Business confidence in Myanmar still robust: ADB

By Ye Myint

Business confidence in Myanmar remains robust, as indicated by a 10 percent increase in company registrations in the first nine months of the 2014 fiscal year, the Asian Development Bank said in its assessment of the country’s economy. Myanmar saw foreign investment topping US$6.6 billion between April and December last year, up from $4 billion for the full year of 2013, the ADB said in its report released on Tuesday.

The report said telecommunications represented almost one third of total investment, followed by oil and gas at 24 percent with a $400 million increase in gas exports, reaching $2.1 billion in the first half of the 2014 fiscal year. Real estate made up 18 percent, hotels 13 percent and manufacturing 8 percent, with an average of one new garment factory opening per week in 2014.

Moreover, growth in services was boosted by a surge in tourist arrivals from 2 million in 2013 to an estimated 3.1 million last year, it added.

The report attributed rapid economic growth in the country’s policy reforms laid down for stability and peace. He responded to queries raised by the delegation members, who were students doing a master’s degree on international policies.

President U Thein Sein was accompanied by Union Ministers Lt-Gen Ko Ko, U Wunna Maung Lwin, U Soe Thane, U Myint Hlaing, Dr Daw Khin San Yi and Dr Ko Ko Oo, and officials.

Art exhibition looks at Yangon’s heritage

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

Yangon, 26 March — An exhibition showcasing the work of Yangon artists, with a focus on the city’s heritage, opened Wednesday at River Ayeyawady Gallery here.

“Live in Yangon” runs from 25 to 31 March, with more than 30 paintings by eight young artists in a variety of media. The one-week event looks at the history of Yangon and the everyday lives of its residents, Artist Min Thurein told The Global New Light of Myanmar.

Some paintings touch on themes of material wealth and morality.
Union Finance Minister explains salary increase for government employees at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

**NAY Pyi Taw**, 26 March — Finance Union Minister U Win Shein explained the section of expenditure reduction included in the union budgets bill at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw here on Thursday.

According to the union minister, over K 8 billion was reduced from the budgets of the offices of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw, the constitutional tribunal and 14 ministries.

In connection with increased salaries for government employees, he said the new salaries range from K 120,000 in minimum to K 500,000 in maximum.

The gap between the lowest and the highest salaries is 4.2 times, with the union minister saying that separate announcements will be made on new rates of salaries for pensioners and other fringe benefits for government staff assigned in remote areas.

Dr Kan Zaw, Union Minister for National Planning and Economic Development, briefed the parliament on the first five-year national development plan from 2011-2012 to 2015-2016, which is part of the 20-year all-round national development project from 2011-2012 to 2030-2031.

The first five-year plan includes rural development and poverty reduction, anti-corruption, reinforcement of rule of law, reconstruction of the country’s economic institutions, state-owned investments, citizen investments, foreign investments and control of inflation.—**MNA**

### Pyithu Hluttaw

Health Department upgrades YGH with technical assistance of local and foreign organizations

**Deputy Minister for Health Dr Win Myint.**—**MNA**

**Deputy Minister for Sports U Thaung Htaik.**

**NAY Pyi Taw**, 26 March — With regard to the question on arrangements for opening Sports University raised by U Min Swe of DaikU constituency, Deputy Minister for Sports U Thaung Htaik replied that the university will be opened in 2016-17 fiscal year depending on budget in 2015-16 FY at the 34th day session of Pyithu Hluttaw Thursday.

U Min Swe of DaikU constituency asked about upgrading of Yangon General Hospital. Deputy Minister for Health Dr Win Myint explained that the Yangon General Hospital upgrading and renovation committee was formed with 12 members to upgrade the facility with technical assistance of former minister of Department of Health Mr. Lord Darzi of England, trustee Dr Michael Maret-Crosby of Rangoon General Hospital Reinvigoration Fund of England, Robin Cross, Ian Goodfellow, and Louise Hansen Yangon Heritage Trust of the UK, Myanmar Engineering Society, Myanmar Integrated Engineer Group, Quality Control and Nikki Group.

Health Department allotted K5 billion in 2013-14 FY and K4.5 billion in 2014-15 FY for upgrading the YGH. Up to 4 February, a five-storey building has been completed by 100 percent while a cyclotron PET/CT, emergency and out-patient ward, main building, building for O2Plan, medical store, 1,000-KVA transformer and lecture hall are under construction.

The Hluttaw invited MPs to discuss the bill on rights of persons with disabilities sent by Amyotha Hluttaw with amendments.

—**MNA**

### Amyotha Hluttaw

Amyotha Hluttaw approves bill amending national education law

**NAY Pyi Taw**, 26 March — Chairman of Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee U Khin Maung Yi read out the findings and remarks of the committee over the bill amending national education law at the 35th day session of Amyotha Hluttaw on Thursday.

The speaker of the Amyotha Hluttaw sought paragraph by paragraph approval for the bill from the Hluttaw.

Deputy Minister for Education Dr Zaw Min Aung also sought the approval for the bill and the session approved it.—**MNA**

### Union SWRR Minister signs book of condolences for demise of Singapore’s former PM Mr. Lee Kuan Yew

**Yangon**, 26 March — Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Daw Myat Myat Ohn Khin signed the book of condolences for the demise of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister of Singapore, at the Singaporean Embassy to Myanmar at No. 236 in Bahan Township, here, on Thursday.—**MNA**

**Art exhibition looks . . . .**

(from page 1)

according to 25-year-old artist Myo Swe Thein, who said, “Accumulation of wealth leads to a decline in values.”

“Apart from an acrylic painting, all paintings on display at the gallery are on sale, with prices ranging from US $200 to $2,000,” Min Thurein said.

Some of the artists have plans to hold solo shows in Yangon later this year to gain greater exposure for their work.

The gallery is located on 35th Street (Middle Block) in downtown Yangon.

**GNM**

An art work depicts view of Yangon City.
Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham honours nationwide immunization campaign

Nay Pyi Taw, 26 March — Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham attended the felicitation ceremony for the Nationwide Measles-Rubella Mass Immunization Campaign in Nay Pyi Taw on Thursday. Also present at Myanmar International Convention Centre (2) were union ministers, deputy ministers, members of the National Health Committee, representatives of the WHO, UNICEF, UN agencies, and international and local non-governmental organisations.

In his speech, the vice president said the government has been fulfilling the needs of citizens by giving priority to preliminary healthcare coverage, education standards, drinking water and electricity supply, transportation, and poverty reduction.

After the government increased spending on health in fiscal 2013-14, the free healthcare system was introduced in hospitals and clinics, allowing the public to spend 60 to 80 percent less on treatment, according to the vice president.

The government aims to raise the life expectancy of citizens equally regardless of region and social status, with immunization to reduce the death rate of children under five an important part of achieving this goal, the vice president added.

Myanmar was able to reduce the death rate of children under five to 43 per 1,000 and the coverage of programmes reached 88 percent of the country including self-administered zones, relief camps and remote areas thanks to various immunization programmes, he said.

The vice president pointed out achievement milestones of the programmes and said the government aimed to reduce measles in 2020 and introduce immunization for rubella in 2015, which was successfully carried out in January and February 2015.

The immunization programme covered 95 percent of the country, the vice president said, thanking the organisations that helped make it a success including GAVI Vaccine Alliance, the WHO, UNICEF, NGOs, the Ministry of Education, and the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association.

The vice president and the union minister for health presented certificates of honour to the organisations at the ceremony.—MNA

ASEAN virtual learning resources centre initially launched in Ngwehsaung

Ngwehsaung, Ayeyawady Region, 26 March—As part of the 13th Senior ASEAN Officials Responsible for Information Meeting, the ASEAN Virtual Learning Resources Centre (AVLRC) was initially launched at Ngwehsaung Yacht Club and Resort on Thursday, according to officials.

Union Minister for Business confidence in Myanmar...

(from page 1)

stronger expansion through the forecast period.

The ASEAN urged Myanmar to maintain the stability and momentum of reform that underpins the growth.

Since ending its isolation and establishing democratic practises, Myanmar has undertaken a wide array of reforms, including opening up the country to the international business community.

After seeing significant economic reform for four years, many development challenges of improving infrastructure, strengthening governance and public sector capacity, developing human capital, building a dynamic private sector, revitalizing agriculture and reducing poverty remain for the country, the ADB pointed out in the report.—GNLM

Constitutional Review Committee discusses amendments to Schedules 1 and 2 of 2008 Charter

Nay Pyi Taw, 26 March—The Myanmar Constitutional Review Committee met here on Thursday to discuss schedules 1 and 2 of the 2008 Charter, according to officials.

Union Minister U Soe Thane, also Chairman of the MCRC, stressed power sharing among regions and states, putting emphasis on resource sharing given current situations. According to Union Minister U Tin Naing Thein, who is also MCRC’s vice chairman, President U Thein Sein has called for speedy amendments to the two tables, which involves changing and rewriting existing laws by respective legislative bodies.

Union Minister U Hla Tun, also MCRC’s vice chairman, pointed out the need to release notifications, rules and regulations for prescribed laws, put forward laws to be amended to Hluttaw, and enact necessary new laws.—MNA

Government announces pay raises for civil workers

Nay Pyi Taw, 26 March—The Ministry of Finance has announced that it has increased the salaries of government workers as of 1 April this financial year.

