Now is time for all national races to join hands, end conflicts and live together

NAY PYI TAW, 19 March — The following is the unofficial translation of a message sent by Agga Maha Thayay Sithu, Agga Maha Thiri Thadhamma U Thein Sien, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, on the occasion of the 41st anniversary Mon State Day which falls on 19 March. End

Esteeued national brethren in Mon State,
I would like to extend my auspicious greetings to all national brethren residing in Mon State.
I am glad and proud of being given the opportunity to send a message on the occasion of Mon State Day, which falls on 19 March.

March 19, on which Mon State was first recognized in the 1974 State Constitution (Draft), has been designated as Mon State Day and it has been 41 years since Mon state Day was first celebrated on March 19, 1974.

We have encountered bitter experiences due to political conflicts in Myanmar Society since the country regained independence. Today is the time for all the national races to join hands to live together in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar by ending the conflicts after learning lessons from the bitter experiences.

The ceasefire agreement with armed groups of national races in Mon State was signed and arrangements are under way to organize an inclusive political dialogue. It is my sincere hope that national brethren in Mon State cooperate in respective sectors to help realize the success of the political dialogue.

After signing the ceasefire agreement with the armed organizations of national race groups in Mon State, I am glad with the development of the transport, education, health and economic sectors and the stability of Mon State. I would like to urge you all to maintain the already achieved stability so that posterity can enjoy it.

I am sending the message, urging all national brethren in Mon State to cooperate in union to build a new, modern and developed democratic nation based on the sound foundations for stability, unity and development already laid down.

UEC issues notification on voters’ list

NAY PYI TAW, 18 March — The Union Election Commission issued a notification dated 18 March, informing the voters of the eligible voters’ lists for Botataung, Pazundaung, Dawbon, Seikkyikhaungto, Seikkan, Dagon, Latha, Kyauktada, Landamadaw and Kamayut townships in Yangon Region, which will be available at ward sub-commission offices for 14 days from 30 March to 12 April. Everyone is required to check whether they are on the voters’ list. Anyone that is not on the list are to apply for their voting right by submitting form 3 and if data are not correct, everyone can correct them by submitting form 4-c. If those who should not be in voters’ list, for example those who were dead and those who are in prison, are included in the list, it is necessary to object to the commission with form 4, according to the notification.

Hundreds more vendors join streamlined trading system

By Aye Min Soe

NAY PYI TAW, 18 March — The Ministry of Commerce has issued 313 Individual Trading Cards in fiscal 2014-2015, bringing the total number of ITC holders in the country to 866, according to the ministry.

The statistics released by the ministry has shown that the border trade volume in 11 months and two weeks in the 2014-2015 Fiscal Year by ITC card holders has reached more than 8.6 billion kyat.

The ministry started to issue the ITC cards to people in border areas in 2012 with the aim of simplifying trading for individuals and minimizing illegal trade, the ministry has issued the ITC cards with a K50,000 registration fee to people at 18 border trading camps, with registration valid for one year. The Individual Trading Card is based on Myanmar’s kyat currency, with card holders not allowed to conduct transit trade but free to engage in border trading.

The export and import license for the individual trading card holders is valid for seven days, entitling each to trade K2 million per day and K10 million for five days consecutively.

The individual trading card allows the export of 160 kinds of goods and import of 242 kinds of goods permitted by the Automatic licensing system, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

MPE puts operation of fertilizer factory to tender

NAY PYI TAW, 18 March — The Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprise of the Ministry of Energy has invited local and foreign companies experienced in urea production, storage and marketing to apply to run one of its fertilizer factories.

The Letter of Expression of Interest form is available at the ministry’s website and it has urged those interested to submit LOEI proposals to the enterprise in person by 4 May, 2015.

The No.3 Fertilizer Factory (Kyawzwa) is located on 902 acres in Aunglan Township. The factory, which was in operation from 1987 to 2010, manufactured 450 tons of urea per day.
Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann receives Vietnamese guests

NAY PYI TAW, 18 March — Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann received Vietnam Communist Party Politburo member and also the Chairman of Vietnam Fatherland Front Mr Nguyen Thi Nhan on Wednesday in the Hlut- taw complex. Together with the speaker were Py- thiut Hlutaw Economic and Trade Development Committee Chairman U Maung Maung Thein, Pyithu Hlutaw Myan- mar-Vietnam Parliament Friendship Association Chairman Dr Kyaw Myint and members U Win Myint, U Aung Hsan, Aung Hsan, Myo Aung Htut and Aung Min, Pyithu Hlutaw Myanmar-Vietnam Parliament Friendship Association, Mr Nguyen Thi Nhan was accompanied by Vi- etnamese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Pham Thanh Dung. —MNA

Information Ministry withdraws proposed Public Service Media bill

NAY PYI TAW, 18 March — The Pyithu Hlut- taw in its session Wednesday discussed illegal imports of satellite TV receivers and the withdrawal of the pro- posed Public Service Media bill by the Ministry of Infor- mation.

Deputy Home Affairs Minister Brig-Gen Kyaw Zan Myint told the Lower House that the ministry and its organs are taking action against illegal imports of satellite TV receivers in ac- cordance with the 2012 Im- port-Export Law. The pen- ality for breaching the law on the prohibition of illegal items is up to three years’ imprisonment, a fine, or both, he said. He added that authorities will take action in response to complaints from TV service providers.

Responding to the querry of Lower House MP U Thein Nyunt, Union Min- ister for Information U Ye Htut also said relevant min- istry need to cooperate to control illegal import of foreign satellite receivers, as some of the channels show explicit programmes and gambling. The information minister said spilt-over is technically unavoidable as TV programmes are broad- cast through satellites, al- though imports of satellite dishes that can receive pro- grammes from Skynet and MRTV have been banned.

He also suggested the bill committee of the Py- thiut Hlutaw should consid- er putting this issue into the discussion of a bill on televi- sion and broadcast law.

On the issue of motor- way tolls, Deputy Minister at the President’s Office U Kyaw Kyaw Win said the toll rates will not be changed for cars coming into Yangon Region.

Concerning tender invi- tations for government projects, Deputy Minister for Construction U Soe Tin said projects worth under K 5 million do not require a tender invitation, but instead should be referred to the de- partmental tender scrutiny board.

From K 5 million to K 50 million, tenders are sought through notice boards of relevant government de- partments, while for projects worth K 50 million and over, tender invitations are adver- tised in state-owned newspa- pers one month in advance.

The Pyithu Hlutaw also agreed on the withdraw- al of the Public Service Media bill that was submitted by the Ministry of Infor- mation on the 26th day of the 9th regular Pyithu Hlutaw session.

Regarding the with- drawal, the information minister said the ministry tried to transform state-run media to public service media, with a study tour of representatives from the Ministry of Information, the Amyotha Hlutaw, and the Pyithu Hlutaw to four Euro- pean countries in June 2012 and the holding of a confer- ence on international public service media in Yangon in September 2012. It also pro- vided an explanation bout PSM to committee members of the Amyotha Hlutaw and Pyithu Hlutaw.

U Ye Htut also said the ministry drafted the PSM bill with the assistance of UNESCO before it was sub- mitted to Hlutaw.

The information minis- ter said the ministry invited public opinion, publicizing the bill on state-run media, adding that the withdrawal is now aimed at reviewing and improving the bill. —MNA

Union Minister U Kyaw Lwin said the Ministry of Construction will conduct a feasibility study with Man- dalay region government to upgrade the 4-mile-long earth road.

U Paw Hlan Lwin of Chin State Constituency-9. —MNA

U Paw Lyan Lwin, an MP of Chin State constitu- ency 9 also asked for de- velopment of Bungtla Waterfall, the longest waterfall in State near Matupi Township, into a tourist at- traction. Deputy Minister at the President’s Office U Aung Thein said the Chin State government is developing its road networks, with understanding that reliable transportation is important for the tourism industry and the respective areas. The Amyotha Hlutaw then approved a bill on amending the Highways Act passed by the Pyithu Hlutaw with some amendments. —MNA

Budget committee explains restraints of allocation

NAY PYI TAW, 18 March — Chairman U Soe Thar of the Joint Committee on Scrutinizing Na- tional Plans, the Union Budget and Taxation Bills on Wednesday outlined to the national assembly the workings of the committee as it assessed projects funded by state revenue, loans or grants.

He said the committee categorized the projects, determining how long they would take until comple- tion and the likelihood of meeting budget require- ments.

The committee scruti- nized the projects by form- ing 19 teams and four cen- tral sub-committees to use allocated budget. MPs of Pyidaungsu Hlutaw then dis- cussed adjustment of the Union budget.

U Tin Maung Oo, representative from Shw- erpyiyar Township constitu- ency, said government ministries need to use budgets properly and sys- tematically without waste.

He also said MPs are suggesting budget reduc- tions in some sectors to prevent waste and to en- sure a ‘clean government and good governance’ in the country.

U Khin Maung Nyo, representative from Loi- kay Township constituenc- y, said budget reductions proposed by MPs are like- ly to cause difficulties for ministries concerned, not- ing that their suggestions are intended to balance the income and expenditures of the state.

Daw Sandar Min, an MP of Zaput Hap Township constituency, said failing projects should be stopped to save state budgets.

U Zaw Myint Phe, representa- tive from Mandalay region constituency 5, said Hlutawas are laterally sup- porting government organ- izations and ministries to make steady progress in the state’s economy and to maintain stability.

