during the oath of citizenship.

While Canadians and Harper himself typically celebrate multiculturalism, the sudden furor over wearing the niqab comes as Harper’s Conservatives warn Canadians they are under threat from “jihadist terrorism,” a threat best met by new tougher security legislation Harper will campaign on.

Thomas Mulcair, leader of the left-of-centre opposition New Democratic Party, on Friday told Ottawa radio station CFRA that Harper was pandering to Islamophobia.

“IT’S NOT DISSIMILAR TO WHAT WE SEE WITH THE PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA, WHO USES A MINORITY THERE, THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL COMMUNITY ... AND HE GOES AFTER THEM WITH GREAT RELISH BECAUSE HE KNOWS THAT IT’S GOING TO RESONATE WITH A PART OF THE POPULATION,” Mulcair said.

Harper spokesman Rob Nicol said Mulcair was fearmongering.

“The comparison to Putin is absurd. No Western leader has stood up to Putin’s regime and called him out as strongly as Prime Minister Harper and our Conservative government,” Nicol said.

The government, on heightened alert after two attacks last year on Canadian soldiers in Ottawa and Quebec by Canadian converts to Islam, in January introduced legislation that would allow Canada’s spies to interrupt suspected terrorists’ travel plans and communications.

But the political debate over the bill, broadly condemned by pundits as unnecessary but supported by skittish Canadians, has shifted from security to the place of Muslims in Canadian society, with the Harper government’s anti-Islam talk now resonating with a part of the population,” Mulcair said.

The opposition Liberals and New Democrats, both to the left of Harper politically, said Canadian women do not need to consult the prime minister on their clothing choices.

Spain arrests eight suspected Islamist militants in dawn raid

PIERA, (Spain), 14 March — Eight suspected Islamist militants accused of planning attacks in Spain and recruiting fighters to send to Syria and Iraq were arrested in dawn raids across Spain on Friday, the Interior Ministry said in a statement.

The six men and two women were connected to the Islamic State militant group via one of their operatives who organized activity from Syria and Iraq, the ministry said.

All those arrested had Spanish nationality, and five were of Moroccan heritage. “The group represented a serious and definite threat to national security,” the ministry said in a statement, adding that the network aimed to carry out attacks on the mainland.

The Spanish government has renewed its focus on Islamist militant activity since the attacks on French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris in January in which gunmen killed 17 people.

Islamist militants killed nearly 200 people in March 2004 in an attack on a commuter train, setting off bombs hidden in rucksacks as the train drew in to Madrid’s main station.

Including Friday’s arrests, Spanish police have arrested 23 people linked to such activity so far this year, according to government data — more than half the total arrested in the whole of last year. The arrests on Friday were made in Barcelona and Girona in the north east of Spain and Cadaq Real and Avila in the centre, the ministry said.

The mother of one of those arrested, who gave her name as Maria, told Reuters heavily armed police had raided her house in the Catalan village of Piera at 4 am, herding members of the family into the dining room before arresting her 18-year-old son.

The mother of 11, a Spaniard converted to Islam who teaches Spanish and Catalan to Arab-speaking children in the basement of her house, said the police searched the house and removed the hard drives from computers.

The non-lethal aid, announced on the fourth anniversary of the revolution against Assad, brings total US support to the Syrian opposition to nearly $400 million since the start of the revolution, the State Department said.

US to send $70 million in non-lethal aid to Syrian opposition

WASHINGTON, 14 March — The US State Department said on Friday it was working with Congress to provide about $70 million in new non-lethal assistance to the Syrian opposition fighting President Bashar al-Assad.

The aid comes as the US military separately prepares to train and equip Syrian rebels to fight Islamic State militants in Syria.

The non-lethal aid will go toward basic community services, supporting “vetted units of the armed opposition,” digital security training, and documentation of war crimes and other violations by the Syrian regime, the State Department said.

“As we have long said, Assad must go and be replaced through a negotiat ed political transition that is representative of the Syrian people,” said Alistair Baskey, a spokesman for the White House National Security Council, in a statement.

A general view shows a damaged street with sandbags used as barriers in Aleppo’s Saif al-Dawla District on 6 March, 2015. — Reuters
Many Hands Make Light Work

By Maung Phyo (WYU)

The word “philanthro-py” derived from Greek word “philanthro-” or Latin root “philanthropia” literally falling into two segments “Phil” meaning “Love” and “Anthropos or antropia” standing for “human beings”. Therefore, it etymologically means “Love of Humanity”. In this sense, the meaning of it goes to the extent of caring, nourishing and enhancing “what is to be human” on both the benefactors’ and the beneficiaries’ parts. According to Encyclopedia Britannica (2014), it is defined as voluntary, organized efforts intended for socially useful purposes. However, the most meaningful meaning, as Wikipedia defines, is “private initiative, for public good, focusing on quality of life”. It is said that playwright Aeschylus (525/524 BC-456/455 BC) (the first of classical Athens’ great dramatists, who raised the emergence of classical Athens’ great drama) started to coin fines, is regarded that charity relieves problems whereas philanthropy and philanthropy. Sometimes, it is lost in my own fancy that they could carry on with progressive momentum if they are supported to the possible extent by the Government. I have no doubt that any sensible person in Myanmar would have such idea in common. There lacks, so a few words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