The announcement signed by Union Minister U Win Shein was made on 25 March, following a government meeting the same day.

The pay rises were part of the government’s efforts to raise the standard of living of its employees, the union minister said in the announcement.

The new pay scales, some of which doubled, will revoke the allowance of fringe benefits the ministry has rendered to all civil servants since 2012.

Separate announcements will be made for the pension pay rise of the retirees and other expenditures for staff working in remote areas.

Under the new scale, the lowest monthly salary of K 75,000 will become K 120,000, while the highest monthly salary of K250,000 will come to K500,000.—MNA

Tele-plays honour Armed Forces Day

Nay Pyi Taw, 26 March—In honour of 70th Anniversary of Armed Forces Day, Shae Hsaung cinema in Yangon will show the tele-plays entitled Father and Sons; Like Father, Like Son; Archive of Stars; and Mother of Good Sons while Myo Gon Yaung cinema in Mandalay will present the tele-play entitled Archive of Stars on 27 March.—MNA
More cars, illegal parking worsen Mandalay’s traffic woes

Mandalay, 26 March — Due to an increasing number of vehicles, roads in downtown Mandalay are congested every day, with the problem made worse by illegal parking on road-sides.

To combat congestion, the Mandalay City Development Committee is carrying out projects to expand roads, build overpasses and open some streets to one-way traffic.

The Myanmar Police Force has assigned more than 250 members of the Traffic Police to solve the congestion problem in Mandalay.

“Traffic blocks occur at the corner of 26th and 80th streets in downtown Mandalay from the early morning to evening. The growing number of vehicles is one of the problems,” a local resident said.

More than 700,000 motorcycles have been registered at the Directorate of Road Administration in Mandalay Region up to the end of February 2015, according to a recent regular session of Mandalay Region’s Hluttaw.

The department has registered 836,385 vehicles, including 77,563 cars and 772,522 motorcycles.

Mandalay City’s seven townships are home to more than 1.72 million people.

While officials are striving to ease traffic congestions, local people need to abide by traffic rules, a driver said.

Aung Ye Thwin

Five-member committee endorses issuance of citizenship scrutiny cards

Mandalay, 26 March — A five-member committee recommended issuance of citizenship scrutiny cards to local ethnic people in Mandalay Region who did not have all of the documents required for the ID.

Some people lack the knowledge to systematically store their important documents on background history of family to be used in making IDs, making it difficult to process their applications.

To be able to solve these problems, a five-member committee was set up led by the head of Township INRD and also including one representative each from the Township Planning Department, Township Police Force, Township Health Department and a village or ward administrator.

With the endorsement of the committee, DINR issued the ID cards. According to the Moe Pwint Project, the Department of Immigration and National Registration needs to issue the CSC to ethnic people within two days from the time of application.

Aung Ye Thwin

BG and Woodside to invest US$ 1 bn in Myanmar’s energy sector

Nay Pyi Taw, 26 March — UK-based BG Group and Australia’s Woodside Petroleum will invest US $1.08 billion in Myanmar’s oil and gas sector, the EBR energy business review reported on 24 March.

After securing the rights to shallow and deepwater blocks off the coast of Rakhine State in 2013, the two companies have now signed production sharing contracts for the blocks.

“Operations for the shallow water blocks will take over $545 million and deepwater blocks will cost more than US$ 535 million,” an official from the Ministry of Energy, who asked not be named, said.

“Rakhine basin is an emerging oil and gas province in Myanmar that fits very well with Woodside’s proven capabilities in deepwater exploration,” Woodside Global Exploration executive vice-president Phil Loader said.

Kyaw Htike Soe

Palethwe paddy produces 190 baskets per acre in Kawa Tsp

Kawa, 26 March — A ceremony to harvest a model plot of Palethwe hybrid paddy on a 100-acre farm was held in Khamonkangyi Village, Kawa Township, Bago Region, on 24 March.

Head of Bago Region Department of Agriculture U Hla Myint explained extended sawn acreage of Palethwe paddy, production of quality paddy seeds of Palethwe species, and good agriculture patterns for local farmers to boost production.

Staff of the Department of Agriculture, Department of Settlement and Land Records Department and Agricultural Mechanization Department participated in the paddy harvesting ceremony. After the process, the model plot produced 190 baskets of paddy per acre.

Shwe Phone Aung (Bago)
India to hold India-Africa Summit in October

NEW DELHI, 26 March — India will hold a five-day ‘India-Africa Summit’ later this year, where nearly 1,000 delegates will be invited, the Ministry of External Affairs has said.

The summit will begin on 26 October and leaders from some 54 countries are expected to attend, the External Affairs Ministry officials said on Wednesday evening.

The meeting between the heads of state and government will take place on 29 October and bilateral meetings are being scheduled on 30 October, Navtej Sarna, secretary (West) of the ministry, told the media.

The summit was earlier slated for December last year, but had to be canceled due to Ebola outbreak in Africa.—Xinhua

China does not seek dominant role in AIIB

BEIJING, 26 March — Unlike the United States with its preponderant presence in existing global lending bodies, China, despite its status as the initiator of the Asian Investment Bank (AIIB), does not seek a dominant role in the institution’s decision-making.

Following a report by the Wall Street Journal that said China has proposed to forgo veto power at the AIIB to attract more countries to join the new bank, a senior Chinese finance official and a foreign ministry spokesperson both said it is a false proposition to say China seeks or relinquishes veto power.

As an inclusive multilateral development bank, the AIIB has been keeping its gate open for all members of the international community, and a growing membership means that the stakes held by each member will be diluted.

The recent wave of enthusiasm among Western countries to join the Beijing-headquartered bank is by no means the result of certain “lure” offered by China but out of the realization that the new bank has a bright future: given factors such as China’s rich experience in infrastructure development, the enormous gap in fund needed to break the infrastructure bottleneck in Asia as well as Asia’s growing gravity in the global economy.

The upbeat mood surrounding the China-initiated bank is also partially due to the frustration over long-waited reforms in existing global lenders such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The distribution of voting power in these organizations, which used to be the fundamental pillars of the Bretton Woods System, has long been considered outdated as it no longer reflects the reality of the global economic landscape.

Since the onset of the 2008 financial crisis, the World Bank and the IMF have embarked on reforms to give emerging economies a larger say, but apparently such efforts is not to the liking of the United States, which wields de facto veto power in both organizations.

A proposal by the IMF in 2010 to increase quotas for under-presented members could not be implemented as of today, thanks to failure of the US Congress to ratify the draft. As such, the AIIB will be a complement rather than a competition for existing development banks, the emergence of the institution will be a great incentive for reforms at the World Bank and the IMF.

Instead of capping on the haggling AIIB, it is better for Uncle Sam to focus on promoting reforms in the World Bank and the IMF, otherwise it would not take long before he finds himself in a big playhouse but with few playmates.—Xinhua

Vietnam industrial zone accident kills 14, 30 injured

HANOI, 26 March — Vietnamese soldiers and police joined a rescue mission on Thursday searching for survivors after a huge scaffolding collapsed, killing 14 workers and injuring 30 in central Vietnam, the government and state television said.

Two of the dead workers are still trapped under the rubble of the structure that collapsed on Wednesday night in the Vung Ang economic zone of Ha Tinh Province. All the victims are Vietnamese, state-run Vietnam Television (VTV) said.

Rescuers were working urgently to help the victims, Deputy Chairman Dao Quoc Khanh of the provincial People’s Committee said in the broadcast.

Many of the injured were in hospital in critical condition, VTV said. It showed pictures of rescue workers digging through the rubble of the collapsed steel structure.

The accident happened at a seaport project that is part of a complex owned by Taiwan’s Formosa group. The workers are from a Vietnamese sub-contractor hired by Samsung C&T Corp (000830.KS), a unit of South Korea’s Samsung Group, the state-run Thanh Nien newspaper said.

“At the construction site, there were thousands of workers, so the number of workers in distress is not yet accurately calculated,” Pham Tran De, deputy head of the zone’s management board told the online VnExpress newspaper.

The incident was the latest setback for the Vung Ang economic zone, which was hit by rioting and arson attacks on facilities employing Chinese workers last year, as anti-China sentiment erupted in the wake of a maritime territorial row.
Ceremony to commemorate victims of slavery held in New York

Sam Kutesa (standing), president of the United Nations General Assembly, addresses the ceremony at the UN headquarters in New York on 25 March, 2015, to unveil a memorial, the Ark of Return, to the victims of slavery and the Transatlantic slave trade. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon (4th from L) is seen in the back. — KYODO NEWS

N Korea warns against US missile defence system in S Korea

BEIJING, 26 March — North Korea said on Thursday the possible deployment of an advanced anti-ballistic missile system in South Korea to stop creating a new Cold War environment.

A Foreign Ministry statement, carried by the official Korean Central News Agency, claimed that the US plan is aimed at preparing for a pre-emptive strike at the country and creating favourable conditions for containing China and Russia.