Later, the Pyidaungsu Hlutaw also discussed a controversial bill on the development of small and medium scale enterprises. —MNA
C-in-C receives Turkish Ambassador

NAY PYI TAW, 18 March — Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received Ambassador of Turkey to Myanmar Mr Murat Yavuz Ates in Nay Pyi Taw on Wednesday.

The C-in-C and the ambassador discussed matters on promoting relations between the two armed forces and mutual cooperation. Myanmar and Turkey established diplomatic relations in September 1958 and Turkish embassy in Myanmar was opened in Yangon in March 2013.

ROK’s Eximbank to assist Myanmar’s IT Infra-Network Expansion Project

NAY PYI TAW, 18 March — Myanmar’s Ministry of Communication and Information Technology and the Export-Import Bank of Korea signed an agreement on implementing the IT Infra-Network Expansion Project in Myanmar on 17 March. The loan agreement worth $55.874 million was signed by General Manager U Khin Maung Tun of Myanma Posts and Telecommunications and Director Mr Yim Seoung Hyoog of Korean Eximbank in the presence of Deputy Minister U Thaung Tin, who made a keynote address at the signing ceremony.

The loan will be disbursed by South Korea’s Economic Development Cooperation Fund. The funds will pay for expansion of high-speed fiber links between Taunggyi and Mandalay; Mandalay and Myitkyina; Dawei and Kawthoung; and Magway and Sittway.

Union Defence Minister back home

NAY PYI TAW, 18 March — After attending the 9th ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting and Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (2015), Union Defence Minister Lt-Gen Wai Lwin arrived back in Yangon on 18 March.—MNA

Tatmadaw columns capture insurgents-held hilltops

NAY PYI TAW, 18 March — After being forced to abandon strategic location due to the offensive of the Tatmadaw, Kokang insurgents are attacking Laukkai from afar and ambushing Tatmadaw troops on their way.

At 3 am on Wednesday, Tatmadaw columns drove away six groups of Kokang insurgents who were trying to launch attacks on Laukkai.

Tatmadaw columns also captured five hilltops of the insurgents’ defence line with the aid of air-strikes, forcing the insurgent to withdraw to the east of the region.

At 8 am in the morning, Tatmadaw columns combing the area near Ceaw village fought with Kokang insurgents and the Tatmadaw columns are in hot pursuit of them.

Similarly, Tatmadaw columns are fighting against Kokang insurgents who are trying to recapture Point 1468 hilltop since March 17.

Acting on tip-off, Tatmadaw columns and members of police force searched a house and a temporary tent and arrested 16 men with 7 kg of metha-efidrine worth over K 130 million, 21 kg of efidrine worth K 5.67 million, 6,000 tablets bearing WY letters worth K 9 million, 103.5 kg of stimulant powder worth over K 20 million, one heroine block worth K 6 million and 300 gms of dye.

During the fighting, Tatmadaw columns seized three bodies of Kokang insurgents, two launchers, six small arms and ammunition. A total of 13 officers and other ranks sacrificed their lives for the country and 28 others were injured during the fighting.

Aungdagon-7 double-decker ferry boat will ply in Rakhine State.—MoT

NAY PYI TAW, 18 March — Ministry of Transport is making arrangement to operate a new ferry boat from Sittway, capital city of Rakhine state, to nearby areas.

Aungdagon-7 double-decker ferry boat will ply to enhance transportation sector in the northwest Myanmar state after Aungdagon-3 passenger vessel sank on March 13 due to bad weather. The incident cost 61 deaths although 169 people could be rescued.

The upcoming vessel, strengthened in both hull and engine, as well as carrying life jackets, life boats, communication gadgets and navigation signal systems, is expected to depart Yangon for Hingikyikun Township and it will proceed to Sittway jetty.

Inland Water Transport of Rakhine State branch is operating ferry boats to Maikuk-U, Butheedaung and Taunggupt towns almost every day.

Seventh meeting between . . .

(from page 1)

The KIO delegation also met with President U Thein Sein, Vice President Dr Sai Maik Kham and Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 15 and 16 March for the first time.

If trust can be built between KIO and the government, this will contribute much to the nationwide ceasefire agreement being signed by the UPWC and the NCCT, according to Leader of the NCCT U Naing Han Tha.

Ye Khonng Nyant, Myat Thanda Maung
National Scrutinization Card issued to eligible citizens in Launglon, Taninthayi Region

DAWEI, (Taninthayi Region), 18 March — With the assistance of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), staff from Launglon Township Immigration and National Registration Department in Dawei District, Taninthayi Region issued National Scrutinization Cards to eligible nationalities on 17 March. They issued the cards free of charge within one day. The activity was supervised by the Taninthayi Region Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Breeding Dr Win Aung. During the day 150 persons and 5 households received their official documents.

Pho Shwe Thun (Dawei)

Workshop on International Standard for Exercise of Police Powers in Mandalay

Mandalay, 18 March — The Myanmar Police Force and the International Committee of the Red Cross jointly organized a workshop on the International Standard for Exercise of Police Powers in the second capital city on 17 March. Thirty police officers from Mandalay Region participated in the workshop from 17 to 19 March. ICRC Representative in Yangon Mr John Erik Jensen discussed topics including management affairs, functions of the ICRC, maintaining law and order, and control of riots.—Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Illegal precious wood seized in Kawlin, Kachin State

Kawlin, (Kachin State), 18 March — Forestry staff from Katha District and Kawlin Township in Kachin State seized nearly 9 tons of hewn Tamalan timber in the early morning of 14 March. The Tamalan (Dulbergia Oliveri) timber was loaded on a six-wheel truck. When the officials, acting on a tip-off, stopped to search the truck, U Pokkhwa was at the wheel but managed to escape. His accomplices Ko Ngé and U Thein Win were arrested. The timber worth K 1.5 million was deemed to have been in the possession of the escapee together with another two people from Wuntho town, Kachin State. Kawlin Police Station filed a lawsuit against them. In February this year, Kawlin Township Forest Department seized about 70 tons of various species of illegal woods, as well as vehicles, chain-saws, motorbikes, home-made guns and sawmill-equipment.

Talks on duties of Golf Referee on 26 March

YANGON, 18 March — Talks on duties of golf referee will be given on 26 March from 9 to 11 am at Yangon Golf Club (Danyingone). As Myanmar Golf Federation is endeavouring for development of Myanmar’s golf standard, the talks is aimed at turning out new generation golf referees. Those who wish to attend the talks may contact 09-973190117 and 09-25422070.

Young Myanmar women participate in ASEAN Youth Program:

Daw Thet Zin Myint and Daw Lwin Kyawt Kyawt San who are members of Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs Association left for Malaysia on 14 March to participate in the ASEAN Youth Program to be held from 15 to 20 March. —MWEA
Thai lawyers call for investigation of bomb suspects’ complaints

BANGKOK, 18 March — A group of Thai lawyers called on Wednesday for an investigation into allegations that four suspects held over a Bangkok bomb attack were tortured while in police custody.

The call came amid growing concern about tough action by the military government to stifle dissent under martial law, which has been in force since a military coup in May.

A small bomb went off last month outside a court in the capital, Bangkok, causing minor damage. It followed similar small twin explosions outside a shopping mall on 1 February.

The blasts are widely believed by the public to signal dissatisfaction with military rule and they raised questions about the durability of an uneasy calm since the coup.

Police said 13 people were arrested in connection with the blast at the court and the group Thai Lawyers for Human Rights said four of them, all men, were tortured while in police custody.

“The suspects were kicked in the back ... Some said they were electrocuted during questioning between 9 March and 15 March,” the group said in a statement.

Police denied the men were tortured.

Among the 13 arrested was a volunteer nurse, Natthida Miwanpa. She had earlier said that she witnessed the shooting of civilians by soldiers during violent political confrontations in 2010.

Police said on Tuesday Natthida was charged with terrorism and was being held at a Bangkok prison.

But he said she was missing for six days before that and New York-based Human Rights Watch group accused the military of holding her in secret.

“Holding a witness to alleged military crimes incommunicado for six days is a profoundly disturbing abuse of authority that has become commonplace under martial law,” said Brad Adams, the group’s Asia director.

The ruling junta, known as the National Council Police and Order, denied holding her.

Junta spokesman Colonel Winthai Suvarée also denied that the military was using martial law to go after its critics.

“The government is not trying to go after those who disagree with its views,” he said. “Only those who cause extreme damage to national security will be kept under military custody.” — Reuters

Indonesia to call off search for AirAsia crash victims

JAKARTA, 18 March — Indonesia will on Sunday end a search for the bodies of 56 people missing from an AirAsia (AIRA. KL) jet that crashed in the Java Sea in December, a national rescue agency official said.

AirAsia flight QZ8501 lost contact with air traffic control during bad weather less than halfway into a two-hour flight from Surabaya in Indonesia to Singapore on 28 December. All 162 people on board the Airbus (AIR.PA) A320 were killed.

“Some of our ships and personnel have been pulled back already and some remain on standby, but officially the operation will be finished on Sunday,” Yusuf Latif, a spokesman for the search and rescue agency, told Reuters.

The flight data and cockpit voice recorders — known as “black boxes” — were recovered two weeks after the crash. Large pieces of the fuselage were also found on the sea floor.

A multi-national rescue effort, led by the Indonesian military and often hampered by bad weather and strong currents, recovered 106 bodies, with 56 unaccounted for.

“Few details of the analysis of the flight recorders have been made public. The National Transportation Safety Committee has revealed that the French first officer was at the controls of the jet just before the accident,” sources told Reuters.

The captain of the was out of his seat conducting an unusual procedure when his co-pilot apparently lost control, but Indonesian authorities said there was no evidence of that.