Therefore, suffice it to say that, giving away money to a hungry man is an act of charity but showing him or her how to earn it, philanthropy. It is almost a shame for the author of this article to have carried the topic so far just to bring the reader into notice that Myanmar’s philanthropic organizations are in need of the Government’s and the public support although a countless number of marvelous jobs already done in this field or also having proved “fruitful results” to each beneficiary across the country. However, “Many Hands Make Light Work” as a saying goes, there seems a strong possibility for this organization to improve and expand their undertaking if they are endowed with governmental support and other public support. In fact, the philanthropic groups play a pivotal part in the improvement of the heath, educational and social wellbeing of the citizenry in Myanmar. They need donation and cooperation from the public and sponsorship or support in terms of financial, moral or administrative ones and accreditation from the Government that they might continue their selfless endeavor without any hindering or backsliding obstacles. Myanmar is best known to the world for her ever-smiling, incredibly generous and kind-hearted people. According to NPP (Non-profit Quarterly) (Written by Ruth McCambridge on Wednesday, 19 November 2014), the new World Giving Index 2014 with the findings proved that Myanmar was ranked first for the year 2014 under the category of most generous. The comparative data were collected from the surveys conducted in more than 140 countries representing approximately 94 percent of the world’s population. The report of the United States and Myanmar are tied for the first place. Myanmar’s high rank across all three “giving” categories ad their lives is likely to be very high rate (91%) of making cash donations. The result is accounted for by the religious traditions of the country and the report said “Nine out of ten people within Myanmar follow the Theravada school of Buddhism and the majority of the Sangha (ordained monks and nuns) are supported by Dana (charitable giving) by lay followers of the religion. This clearly translates into a strong culture of charity, with Myanmar ranked first for donating money and 13 percent of the population points ahead of the second placed country”. In the light of this report, it is clear that Myanmar abounds in a myriad of generous and magnanimous contributions only require to be properly channeled to the needy so as to avoid “making charity where there is already plenty” reflected by the Myanmar Proverb “hej ma: ja mou: jwi:”. Once, I have come across a certain poem on the Internet composed by a man called Chuck in honor of an American lad who is running across the United States to raise funds for the impoverished children. His program is named “Compassion Run”. It seems that he would run each (750 square miles) of the major four parts of the United States thereby raising public awareness on the childhood poverty issue and in the meantime collecting charity from the supporters on the way. He is from Detroit and 23 of age. His name is in the poem which reads really moving. The readers can enjoy the poem by visiting the webpage: http://www.compassionrun.org/author/pub/ With the poem, what I want to touch on here is to pin-down the support of more in various forms for his Compassion Run. At the time of writing this article, his part one of running has been completed and part two is on progress.

On the same vein, in Myanmar with the exception of State Hospitals and Homes for the Aged, there is an increasing number of nonprofit organizations having been launched, in their own way, activities that would benefit the poverty-stricken people under the categories of healthcare services, education and other social activities. In addition, there are a few who have been trying to improve the social welfare of people to the highest possible extent each of their ability permits. Such people comprise both lay people and monks such as His Grace Than Shwe Kyaw-Thu Thabarwa Dhamma Center, Dr. Ashin Pyin Nyaw Bha Tha of Pann Pyo Let Monastic Education School, U Kyaw Thu of Free Funeral Service Center, etc. to mention but a few. We appreciate your feedback and contributions.

We are making our own nonprofit and philanthropic ends meet in cooperation with the assistance of donors, local and foreign. No doubt, their contributions to the society are effective. However, the effectiveness of these organizations is precisely depending on the support of the Government. I am able to see that there is no barrier on the path these organizations are keeping forward for this social welfare of the State administratively with the help of humanitarian law. It is really heart-wrenching to see these organizations like “Thabarwa Dhamma Center”, are precariously struggling for the survival. Sometimes, I am lost in my own fancy that they could carry on with progressive momentum if they are supported to the possible extent by the Government. I have no doubt that any sensible person in Myanmar would have such idea in common. There lacks, so a few words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

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Raffles Institution in Singapore: Alma Mater of State Leaders

By Sayar Mya

Raffles Institution (RI) of Singapore

Raffles Institution in Singapore was founded in 1823. It is the oldest school in Singapore for pre-tertiary learning. RI is an independent school in Singapore providing a pre-university education. The institution consists of “boys-only” for Year 1 to 4 classes and a coeducational for Year 5 and 6 classes. Its current campus is in Bishan. The area is a neighbor-hood in the city-state of Singapore situated in the Central Region, measuring approximately three by three kilometers.

RI was among the first schools to receive the Min-istry of Education’s School Excellence Award. It is a member of various academic partnerships and alliances, such as the G20 Schools and the Global Alliance of Leading-Edge Schools.

In 2011, RI was awarded the Singapore Quality Award for having produced 90 Presi-dent’s Scholars, 3 out of 7 Presidents, 2 out of 3 Prime Ministers, 9 Cabinet ministers, 13 CEOs of government-linked statutory boards and agencies. The Board is headed by the Development Branch.

Raffles Institution Prefectural Board (RIPB) aims to serve as role models of character, committed to inspiring and rallying the school, so as to forge a united Rafflesian community.

In July 2012, the RIPB engaged the school in a comprehensive review of the role of prefects in RI. It was in fact in many years for the Board to take up this issue. And after 3 months of dialogues with students, teachers, alumni and the school management, the RIPB moved to implement 2 key branches namely “Standards and Spirit”. It is reflecting the core mission of all prefects. The work of these 2 branches is supported by the Development Branch.

The Board is headed by the Head Prefect and Deputy Head Prefect, together with 4 members of the RIPB Executive Committee. They work closely with the prefects and a team of RIPB teachers to fulfill the mission of the Board.

Class Executive Committee

Every class in Raf-fles Institution has its own “Class Executive Committee (CEC)”. This consists of two students namely a Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen. Often, stu-dents vote for classmates to take up these positions, but some Form Teachers may choose to select students themselves.