The United States is considering introducing the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system in South Korea to counter North Korea’s nuclear and missile threats.

Military helicopter falls in Central Vietnam, at least three soldiers injured

HO CHI MINH CITY, 26 March — At least three Vietnamese soldiers were injured on Thursday when a military helicopter fell down over the runway on Phu Quy island, central Binh Thuan Province, about 1,150 south of capital Hanoi.

About 9 am local time on Thursday, a MI-8 helicopter fell down from the height of 9-10 metres over the runway located in the military zone on Phu Quy island, causing the injury of three soldiers. They were immediately transported to hospital, local VNExpress quoted Ta Minh Hnat, deputy chairman of Phu Quy district, as saying.

There are eight people aboard the helicopter when the accident occurred, said the district official, adding that the helicopter’s tail was broken and blew 30 metres away, while debris broke glass windows and walls of houses nearby.

Philippines pushes for single e-commerce platform within ASEAN

MANILA, 26 March — The Philippine Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said on Thursday that it will propose a single e-commerce platform for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) within the ASEAN in the upcoming Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) ministerial meeting to be held in Boracay Island.

The ministerial meeting dubbed as “APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade” to be held in May will discuss issues affecting MSMEs and the way they do business across the ASEAN.

“We already have ideas we can agree on identifying e-commerce platform to be used by MSMEs across APEC economies,” DTI secretary Gregory L. Domingo said.

The proposed platform outlines customs rules and procedures and regulations for the rules of origin (ROO). “MSMEs are having a hard time exporting. A single platform wherein they can book their sales and with links to logistics will boost MSME trade across the region,” said Domingo.

The Philippines will suggest an MSME with shipments of 2,000 US dollars or less be exempt from the ROO, since ROO rules apply to countries of regions with existing free trade agreements.

Domingo pointed out that many of the MSMEs see the influx of goods and services in their own market but find it very difficult to take advantage of the free trade agreements because of the very cumbersome rules and procedures.

Chinese police raid office of prominent NGO: co-founder

BEIJING, 26 March — Chinese police officers raided the office of a prominent non-governmental organization in Beijing this week, seizing laptops and details of contacts, its co-founder said on Thursday, the latest target of China’s crackdown on activists.

Lu Jun, co-founder of Yarenping, an anti-discrimination NGO, said about 20 police officers broke into its offices in the early hours of Tuesday, taking away financial receipts, project contacts and several computers and laptops.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has overseen a broad crackdown on the country’s rights community since he took office in 2013, in what some groups call the worst suppression of dissent in two decades.

Lu said before the search, police had taken his colleague, a man named Cao, into custody for several hours and entered the office with Cao. Cao had been involved in a project on public interest law and has since fled Beijing, according to Lu. Lu said he believed the raid was linked to his calls for the release of five women activists, who were detained just over two weeks ago, apparently for planning to demonstrate against sexual harassment on public transport.

“I feel the message is that the police want to suppress my calls for solidarity with these women rights activists,” Lu said in a telephone interview from New York, where he is a visiting scholar. “The second signal is that striking down NGOs is a priority.”

A police officer in the Yangfangdian District, which administers the area Yarenping is located, was unable to comment when asked to confirm the raid.

“Authorities have become increasingly concerned with foreign funding,” Maya Wang of New York-based Human Rights Watch said in emailed comment to Reuters, pointing to the raids devoted to foreign funding in a slew of new security laws.

Police have denied mediation to Wu Rongrong, one of the detained women activists suffering from a chronic liver disease, after determining that she does not need it, said her lawyer, Wang Fei.

“Before, she was detained, she was always taking the medication for anti-viral treatment,” Wang said. “From what I’ve seen, her physical condition is poor and her face looks jaundiced.”

The Haidian detention centre, where Wu is being held, declined to comment.

Foreign NGOs in China have told Reuters they are bracing for a crackdown as the government prepares to pass a new law to regulate their activities.— Reuters

Philippines pushes for single e-commerce platform within ASEAN

Official campaigning for nationwide local polls kicks off

Supporters of a candidate in the upcoming Oita gubernatorial election raise their fists in a rally in the city of Oita, southwestern Japan, on 26 March, 2015, the day official campaigning for the election started. — KYODO NEWS

The Philippines will also be held on 12 April. The LDP and the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan will face off in two prefectures — Hokkaido and Oita.

In the northernmost prefecture of Hokkaido, incumbent Gov Harumi Takahashi is seeking a fourth term, backed by the LDP and its junior coalition ally, the Komeito party. She will be challenged by Noriyuki Sato, a former television anchor who has won the support of the DPJ and other opposition parties.

Voting for mayors in five other designated major cities and for assembly members in about 60 prefectures and major cities will also be held on 12 April.

The next round of voting for over 900 local elections will be held on 26 April. — KYODO NEWS
US wants detailed deal with Iran but hints at flexibility

Lausanne, (Switzerland), 26 March — The United States wants major powers to reach a detailed political understanding with Iran by 31 March to clear the path for a long-term nuclear accord, a senior US official said, while hinting that Washington could be flexible on its format.

Speaking to reporters travelling with Secretary of State John Kerry to the heart of talks in the Swiss city of Lausanne, the senior State Department official added that Washington would not rush to complete an agreement just because there was a deadline.

The official said any framework agreement must address key aspects of a future nuclear deal with Tehran that Iran and the six aim to conclude by 30 June.

“Any political understanding needs to address in some way all of the elements of a final agreement,” the official said late on Wednesday.

“We do not know what form this will take,” the official said. “We have always said it needs to have specifics. We will need to communicate as many specifics as possible in some form or fashion (to the public and US Congress).”

Those elements include the different pathways to a nuclear weapon, ensuring that it would take at least one year to produce enough high enriched uranium for a single bomb, research and development into advanced centrifuges, transparency measures and monitoring, and sanctions relief for Iran.

This is a problem for Iran, whose supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is vehemently opposed to the idea of a two-step process — a written framework accord by end-March and a full deal by 30 June. Iranian officials say they fear the former would curtail Tehran’s negotiating space for a final deal.

Iranian officials have suggested they could accept some kind of statement or political declaration in Lausanne, as opposed to a formal written agreement. The disadvantage of that, Western officials say, is all sides could spin it to their liking.

Iran denies Western allegations it is seeking the capability to procure atomic weapons.

With the Republic-lican-led US Congress threatening to vote on new sanctions against Iran if there is no agreement thus month, the administration of President Barack Obama is pushing hard to secure some kind of deal. Obama has vowed to veto any new US sanctions moves. France has said that the real deadline was 30 June and there was little point in rushing to conclude anything by an end March. The US official, playing down any suggestions of any ongoing disputes with France, made clear Washington agreed.

“That does not mean that we will rush to get a bad deal because there’s a deadline,” the official said. “We won’t.”

The Lausanne talks broke off last week due to disagreements between Washington and France, Western officials said. But the main obstacle in the talks, Western officials say, remains Iran’s refusal to compromise on sanctions, research and development and other issues.

It will not be clear if Iran is now ready to compromise until Kerry meets Zarif on Thursday, the US official said. If enough progress is made this week, other foreign ministers the six powers group may join.

The goal of the talks, underway for nearly 18 months, is to hammer out a framework agreement by the end of May.

The US congressmen said it needs to have specificity, flexibility, a way forward and understanding needs to address in some way all of the elements of a final agreement,” the official said late on Wednesday.

“The only thing we need to do is make sure we get the final deal by the end of June,” the official said. “We need to make sure we get the details of the deal by the end of May.”

In the interview, Picado, who had been in Caracas for two months, asserted that a shortage of basic products was due to “political factors” and “big business” trying to destabilize the country and hurt the government’s credibility.

Picado also defended the decree powers that Venezuela’s parliament granted Maduro after US President Barack Obama declared Venezuela a threat to US national security earli-er this month.

“The content of the statements and the possibility of giving an interview was not previously discussed,” as is the rule, Costa Rican Foreign Min-ister Manuel Gonalez said in a news conference.

In the interview, Picado, who had been in Caracas for two months, asserted that a shortage of basic products was due to “political factors” and “big business” trying to destabilize the country and hurt the government’s credibility.

Picado also defended the decree powers that Venezuela’s parliament granted Maduro after US President Barack Obama declared Venezuela a threat to US national security earlier this month. — Reuters

Costa Rica fires ambassador in Venezuela after vocal support of Maduro

San Jose, 26 March — Costa Rica fired its ambassador in Venezuela after the diplomat gave an interview in which he defended the Venezuelan government, the Central American country said on Wednesday.

Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solis had said that the government did not want at least a month of ambassador Federico Picado, whose interview with local newspaper La Nacion was published last weekend.

“The content of the statements and the possibility of giving an interview was not previously discussed,” as is the rule, Costa Rican Foreign Minister Manuel Gonzalez said in a news conference.

In the interview, Picado, who had been in Caracas for two months, asserted that a shortage of basic products was due to “political factors” and “big business” trying to destabilize the country and hurt the government’s credibility.