The AirAsia crash was the latest in a string of accidents to hit Indonesia’s aviation industry, which is among the fastest-growing in the region, and has stepped up pressure on the government and airlines to improve safety.

The final result of the investigation is due in about six months, an investigator said.

Lawyer for Pakistan doctor who helped CIA find bin Laden shot dead

PESHAWAR, 18 March — A Pakistani lawyer under death threats for defending a doctor who helped CIA agents hunt al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was shot dead on Tuesday, police said, and two militant groups claimed responsibility.

Samullah Afridi represented Dr Shakil Afridi, who was jailed in 2012 for 33 years for running a fake vaccination campaign believed to have helped the US intelligence agency track down bin Laden. That sentence was overturned in 2013 and the doctor is now in jail awaiting a new trial.

Samullah Afridi was shot dead on Tuesday as he was returning to his home in the northwestern city of Peshawar, police said. According to media, he had recently returned there from abroad after leaving Pakistan for his safety.

“He was returning home when armed men opened fire. He died on the spot,” police official Jamal Hussain said. A hospital spokesman added that Samullah Afridi was shot twice, in the abdomen and the neck.

Two Pakistan militant groups claimed responsibility for the lawyer’s death. Jundullah, a Taliban splinter group, said: “We killed him because he was defending Shakil, who is our enemy.”

A Taliban faction, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan Jamaatul Ahrar (TTP-JA), later said it had shot him. “Dr Shakil Afridi had spied on our respected and supreme leader Sheikh Osama to the CIA,” TTP-JA spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan said.

“Samullah Afridi had represented his case,” Ehsan said, “that’s why we decided to eliminate him when we can’t approach Dr Shakil.”

US officials have hailed Shakil Afridi as a hero for helping pinpoint bin Laden’s location before a 2011 raid by US special forces in Abbottabad, Pakistan, that killed the al-Qaeda leader after more than a decade of searching for him.

Samullah Afridi stopped representing the doctor last year, saying he had become a target. “I have been receiving threats from various organizations, and because of those threats I even went to Dubai some time back,” he told Reuters TV. “Some organizations do not want us to continue defending this case ... Not only is my life in danger, my family is also in danger. I have therefore decided to quit this case.”

Shakil Afridi’s original sentence damaged ties between Pakistan and the United States that were already strained over the bin Laden raid. Angry US senators withheld $33 million in aid from Pakistan in retaliation. — Reuters

Condition of Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew worsens further: gov’t

SINGAPORE, 18 March — The condition of Singapore’s 91-year-old former leader Lee Kuan Yew has worsened further, the government said on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, the government said Lee’s condition had worsened due to an infection. Lee, regarded as the founding father of modern Singapore, has been supported by mechanical ventilation in the intensive care unit of the state-owned Singapore General Hospital since being admitted with severe pneumonia on 5 February.

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

Kyodo News

Ex-leader Lee Kuan Yew

Ex-leader Lee Kuan Yew

Condition of Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew worsens further: gov’t

SINGAPORE, 18 March — The condition of Singapore’s 91-year-old former leader Lee Kuan Yew has worsened further, the government said on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, the government said Lee’s condition had worsened due to an infection. Lee, regarded as the founding father of modern Singapore, has been supported by mechanical ventilation in the intensive care unit of the state-owned Singapore General Hospital since being admitted with severe pneumonia on 5 February.

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

Kyodo News

Ex-leader Lee Kuan Yew
IMF chief lauds Indian central bank’s efforts in steering economy

IMF chief Christine Lagarde says she welcomes Rajan’s efforts to steer the Indian economy to safer waters and to introduce flexible inflation targeting as a new regime for conducting monetary policy.

Lagarde met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Monday. The IMF chief said she expects the world economy to grow about 3.5 percent this year and 3.7 percent next year, but the outlook differs significantly across countries and regions.—Kyodo News

Pakistan hangs nine as death row convict’s mother begs for mercy

Islamabad, 18 March — Pakistan hanged nine death row convicts on Wednesday, media said, as the mother of a man charged as a child with murder and due to be hanged this week begged the president for mercy.

Wednesday’s hangings bring the number of executions in the past two days to 21, and to 48 since an unofficial moratorium on capital punishment was lifted in December. Twelve were executed on Tuesday.

However, the Interior Ministry said it did not know how many people had been executed in total.

“The ministry does not have consolidated data after the lifting of the moratorium as new cases include all types, including terrorism,” a spokesman said in a text message.

The death sentence cannot be used against a defendant under the age of 18 when the crime was committed. Testimony obtained by torture is also inadmissible. Yet lawyers for Shafiq Hussain say he was just 14 in 2004 when he was tortured into confessing to the killing of a child. He is due to be hanged on Thursday.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif lifted the moratorium on 17 December, a day after Pakistani Taliban gunmen attacked a school and killed 134 students and 19 adults.

The killings put pressure on the government to do more to tackle the Islamist insurgency.

At first, the government said only militants would be executed. But last week it emerged that officials had quietly widened the policy for all prisoners on death row whose appeals had been rejected.—Reuters

South Korea businesses visit North’s factory park to protest wage rise

Paju, (South Korea) 18 March — South Koreans who operate factories in an industrial complex in North Korea went to the park on Wednesday to protest against a North Korean decision to increase wages paid to North Korean workers there.

The Kaesong industrial zone, jointly by the two Koreas, is just on the North Korean side of their heavily fortified border. It is last remaining symbol of economic cooperation between the rival states.

North Korea shut down the complex for five months in 2013, during a period of diplomatic tension, and dialogue between the two sides on its operations have been patchy for years.

“The unilateral change of labour rules is a problem,” Chung Ki-sup, a leader of the council of South Korean companies that have operations in the zone, told reporters, referring to the wage increase.

“But that can be easily resolved when dialogue resumes,” he said before crossing the border.

South Korea has 125 companies in the zone, most of them with medium-sized firms, employing 53,000 relatively cheap North Korean workers.

The complex has operated for a decade but there have been persistent questions about the viability of a project that is subject to political tension between the two Koreas, which remain technically at war.

In September, the North introduced a regulation allowing it to detain South Korean workers if their companies failed to live up to their contracts, if confiscation of property did not cover potential losses.

A South Korean business representative said the rule could hurt investment.

The wage increase and lack of dialogue about it are likely to compound such doubts.

The North Korean agency that supervises the complex demanded an increase of about $3.65 in the minimum monthly wage for its workers, to $74 a month.

South Korea has rejected the demand, saying the unilateral increase violated agreements. North Korea has said it has the sovereign right to raise wages at Kaesong.

Chung said he believed the stalemate over Kaesong was linked to South Korea’s refusal to ban activist groups from launching into North Korea balloons carrying leaflets critical of the North Korean government. The balloons infuriate North Korea.—Reuters

Pro-N Korea group to pay over 200 mil yen a year to rent HQ building

Tokyo, 18 March — The Chongryon group of Korean Residents, a pro-Pyongyang group known as Chongryon, has agreed to pay over 200 million yen ($1.6 million) a year to rent its headquarters building in Tokyo from a real estate firm, sources close to the matter said on Tuesday.

The firm based in Yamanashi Prefecture bought the property for 4.4 billion yen in January from Marunaka Holdings Co that acquired it for 2.21 billion yen through an auction last year.

The Chongryon headquarters building has served as North Korea’s de facto embassy in Japan in the absence of diplomatic relations between Japan and North Korea.

In the absence of diplomatic relations between Japan and North Korea, the group’s decision to move its headquarters building buildinging as long as it pays the rent. The group declined to comment on the matter.

The sources also said the group sold another property in Tokyo to an Osaka-based property company for 1.7 billion yen in January. The asset sale is expected to help pay for the rent.—Kyodo News

US, Japan seek defence guidelines to address new security issues

Washington, 18 March — US and Japanese national security officials agreed on Tuesday that a set of envisioned defence cooperation guidelines should help both governments deal with new challenges appropriately, according to the White House.

President Barack Obama’s foreign policy adviser, and Shoto Haraga, a right-hand man to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on foreign policy, also agreed that the United States, Japan and other Group of Seven industrialized nations should be united in dealing with the Ukrainian crisis.

Rice, the National Security Advisor, and Yachi, a veteran diplomat who heads the National Security Council’s secretariat, met at the White House ahead of Abe’s visit to the United States.

Rice told Yachi that Obama “looks forward to hosting Prime Minister Abe for an official visit next month,” according to the White House.

Japanese government sources said Abe plans to visit the United States in late April or early May but no official itinerary has been announced. The Japanese Prime Minister last traveled to Washington in February 2013.

Rice and Yachi “took note of the progress” that has been made in revising the Guidelines for US-Japan Defence Cooperation, which define the roles of the US military and Japanese Self-Defense Forces in a possible contingency.

The US and Japanese officials “agreed that a successful outcome will ensure that the alliance continues to be fully capable of responding to 21st century security challenges,” the White House said.

Washington and Tokyo are trying to finish revising the guidelines by late April based on the interim report released in October. Rice and Yachi discussed the importance of bilateral cooperation in addressing issues such as North Korea’s development of a nuclear weapon and ballistic missiles as well as a trilateral alliance involving South Korea.

Other topics in the Rice-Yachi meeting included “maritime security in East Asia,” the White House said, apparently referring to China’s claims to disputed islands in the East China Sea and South China Sea. The meeting took place a year after Russia annexed Crimea, southern Ukraine, which drew flak from the G-7 members and other countries.

Rice underscored “the need to maintain G-7 unity in responding to Russian aggression in Ukraine,” the US government said.