Discipline

The school continues to maintain strong discipline framework and strict regulations. Disciplinary measures are based on the Raffles Online Discipline System, introduced in 2011 and adapted from the Year 5 - 6 classes. Prior to the present system, student records were maintained based on a demerit point system, with Reformative Work Order and detention sessions for repeat offenders. These systems are primarily targeted at petty offences. Current school rules include prohibitions on eating and possessing sweetened drinks outside the canteen, physical activity in school uniform, and changing uniform in class. The discipline framework is administered by the Discipline Master, in collaboration with the Raf-fles Institution Prefectural Board (RIPB), for Year 1-4 students, and the Assistant Department Head (ADH) for Discipline for Year 5-6 students. For more serious offences, all students are liable to receive corporal or physical punishment in the form of caning if necessary.

Curriculum Raffles Academy

The Raffles Academy (RA), implemented in 2007, is a program for students to explore interests in specific subjects. RA offers a curriculum pitched at a deeper level. During the acade-mic periods, RA students learn and exchange knowledge by joining a special pull-out class. Furthermore, compulsory extra classes are held. The subjects available include History, Geography, Mathe-matics, Economics, Chemistry, Physics, Literature. RA has also offered Music starting in 2010.

At Secondary 2, students can apply for RA via a submission of portfolio of achievements, test-scores and interviews, before they are identified for RA.

Raffles Leadership Program

The “Raffles Leadership Program (RLP)” is an initiative of the Leadership Development Department, aimed at preparing Rafflesians to take on positions of leadership in school and in life. All Year 3 pupils go through the program which includes going through Leadership Challenge Work-shop and taking the My-ers-Briggs Type Indicator Instrument.

Student Activities

Co-curricular activities

Raffles Institution offers about a hundred CCAs under the Co-curricular activity (CCA) program, including sports, uniformed groups, performing arts, and clubs and societies.

CCAs are categorized into the following:

- Core CCAs: a program for students themselves.
- Sports CCAs: a program for students themselves.
- Class Executive Committee (CEC): for all prefects, keeping up to a certain point. For Year 5-6 classes, CECs are mainly targeted at petty offences.
- Merit CCAs: the original CCA system, which is the original CCA system for all clubs and societies.
- Student Interest Groups (SIGs): introduced by the Prefectural Board. These were defined as interest groups formed by students themselves. However, SIGs are not considered to be CCAs and do not receive school funding like CCAs do. Also, with members of Merit CCAs, the SIGs are still required to take up at least one core CCA. Currently, many of the original SIGs no longer exist. Exceptions include the Raf-fles Institution Student En-trepreneurship (RISE) SIG, which has been successful in nationwide competitions.

Conclusion

When one is desirous to assess and evaluate an educational institution in the region or across the globe, the criterion could be outlined as follows. They are (1) Mis-sion; (2) Integrity, Ethical and Responsible Conduct; (3) Teaching and Learning, Quality, Resources and Support; (4) Evaluation and Improvement; (5) Resource Planning, Institutional Effectiveness.
Dollar powers to fresh highs; stocks and oil fall

New York, 14 March — The dollar surged on Friday as weak inflation data failed to stem expectations of a Federal Reserve rate hike next month. The dollar index .DXY rose 0.8 percent, setting up its first close above 100 since April 2003. The Fed’s policy-setting committee meets next week.

Stocks fell on Wall Street on concerns of the impact of higher rates and a stronger dollar on corporate profits. The S&P 500 was down for a third straight week, though it is just 3 percent below its record high set early this month.

“The stronger dollar, the continued hammering of the euro equals continued lower equity prices ahead of the Fed comments next week,” said Michael James, managing director of equity trading at Wedbush Securities in Los Angeles. “We’ll know more of the Fed’s thinking on Wednesday but right now most people are expecting a rate hike to come in June and the equity markets not to be very receptive of that.”

The Dow Jones industrial average .DJI fell 145.91 points, or 0.82 percent, to 17,749.31, the S&P 500 .SPX lost 12.55 points, or 0.61 percent, to 2,053.4, and the Nasdaq Composite .IXIC dropped 21.53 points, or 0.44 percent, to 4,871.76.

For the week, the Dow was down 6.6 percent, the S&P 500 was off 0.9 percent and the Nasdaq was down 1.1 percent.

The MSCI All-Country World equity index .MIWD00000PUS fell 0.6 percent. The FTSEurofirst 300 pan-European index .FTEU3 closed up 0.3 percent. Stocks in Europe continued to be supported by the massive bond-buying program at the European Central Bank.

The divergence in monetary policy between the ECB and the Fed pushed the euro EUR= further down against the greenback, with the euro’s currency hitting a 12-year low of $1.0460. It was last down 1.3 percent at $1.0460.

The dollar rallied even after disappointing US inflation and consumer sentiment data, which showed the economy was already building the currency.

“This isn’t so much about the data, rather the Fed and what to expect from next week’s meetings,” said Camilla Sutton, chief currency strategist at Scotia Capital in Toronto. The dollar index .DXY added 0.7 percent to 100.16.

US crude CLc1 fell 4.4 percent to $45 per barrel, while Brent crude LCOc1 fell 4.6 percent to $54.43. The global oil glut is getting bigger and US production shows no sign of slowing, the International Energy Agency said.

Largely because of the oil selloff, the Thomson Reuters/CRB Commodity Index .TRJCRB settled at a six-year low.

The US benchmark 10-year Treasury note yield US10YT=RR rose to 2.1192 percent from late Thursday’s 2.096 percent, with the price down 7/32. “The market’s consolidating,” said Kim Rupert, managing director of global fixed income at Action Economics in San Francisco. “It’s hard to be a buyer at this point.”