Picado also defended the decree powers that Venezuela’s parliament granted Maduro after US President Barack Obama declared Venezuela a threat to US national security earlier this month. — Reuters

Ex-US war prisoner Bowe Bergdahl charged with desertion, misbehaviour

Fort Bragg, (NC), 26 March — Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, a former Taliban prisoner in Afghanistan, was formally charged on Wednesday with desertion and misbe-haviour before the enemy, and could be sentenced to life in prison if convicted of the most serious count, the army said.

Bergdahl’s attorney, Eugene Fidelle of Yale Law School, said the army had scheduled an Article 32 investigation hearing on 22 April to determine whether there was sufficient evidence to proceed with a court-martial.

The Army said the investigation, similar to a civilian grand jury proceeding, would take place at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio.

Bergdahl, 28, was released from Tadalan custody last summer in a contro-versial prisoner swap that saw five Taliban prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, transferred to Qatar, where they were required to remain for a year.

Bergdahl disappeared on 30 June, 2009, from Combat Outpost Mest-La-lak in Paktika Province in eastern Afghanistan and was subsequently held. He is alleged to have departed from the outpost early one morning after doing guard duty, leaving behind his gear, weapons and body armour.

An initial wave of euphoria over Bergdahl’s release was followed by a backlash among former Army Sergeant Evan Buetow, who served with Bergdahl, said on Wednesday that the former war prisoner had been treated fairly by the Army and needed “to answer for what he did.”

“He put all of our lives in danger,” Buetow said. “Men from our company died, when I don’t believe they would have if he wouldn’t have left.”

Republican lawmakers also backed the Army’s decision. House Armed Forces Committee Chairman John McCain, a retired Navy war pilot himself, said in a statement that Bergdahl’s trial would not be fair — “It is the right thing to do.”

Some of Bergdahl’s former Army comrades also came forward and said they believed he de-served his post. — Reuters

US Secretary of State John Kerry (L) and Iran’s Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif pose for a photograph before resuming talks over Iran’s nuclear programme in Lausanne on 16 March, 2015. — Reuters

Co-pilot appears to have crashed Germanwings plane deliberately — French prosecutor

Paris / Seyne-les-Alpes, 26 March — The co-pilot of the Germanwings airliner that crashed in the French Alps killing all 150 people aboard appears to have brought the A320 Airbus down deliberately, the Marseille prosecutor said on Thursday.

German Andreas Lubi-tz, 28, left in sole control of the Airbus A320 after the captain left the cockpit, refused to re-open the door and operated a control that sent the plane into its final, fatal descent, the prosecutor told a news conference.

The French prosecutor said Lubitz was not known as a terrorist and there were no grounds to consider the crash as a terrorist incident.

Recordings suggested pas-sengers’ screams began just before the final impact, he said. Earlier, a German state prosecutor had said that just one of the two pilots of the Germanwings airliner was in the cockpit at the time it went down.

The statement came after the New York Times reported that black box recordings showed one of the pilots had left the cockpit and could not get back in before the plane crashed.

“One was in the cockpit and the other wasn’t,” Christoph Kumpa at the prosecutor office in Dasseldorf told Reuters by telephone, adding that the information came from in-vestigators in France.

Complete copies of all the recordings were still undergoing detailed analysis by a group of experts, a prosecutor spokesman told the newspaper.

The recordings did not make clear why the pilot left the cockpit or why he could not re-enter the plane as the plane steadily descended toward a mountain range in a remote area of the French Alps on Tuesday.

“The guy outside is knocking lightly on the door and there is no an-swer,” an investigator described only as a senior French military official told the New York Times, citing the recordings. “And then he hits the door stronger and no answer. There is never an answer.”

The co-pilot was under-standings an “out of control” pilot, the investigator added. — Reuters

A black box voice recorder from the German Airbus operated by Lufthansa’s Germanwings budget airline Airbus A320 crash is seen in this photo released on 25 March, 2015 by the BEA, France’s Bureau d’Enquetes et d’Analyses. — Reuters

US Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl is pictured in this undated handout photo provided by the US Army and received by Reuters on 31 May, 2014. — Reuters

Lawmakers angry because the probe was given 30 days’ notice before the transfer of the Guantanamo prisoners, as required by US law.

Some of Bergdahl’s former Army comrades also came forward and said they believed he de-served his post. — Reuters

Former Army Sergeant Evan Buetow, who served with Bergdahl, said on Wednesday that the former war prisoner had been treated fairly by the Army and needed “to answer for what he did.”

“He put all of our lives in danger,” Buetow said. “Men from our company died, when I don’t believe they would have if he wouldn’t have left.”

Republican lawmakers also backed the Army’s decision. House Armed Forces Committee Chairman John McCain, a retired Navy war pilot himself, said in a statement that Bergdahl’s trial would not be fair — “It is the right thing to do.”

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The Conquering Spirit

Kyi Mun

Life is not a bed of roses, it is said. It is also said that life is not like going for a picnic, nor is it like embroidery. It is commonly assumed that life is a fight; life is a struggle; or life is a journey. Anyway, life is a long process of unity and struggle of opposites. So, life is made up of both good and bad things, pain and pleasure, gain and loss, joy and sorrow, likes and dislikes, etc. Since life is impermanent and transient and very vulnerable, we have got to have fortitude, resilience, endurance and equanimity, and have the conquering spirit deep down in our being. Ever surrounded by the eight winds, we have got to fortify ourselves with an indomitable spirit. So, let us in-dulge ourselves in exploring the meanings of the Conquering Spirit as follows:

**OBJECTIVE**
- Objective means: Something that you are trying to achieve. Synonym is goal. In considering, “How to get what you want?” how to get is the strategy and what you want is the objective. So, we have got to unambiguously and definitely know what we want most in our life, in our job, and in our relationships. In going on a journey, you must have a definite destination. You must know where you are going and where you want to arrive at.

**NEWWNESS OF MIND**
- To have a conquering spirit in our lives, we have got to be transformed to the renewal of our mind. We must be always strong-minded with fervor, determination and resolute steadfastness.

**QUALITY OF CHARACTER**
- Character is what you are. So, your character will be determined by the qualities of your:
  - Health & Strength
  - Vision & Strategy
  - Passion & Values

obviously depends on their income level.
Rich families in Myanmar send their children to international schools affiliated with overseas educational institutions, spending at least US $10,000 per year for primary school students, excluding other costs like allowances, fees for private teachers and so on. The richer the families, the more money they can spend on the education.
Middle class families also spend a large proportion of their incomes on education of their children, since they deem schooling as the only path to a higher social status. Although school fees for public schools are not very high, there are many others expenditures for education such as private tuition fees and school buses.
Some poor families send their children to school and urge them to try hard, knowing education is the only legacy they can give. These families work hard and save in order to spend as much as they can on their children’s education.
Unfortunately, some poor families take their children out of school because they cannot afford education. There have many such cases in the past, and we can see the impact of this disadvantage. The value of education is apparent, and families should not hesitate to spend what they can on schooling their children.

**NEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEWNESS OF MIND**
- To have a conquering spirit, you have got to have a very strong spirit, stamina, staying power, serenity and solemnness. You must have the spirit of: “My head is bloody but unbowed; I’m the master of my fate, and I’m the captain of my soul.”

**ENDEAVOUR**
- It is said that: “Actions are ours; consequences belong to heaven.” It is also said that “we reap what we sow”. And a Jewish proverb says: “The wisdom of life is to endure what we must and to change what we can.” The Prince Gautama Siddharta had proclaimed:
  - “Let there be all skins, Let there be all bones, Let there be all sinews, Let my life be forfeited, I’ll not rise until I’ve attained full enlightenment.”

It is said that one of the implied meanings of effort or endeavor is courage.

**RESOURCESFULNESS**
- Man, mind, morale, money, material, method and machine are resources for building business, wealth and success. If we wisely use these resources most effectively, we’ll be able to be the movers and shakers for peace, progress, and prosperity.

**INSPIRATION**
- Inspiration, here, means: Encouragement or motivation that excites and enhances desire, enthusiasm, fervor, perseverance and indomitable spirit to have a sustainable conquering spirit. We have got to have hands-on, mind-on and heart-on inspiration, as the saying goes: “motivators must be motivated and trainers must be trained.” Napoleon Bonaparte had said “Morale is to material as 3 is to 1.”

**NEVER GIVING UP**
- A person with a conquering spirit will:
  - Never give up,
  - Never give in,
  - Stand up to it, and
  - Fight it through to victory

It is said that: “A quitter never wins, and a winner never quits.”

**GOING ALL-OUT FOR VICTORY**
- To be victorious and triumphant, we’ve got, with all our mind, with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our strengths to:
  - Drive
  - Strive
  - Thrive
  - Arrange
  - Revive

**STRATEGY**
- Strategy means: A Plan of Action with a definite objective. It requires keen and backed up by adequate, comprehensive and creative resources. It is a combination of a winning vision and meticulous planning and preparations for securing decisive victory. A strategy should be based on the Eight Principles of:
  - Clear-cut, definite objective
  - Concentration
  - Offense
  - Cooperation

**ECONOMY OF FORCE**
- Economy of Force: the strategy and what you want is the objective. So, we have got to have a strong-minded with fervor, determination and resolute steadfastness.