Yachi arrived in Washington on Sunday for a four-day stay and met with US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter and Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday. —Kyodo News

South Korea businessman visits North’s factory park to protest wage rise

Paju, (South Korea) 18 March — South Koreans who operate factories in an industrial complex in North Korea went to the park on Wednesday to protest against a North Korean decision to increase wages paid to North Korean workers there.

The Kaesong industrial zone, jointly by the two Koreas, is just on the North Korean side of their heavily fortified border. It is last remaining symbol of economic cooperation between the rival states.

North Korea shut down the complex for five months in 2013, during a period of diplomatic tension, and dialogue between the two sides on its operations have been patchy for years.

“The unilateral change of labour rules is a problem,” Chung Ki-sup, a leader of the council of South Korean companies that have operations in the zone, told reporters, referring to the wage increase.

“But that can be easily resolved when dialogue resumes,” he said before crossing the border.

South Korea has 125 companies in the zone, most of them with medium-sized firms, employing 53,000 relatively cheap North Korean workers.

The complex has operated for a decade but there have been persistent questions about the viability of a project that is subject to political tension between the two Koreas, which remain technically at war.

In September, the North introduced a regulation allowing it to detain South Korean workers if their companies failed to live up to their contracts, if confiscation of property did not cover potential losses.

A South Korean business representative said the rule could hurt investment.

The wage increase and lack of dialogue about it are likely to compound such doubts.

The North Korean agency that supervises the complex demanded an increase of about $3.65 in the minimum monthly wage for its workers, to $74 a month.

South Korea has rejected the demand, saying the unilateral increase violated agreements. North Korea has said it has the sovereign right to raise wages at Kaesong.

Chung said he believed the stalemate over Kaesong was linked to South Korea’s refusal to ban activist groups from launching into North Korea balloons carrying leaflets critical of the North Korean government. The balloons infuriate North Korea.—Reuters
Jerusalem, 18 March — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu won a come-from-behind victory in Israel’s election on Wednesday after tackling hard to the right in the final days of campaigning, including abandoning a commitment to negotiate a Palestinian state.

In a four-day pre-election blitz, Netanyahu made a series of promises designed to shore up his Likud base and draw voters from other right-wing and nationalist parties, including a pledge to go on building settlements on occupied land and saying that there would be no Palestinian state if he is re-elected.

With 99.5 percent of votes counted, Likud had won 30 seats in the 120-member Knnesset, comfortably defeating the Zionist Union opposition on 24 seats, Israeli media said. It amounted to a dramatic and unexpected victory — the last opinion polls published four days before the vote showed the Zionist Union with a four-seat advantage over Likud.

In a statement, Likud said Netanyahu intended to form a new government within weeks, with negotiations already underway with the pro-settler Jewish Home party led by Naftali Bennett, as well as with religious groups. The critical party to get on side will be centrist Kulanu, led by former Likud member Moshe Kahlon, who won 10 seats, making him a kingmaker given his ability to side with either Netanyahu or the centre-left opposition.

“Reality is not waiting for us,” Netanyahu said. “The citizens of Israel expect us to quickly put together a leadership that will work for them regarding security, economy and society as we committed to do and we will do so.” — Reuters

Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu waves to supporters at the party headquarters in Tel Aviv on 18 March, 2015. — Reuters

Brazil’s opposition calls for Rousseff probe in Petrobras scandal

Sao Paulo, 18 March — Brazil’s main opposition party said on Tuesday it would call on the Supreme Court to investigate President Dilma Rousseff’s involvement in a corruption scheme at state-run oil firm Petrobras Brasilio SA.

The motion comes a day after prosecutors charged the treasurer of Rousseff’s Workers’ Party, Joao Vaccari, with corruption and money laundering, saying that Vaccari was aware that donations he sought for the party were bribed money stolen from Petrobras.

Rousseff has denied knowing about corruption at Petrobras as chairwoman of its board from 2003 to 2010 when much of the alleged graft occurred and has urged a thorough investigation.

She is facing a growing wave of anger over the scandal, however. Some 1 million people protested in two dozen cities on Sunday, many calling for her impeachment.

The president of the opposition PSDB party, Aecio Neves, who narrowly lost last year’s presidential election to Rousseff, said in a statement his party would join smaller parties in a Wednesday meeting with Supreme Court Justice Teori Zavascki to ask for the investigation.

The Supreme Court is investigating 34 sitting politicians, including the speakers of both houses of Congress, for allegedly receiving bribe money stolen from Petrobras, but Rousseff is not among them.

Zavascki has previously said there was no evidence to justify an investigation of the president. The Workers’ Party said all its campaign donations are legal.

Prosecutors have secured commitments to return $50 million reais ($154 million) of money funneled off of Petrobras contracts to public coffers through plea bargain deals, but suspect much more was stolen.

Josh Earnest, the White House press secretary, told reporters there is no change in the US position that it will not join the China-led bank.

“It will be important for prospective members of the AIIB to push for the adoption of those same high standards, including strong board oversight and other safeguards,” Earnest said.

Jen Psaki, a US State Department spokeswoman, sought to dismiss the issue in various channels including bilateral ones.

The German Finance Ministry said on Tuesday that the country as well as France and Italy will work “to establish an institution that follows the best standards and practices in terms of governance, safeguards, debt and procurement policies.”

Britain said last week it will work on “ensuring that the AIIB embodies the best standards in accountability, transparency and governance, which will be essential to ensuring the success of the initiative.”

The US is one of 20 other countries, including Thailand, India, Kuwait and Kazakhstan, agreed last year to launch the $50 billion development bank by the end of 2015. The number of countries has since grown while China has said it will re-examine nations announcing participation by the end of this month as the founding members of the bank.

US concerned about other G-7 nations’ plans to join China-led bank

Washington, 18 March — The United States expressed concern on Tuesday about plans by some other Group of Seven countries to join a China-led development bank, while the European countries pledged to work to address issues of governance and other standards.

“I hope before the final commitments are made, anyone who lends their name to this organization will make sure that the governance is appropriate,” US Treasury Secretary Jack Lew told a congressional hearing in reference to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

The United States, as well as Japan, has been cautious about taking part in the bank that has China as the largest shareholder, citing concerns about its ability to screen projects before lending money to make sure that its loans do not result in corruption and overdevelopment.

Lew said in written testimony to the House of Representatives’ Committee on Financial Services that new players in the multilateral development bank project are “challenging US leadership in the multilateral system,” apparently mentioning China.

The US government is worried whether the AIIB can adhere to the high standards that international financial institutions have developed in terms of protection of the rights of workers and the environment, Lew told the committee.

The US finance chief spoke at the committee after China said France, Germany and Italy were going to take part in the AIIB following Britain, which said last week it would do so.

President Rousseff’s Workers’ Party, said on Tuesday that the country as well as France and Italy will work “to establish an institution that follows the best standards and practices in terms of governance, safeguards, debt and procurement policies.”

Brazil’s President Dilma Rousseff reacts during the signing ceremony of the Civil Procedure Code, at the Planalto Palace in Brasilia on 18 March, 2015. — Reuters

Envelope mailed to White House tests ‘presumptive positive’ for cyanide

Washington, 18 March — An envelope mailed to the White House tested “presumptive positive” for cyanide and will undergo more testing to confirm the results, the US Secret Service said on Tuesday.

The agency charged with protecting the president said the envelope, which was received on Monday at the White House Mail Screening Facility, initially tested negative. Biological testing on Tuesday “returned a presumptive positive for Cyanide,” the Secret Service said in a statement, adding the sample was then sent to another facility to confirm the results.

The agency declined further comment, citing the ongoing investigation.

There were no injuries from the envelope, according to media reports.

The Intercept news website, which first reported the incident, said the envelope contained a milky substance and was in a container wrapped in a plastic bag. — Reuters
Thursday, 19 March, 2015

Education, love and nurturing essential for children

By Aung Khin

Children are very delicate, both physically and mentally. They need the care of parents and teachers before they become adults. To ensure their development, they should be nurtured with kindness and love.

A school season is about to end for all children, with many having already completed the academic year. The hot sun is waiting them from outside. Many children from rural areas will not spend their summer holidays playing, but instead will be helping their parents complete the summer harvest. The sun is too hot for these delicate children. Income from these crops would be a source of financial support for their next year of school, but some of their parents, unfortunately, will not ensure that the children return to the classroom next year.

Most families in Myanmar value education and parents generally understand that a lack of education will almost certainly guarantee their children hardship. Nevertheless, low enrolment, poor attendance and high dropout rates are still prevalent in the country. Successive governments have tried to reduce the dropout rate by providing school supplies and textbooks, as well as not charging enrolment fees.

Official statistics between 2006 and 2011 showed the primary school dropout rate in rural areas was 13.90 percent compared to 1.90 percent in urban areas. Despite officially free primary education, many families in poor or remote areas cannot afford additional exercise books and stationery, uniforms, other unexpected fees and pocket money for their children for schooling.

Poverty, poor schooling opportunities and lack of long-term job prospects are pushing children in some areas to leave school even at primary level and risk their wellbeing by becoming child labourers.

The vast majority of child labour is found in rural settings and the informal urban economy, where children are employed by their parents, rather than in factories. According to the International Labour Organization, the number of child labourers globally has declined by more than one third since 2000, while more than half of those engaged in child labour perform hazardous work.

Children working away from their families will yearn for the bosom of their mother if they have the opportunity to dream of their home at night.

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.

--
U Kyi Mun residing in Yangon is a consultant of NAIN Group Capital Co., Ltd.