Spot gold XAU= edged up 0.2 percent to $1,156 an ounce, following nine consecutive sessions of declines. Copper CMCU3 gained 0.25 percent to close the week up 2 percent.— Reuters

Three Kansas patients die after eating tainted ice cream

KANSAS CITY, 14 March — Three Kansas hospital patients have died and two have been sickened by listeriosis linked to single-serve Blue Bell Creameries ice cream products since last year, health officials said on Friday.

The five adult patients became ill from January 2014 to January of this year with one of four rare strains of Listeria monocytogenes bacteria while hospitalized with unrelated illnesses, Kansas health officials said in a news release.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment declined to identify the hospital.

Three strains of the bacteria were found in products made at privately held Blue Bell Creameries’ main facility at Brenham, Texas, said the US Food and Drug Administration, which is investigating the contamination.

Hospital records that were available on four of the patients showed they had been served Blue Bell ice cream products, but it was not clear if these products came from Brenham, the FDA said. Blue Bell said it traced the problem to one machine that produced a limited number of snack items, and that it had shut down the line where the products were made. It was the first product recall for the 108-year-old company, it said. The FDA contacted Blue Bell about the illnesses four weeks ago and the company has retrieved the products, said RICKY DICKSON, Blue Bell vice president of sales.

“You shouldn’t find any of this product on the market,” Dickson said in a telephone interview.

Listeriosis is a rare, potentially fatal illness caused by food contaminated with Listeria monocytogenes. The condition, which primarily affects older adults, pregnant women, newborns, and adults with weak immunity, causes fever and muscle aches. It is sometimes preceded by diarrhea and other gastrointestinal symptoms.— Reuters

American in Honduras isolated pending tests for Ebola

Tegucigalpa, 14 March — A US citizen has been hospitalized in Honduras while he is screened for Ebola, health authorities in the Central American country said on Friday.

The 66-year-old American, who has not been identified, had spent time in Liberia before coming to Honduras on 11 March, authorities said.

Although he didn’t have any symptoms when he arrived in the country, he was hospitalized with a 100.4 degree fever on Friday in Comayagua, about an hour north of the capital Tegucigalpa, an owner of the hospital, Juviny Ochoa, told Reuters.

The deputy minister of health, Francis Contreras, told local television that authorities were taking precautions because the patient had been in an African country.

“We have adopted international health protocols to treat these kinds of cases,” Contreras said.— Reuters

US seeks billions from global banks in currency investigation — Bloomberg

New York, 14 March — The US Justice Department is seeking about $1 billion from each of global banks being investigated for manipulation of currency markets, Bloomberg reported on Friday, citing people familiar with the talks.

The figure is a starting point in settlement discussions, with some banks being asked for more and some less, Bloomberg said.

One bank that has cooperated from the beginning is expected to pay far less and penalties of about $4 billion are on the table, Bloomberg reported, adding that the number could change markedly.

With banks pushing back harder than in some previous negotiations, including those for mortgage-backed securities, the final penalties could be lower, Bloomberg said.

The discussions, which have begun in earnest in recent weeks, could lead to settlements that would resolve US accusations of criminal activity in the currency markets against Barclays Plc, Citigroup Inc, JPMorgan Chase & Co, Royal Bank of Scotland Group Plc and UBS Group AG, Bloomberg said.

Prosecutors are also pressing Barclays, Citibank, JPMorgan Chase and the Royal Bank of Scotland, to plead guilty, Bloomberg reported.

Last year, regulators fined six major banks, including HSBC Holdings Plc, JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America Corp, a total of $4.3 billion (2.9 billion pounds) for failing to stop traders from trying to manipulate the foreign exchange market.

UBS, the first bank to notify US authorities of possible misconduct, has been granted immunity from prosecution for anti-trust violations, Bloomberg reported.

Barclays, JPMorgan Chase and UBS declined to comment. Citibank and Royal Bank of Scotland could not be immediately reached for comment.— Reuters

Japan’s TDK to remove neon sign from London’s Piccadilly Circus

Photo taken on 13 March, 2015, shows electronic signboards in London’s Piccadilly Circus. Japanese electronics maker TDK Corp is taking down its neon sign from Piccadilly Circus on 24 March, spelling the end of a Japanese presence in one of the world’s most prestigious advertising locations.

KYODO News
Apple Watch not on shopping list for 69 percent of Americans

SAN FRANCISCO, 14 March — Apple Inc’s (AAPL.O) new smartwatch may be a tough sell, with 69 percent of Americans indicating they are not interested in buying the gadget, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll.

However, the survey also showed limited awareness of the watch. The poll was taken after Apple Chief Executive Tim Cook rolled out the product on Monday, and only about half of respondents said they had heard news of the timepiece in the last few days.

Also, in an encouraging sign for Apple, roughly 13 percent of survey respondents who did not own an iPhone said that they would consider buying one in order to buy an Apple Watch, which needs an iPhone to work fully.

Apple overcame skepticism about the iPad and iPhone when they first debuted, but the survey suggests that the world’s largest technology company has work to do to make the watch ubiquitous.

The new watch, a test of Cook’s leadership, is the company’s first new product in five years, and it hits stores on 24 April.

It allows users to check email, listen to music and make phone calls from their wrist. Apple will sell various versions, from a $349 (236 pounds) “sport” edition to a $1,700 18-karat gold timepiece.

Ipsos surveyed 1,245 Americans online between 9 March and 13 March. The data was weighted to reflect the US population and has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.

Apple did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the poll.

More than half of respondents, 52 percent, agreed with the statement that smartwatches are a “passing fad.”

One-quarter of respondents said they were interested in purchasing the Apple Watch, but 69 percent said they had no desire, and 6 percent said they were unsure.