**STRENGTH**
- Strength means: Health & Strength, Vision & Strategy, Passion & Values

**NATIONALITY**
- Nationality means: The ability to plan something and go through with it.

**FAITH**
- Faith means: The ability to believe in something and work towards it.

**MORALE**
- Morale means: To have the ability to plan something and go through with it.

**MONEY**
- Money means: The ability to believe in something and work towards it.

**MATERIAL**
- Material means: The ability to believe in something and work towards it.

**METHOD**
- Method means: The ability to believe in something and work towards it.

**MACHINE**
- Machine are resources for building business, wealth and success.

**ENDURANCE**
- The power to endure what we must and to change what we can.

**SERENITY**
- Serenity means: To have the ability to believe in something and work towards it.

**STAYING POWER**
- Staying power means: The ability to believe in something and work towards it.

**RESOURCESFULNESS**
- Resourcesfulness means: The ability to believe in something and work towards it.

**INTUNITY**
- Intuity means: The ability to believe in something and work towards it.

**ENDURONESS**
- Enduroness means: The ability to believe in something and work towards it.

**INITIATIVE**
- Initiative means: The ability to believe in something and work towards it.

**REVOLUTIONARY**
- Revolutionary means: The ability to believe in something and work towards it.

People with the conquering spirit cannot but seammlessly be integrated with personal uprightness, dignity, honor and self-respect.

**REVOLUTIONARY**
- Revolutionary means: (1) Involving a great or complete change: a revolution; a revolution and a revolution.

(2) A person who starts or supports a revolution. In making a radical, revolutionary transformation of a person’s life or a nation’s destiny, the conquering spirit is indispensable. A revolutionary change must be effected with the spirit of: “Do or die”; and ‘Swim or sink.’

A catalyst of radical change must have: The resolute determination and capability to turn heaven and earth upside down!

**NAING Group Capital Co.,Ltd.**

Friday, 27 March, 2015

Education the most worthwhile investment

By Kyin Win Thein

According to sociologists, the family is the basic unit of a society. It is with the family, therefore, that such scholars begin to analyze a society.

Being aware that education is the best weapons to counter all social woes, families spend a lot on schooling their children, but the outlay obviously depends on their income level.
Rich families in Myanmar send their children to international schools affiliated with overseas educational institutions, spending at least US $10,000 per year for primary school students, excluding other costs like allowances, fees for private teachers and so on. The richer the families, the more money they can spend on the education.
Middle class families also spend a large proportion of their incomes on education of their children, since they deem schooling as the only path to a higher social status. Although school fees for public schools are not very high, there are many others expenditures for education such as private tuition fees and school buses.
Some poor families send their children to school and urge them to try hard, knowing education is the only legacy they can give. These families work hard and save in order to spend as much as they can on their children’s education.

Unfortunately, some poor families take their children out of school because they cannot afford education. There have many such cases in the past, and we can see the impact of this disadvantage. The value of education is apparent, and families should not hesitate to spend what they can on schooling their children.

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.
Mandalay, 26 March — The Mandalay Branch of Myanmar National Airlines will change flight schedules as of 1 April for convenience of passengers during the Maha Thingyan Festival.

Air tickets are available at the department through online service. According to the new flight schedules, MNA will fly to Yangon from Mandalay five days a week, with daily flights to Myitkyina, two days a week to Bhamo, three days to Homalin, three days each to Kengtung, Hkamti and Kalay, four days to Tachileik and two days to Lashio.

“MNA will fly Mandalay-Yangon flight by E-190 Embracer jet on Monday, Tuesday and Friday mornings. Flight ticket rates are posted through online for all routes,” the manager of Mandalay Branch.

At present, tickets are sold at K52,000 per passenger from Mandalay to Yangon, K57,000 to Bhamo, K71,000 to Homalin, K76,000 to Kengtung, K66,000 to Hkamti, K58,000 to Kalay, K58,000 to Myitkyina, K52,000 to Tachileik and K51,000 to Lashio. Passengers may contact the Mandalay Branch of MNA on 02-36221 and 02-36222 and www.flymna.com.

Min Htet Aung
(Mandalay Sub-printing House)

Self-reliant electricity benefits 300 houses

Nyaunglebin, 26 March — A ceremony to launch supply of electricity on a self-reliant basis was held in Ale Village in Nyaunglebin Township, Bago Region, on 25 March.

Township authorities and well-wishers cut the ribbon to switch on the electrification.

Well-wishers U Myo Tun Oo, sister Daw Lei Lei Maw and family donated K13 million together with other well-wishers.

A 100KV transformer installed with the cash donation of well-wishers benefits 300 houses in the village.

Nay Lin
(Reporter)

Ships stranded upstream of Myinmu due to low water level

Myinmu, 26 March — Cargo boats and ferries for tourists have become stranded between Ywathit village in Ngazun Township and Nyaungyin village in Myinmu Township, Bago Region, due to low water levels in the Ayeyawady River. Stranded boats, which risk damage while in shallow water, have been waiting for the water level to rise in order to continue their trips. The average water level of the Ayeyawady River has been dropping year by year since 2010.

Kyemon (624)

Danger of narcotic drugs disseminated to local residents

Kayan, 26 March — Talks on crime reduction and prevention of drug abuse during the Maha Thingyan festival period were given at the hall in Ward 2, Kayan, Yangon, on 24 March.

Commander of Township Police Force Police Major Kyee Lwin gave talks on crime prevention, while Police Captain Thein Lwin of Anti-drug Squad No 43 spoke of the disadvantages of narcotic drugs and penalty for drug possession. Township Medical Officer Dr Saw Thurein spoke about diseases related to drug abuse.

The talks were also attended by local authorities, members of social organizations, owners of medicine shop and youths.

Ko Htet

Police target gamblers in crackdown

Mandalay, 26 March — Local authorities have taken action in 51 cases this year under the gambling law up to 19 March in Mandalay Region, according to the Mandalay Region Hluttaw.

Police and local authorities joined hands in arresting gamblers in 434 cases in 2014.

Talks on crime reduction were given to over 70,000 people in 2014 and more than 12,000 people so far this year.

Aung Ye Thwin

A laterite road was commissioned into service in Nyaunglebin Township, Bago Region, built by Metal Dragon Co., Ltd. with K130 million fund of the Department of Rural Development in 2014-15 FY, on Thursday. Zigongyi-Kyachaung-Zeebyukhin-Kyaban rural road is 2.5 miles long and 10 feet wide.—Nay Lin (Nyaunglebin)
Saudi Arabia, allies launch air strikes in Yemen against Houthi fighters

SANAA, 26 March — Saudi Arabia and Gulf region allies launched military operations including air strikes in Yemen on Thursday, officials said, to counter Iranian forces besieging the southern city of Aden where the US-backed Yemeni president had taken refuge.

Gulf broadcaster Al-Arabiya TV reported that the kingdom was contributing as many as 150,000 troops and 100 warplanes to the operations. Egypt, Jordan, Sudan and Pakistan were ready to take part in a ground offensive in Yemen, it said.

There was no immediate confirmation of those figures from Riyadh. Al-Arabiya also said the United Arab Emirates was sending 30 warplanes to join the operation, along with 15 each from Bahrain and Kuwait, 10 from Qatar, six each from Jordan and Morocco and three from Sudan.

Yemen’s slide towards civil war has made it a crucial front in mostly Sunni Saudi Arabia’s rivalry with Shi’ite Iran, which Riyadh accuses of stirring up sectarian strife throughout the region and in Yemen with its support for the Houthis.

US-led coalition, Iraqis sound State in Tikrit

BAGHDAD / WASHINGTON, 26 March — US-led coalition warplanes had earlier launched air strikes on the main airport in the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, and its al-Dula’im military airbase, residents said.

A Reuters witness in the capital said four or five houses near Sanaa airport had been damaged. Rescue workers put the death toll from the air strikes at 13, including a doctor who had been pulled from the rubble of a damaged clinic.

The four or five house deaths came soon after Saudi Arabia’s ambassador in Washington, Adel al-Jubeir, announced the operation.

“We will do whatever it takes in order to protect the legitimate government of Yemen from falling,” Jubeir told a news conference in Washington.

State media showed footage of Saudi jets taking off from a darkened airfield. It also showed Interim Minister Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef and Defence Miniser Mohammed bin Salman — two of the most powerful royals after King Salman 9 — aboard a Royal Saudi Air Force jet.

US-Airpower’s role in Tikrit

A military vehicle, belonging to Shi’ite fighters known as Hashid Shaabi, burns after being hit by Islamic State militants, during clashes in northern Tikrit on 11 March, 2015.— REUTERS

In language that appeared to intentionally omit the Iranian-backed militia, Lieutenant General James Terry, the senior US commander of the US-led coalition, said the strikes were aimed at enabling “Iraqi forces under Iraqi command.” These strikes are intended to destroy ISIL’s stronghold with precision, thereby saving innocent Iraqi lives while minimizing collateral damage to infrastructure,” Terry said, using an acronym for Islamic State. As coalition aircraft entered the fray, Iraqi forces pounded Islamic State positions in Tikrit, resuming an offensive that had stalled for almost two weeks. Two military officers in the city confirmed Iraqi forces were shelling the militants.