Human Relations Skills II

By Kyi Mun

Self Management • Authenticity • Reliability • Constructiveness
Managing People • Soft Power • Protective Heart • Firm Mind
General Management Skills • M = Making Things Happen
• A = Accountability
• G = Goal-driven
• I = Interpersonal Relationships
• C = Commitment
General Leadership Skills • P = Persuading
• O = Organizing
• E = Enabling
• T = Teaching
• I = Inspiring
• C = Caring
Marketing (Customer Service) Skills
• To smile
• To be sweet
• To be smart
• To be sincere
• To be spirited
• To be savvy
• To be sizzling
General
• Strive for Win-Win Outcomes
• Thou shall Prefer One Another
• Salesmanship
• All Ends Well, That Ends Well

Win-Win Outcome
Win Win — Win
Win — Lose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effectiveness And Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Effective and Efficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Effective but Inefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ineffective but Efficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ineffective and Inefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Effectiveness means Doing the Right Things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Effectiveness means Goal Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Efficiency means Doing the Things Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Efficiency means High Productivity &amp; Low Wastage of Resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management And Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Good Management &amp; Good Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good Management &amp; Poor Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor Management &amp; Good Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor Management but Good Leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Across all cultures, however, there are distinct differences between being a manager and being a leader:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managers do things right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaders do the right things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers accept the status quo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders challenge the status quo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers ensure it gets into practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders create and articulate a vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers focus on the tactical and the short term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders focus on the strategic and the long term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers tell subordinates what to do and how to do it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders set a direction, obtain buy-in from others, and allow the “how to” to be developed by those handling the implementation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yangon Gold Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buying K662,700 per tical: Selling K663,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandalay Gold Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying K662,600 per tical: Selling K663,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FE RATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USD Buying K 1035: Selling -----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGD Buying K 765: Selling K774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euro Buying K 1,120: Selling K1,160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**LocaL News**

**Ngapali’s natural beauty draws international attention**

**Nay Pyi Taw, 18 March** — Stretching 8 miles from north to south on the western coast of Myanmar, Ngapali beach is renowned for its natural beauty and safety for swimmers. The beach, located in Thandwe Township, Rakhine State, attracts many international tourists, many of whom enjoy diving among coral reefs or surfing.

As the number of tourists rises year by year, flight schedules have increased and new hotels and bungalows have been popping up. The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is taking measures to minimise the environmental impact of the rising visitor numbers, working on conservation together with local authorities and hoteliers. To improve the status of the beach Ngapali beach was upgraded into a town, an airport in Thandwe was expanded, roads to the beach were upgraded and a detour was built. Construction of a new dam and the installation of new power lines have improved living standards for local residents.

**Ngapali’s natural beauty draws international attention**

**Veteran sports writers honoured**

**Mandalay, 18 March** — The Myanmar Sports Writers Association organized the fifth respect-paying ceremony for veteran sports writers on 23 February in Mandalay.

Altogether 18 veteran writers attended the ceremony to take respect. Officials recounted the history of respect-paying ceremonies and outlined plans to expand the association. The younger writers went to the homes of their elders to present them gifts.

One of the veteran writers who took respect was Gyodu Nyunt Maung, who wrote features for the once-famous journal Tagun. He received K 200,000 contributed by the Ministry of Sports, K 100,000 by Myanmar Football Federation and K 200,000 by sports writers plus kind.—Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)

**Open division football tourney to mark 700th anniversary of Sagaing**

**Sagaing, 18 March** — With the sponsorship of retired minister U Khin Maung Myint, men’s and women’s open division football tournaments will be held in the last week of April in Sagaing, upper Myanmar.

The tournaments are to commemorate the 700th anniversary of the founding of Sagaing. Those who wish to participate in the tournaments should contact Sagaing District Sports and Physical Education Department not later than 5 April. The entrance fee is K 30000 per team. The organizers will accept 36 men’s teams and 12 women’s teams. Handsome prizes will be awarded to winners, according to sources. —Tin Maung (Mandalay)

**French trainer leads election reporting course in Myitkyina, Kachin State**

**Myitkyina, 18 March** — It is important to abide by the rights and duties of journalists in election time, said Mr Francois Gerles, a French citizen and coach of the Election Reporting Course, during its opening ceremony in Myitkyina on 18 March.

The five-day course from 16 to 20 March, organized by the Myanmar Journalist Institute, was attended by 15 journalists in Kachin State. During the by-election time in 2012, elections in three townships were cancelled three days before the election date on security grounds. As a consequence, locals are worried that elections cannot be held in all constituencies in Kachin State.

**Northern Shan State enjoys tourism boom**

**Nay Pyi Taw, 18 March** — With tourism booming across Myanmar, parts of northern Shan State have also seen an increase in visitor numbers. Tourists can reach northern Shan State from Yangon by air and car, as well as by train via Mandalay and Lashio. The most attractive view for tourists during their trips from Mandalay to Lashio by train is the Goteik viaduct located between Naungkio and Kyaukme. The viaduct was built in 1903 with a length of 2260 feet and height of 320 feet. In northern Shan State there are numerous tourist attractions, including traditional bamboo ware made by locals, ancient pagodas, hot springs, and an ancient manor of Shan chieftains.—MOHT

**MOHT**
Somali Islamists kill four in cross-border attack on Kenyan town

ISOLO, (Kenya) 18 March — Somali Islamist militants killed at least four people during a raid on a Kenyan town near the border with Somalia, police said on Wednesday.

Hooded gunmen attacked a shop in the northeastern town of Wajir, about 100 km (60 miles) from the Somali border, firing guns and setting off explosions, witnesses said late on Tuesday.

“They locked (people) inside the shop, set it on fire and left. Three died inside while one (died) while being ferried to hospital,” said Mohamed Siyat, a county government official.

The Islamist group Al Shabaab claimed responsibility for the raid. The militants last week also killed several people when they attacked a convoy carrying a regional Kenyan governor, Ali Roba, near the Mandera area bordering Somalia.

The northeastern region stretching from Wajir to the border town of Mandera has often been targeted by al Shabaab, which has vowed to punish Kenya for sending troops into Somalia where they are fighting alongside other African peacekeepers.

Many residents and regional politicians have vented frustration with the government for failing to improve security in a crime-ridden region awash with bandits and gunmen.

 Analysts say the long and porous border with Somalia has made the northeastern region a soft target for al Shabaab, who often retreat into Somalia after raids.—Reuters

---

US, eying Iranian arms in Iraq, warns on sectarian tensions

WASHINGTON, March 18 — The United States is concerned about how heavy Iranian weaponry might be used inside Iraq, including as Iran-backed militia help the offensive to retake the Iraqi city of Tikrit from Islamic State militants, a US official said on Tuesday.

Reuters has previously reported on the alleged presence of Iranian rockets inside Iraq. US officials declined to comment on specific Iranian weaponry after The New York Times reported it might include Fajr-5 artillery rockets and Fateh-110 missiles.

Still, the US official said the potential use of heavy Iranian weaponry would raise questions about the risk of civilian casualties. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, noted extensive US efforts to ensure precision in its strikes. “Our primary concern is how any weapons — artillery, rockets or other systems — are employed and the potential for civilian casualties or collateral damage,” a second US official said, declining to comment specifically on Iranian weapons. The United States has warned that civilian casualties or other abuses by Iraqi forces and Shi’ite militia against Sunni Iraqis could inflame sectarian tensions, which helped pave the way for Islamic State’s advance through Iraq last summer.

US officials are watching with concern as the Iraqi militia and regular forces stage an offensive to retake Tikrit, former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein’s home city. At the State Department, spokeswoman Jen Psaki said the United States has previously acknowledged Iran’s provision of supplies like arms, ammunition and aircraft to forces in Iraq.

“We continue to emphasise that it’s important that actions don’t raise sectarian tensions,” Psaki said, without delving into specifics on Iranian weaponry.

If Iraq’s Shi’ite-led government retook Tikrit it would be the first city clawed back from the Sunni insurgents and would give the government momentum in the next, pivotal stage of the campaign: recapturing Mosul, the largest city in the north.—Reuters

---

A boy looks at a model of an Iranian third-generation Fateh-110 (Conqueror) surface-to-surface missile while visiting a war exhibition held by Iran’s Basij militia and revolutionary guard to mark the anniversary of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88), also known in Iran as the “Holy Defence”, at a Revolutionary Guards military base in southern Tehran on 23 Sept, 2010. Reuters

Militias destroy Iraqi villages, displace thousands: rights group

LONDON, 18 March — Iraqi Shi’ite militias unleashed a campaign of “deliberate and wanton destruction” as they rampaged through dozens of villages last year after driving Islamic State fighters out of the northern town of Amerli, rights activists said on Wednesday.

The militias, along with Iraqi security forces and volunteer fighters, ransacked, torched, bulldozed and blew up thousands of Sunni homes and business, Human Rights Watch said.

Shi’ite militias have teamed up with Iraqi government forces and Kurdish peshmerga fighters to dislodge Islamic State, the hardline Sunni Islamist group which has seized swathes of northern and central Iraq.

But HRW warned that militia abuses were exacerbating sectarian grievances in the deeply divided country.

It said militias and government forces had destroyed over 75 percent of buildings in at least 18 villages surrounding Amerli, including schools, mosques and clinics.

At least 11 men were abducted, the rights group said, but residents reported many others had gone missing.

HRW called for Iraq’s Shi’ite-led government to disband the militias and urged the United States, Iran and other countries supporting its fight against Islamic State (ISIS) to ensure operations did not pave the way for such abuses.

“Iraq can’t win the fight against ISIS’s atrocities with attacks on civilians that violate the laws of war and fly in the face of international decency,” said Joe Stork, HRW’s deputy Middle East and North Africa director.