Initial demand for the watch is expected to come primarily from existing iPhone users, but its wider success is seen depending on whether developers create enticing apps tailored to the device, so-called killer apps.

Apple is among several large tech companies looking to jumpstart a new market for “wearable” electronic devices. Samsung Electronics (005930.KS), Sony Corp (6758.T) and LG Electronics (66570.LS) have all released their own smartwatches, many of them powered by software developed by Internet company Google Inc (GOOG-L.O).

But consumers have yet to cotton to the notion of wearable devices. Google recently halted sales to consumers of Glass, a $1,500 screen attached to glasses which were routinely mocked for their awkward appearance.

Roughly 4.6 million smartwatches were sold globally in 2014, according to research firm Strategy Analytics, a fraction of the more than 1 billion smartphones sold worldwide.

Many in the tech industry hope that Apple, famous for its marketing savvy and loyal fans, will have the power to transfigure the smartwatches into a product that appeals to the general public.

Some 46 percent of respondents said that the Apple Watch had a “cool factor.”

But only 29 percent said they were more interested in purchasing an Apple Watch than another brand of smartwatch.

Analysts expect that Apple will sell between 10 million and 32 million watches in 2015.

Apple CEO Tim Cook introduces the Apple Watch during an Apple event in San Francisco, California on 9 March, 2015.— REUTERS

SpaceX sees US approval for rocket launches by June

WASHINGTON, 14 March — SpaceX Exploration Technologies expects the US Air Force to certify it to compete to launch national security satellites by June, President Gwynne Shotwell told Reuters on Friday.

Shotwell said the company’s relationship with the Air Force was better than ever after the two sides in January settled a lawsuit filed by SpaceX. She said the US military was increasingly open to innovation by commercial firms.

SpaceX, founded by technology entrepreneur Elon Musk, had accused the Air Force of dragging its feet in ending the current launch monopoly held by United Launch Alliance, a joint venture of Lockheed Martin Corp and Boeing Co.

Air Force and Pentagon officials credit SpaceX

with energizing the government rocket launch market and pushing ULA to lower its prices, even before the privately held company had been certified to compete for rocket launches.

The Air Force missed its December target for completing the certification process, but a top US official told Reuters this week the process should be complete by June.

“We are really close to getting the work done and getting the requirements made,” Shotwell said. “I’m hoping it can be a little bit sooner, but we’ll see.”

Shotwell also welcomed a request for information that the Air Force issued last month as it develops a plan to end US reliance on the RD-180, a Russian-built engine that powers the Atlas 5, one of two rockets used by ULA.—Reuters
Quick answers to double shooting elude police in Ferguson, Missouri

Floods in Angola

Senior US diplomat to visit S Korea after attack on envoy

EU considers foreign camps to handle asylum seekers

UK applies to co-build Asian infrastructure bank
First direct flight from Havana to New Orleans opens

HAVANA, 14 March — Cuba will receive on Saturday the first direct flight between the southern US city of New Orleans and the Cuban capital of Havana in half a century, local media reported on Friday.

The aircraft brings 80 business and community leaders seeking to explore avenues of cooperation between the US and Cuba, according to the official news website Cubadebate. This is historic as it is the first non-stop flight from New Orleans to Havana since 1958, Cubadebate said.

For years, there have been charter flights from US to Cuba, mainly operating from the cities in the southern Florida state, with “humanitarian” character, as the US economic sanctions imposed in 1994, and because it is historic as it is the first non-stop flight from New Orleans to Havana since 1958, Cubadebate said.

US using sanctions to ‘intimidate’ Venezuelan gov’t officials

CARACAS, 14 March — The United States is using its sanctions regime to “intimidate” Venezuelan government officials, a Latin American legislator said on Friday. Roy Daza, a Venezuelan deputy of the Latin American Parliament (Parlatino), said the tactic was especially targeted at Venezuelan prosecutors investigating those responsible for the violent anti-government demonstrations in 2014 and their US links.

The four months of protests claimed 43 lives.

“What is the administration of (US President Barack) Obama seeking through the sanctions against Venezuelans?” asked Daza in an opinion piece published in the regional daily Correo del Orinoco. “Evidently it’s trying to pressure and intimidate officials working to defend the peace in our country and the legal branch, the Prosecutor’s Office.”

Venezuela’s National Prosecutor Katherine Harrington is one of seven security and financial officials barred by the United States, freeze any assets they may have there and prohibit Americans from doing business with them.

Cuba’s foreign policy is a defiance of US dominance on the continent. Officials say the emails uncover a plot to assassinate President Nicolas Maduro and topple his government.

In announcing the third set of sanctions against the South American government in four months, Obama issued an executive order claiming “the situation in Venezuela ... constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, and I hereby declare a national emergency to deal with that threat.”

The aggressively-worded declaration has been condemned by the international community and should be retracted, said Daza.

Huge Pacific cyclone devastates Vanuatu, at least eight dead

SYDNEY, 14 March — One of the Pacific Ocean’s most powerful ever storms devastated the island nation of Vanuatu on Saturday, tearing off roofs, uprooting trees and killing at least eight people with the toll set to rise, and officials said Sunday.

The United Nations was preparing a major relief operation and Australia said it was ready to offer its neighbour whatever help it could.

With winds up to 340 kph (210 mph), Cyclone Pam left Vanuatu cut off, with little power, poor communications and a looming threat of hunger and thirst.

Unconfirmed reports said the number of dead could run into dozens but aid workers said it would be days or weeks before the full impact was known.

“It felt like the world was going to end,” Alice Clements, a spokeswoman for the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), said from Vanuatu.

“It’s like a bomb has gone off in the centre of the town. There is no power. There is no water.”