“Military operations in Tikrit started at around 9 pm local time by pounding Islamic State positions with artillery, mortars and Katyusha rockets,” said provincial council member Hadi al-Khazraji. More than 20,000 troops and allied Shi’ite paramilitary groups have been taking part in the offensive and have suffered heavy casualties on the edge of the city, 100 miles (160 km) north of Baghdad.

The Iraqi military had lobbed for US-led coalition air strikes while Shi’ite paramilitary forces opposed such a move. One militia leader, Hadi al-Amri, boasted three weeks ago that his men had been making advances for months without relying on US air power.

The mainly Sunni city of Tikrit was seized by Islamic State in the first days of their lightning strike across northern Iraq last June. If Iraq’s Shi’ite-led government retakes Tikrit, it would be the first city wrested from the Sunni insurgents and would give Baghdad momentum for a pivotal stage of the campaign: recapturing Mosul, the largest city in the north. Still, the offensive raised thorny questions for American war planners, who have long sought to distance themselves from the acknowledged risks that heavy involvement of the Shi’ite militia on the ground could heighten sectarian tensions in the Sunni city of Tikrit.

“Military operations in Tikrit started at around 9 pm local time by pounding Islamic State positions with artillery, mortars and Katyusha rockets,” said provincial council member Hadi al-Khazraji. More than 20,000 troops and allied Shi’ite paramilitary groups have been taking part in the offensive and have suffered heavy casualties on the edge of the city, 100 miles (160 km) north of Baghdad.

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S Korea expands easy money for small firms by printing money

SEOUL, 26 March — South Korea’s central bank on Thursday expanded its easy-money programme for small companies by printing money to stimulate the lulluster economy.

Bank of Korea (BoK) increased its lending facility for small- and mid-sized enterprises to 20 trillion won (18 billion US dollars) from 15 trillion won, the bank said in a statement. The increase will take effect from 1 April.

The 5.0- trillion-won increase at a single cast was the largest since the facility was introduced in 1994 to encourage banks to lend money to small companies at a low rate.

The latest case was the 3.0-trillion-won expansion in the facility in July 2014. The BoK increased the programme by 2.5 trillion won during the 2008 global financial crisis.

BOJ says structural factors hurting exports are fading

As of March 2015, almost 4,000 children under 16 have been affected by Ebola in the current epidemic.

Donnelly’s team, whose work was published in the New England Journal of Medicine on Wednesday, analyzed data on Ebola cases in children under 16 in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone since March 2014 when it was first confirmed in the forest region of Guinea.

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Health workers take the temperature of a boy who came in contact with a woman who died of Ebola virus in the Paynesville neighbourhood of Monrovia, Liberia, on 21 Jun, 2015. — Reuters

Ebola is most deadly among babies, young children, study finds

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Police search Chongryon leader’s home over illegal mushroom import

Tokyo, 26 March — Police on Thursday searched home of the head of the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, while arresting two South Korean men on suspicion of illegally importing “matsutake” mushrooms from North Korea.

The raid was conducted at six locations, including the Tokyo home of Ho Jong Man, chairman of the association called Chongryon, sending a shockwave among parties relating to the body which has functioned as a de facto North Korean Embassy for many decades in the absence of diplomatic ties between Tokyo and Pyongyang.

Observers say the raid on the chairman’s home could affect stalled bilateral talks on Pyongyang’s abductions of Japanese nationals in the 1970s and 1980s.

Police arrested Lee Tong Chol, 61, president of a Tokyo-based trading house, and Yoshishiki Kin, 42, an employee of the company, on suspicion of illegally importing about 1,200 kilograms of matsutake mushrooms worth around 3 million yen through China to Japan in September 2010.

The mushrooms are believed to have been sold in Japan, mislabeled as Chinese-grown produce.

Japan has banned imports from North Korea since October 2006 as part of its economic sanctions imposed following Pyongyang’s missile launch and its nuclear test.

Both suspects, residents of Japan, denied the allegation. Police are investigating the relationship between the suspects and Ho, who is a member of North Korea’s top legislature.

After his home in a Tokyo residential area was raided in the early morning, Ho told reporters angrily he does not know the trading company. “The investigation is done unlawfully and this would lead to serious problems in the relationship” between North Korea and Japan, he said.

Police have been investigating the case by searching more than 10 locations, including the trading house and homes of the president and Ho’s son last May.

The locations searched on Thursday included the Tokyo home of the pro-Pyongyang group’s vice chairman.

Kyodo News

Heavy rains in northern Chile leave two dead, 20 missing

SANTIAGO, 26 March — The heaviest rains to hit Chile’s northern desert regions in 20 years have left at least two people dead and 24 missing as the torrential downpours caused mudslides and rivers to breach their banks, leaving thousands of residents stranded.

The government’s ONEMI emergency office reported early Thursday that nearly 61,000 people were without power and almost 50,000 lacked drinking water in the usually arid regions of Coquimbo, Atacama and Antofagasta.

Television images and photos on social media websites such as Twitter showed muddy rivers rushing through city streets, bridges washed away, flooded buildings, including a hospital, and even some towns that had been partially wiped out.

O useMemo said that one person in Antofagasta was electrocuted on the street, while a mudslide killed another person in Atacama. Another 24 people were missing.

President Michelle Bachelet travelled to the affected areas to assess damages and help lead rescue efforts.

“We’re doing everything humanly possible to get to where (those affected by the catastrophe) are as quickly as possible,” Bachelet said.

Interior Minister Rodrigo Penailillo said on Wednesday that a state of catastrophe had been declared and armed forces had been ordered to co-ordinate support operations and take control of public order in the worst affected area.

The “very intense” rains were expected to continue for around another eight hours yet, he said.

Residents of several towns were asked to evacuate. Many roads were cut off and evacuations could only be done via air transport, said Deputy Minister Mahmud Aleuy.

The normally arid north is home to many of Chile’s largest copper mines, which account for about a third of global supply.

The torrential downpours in the world’s biggest copper producer have forced companies to suspend operations at several of the area’s major mines, putting an estimated 1.6 million tonnes of capacity of the red metal on hold.

Fibre optics had been cut across the northern region, which was affecting communications and could affect flights, said LATAM Airlines’ Chilean arm LAN.

The sudden autumn downpour comes after an unusually hot, dry summer exacerbated an eight-year drought and left fields parched.

The dry conditions continue in the south of Chile, where firefighters are battling nearly 40 separate blazes that are burning some 14,000 hectares, according to Onemi.

The China Muerta reserve and the Conquillal national park, revered for its forests of thousand-year-old Araucarias, or monkey-puzzle trees, are among the areas affected by the flames.—Reuters

5-year restoration completed of Himeji Castle, a world heritage site

KURE, 26 March — Restoration of the 17th century Himeji Castle, a UNESCO World Heritage site in western Japan, was completed on Thursday after five and a half years, marked by a government celebratory ceremony a day before its opening to the public.

Roof tiles were replaced and outer walls repainted during the extensive renovation that started in October 2009, enabling the castle, a national treasure also known as “shirasagi-jō” (Egret Castle), to regain its elegant appearance with its white plastered earthen walls. The castle’s main donjon — or central six-floor tower — was built in 1699. The castle — recognized by the UNESCO Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as Japan’s first World Cultural Heritage site in 1993 — was renovated for the first time since 1964, when the last major reconstruction ended.

The “Blue Impulse,” the Japanese Air Self-Defence Force’s air aerobatic and precision flying team, flew over the castle to celebrate the restoration work completion.

President Michelle Bachelet travelled to the affected areas to assess damages and help lead rescue efforts.

“We’re doing everything humanly possible to get to where (those affected by the catastrophe) are as quickly as possible,” Bachelet said.

Interior Minister Rodrigo Penailillo said on Wednesday that a state of catastrophe had been declared and armed forces had been ordered to co-ordinate support operations and take control of public order in the worst affected area.

The “very intense” rains were expected to continue for around another eight hours yet, he said.

Residents of several towns were asked to evacuate. Many roads were cut off and evacuations could only be done via air transport, said Deputy Minister Mahmud Aleuy.

The normally arid north is home to many of Chile’s largest copper mines, which account for about a third of global supply.

The torrential downpours in the world’s biggest copper producer have forced companies to suspend operations at several of the area’s major mines, putting an estimated 1.6 million tonnes of capacity of the red metal on hold.

Fibre optics had been cut across the northern region, which was affecting communications and could affect flights, said LATAM Airlines’ Chilean arm LAN.

The sudden autumn downpour comes after an unusually hot, dry summer exacerbated an eight-year drought and left fields parched.

The dry conditions continue in the south of Chile, where firefighters are battling nearly 40 separate blazes that are burning some 14,000 hectares, according to Onemi.

The China Muerta reserve and the Conquillal national park, revered for its forests of thousand-year-old Araucarias, or monkey-puzzle trees, are among the areas affected by the flames.—Reuters

Cold front to hit N China, rains to sweep south

BEIJING, 26 March — A cold front will hit north China, bringing floating dust and strong winds, while rains will sweep south China, over the next three days, the National Meteorological Centre (NMC) said on Thursday.