“Militia abuses are wreaking havoc among some of Iraq’s most vulnerable people and exacerbating sectarian hostilities,” he said.

Shi’ite fighters ride an armoured vehicle in the town of al-Asam on 9 March, 2015. Reuters

US losses drone over Syria, which claims to have brought it down

WASHINGTON, 18 March — The United States lost one of its Predator drone aircraft over northwest Syria on Tuesday, US officials said, as Syrian state media reported its air defenses brought down the spy plane in the government-controlled Latakia Province.

If Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s forces took down the US aircraft — something US officials said was not immediately certain — it would raise the stakes in the US-led bombing campaign against Islamic State militants that began in Syria in late September. The United States has previously described Assad’s air defenses as “passive,” meaning they have not engaged the US-led coalition’s aircraft as American and other planes carry out strikes against militants.

The US airstrike have not targeted Assad’s forces or military infrastructure.

Tuesday’s incident took place sometime around 7:40 pm in Syria, when the United States lost contact with an unarmed MQ-1 Predator aircraft operating over northwest Syria, a US official said. A second US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the aircraft took off from a base in Turkey and a third official confirmed it was operating over Latakia Province.

A fourth US official said the aircraft was destroyed but US officials were not ready to say what happened — much less whether Assad’s forces might have engaged the aircraft. They said the cause of the incident was unclear.

“At this time, we have no information to corroborate press reports that the aircraft was shot down,” said the first US official, who asked to be described only as a defense official.

“We are looking into the incident and will provide more details when available.” It was the first such incident since the US-led coalition began carrying out air strikes against the hardline militant Islamic State group, first in Iraq in August and then in Syria late the next month. But it was not the first loss of a coalition aircraft in Syria. In December, a Jordanian pilot was captured by Islamic State militants after his warplane came down in northeast Syria. The militants released a video in February showing the pilot being burned alive in a cage.—Reuters
Asian business sentiment steady in first quarter as US rate hike fear keeps firms in check

SHANGHAI, 18 March — Concern over a US interest rate hike kept sentiment in check at some of Asia’s biggest firms, as optimism about the outlook for business over the next six months was near steady in the first quarter, a Thomson Reuters/INSEAD survey showed.

The Thomson Reuters INSEAD Asian Business Sentiment Index RACSI was 71 for the March quarter versus 72 three months earlier. A reading above 50 indicates an overall positive view. Companies in India were the most upbeat for the fourth straight quarter, logging 97 on hopes that low inflation and aggressive interest rate cuts will boost the domestic economy. Singaporean firms registered the least positive outlook for the third consecutive quarter in anticipation of the first US rate hike in almost a decade, which could happen as early as June. Local banks are likely to match the hike, making mortgages expensive and pulling down demand for property.

“There is significant risk as people may have different interpretations of movements in interest rates in a way that can cause dramatic changes in financial markets,” said Antonio Fatas, a Singapore-based economics professor at INSEAD. China’s reading rose to 54 from 50, as businesses became more optimistic about their future amid central bank efforts to boost the economic slowdown with lower monetary policy, including successive interest rate cuts since last year.

Optimism slid the most in Australia where firms reported a score of 70 from 85 in the fourth quarter, as falling prices of commodities tempered sentiment in the resource-exporting nation. The poll, by Thomson Reuters, the global business and management school INSEAD, was conducted over the first two weeks of March. Of 111 respondents, 45 percent reported a positive outlook, 51 percent were neutral and 4 percent were negative.

Participating firms included Japanese beverage conglomerate Asahi Group Holdings Ltd (2502.T), South Korean shipbuilder Hyundai Heavy Industries Co Ltd (009540.KS) and Australian building materials maker James Hardie Industries PLC (JHX.N).

Foreign banks may be subject to future UK stress tests

WASHINGTON / LONDON, 18 March — The British units of foreign banks could be required by UK regulators to submit to annual health exams for the first time, banking and industry sources said, potentially bringing Britain’s policies into line with those of the US Federal Reserve.

The UK’s Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) has recently started asking foreign banks to submit data, the sources said, a possible first step towards making them subject to the stress tests, which assess if banks have enough capital to withstand a hypothetical economic crisis.

One of the sources added that British units of US banks were being asked for more data to help a regulator a better understanding of market risk, but it does not necessarily mean that formal stress tests will be required in the near future.

Asked for comment, a Bank of England spokesman said: “We collect data to help inform our understanding of risk profiles, such as those in trading books of investment banks. But this should in no way imply an intention to include foreign firms in the concurrent stress testing.”

The PRA’s deliberations underscore efforts by regulators around the world to step up scrutiny of foreign banks operating in their region, to make sure they are strong enough to stand on their own if their parent group experience troubles.

Action by the PRA could create additional headaches for banks, which have to deal with often opaque tests in multiple jurisdictions, while leaving investors with a muddier picture of their health.

Before the 2008 financial crisis, regulators globally largely relied on their peers abroad to overexamine foreign banks doing business on their turf. That changed after some foreign banks were forced to tap emergency dollar funding from the US central bank during the crisis.

The US units of foreign banks have often fared poorly in stress tests run by the Federal Reserve. This year, the U.S. units of Deutsche Bank (DBKGn.DE) and Spain’s Banco Santander (SAN.MC) were the only two banks out of 31 to fail the test.

The PRA has said it would launch a consultation paper this year to see how it would proceed with its stress testing programme beginning in 2016 but declined to give further details. It has said the stress tests would focus on banks’ ability to withstand severe market shocks and a low interest rate regime. The US regulator has already said it plans to strengthen the 2016 framework.

Sunday’s stress tests will be the first to include foreign banks operating in the UK, with all the top 130 banks by the continent’s regulator. The US regulator, the Federal Reserve (FED), will test 30 of the top 130 banks.

All eight institutions passed the 2015 health check, though Lloyds Banking Group (LLOY.L) and Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS.L) only narrowly exceeded minimum standards for withstanding a severe UK recession and slump in house prices. The exam took place alongside a broader test of Europe’s top 130 banks by the continent’s watchdog.

The PRA has warned its stress tests could get tougher and this year may focus more on risks from overseas markets.

The PRA’s consultation study could lead to proposals to increase the number of banks in the test from 2016 and beyond, including UK units of US and other overseas banks as well as more smaller UK banks, the sources said.

Aspirin offers no benefit for people with rare genetic variants: study

WASHINGTON, 17 March — Regular use of aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) can reduce most people’s colorectal cancer risk but a few individuals with rare genetic variants may not share this benefit, a study suggested on Tuesday.

Previous studies, including randomized trials, demonstrated that NSAIDs, particularly aspirin or NSAID, was associated with a 30 percent reduction in colorectal cancer risk for most people. However, they found no such protective effect among about nine percent of the study participants who had genetic variations on chromosome 15.

What’s more, about four percent of the participants who carried two even rarer genotypes on chromosome some 12 had an increased risk of colorectal cancer. The researchers cautioned that regular use of aspirin or NSAID was associated with a 30 percent reduction in colorectal cancer risk for most people.

The findings were published in the US journal JAMA.
UN forum to adopt 7 goals to mitigate disaster risks

Tokyo, 18 March — Major Japanese companies to raise pay scales as requested by Abe

A Royal New Zealand Air Force C-130 Hercules on Wednesday landed in the capital loaded with tools, generators and sup­plies for sheltering in schools, churches and other sturdy buildings.

The framework is expected to be adopted by the Hy­men United Nations' new frame­work that covered the past decade.

Aid arriving in Vanuatu, but fears persist for remote islands

Tokyo, 18 March — Major Japanese companies notified their labour unions on Wednesday that they will raise their pay scales to conclude this year’s spring wage talks, as requested by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who is eager to boost the economy squeezed by last April’s consumption tax hike to 8 percent. Struggling electronics maker Sharp Corp’s labour union refrained from submit­ting a pay raise demand, effectively withdrawing from the united labour talks of major Japanese electronics firms.

But no numerical targets will be included in the Sendai action plan, confer­ence officials said, despite strong calls among civic groups and nongovern­mental organizations for more specific targets. The UN conference on disaster management was held in the city of Yokohama in 1994 and in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, in 2005. The new frame­work will replace the Hy­ogo Framework for Action that covered the past decade.

The Sendai gathering is the first in a series of cru­cial international meetings this year on development goals and climate change.

Kyodo News

Major Japanese companies to raise pay scales as requested by Abe

Tokyo, 18 March — Major Japanese companies to raise pay scales as requested by Abe

Tatsuro Ueda, a Toyota Motor Corp executive, holds a Press conference in Toyota, Aichi Prefecture on 18 March, 2015, after the automaker formally offered its biggest pay hikes ever to conclude the spring wage talks, raising average monthly pay scales by 4,000 yen. Ueda said the offer was “the maximum the company could offer.” Kyodo News

Aid arriving in Vanuatu, but fears persist for remote islands

Port Vila, 18 March — While relief and recover­ey work is well underway in Vanuatu’s capital Port Vila in the wake of pow­erful Cyclone Pam, people on outlying islands are re­portedly facing shortages of food and fresh water.

The Vanuatu authori­ties say water in the capital is up and running again and all roads on the main island of Efate will be cleared by Thursday, according to Radio New Zealand Interna­tional.

Benjamin Shing, spokesman of the National Disaster Management Of­fice, said roads in Port Vila will be cleared by Thurs­day of all the debris from Cyclone Pam, according to the report.

On the densely pop­ulated southern island of Tanna, which suffered a direct hit by the cyclone, many key roads have been cleared.