Tom Skirrow, country director for the Save the Children aid group, told Reuters that Vanuatu’s National Disaster Management Office had confirmed eight dead and 20 injured. He said he expected those figures to rise substantially.

The 83 islands of Vanuatu, 260,000 people, 2,000 km (1,250 miles) northeast of the Australian city of Brisbane.

The president of Vanuatu, Baldwin Lonsdale, told a disaster risk conference in Japan he had no confirmed report of the impact of the storm but he appealed to the world to “give a lending hand”.

The aggressive worded declaration has been condemned by the international community and should be retracted, said Daza.

Weather report

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 15th March, 2015: Weather will be partly cloudy in Taninthayi Region and Kachin State and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

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

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“It’s like a bomb has gone off in the centre of the town. There is no power. There is no water.”

Tom Skirrow, country director for the Save the Children aid group, told Reuters that Vanuatu’s National Disaster Management Office had confirmed eight dead and 20 injured. He said he expected those figures to rise substantially.

The 83 islands of Vanuatu, 260,000 people, 2,000 km (1,250 miles) northeast of the Australian city of Brisbane.

The president of Vanuatu, Baldwin Lonsdale, told a disaster risk conference in Japan he had no confirmed report of the impact of the storm but he appealed to the world to “give a lending hand”. Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said Canberra would be willing to offer Vanuatu whatever help it could. Formerly known as the New Hebrides, Vanuatu was jointly ruled by the United States, and I hereby declare a national emergency to deal with that threat.”

The aggressively-worded declaration has been condemned by the international community and should be retracted, said Daza.
‘Star Wars: Episode VIII’ to release on 26 May, 2017

Los Angeles, 14 March — Walt Disney chairman and CEO Bob Iger said “Star Wars: Episode VIII”, written and directed by Rian Johnson, will be released on 26 May, 2017.

A stand-alone movie based on the Star Wars world that is due on 16 December, 2016, and directed by Gareth Edwards, will be called “Rogue One”, according to The Hollywood Reporter.

Iger made the announcement at Disney’s annual meeting of shareholders in San Francisco.

Iger showed the attendees several trailers of upcoming Star Wars, Marvel and Pixar films, said that Disney will introduce on TV next year the first Latina in its Disney Princess line, and said he has high hopes for the live-action “Cinderella” opening on Friday.

“We absolutely love this movie,” he said.

He said “Big Hero 6” — this years best animated feature Oscar winner has become Disney’s third-highest-grossing animated film of all time, behind “Frozen” and “The Lion King”.

Los Angeles, 14 March — James Bond depicter Daniel Craig and Rodger Moore are set to join forces to poke fun at the spy franchise in a skit for Comic Relief.

The two actors are set to star in a mockumentary-style sketch which will leave viewers feeling shaking and stirred, reported Daily Express.

In the scene Craig is set to shock the world by revealing the biggest Bond secret yet.

The 47-year-old star will be joined by Ben Whishaw, Rory Kinnear, Naomie Harris, director Sam Mendes, and Bond producer Michael G Wilson.

Speaking of his return to agent life, 87-year-old Moore said: “I think viewers will most enjoy seeing that old Bonds never die.”

Written by comedy legends David Walliams and the Dawson Brothers viewers should expect surprises, laughs, and some very special appearances, as they finally learn the truth about James Bond.

Whishaw, who plays Secret Service boss Q, said: “When I first saw the script, I was returning home from the set, and it really made me laugh out loud. I was thrilled to be asked to be involved.”

Mendes added: “When I first saw the script, I was returning home from the set, and it really made me laugh out loud. I was thrilled to be asked to be involved.”

Los Angeles, 14 March — Disney has officially confirmed that a sequel to their highest-grossing animated film of all time, “Frozen” (2013), is in development. “Frozen 2” was announced during the Mouse House’s annual shareholders meeting, reported Ace Showbiz.

Kristen Bell who voices Anna and Josh Gad who voices Olaf the Snowman gleefully respond to the news. “Dreams really do come true!!! #FROZEN2 #BeInspirational,” the former tweet along with a picture of her smiling while lying on a bag of ice.

Los Angeles, 14 March — Movie star Jackie Chan lends his voice to Beijing’s Olympics bid.

Beijing, 14 March — Internationaly acclaimed movie star Jackie Chan has joined in the recording of a song, “Wake up Winter,” that will be used to promote Beijing’s bid for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games.

The first people to officially hear the song will be the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Evaluation Commission during their 24-28 March visit to Beijing.

“Wake up Winter” is actually a call to people around the world with an incessant eagerness for the Olympic Spirit, and a longing for friendship between people and countries,” said songwriter Wang Pingjiu.

A large number of well-known musicians both from home and abroad have been involved, including Zhao Jialin, one of the main composers for “Little Apple”, which was China’s most popular song last year.

It’s not Chan’s first foray into Olympic singing. The action star performed “We Are Ready”, recorded and released a year before the beginning of the 2008 Olympics. He also sang at the closing ceremony of those Games.

Los Angeles, 14 March — Ryan Gosling dismisses ‘Hey Girl,’ discusses new film at SXSW

Austin, 14 March — With a drop of a microphone, Ryan Gosling dispersed his Internet infamy, saying he had never once uttered the phrase, “Hey Girl,” which has made him a viral phenomenon.

“I understand if you’re in a movie and you say something like ‘I’ll be back,’ you own that. But I never said it,” Gosling said while gigging with Mexican filmmaker Guillermo Del Toro at a panel conversation to a full house on Friday.

Gosling was the anticipated opening day guest at the annual South by SouthWest (SXSW) Festival covering film, music and technology in Austin, Texas, being quizzed by Del Toro and the Dawson Brothers viewers should expect surprises, laughs, and some very special appearances, as they finally learn the truth about James Bond.