The country’s weather observatory said a cold front will hit parts of Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, as well as areas of northwest and northeast China from Thursday to Saturday. These regions will see floating dust and strong winds, and even sandstorms. Temperatures will drop by four to six degrees Celsius.

The NMC added that haze will spread areas along the Yellow and Huaihe rivers, as well as north China on Thursday and Friday.

Meanwhile, south China will experience rains and showers in the coming days. Rainfalls will hit parts of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, as well as Guizhou and Hunan provinces, according to the centre.—Xinhua
Pakistan militant spokesman phones to deny death

Deera Ismail Khan (Pakistan), 26 March — A Pakistani militant group called journalists to say on Tuesday that they would try to assure them he was alive after Pakistani intelligence officials claimed he was among 30 fighters killed in air strikes in the northwestern Khyber region.

The intelligence officials said air force jets had targeted militants believed to be al-Qa'ida-allied fighters, including at least six who were said to be members of the group's spokesman, Saladin Khan Ayubi, as one of the fighters killed.

"I wanted to talk to you and other journalists and prove that by the grace of Allah Almighty I am alive," Ayubi told Reuters.

"I would request our journalists to check reports about the killing of our commanders before reporting them to the media," a military official told Reuters.

The military said it had been unable to confirm the death of any of the militants in recent air strikes in the Tirah Valley for days and the military says it has killed over 100 militants.

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A military official said the group's spokesman had been killed and a statement from the group was being checked.

The air force has been pounding positions in the Tirah Valley for days and the military says its forces have killed over 100 militants. At least seven soldiers have also been killed, it says.

There is no way to confirm casualties independently as the area is sealed to journalists.
Oak Ridge Boys, Browns, Grady Martin named country music inductees

NASHVILLE, 26 March — The Oak Ridge Boys, Jim Ed Brown and the Browns, and the late guitarist Grady Martin were named on Wednesday as the 2015 inductees into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Singer Brenda Lee announced the artists who will be welcomed into the elite group at a special ceremony in Nashville later this year.

The Oak Ridge Boys, a country and gospel quartet whose hits include "Elvira" and "Bobbie Sue," sang backup on Paul Simon’s hit "Slip Slidin' Away" and toured with singer Johnny Cash in their early days in country music.

The group credited Cash with helping them make the transition from gospel to country music.

"He took us on the road with him and paid us more than we asked and tipped us 10 percent above that," Diane Allen said at the ceremony.

Jim Ed Brown formed the Browns trio with his sisters Maxine and Bonnie, and Louis Tomlinson, will be on tour as a foursome and will release their fifth album, which sold 495,000 albums in its opening week in February, becoming 2015’s biggest seller so far.

The remaining band will release the cover of "Go Set a Watchman," the highly anticipated second novel by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Harper Lee.

The cover of the book that will be published on 14 July, half a century after Lee’s masterpiece "To Kill a Mockingbird," features a tree in the foreground and a railroad track with a train in the distance.

Michael Morrison, the president and publisher of US general books and Canada at Harper Collins, said the cover draws on the style of the decade in which the book was written, but with a modern twist.

"Go Set a Watchman" begins with Scout’s train ride home, but more profoundly, it is about the journey Harper Lee’s beloved characters have taken in the subsequent 20 years of their lives," Morrison said in a statement.

The upcoming book has been surrounded by controversy since its publication was announced in February. Until then, few people knew it existed; even Lee, 88, had thought it had been lost.

Written before "To Kill a Mockingbird," the book features the same characters, lawyer Atticus Finch and his daughter Scout, but later as she returns as an adult to the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama.

There were concerns about whether Lee had been pressured into agreeing to have the book published, and an unspecified complaint of elder abuse that was investigated by the Alabama Securities Commission.

Earlier this month, the commission closed its probe, saying Lee had made it clear that she wanted the book to be published. "To Kill a Mockingbird," which became an American classic, was adapted into an Academy Award-winning film starring Gregory Peck. —Reuters

Kendrick Lamar tops Billboard 200 for first time with new album

LOS ANGELES, 26 March — Rapper Kendrick Lamar topped the weekly US Billboard 200 album chart on Wednesday for the first time, as his latest album became the second biggest seller of the year so far.

"To Pimp A Butterfly," Lamar’s third studio record, sold 324,000 albums, 125,000 songs and 3.9 million streams for a tally of 363,000 units, according to figures from Nielsen SoundScan.

According to figures from Nielsen SoundScan, Lamar’s album cracked the top 10 of the Billboard 200 chart on Wednesday for the first time, as his latest album became the second biggest seller of the year so far.

Last week’s chart-topper, the soundtrack to Fox TV’s hit hip-hop drama “Empire,” dropped to No 2 with 110,000 units, while alt-rockers Modest Mouse debuted at No 3 with their latest album, “Strangers To Ourselves,” tallying 77,000 units.

The only other new entry to crack the top 10 of the Billboard 200 chart was British singer Mari

Cover of Harper Lee’s second novel, ‘Go Set a Watchman,’ released

NEW YORK, 26 March — Publisher Harper Collins on Wednesday released the cover of "Go Set a Watchman," the highly anticipated second novel by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Harper Lee.

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Malik quits ‘One Direction’, says wants normal life

LONDON, 26 March — Singer Zayn Malik said on Wednesday he was quitting the best-selling pop band One Direction because he wanted to live a normal life and apologized to fans of the hugely popular British-Irish group for doing so.

The decision by Malik to quit came after he dropped out of an Asian tour due to what he said was stress when pictures of him partying with an elite group at a special ceremony in Nashville later this year.

The remaining band members, Niall Horan, Liam Payne, Harry Styles and Louis Tomlinson, will be on tour as a foursome and will release their fifth album, which sold 495,000 albums in its opening week in February, becoming 2015’s biggest seller so far.

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Christie’s aims for auction record book with $140 million Picasso

**New York, 26 March**—Records look set to tumble at the big spring art auctions with Christie’s announcement on Wednesday of a Picasso oil posed to set the mark for the most expensive work of art in auction history.

“Les femmes d’Alger (Version ‘O'),” a vibrant cubist work last auctioned in 1997 when it nearly tripled the expected price, is estimated to fetch about $140 million (94.02 million pounds), by far the highest price ever for a work of art on the auction block.

Pre-sale estimates do not include the standard commission of just over 12 percent, making for a final price in excess of $155 million. Christie’s has accurately assessed the work’s appeal to a global, deep-pocketed market hungry for a defining supply of trophy works.

The most expensive work ever sold at auction, Francis Bacon’s triptych on the market,” said Jussi Pylkkänen, Christie’s global president. “None is more iconic than ‘Les femmes d’Alger’.”

Brooke Lalmy, head of Impressionist and Modern art at Christie’s New York, spoke to what she called the work’s remarkable power.

“Three Studies of Lucian Freud,” sold for $142.4 million including commission in November 2013, although several works have sold for more on the private market. “It has become clear that the many new global collectors chasing masterpieces have been waiting for an iconic Picasso to appear on the market,” said Jussi Pylkkänen, Christie’s global president. “None is more iconic than ‘Les femmes d’Alger’.”

Brooke Lalmy, head of Impressionist and Modern art at Christie’s New York, spoke to what she called the work’s remarkable power.

**England’s Richard III, the ‘villainous’ king, gets ceremonial reburial**

**London, 26 March**—Richard III, the last English king to die in battle and the country’s most malignoned monarch, will be re-buried on Thursday three years after his remains were found under a car park.

Depicted by Shakespeare as a sadistic, crafty hunchback, Richard will be re-interred at Leicester Cathedral in central England some 530 years after he was slain at the Battle of Bosworth Field on 22 August, 1485.

Following the battle, his naked body was thrown on the back of a horse, taken to Leicester and buried in a humble grave, without the dignity usually bestowed on a king. Despite reigning just 777 days, he still fascinates not just historians but ordinary people around the world, some of whom have traveled to Leicester to witness the ceremony.

“He seems a hero to some and a villain to others, and the few short years of his reign held promise of a time of peace and good government that was not to be,” wrote David Monteth, the Dean of Leicester, in a foreword to Thursday’s government that was not to be.

A poem entitled “Richard”, written by actor Benedict Cumberbatch, who himself has been identified as a second cousin, 16 times removed of the royal family, was read by actor Benedict Cumberbatch, who himself has been identified as a second cousin, 16 times removed of the royal family.

“Richard’s death marked the end of the Wars of the Roses, a bloody civil war between the rival dynasties of the House of York and Lancaster.”

**Premier League back in the black as TV cash rolls in**

**London, 26 March**—English Premier League’s clubs have reported the first combined pre-tax profit for 15 years thanks to the soaring value of television deals and a slowdown in players’ salaries.

While on-field performances of England’s top team have failed to match the elite have regressed in the Champions League and Europa League, their bank accounts are bulging, according to business consultancy firm Deloitte. In 2013-14, Premier League clubs generated a combined pre-tax profit of 190 million pounds — four times greater than the previous record of 49 million in 1997-98.