A Royal New Zealand Air Force C-130 Hercules on Wednesday landed in the capital loaded with tools, generators and sup­plies for sheltering in schools, churches and other sturdy buildings.

In contrast, people liv­ing on the remote island of Moso in the northwest of Vanuatu are having to drink harmful saltwater fol­lowing the cyclone, which slammed into the archipel­ago late Friday, according to BBC News.

Residents of Moso told the BBC they are still waiting for outside assist­ance to arrive.

Oxfam’s country di­rector in Port Vila, Colin Collett van Rooyen, said flights over some islands have seen people signaling for help, according to AAP.

The aerial assess­ments of Ambrym island reported large white ‘Hs’ marked out on the ground by people signaling for help, and on Tonga is­sues people holding up mirrors also signaling for help,” he was quoted as saying.

Aid agencies have begun trying to access the country’s small outer is­lands, but flooding has stopped their planes from

Kyodo News
CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV BAO XIANG VOY NO (1503)
Consignees of cargo carried on MV BAO XIANG VOY NO (1503) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 19.3.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: M/S BRIGHT SAIL SHIPPING CO., LTD
Phone No: 2301186

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV BANGSAPHAN VOY NO (120)
Consignees of cargo carried on MV BANGSAPHAN VOY NO (120) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 19.3.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.I.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: M/S WONGSAMUT OCEAN SHIPPING CO., LTD
Phone No: 2301186

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Energy
Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprise
Title: Request for Letter of Expression of Interest (LOEI) for Joint Venture Project of No.3 Fertilizer Factory (Kyawza)

1. The Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprise, Ministry of Energy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar hereby announced an invitation to the experienced local and foreign companies in urea production, storage, distribution and marketing to submit the Letter of Expression of Interest (LOEI) for Joint Venture Project of No.3 Fertilizer Factory (Kyawza), Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprise (MPE).
2. The required data for LOEI submission and information related to No.3 Fertilizer Factory are available in the Ministry of Energy website (http://www.energy.gov.mm/index.php/en/information/announcement) and (www.facebook.com/MinistryOfEnergyMyanmar) as well as the following address in person during the office hours.

Director (Planning)
Fax: 067 411124
Phone: 2301185

Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprise
E-mail: MPEHO@mptmail.net.mm
Building No 44, Nay Pyi Taw

3. LOEI shall be submitted to following address in person not later than 12:00 noon at the date of 4.5.2015.

Managing Director
Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprise
Building No 44, Nay Pyi Taw
E-mail: mpeic1@gmail.com

4. No submission of LOEI can be allowed by fax or email or express.

5. Only the qualified LOEI proposals will be invited to conduct the tender process.

Ringleader’s son given 17 years for 2 of 8 Amagasaki murders

Kou, 18 March — The second son of Miyoko Sumida was sentenced to 17 years in prison over the killing of two of the eight people found dead in a series of murders allegedly committed by Sumida’s group in the western Japan city of Amagasaki.

Yutaro Sumida, 28, who had denied his involvement in the murders, was judged to have caused the death of Mariko Nakajima, 26, by violence and abuse after detaining her in a shed on the balcony of an apartment in the city in Hyogo Prefecture between 2005 and 2011, and of forcing Hisayoshi Sumida, 51, to plead for his death during a trip to Okinawa Prefecture, the Kobe District Court found.

He was living in the apartment with his mother and several others. Miyoko allegedly controlled the group through violence and starvation but was never prosecuted after committing suicide in a detention facility in December 2012.

A total of seven defendants were indicted in cases involving the deaths of eight people and the disappearance of three others. Yutaro was charged with seven crimes involving five of the victims, but had only admitted to abandoning the body of one. He denied having any intention to kill the two persons he was found guilty of murdering.

Prosecutors had called for the defendant to be sentenced to 25 years in prison.

The trial, which was presided over by Judge Koji Masuda and involved 32 judges, lasted for 132 days and was the longest trial involving lay judges since the system was launched in May 2009.

Kyodo News
Taylor Swift denies insured leg rumour

LOS ANGELES, 18 March — Country star Taylor Swift has denied reports of insuring her leg for USD 40 million.

The “Blank Space” hitmaker mockingly said she cat owes her the money for scratching one of her legs, reported Aceshowbiz. She posted on Instagram a picture of it and used it to laugh off the recent rumour.

“Great work Meredith,” the singer captioned the pic, referring to her character Dr Meredith Grey, tweeted on Sunday.

Heather Mills slammed Paul McCartney for working with Kanye, Rihanna

NEW YORK, 18 March — The Beatles star Paul McCartney’s ex-wife Heather Mills feels he is not famous anymore and claims the musician is collaborating with young stars Kanye West and Rihanna so that people remember him.

The 47-year-old former model officially ended her six-year-old marriage to the surviving member of The Beatles in 2008, reported Aceshowbiz.

“When I go down the street, I get kids coming up to me — half of them don’t even know who he is,” Mills said during her appearance on Ireland’s “The Late Late Show with Ryan Tubridy”.

“They are all about West. They are all about Rihanna. That’s why he’s got to do songs West, on “Only One” and “All Day” that will be featured on the rapper’s own full-length “So Help Me God”.”

Paul McCartney’s ex slams him for working with Kanye West, Rihanna

LOS ANGELES, 18 March — The Beatles star Paul McCartney’s ex-wife Heather Mills feels he is not famous anymore and claims the musician is collaborating with young stars Kanye West and Rihanna so that people remember him.

The 47-year-old former model officially ended her six-year-old marriage to the surviving member of The Beatles in 2008, reported Aceshowbiz.

“When I go down the street, I get kids coming up to me — half of them don’t even know who he is,” Mills said during her appearance on Ireland’s “The Late Late Show with Ryan Tubridy”.

“That’s why he’s got to do songs with Rihanna and Kanye West, so people remember (who he is).”

Rihanna’s latest song “FourFiveSeconds”, featuring McCartney, 72, has peaked at 4 Number on Billboard Hot 100. McCartney has collaborated with West, 37, on “Only One” and “All Day” that will be featured on the rapper’s own full-length “So Help Me God”.”

Oprah Winfrey to auction contents from Chicago apartment

LOS ANGELES, 18 March — Actress and media magnate Oprah Winfrey is selling antique furniture, paintings, prints, ceramics and memorabilia from her Chicago apartment next month to benefit her education academy for girls in South Africa.

“She is an excellent collector, very well educated,” Hindman said about Oprah. “She has lots of different interests and over the years she has collected all sorts of different things.”

The 571 lots in the Chicago sale on 25 April are mostly from her downtown condominium. Leslie Hindman Auctioneers said proceeds from the auction will go to The Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy Foundation, which supports her education academy for girls in South Africa.

Estimates for the total one-day sale and the complete catalog were not immediately available. In addition to the in-house auction, potential buyers can also place bids online.

Lots from the sale, which will also include china, porcelain, fixtures, clothing and accessories, will be exhibited ahead of the auction from 16 to 24 April. Winfrey, 61, is one of the richest and most powerful celebrities in the United States. Forbes magazine estimates her net worth at $3 billion.

Earlier this month the former talk show host and philanthropist announced she would be closing Harpo Studios, where she filmed “The Oprah Winfrey Show” in Chicago.

She said she will be carrying on the legacy of the studios with programming for her cable television network (OWN), which was created in a joint venture with Discovery Communications Inc., from California.

Winfrey, who was nominated for a best supporting actress Oscar in 1986 for “The Colour Purple,” appeared in the 2014 Martin Luther King biopic “Selma,” and in the civil rights drama “Lee Daniels’ The Butler” in 2013.
World’s top alcohol and drug experts share strategies in Australian

SYDNEY, 18 March — Some of the world’s top alcohol and drug experts gathered at a conference in Brisbane, Australia, on Wednesday to share ideas on how to address common problems associated with substance abuse.

The 7th Australasian Drug and Alcohol Strategy Conference (ADASC) 2015 provides a platform to share experiences between policing jurisdictions, health service providers, policy analysts, academics and industry representatives. The ADASC 2015 facilitates strong partnerships and enables collaboration to minimize the detrimental effects of alcohol and other drugs.

Queensland police commissioner Ian Stewart said drug abuse was a worldwide problem and different nations can share best-practice methods to boost treatment and enforcement.

Stewart said drug abuse has widespread effects for all of society. “Sadly, the misuse of drugs is often a compounding factor in relation to mental illnesses and other challenges that people have,” Stewart said in a statement.

“The misuse of substances certainly creates a complexity that our people have to deal with and whilst we provide the training and the equipment, the difficulty is that our officers are sworn to protect the community and put themselves in harm’s way on occasions.”

Conference organizers said ADASC 2015, which runs until Friday, will encourage, develop and foster inter-agency partnerships and collaboration within and across borders. — Xinhua

MADRID, 18 March — Spanish scientists said on Tuesday that remains found under a Madrid convent are likely to include those of “Don Quixote” author Miguel de Cervantes, one of the world’s most celebrated writers.

Nearly 400 years after his death, the quest to find Cervantes had led investigators deep into the sub-soil of a 17th century convent.

Some of bones dug up in recent months almost certainly belong to the writer, they said.

“We believe that some of the remains of Miguel de Cervantes are among the fragments,” forensic anthropologist Francisco Exteberria told a news conference.

Investigators may never be able to guarantee with absolute certainty that it was his body and DNA tests would be tricky, the experts said. Cervantes had a sister who is buried near Madrid, but only tiny bone fragments remain of her body.