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Los Angeles, 14 March — They were on hand for the announcement along with Disney CEO Bob Iger at the meeting. “We enjoyed making “Frozen Fever” (a short movie) so much and being back in that world with those characters,” said Lasseter in a statement.

Jennifer Lee and Chris Buck have come up with a great idea for a sequel and you will be hearing a lot more about it and we’re taking you back to Arendelle. We are so excited about that.”

“Frozen” is also supported by Idina Menzel as Elsa and Jonathan Groff as Kristoff. The movie collected USD 1.27 billion worldwide and won two Oscars for best animated film and best song for “Let It Go”. 

Reutres

‘Frozen 2’ officially announced, cast rejoice

Ryan Gosling poses on the red carpet as he arrives for the screening of the film “Lost River” in competition for the category “Un Certain Regard” at the 67th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes on 20 May, 2014.

PTI

ReuTeRs

Movie star Jackie Chan
Halihodzic won’t tolerate losing, confident he can revive Japan

San Francisco, 14 March — Lawmakers in San Francisco are trying to apply the same health warning policy used with alcohol and tobacco products on sugary drinks.

If the elected officials have their way, San Franciscans will soon see labels on soda bottles warning consumers about the drink’s potential damage to health if it contains at least 25 calories per every 35 centiliters.

The move was proposed by three members of the US west coast city’s 11-member Board of Supervisors. As co-authors of the bill, supervisors Malia Cohen, Scott Wiener and Eric Mar are also pushing to ban advertisements of sugary drinks on city-owned properties. “We want to avoid these industries from targeting their main consumers who belong, mostly, to society’s low-income sectors, like Hispanics, African Americans as well as the Asian community, who have the highest risks of developing Type II diabetes of all the country’s minorities,” Cohen told Xinhua on Thursday.

The draft bill was presented this week during a board meeting. If enacted, it would make San Francisco the first US city to introduce such a policy.

This is not the city’s first battle against sugary drinks. Lawmakers last year failed to introduce a tax on sodas that would have increased the cost of these beverages, when voters snubbed their proposal on the ballot. “We can’t afford to allow these companies to sell drinks loaded with sugar, it’s hurting our community and it’s hurting our society,” Cohen said. “We truly hope this legislation passes later on this year, since consumers need to know that these beverages can cause obesity, tooth decay and diabetes. Many of them are not aware of the danger and drink outstanding amounts of these soda drinks per week,” she said.

CalBev, which represents members of the non-alcoholic beverage industry in California, rebuffed the supervisors’ proposal earlier this week, arguing that they are targeting sugary drinks instead of other consumer goods loaded with sugar, like pastries or certain caffeine drinks. A proposal to tax sugary drinks did succeed, however, in Berkeley last year, making the city north of San Francisco the first in the country to apply a taxing measure on sugary sodas and beverages.

Lawmakers in San Francisco and the Bay Area believe now that after voters in Berkeley approved the move, momentum is building up to bring out the big guns against soda companies.

“We think it’s the right time for this proposal,” Cohen said, “people are more aware of the health problem these drinks pose and we know that these companies are going to try to fight back to bury the bill, like they did last year.” — Xinhua

(From L) Japan Football Association President Kuniyu Daini, Vahid Halilhodzic, the new coach of the Japan men’s national soccer team, and JFA technical director Masahiro Shimoda.

“Victory is the first word that always comes out of my mouth.”

“I’ve watched a lot of game film over the last two weeks. I saw every game from World Cup and Asian Cup and have analyzed it. The quality is there, despite the results. But what I didn’t see is confidence. Restoring that confidence can be easy, other times not.”

“Japan have not had the results since the World Cup in Brazil but they have what it takes to turn things around. When I started working with the Algerian team where I was before, they were ranked 52nd in the world. After working with them for three years, they climbed to 17th and I’m convinced I can do the same with Japan.”

Japan were eliminated in the first round at last summer’s World Cup with two defeats and a goalless draw, and under Aguirre as holders, went out in the Asian Cup quarterfinals after penalties against the United Arab Emirates.— Kyodo News

San Francisco pushes for health warnings on soda bottles

Sunday, 15 March, 2015

Tokyo, 14 March — New Japan coach Vahid Halilhodzic said at his unveiling on Friday that he is confident of turning around a team that has disappointed at the last World Cup and Asian Cup.

Hours after arriving from France, Halilhodzic, the eighth foreigner to coach Japan, put pen to paper on a contract that sees him succeed Javier Aguirre, who was sacked last month after being named as a defendant in a criminal complaint for match-fixing in Spain.

Japan Football Association President Kuniyu Daini said he expects “strong leadership” from the 62-year-old ex-Algeria disciplinarian, and Halilhodzic, who left his family behind in France to take the job, is more than willing to give it to him.

“I hate losing. When I lose, I become ill,” Halilhodzic said during a nationally televised Press conference attended by 242 journalists, ahead of his tempura dinner with Daini and JFA technical director Masahiro Shimoda.