The figures are in sharp contrast to the previous decade when Premier League clubs accumulated combined pre-tax losses of 2.6 billion pounds. Deloitte analyst Dan Jones said clubs were now spending less of their income on players’ salaries. “Last season was the first in the Premier League’s current three-year broadcast deal, which was a record breake when it was struck,” Jones said. “Despite this extra in come clubs showed rela tive restraint in wage costs, which grew by six percent. “With the recent announcement of another record Premier League broadcast deal, the income increases show no sign of ending and should make this season’s profit a regular outcome.”

The report said, excluding player trading, net interest charges and the amortisation of contracts, top flight clubs recorded a 620 million pounds operating profit last season.

However the percentage revenue spent on player salaries had fallen from a record of 71 percent in 2012-13 to 58 percent in 2013-14 — the lowest since 1998-99.— Reuters

**Alonso cleared to race in Malaysia**

**Sepang, (Malaysia) 26 March**—Fernando Alonso passed a final medical examination on Thursday and will be able to participate in the Malaysian Grand Prix this weekend after the Spaniard missed the Formula One season-opener in Australia due to concussion.

The double world champion was sidelined following a winter-testing crash in Barcelona last month after leaving Ferrari for McLaren at the end of last season, but has been given the go-ahead to return to racing for a team where he spent one unhappy season in 2007.

Alonso flew to Malaysia after coming through tests by three independent doctors at Cambridge University on Sunday and then passed the official examina tion by the governing body’s medical delegate and the Sepang Circuit’s chief medical officer.

“During the examination the driver passed all mandatory fitness tests and has thus been declared fit to race in this weekend’s Malaysian Grand Prix,” the International Automobile Federation (FIA) said in a statement.

Considered one of the most skilful drivers in Formula One, Alonso will need to be at his very best around the Hermann Tilke-designed track to have any chance of picking up points on his return to racing for a team that fared poorly in Australia.

Struggling for pace and reliability with the new Honda engine, team mate Jenson Button crawled around Albert Park to cross the line last of the 11 finishers.

Fernando Alonso’s stand-in Kevin Magnussen failed to start the race due to engine issues.

“I’ve been working hard on my fitness and feel comfortable and good and ready to go this weekend,” Alonso said prior to his departure for Malaysia.—Reuters
Golfers to join Myanmar Golf Tours in 2015

YANGON, 26 March — A Press conference on holding the Myanmar Golf Tour 2015 took place at Central Hotel on Bogyoke Aung San Street, here, on 24 March.

Chairman of Myanmar Professional Golfers Association U Chan Han explained plans to hold the Myanmar Golf Tour and replied to queries raised by media.

The first leg of the tour will be held at Myanmar Golf Club in Nay Pyi Taw from 2 to 5 April, the second leg from 7 to 10 May at Htanlawady Golf Club, the third from 2 to 5 June at Mingaladon Tatinadaw Golf Course, the fourth from 23 to 26 July at Yadaguntang Golf Club in Mandalay, the fifth from 27 to 30 August in PyinOolwin golf club, the sixth from 8 to 11 October at Ayethyey Golf Club in Taunggyi, the seventh from 3 to 6 November at Yangon Golf Club in Yangon, the eighth from 19 to 22 November at Shwemanaung Golf Club and the ninth from 3 to 6 December at Zeyathiri Golf Club.—GNLM

Azarenka through at Miami to face Jankovíc

MIAMI, 26 March — Two-times Miami Open winner Victoria Azarenka defeated Spain’s Silvia Soler-Espinosa 6-1, 6-3 on Wednesday to set up a second round meeting with Serbia’s Jelena Jankovic.

Former world number one Azarenka made her name with a victory in Miami in 2009 and followed that up with another triumph in 2011 but hampered by injuries, she has fallen down the world rankings in the past year to 36. The Belarusian, who was not at Miami for three years, had to fight back from 3-1 down in the second set to ensure she advanced in straight sets.

“I felt I played really good in the first set but in the second I dropped a little my aggressivity,” said Azarenka. “But it is nice to be back somewhere where I had a lot of success. I’ve always loved this city and this tournament.”

Azarenka will face a tough test in the next round with in-form Jankovic coming off a run to the Indian Wells final before falling to Romanian Simona Halep. Third-seed Halep will face Czech Nicole Vaidînová, the former world number seven back on the tour after ending her retire ment. The 25-year-old Vaidînová beat Hungarian Timea Babos 6-1, 7-6 in what was her first WTA-level match since Memphis in 2010.

Russian wildcard Daria Gavrilova advanced past New Zealand’s, Marina Erakovic who had to retire with an ankle injury when down 5-1. Gavrilova will face US qualifier Bethanie Mattek-Sands in the next round.

Podolski spares German blushes against Australia

KAI SERSLAUTERN, (Germany), 26 March — Substitute Lukas Podolski grabbed an 81st-minute equalizer to rescue a 2-2 draw for 2014 World Cup winners Germany in an entertaining friendly against Asian champions Australia on Wednesday.

Podolski, who has been mainly on the bench for Inter Milan recently, stroked the ball home from close range with his left foot nine minutes after coming on to score his 48th goal for his country.

Socceroos captain Mile Jedinak had made up for gifting Germany the lead by putting up with a brilliant curling free kick in the 50th minute. Earlier, Marco Reus gave the hosts a 1-0 advantage before James Troisi levelled.

“It was a bit hectic,” said Germany coach Joachim Loew. “We had some good chances to make it 2-0 or 3-0. Sometimes in friendly matches you are missing a few percentages,” said Loew who rested several players including Bas tin Schweinsteiger, Mats Hummels and Jerome Boateng.

Australia, who won their maiden Asian crown in January, were in no way intimidated early on while the Germans struggled with an experimental three-man defence. The visitors had a good chance in the opening seconds as Nathan Burns raced clear but he was denied by a last-gasp tackle. Ilkay Guendogan, fit again after a back injury and making his first international appearance since August 2013, responded for Germany with a long-range effort.

Matthew Leckie then should have put Australia ahead in the second minute when he twice shook off Benedict Hoewedes and fired wide.

Hoewedes, Shkodran Mustafi and Holger Badstuber had never played together before and it showed as they were repeatedly left chasing shadows.

Germany, however, had no such problems in attack when Sami Khe- dira pounced on a mistake by Jedinak and sent Reus through to open the scoring. Jedinak almost hand ed the world champions a second goal but this time Reus’ effort was saved by Matt Ryan. The Australians then started to pour forward and Troisi equalised with a bullet header from a cross by Burns.

“I hope this sheds us of any inferiority complex we may have about our selves,” said visiting coach Ange Postecoglou.

“I am super proud. We threw the boys some big challenges today and they were up to it.”

Germany travel to Georgia for a Euro 2016 qualifier on Sunday while Australia meet Macedonia in a friendly on Monday.

Nishikori has sights set on being No 1

Japan’s Kei Nishikori holds a Press conference in Miami, the United States, on 25 March, 2015, ahead of competing in the Miami Open Tennis tournament.—KYODO NEWS

Miami, 26 March — Japan’s Kei Nishikori said on Wednesday at the Miami Open that he aspires to be world No 1, but acknowledged it will take some doing to succeed the man who beat him last year here in the semifinals, Novak Djokovic.

The 25-year-old Nishikori is just now becoming accustomed to being ranked in the top five.

He said he had his eye on the world’s top spot, but conceded it’s going to take some doing — especially with Djokovic at the top of his game.

“It’s going to take some time to get No 1,” he told a Press conference according to atptour.com. “Novak is the top player right now. It’s not easy to beat him or Roger (Federer) or Andy (Murray). But, slowly, I think I’m coming. I’m playing good tennis and feeling much stronger mentally and physically, too. It might take some time, but hopefully I can get there as soon as possible.”

“I’m getting used to this. The first couple of months when I was ranked No 5, I was a little bit nervous and wasn’t comfortable. But now I’ve gotten used to (it) and more confidence being top five. It’s not easy to keep this ranking. But hopefully I can do well.”

“He (Djokovic) has a good serve and great strokes, great backhand. (He’s) very consistent and very solid from the baseline. He doesn’t give you a lot of un forced errors. If you beat Novak, you have to be aggressive and you have to win points with your aggressive play. You have to take some risks to win against him.”

After crashing out in the fourth round at the Indian Wells masters event, the tour to Miami is almost like coming home for Nishikori, who lives and trains a few hours away in Bradenton, Florida.

“The fast courts suit me,” said the fourth-seed Nishikori. “I’ve just been playing well, so I think I have a chance here.”

This is one of my favourite tournaments. I did well here last year. It’s really comfortable playing here. It’s a little hot and humid, but I try to enjoy this week. It’s almost my home. It’s really close from my Bradenton home. It’s really easy to come here.”

“Indian Wells, the ball was flying more, and the court was really slow, so the bounces were high and the courts were slow. Here the court is really fast.”

Before the press conference, Nishikori practiced with Urugu ay’s Pablo Cuevas and worked on his Jekyll-and-Hyde service game with coach Michael Chang.

“If I’m getting the fundamentals right, the location of my toss and how I use my feet, I think I’ll be OK,” said Nishikori, who is scheduled to begin play in the second round here on Saturday.—KYODO NEWS

Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the Global New Light of Myanmar Daily.