Cervantes — whose masterpiece about an errant, daydreaming knight and his faithful servant Sancho Panza has delighted readers around the world — had requested to be buried in the convent. The Trinitarian religious order had helped to pay a ransom to release him from slavery after he was captured by Moorish pirates.

He died in 1616 — the same week as William Shakespeare. But the exact location of his tomb was lost in a subsequent rebuilding of the convent.

Historians hope to establish a burial site for Cervantes, considered the father of the modern novel, to attract literary pilgrims and tourists.

Madrid mayor Ana Botella said on Monday that authorities were looking into the possibility of opening up the site to visitors. “We’ve contributed a little bit to our history today,” she said.

Investigators began their search almost a year ago in the cloistered baroque convent, still home to a dozen elderly nuns.

They recently found bone fragments and as well as a dilapidated piece of a wooden coffin with the letters “M” and “C” on it.

None of the bones showed signs of the injuries Cervantes was known to have sustained during his life, including lesions to his left arm when he fought in the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, the experts said.

The Cervantes search takes place after a similar quest in Britain, where investigators found the remains of medieval monarch King Richard III in 2012 under municipal car park. He will be reburied in a ceremony next week. — Reuters

Florida manatee population shows signs of recovery, maybe

ORLANDO, 18 March — A record 6,063 manatees were sighted in Florida’s coastal waters during February’s annual headcount, demonstrating the success of conservation efforts for the slow-moving sea cow which once numbered in the hundreds, state wildlife experts said on Tuesday.

But advocates for the endangered manatee cautioned that near-perfect conditions for the headcount may have helped push the number higher than ever, said Holly Edwards, a biologist for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

She added that the number by itself doesn’t determine the need for continued federal protections. “The need is not based on numbers of manatees. It’s based on whether the threats to manatees have been adequately addressed,” Edwards said.

Patrick Rose, executive director of the Save the Manatee Club, said the fact that manatees in Florida have scars from encounters with boats demonstrates the need for protection.

Manatees have been on the US Endangered Species list since it was created in 1973. Hunting depleted the population a century ago, Rose said.

One environmental group last week filed notice it plans to sue federal wildlife officials on charges of violating the Endangered Species Act, for failing to properly protect manatees.

The Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility wants to ban so-called “swim-with” tours that attract swimmers to shallow warm-water lagoons to pet resting manatees.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service in February announced rules to restrict swimmers, canoes and kayaks in certain springs where manatees retreat during cold weather to protect the mammals from bumps and injuries. — Reuters

Forensic archaeologist Francisco Exteberria (C), historian Francisco Marin (R) and forensic anthropologist Almudena Garcia said on Tuesday that remains of Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes were found in Madrid on 17 March, 2015. — Reuters

Orlando officials said on Tuesday that the March 18 record for the world’s most celebrated manatee population was the result of good weather conditions.

The US fish and wildlife service reported 6,063 manatees in Florida’s coastal waters. The mark broke the previous record of 5,285 manatees set two years ago.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service also reported a record number of 1,184 manatees in the waters near Palm Beach County.

The agency said the unusually high number of manatees is a sign that conservation efforts are paying off.

The Florida manatee population has been on the rebound since it was declared an endangered species in 1967. But the species remains vulnerable to cold weather and human activities.

Overall, the number of manatees has grown from just 250 in 1940 to 6,063 in 2015.

The maximum number of manatees recorded in Florida was 9,545 in 2012.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service estimates there are about 7,000 manatees in the wild. — Reuters

A Florida manatee interacts with River Venturers’ Captain Mike Birns in the Three Sisters Springs in Crystal River, Florida in this 15 Jan, 2015, file photo. — Reuters
Federer, Nadal advance at Indian Wells

Indian Wells, Calif — Roger Federer earned a modicum of revenge against Andreas Seppi in a 6-3, 6-4 triumph that advanced the four-time champion to the fourth round of the BNP Paribas Open on Tuesday.
Federer lost to the Italian at the Australian Open in January but allowed no such repeat as he lost just one service game and needed 82 minutes to beat Seppi and advance to fourth round.
Rafa Nadal also advanced with a sloppy triumph over American Donald Young 6-4, 6-2.
Nadal, a three-time champion at Indian Wells, looked out of sorts in the opening set slamming an easy overhead into the net to give Young an early break and then later double-faulting to hand over another

But the 47th ranked Young was not better at finding the target saving just two of eight break points as a first-pumping Nadal walked off Stadium court at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden with the victory.
While the opening set was a comedy of unforced errors the second saw Nadal flash some of his top form as he raced to a 5-1 lead closing out the match in a tidy 80 minutes.
“It’s true that I had a few mistakes. I was able to find solutions,” Nadal told reporters. “I’ve played a lot of good tournaments here, good results. ‘I am confident and I hope that tomorrow I can play a good match.’
Ninth seeded Czech Tomas Berdych had earlier kicked off another sunny day of action with a straight-forward 6-4, 6-2 win over American Steve Johnson.
Jack Sock, however, will carry the American flag into the round of 16 after rallying past 15th seeded Spaniard Roberto Baustista Agut 3-6, 6-3, 6-2.
France’s 13th seed Gilles Simon scored a formidable 6-2, 7-5 victory over German qualifier Michael Berrer while Czech Lukas Rosol was a 6-4, 6-7 (4), 7-6 (3) winner over Dutchman Robin Haase, while Spain’s Tommy Robredo beat 11th seed Grigor Dimitrov 6-4, 1-6, 7-5 in the final match to end.

Rafael Nadal (ESP) returns the ball during his match against Donald Young (USA) in the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden on 17 March, 2015.—REUTERS

Tearful Pennetta stuns Sharapova, Serena wins

Indian Wells, Calif — Maria Sharapova fell victim to an emotional Flavia Pennetta, who burst into tears before regaining her composure to stun the second seed 6-3, 6-3, 6-2 at the BNP Paribas Open on Tuesday.
Italy’s Pennetta, the defending champion at Indian Wells, left the court momentarily after breaking down following her first set loss. “Sometimes woman have these moments. (I) just go and let everything out, screaming...” Pennetta told reporters. “I just breathe and just let it pass.”
When the 15th seeded Pennetta returned she seized the momentum, going on to win 10 of the last 13 games to blaze past the two-time champion Sharapova and into the last eight.
Sharapova said she was unaware of Pennetta’s emotional outburst and had struggled of her own, the Russian finishing with 42 unforced errors and 11 double faults.
“Maybe I wasn’t playing my best tennis but I was competitive enough,” Sharapova said. “I just wasn’t able to step up in the key moments.”

Earlier, top seed Serena Williams overcame a wobbly start to see off a determined Sloane Stephens 6-7(3), 6-2, 6-2 and move into the last eight.
Williams, playing her third match at Indian Wells after deciding to end a 14-year boycott of the event where she had suffered alleged racist abuse, enjoyed plenty of support but struggled early to find her form.
Stephens, who reached the quarter-finals a year ago, looked ready to return to the last eight after breaking Williams twice to open the match but in the end there was no denying the world number one as she extended her winning run to 14 matches.
“I don’t feel like I need to come here and win the trophy,” Williams told reporters. “I feel like this is more than I have ever imagined doing. I never imagined even having an opportunity to come back and win it again.”
I feel like I have been a champ here, and I’m really happy with every match that I win and every result. For me it’s all icing on the cake.”

Myanmar U-20 and U-22 to meet Malaysia U-22 on 19 and 22 March

YANGON, 18 March — The Myanmar U-22 team, currently in training for the AFC U-23 Championship, and the Myanmar U-20 team, preparing for the U-20 World Cup, will play matches against the Malaysia U-22 team in Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon.
On 19 March at 4 pm, Myanmar U-20 will play the guests and on 22 March, Myanmar U-22 will meet them at the same time. The matches will be broadcast live from Myanmar Radio and Television, News Channel, Entertainment Channel and Radio Myanmar.—ANA

Myanmar U-22 team players participate in a team training session.

Atletico win shootout to send Leverkusen packing

Atletico Madrid stay on course for a second straight Champions League final appearance by beating Bayer Leverkusen 1-0 on Tuesday and then winning a nerve-jangling penalty shootout to reach the last eight.
Leverkusen were last month’s first leg in Germany 1-0 and a goal from Atletico midfielder Mario Suarez in the 27th minute of a finely-balanced absorbing return match left the teams locked at 1-1 after extra time.
Both sides failed with two penalties before visiting striker Stefan Kiessling fired his side’s fifth spot kick over the crossbar to give the hosts a 3-2 shootout victory and send the fans thronging the Calderon into ecstasy.
It was Atletico’s first shoot-out triumph in four attempts in European competition and earned them a place in Friday’s quarter-final draw.
“What defines us is that we are a team,” said Suarez who also netted a penalty in the shoot-out.
“We don’t care who we get in the next round,” he told Spanish television. “It will be one of the best and nobody will want to play us.”

Roared on by the home support, Diego Simeone’s men came storming out of the blocks but Leverkusen refused to be intimidated and Suarez’s deflected effort that went in off defender Omer Toprak was their first shot. It was more of the same in the second half with a fired-up Atletico pressing forward without really threatening and a well-organised Leverkusen looking to hit back on the counter attack.
Atletico playmaker Arda Turan fired over with a volley on the run in the 69th minute after good work down the left from Antoine Greizmann and a Koke free kick evaded everyone and almost sneaked inside the post a minute later. The players clearly tired and chances were few in extra time.
Atletico midfielder Raúl Garcia had the clearest chance of the 108th minute when he blasted an angled shot straight at keeper Bernd Leno while Leverkusen captain Simon Rolfes lashed a long-range effort just wide in the 111th.—REUTERS