(Written by Jiji Press staff)

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(15-3-2015 07:00 am– 16-3-2015 07:00 am) MST

* News
* Entrepreneur
* Paper Products... Plain but Pretty
* A Monk’s Robe
* The Man and The Elephant
* Traditional Snacks
* News
* Short Trip With Steve (Mon State)
* Kay Tu Mar Lar “The Decision”
* News
* Indonesia — Myanmar Bilateral Ties
* Kambowzathardi Golden Palace — A Treasured Legacy of Golden Days
* News
* Food Trip (Ep-5) (Part-1)
* Shaping Life with Music
* Today Myanmar “Myanmar Quality Gold”

Myanmar International

June 16

6:00 am

Partita by Venerable Mungun Sayadaw

6:30 am

Physical Exercise

7:00 am

News

Weather Report

7:35 am

Business News

8:00 am

News / International News

8:35 am

Documentary

9:35 am

Live Entertainment

10:30 am

Head Line News

11:35 am

Amazing World

12:00 noon

News / International News / Weather Report

12:35 pm

Round Up Of The Week’s International News

People visit the 2015 Canada Blooms in Toronto, Canada, on 13 March, 2015. As Canada’s largest flower and garden festival, the 10-day event kicked off on Friday to exhibit the accomplishments in Canadian gardening and floral design. Xinhua

News Channel in Brief

Sunday, 15 March, 2015

6:00 am

Alinksa Wutiy Music Troupe

6:20 am

Myanmar Video

7:55 am

Fashion Show

8:20 am

Pyi Thu Ni Ti

8:45 am

Sing & Enjoy

9:30 am

Myanmar Movie

4:45 pm

FIFA Women’s Olympic Football Tournament Rio 2016 (ASIAN Qualifiers) (LIVE) (Myanmar & India)

8:00 pm

News / International News / Weather Report

9:00 pm

News

Entertainment Channel

15-3-2015, Sunday

12:50 pm

Myanmar Movies (Part-1)

2:35 pm

Myanmar Movies (Part-2)

3:00 pm

News / International News

4:45 pm

FIFA Women’s Olympic Football Tournament Rio 2016 (ASIAN Qualifiers) (LIVE) (Myanmar & India)

7:00 pm

News

7:35 pm

Documentary (Women’s in Myanmar Society)

8:00 pm

News / International News / Weather Report

9:00 pm

News
Serena makes winning return to Indian Wells

Indian Wells, (California), 14 March — Serena Williams returned to Indian Wells on Friday after a 14-year boycott due to racist abuse she suffered in the 2001 final and got her bid for a third BNP Paribas Open title off to a winning, though somewhat error-prone, start.

On a sultry evening at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden in front of a sell-out crowd, the American world number one overcame a nervous start on the stadium court to battle past Romania’s Monica Niculescu 7-5, 7-5 in the second round.

Poland’s Agnieszka Radwanska, the seventh seed and a losing finalist at Indian Wells last year, had a much easier time of it earlier in the day, Storming into the third round with a 6-3, 6-1 demolition of American Alison Riske.

Williams said she was overwhelmed by the reaction coming back to play at the venue and that Niculescu’s style had taken some getting used to. “I have never played anyone like her, and I was struggling to find my rhythm,” she said in a courtside interview after being repeatedly thwarted by an unorthodox opponent who used a heavily sliced forehand. “It was a really tough match.”

Williams had skipped the showcase event after winning her second title here in 2001, beating Kim Clijsters in a final marred by some spectators who booted and heckled the American and her family.

The heckling was in apparent response to Serena’s sister Venus having withdrawn from their semi-final that year just minutes before the match.

“It feels overwhelming, walking out and having everyone here cheering me,” she said. “It’s been really worth it, coming back here.”

Williams, watched by her mother Oracene and sister Isha, was broken in the opening game and trailed 0-2 before gradually finding her range. She won the next three games but was broken again in the seventh, then trailed 3-5 before clawing her way back with a mixture of power serving and blistering ground strokes, helped by several unforced errors by the Romanian.

Surreptitious by shouts of “Come on Serena” and “Go Serena” from the crowd, the American won four games in a row to take a topsy-turvy opening set in an hour.

After trading early service breaks in the second, Williams finally sealed victory on her fourth match point when her opponent netted a backhand, ending an encounter that lasted just over two hours.

Earlier in the day, Radwanska broke Riske twice in the opening set and three times in the second to triumph in just over an hour. “I started very well,” Radwanska said after hitting 15 winners on a hot afternoon at Indian Wells.

“Trailing the end of the first set but I also finished very well, so that’s the most important thing.”

The Polish world number eight will next meet England’s Heather Watson, who beat Camila Giorgi of Italy 7-5, 7-5. In other matches, third seed Simona Halep of Romania fought back to beat Russian Daria Gavrilova 2-6, 6-1, 6-2, while eighth-seeded Russian Ekaterina Makarova breezed past compatriot Elena Vesnina 6-4, 6-0.

Chelsea will win the league, Mourinho promises

LONDON, 14 March — Chelsea will win the Premier League this season. That is the apparent response to Serena’s sister Venus having withdrawn from their semi-final that year just minutes before the match.

The heckling was in apparent response to Serena’s sister Venus having withdrawn from their semi-final that year just minutes before the match.

“Once they’re charging over, over and over again, you can’t really go out there and say it’s a good, interactive meeting,” he added.

“We have 11 matches to play. We have an advantage of five points with a match in hand. We cannot promise we will win every game but we are optimistic.”

Chelsea could only draw 2-2 after extra time at home to the French champions on Wednesday despite playing against 10 men after Zlatan Ibrahimovic was controversially sent off. That meant they went out of the competition on away goals.

“We never asked to be in the Champions League but we have been there and that is why we are in the Champions League final. It’s a brilliant season.”

Mourinho promised to win the league this season. He said: “Good, interactive meeting.”

“The future now is to win the cup and then I want to win the Champions League.”

After widespread criticism of the way nine Chelsea players surrounded the referee to demand that Ibrahimovic was sent off, Terry claimed other teams did the same.

“Once they’re charging the referee, the only thing we can do is respond,” he said.

“If I have to run 20 or 30 yards it doesn’t look great but when you’re standing back and seeing five or six of your players surrounding the ref I have to go and support my team mates.”