Local property group awards design, build contract to Singaporean consortium

By Aye Min Soe

YANGON, 13 April—Property group Thanlyin Estate Development awarded the design and build contract to a consortium consisting of Dragages Singapore and SPA Project Management, according to the company’s statement.

The subsidiary of Bouygues won a contract worth approximately at US$ 116 million, of which Bouygues Construction’s share is valued at approximately $68 million.

The new phase of the Star City project covers the design and construction of six residential buildings including a total of 956 apartments. Four of the buildings will be 82 metres tall (25 storeys) and the other two will be 91 metres (28 storeys). The contract also includes the construction of a two-storey car park along with a local community building and Damsels perform dances at opening ceremony of Yangon Mayor’s central pandal.—SINA

Yangon, 13 April—The Thingyan Festival kicked off Monday in Yangon with water-throwing pandals opening to revelers across the city.

Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe unveiled the pandal of the government located on Yangon-Pyay Road, while Chairman of Yangon City Development Committee U Hla Myint opened the YCDC pandal at City Hall, followed by performances by dancing and cultural troupes and celebrities.

The YCDC has allowed the construction of more than 200 pandals of varying sizes to celebrate the traditional Myanmar New Year Water Festival in Yangon.

Big water-throwing pandals on Kaba Aye Pagoda Road and Kandawgyi Road have drawn throngs of revelers.

The Rakhine Thingyan Festival starts with a splash in Yangon

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Bangladesh eyes promotion of bilateral ties with Myanmar

YANGON 13 April — Bangladeshi foreign minister on Sunday offered a list of ongoing and future engagements that he has expected to promote bilateral ties with Myanmar.

Speaking at a conference on Bangladesh's engagement with India and Myanmar, Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali said Dhaka pursued a neighbourhood foreign policy and that the relation with the neighbours was characterized by “intensive engagements”.

He said a “fresh start” in the relations began with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assuming office in 2009 and it continued “to be strengthened and widened in our joint efforts to move ahead”.

Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali said a proposal on Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) was currently being considered by both the countries, which, if implemented, will help improve the bilateral trade.

Bangladesh has expected to increase its export items to Myanmar like the ready-made clothes, pharmaceuticals, leather, ceramics, jute, agricultural products, while importing abundance of agricultural, natural and mineral resources from the Southeast Asia country. The foreign minister added while Myanmar has started to open up for foreign investments and Bangladesh is looking for suitable investment opportunities in the resource-rich country.

Bangladesh and Myanmar agreed in 2007 to establish road link, followed by connecting the growth centres, ports and key cities.

Local property group awards design, build . . .

(from page 1)

the development of green spaces, a swimming-pool and a leisure activity area.

Ludwig Reichhold, executive vice president for Southern Asia at Bouygues Bâtiment International, said in the statement of company:

“Following on from an initial contract awarded in 2013, this latest success will reinforce our long-term commitment to Myanmar, which includes an initiative to provide training for local employees.”

The works will involve 2,100 people at peak periods and scheduled to last approximately three years.

The first phase of the City project — consisting of five residential buildings which have already been built by Dрагages Singapore and SPA Project Management for Thanlyin Estate Development — is currently at the completion stage.

MHD forecasts rain . . .

(from page 1)

Taungup, 0.59 inch in Hainghwé, 0.51 inch in Heho and 0.48 inch in Haka.

Temperatures are expected to drop during the Thingyan Festival as rain showers are likely in some regions, according to a top weather expert.

With rain showers, relief from the ultra-violet (UV) rays can arrive in some parts of Myanmar, which has been experiencing dangerous UV index levels, Dr Tun Lwin said in a Facebook post on Sunday.

The weather expert also warned areas in eastern part of Shan, Kayah and Kayin states to be alert to the possibility of thunderstorms, lightning, isolated heavy falls, gale force winds and hailstones on April 13 and 14 due to cumulus clouds in those areas.

Thunderstorms mostly happen in April and May in Myanmar.

Singapore Airlines to be official airline partner for 28th SEA Games

Singapore Airlines (SIA) is further strengthening its support for sports and tourism by sponsoring the 28th Southeast Asian (SEA) Games to be held in Singapore from 5 to 16 June 2015.

As the Official Airline Partner for the 28th SEA Games, SIA will sponsor complimentary Economy Class tickets to Singapore as prizes for promotional activities around the region. One key component of this engagement will be NILA’s Quest – a web-based digital game specifically created for the 28th SEA Games that aims to engage the regional community.

The grand prize will see a winning pair from each region fly to Singapore to enjoy the SEA Games.

SIA will also sponsor handbell fans which are included in the fun packs that will be distributed during the preview, opening and closing ceremonies, as well as SEA Games-themed Airbus A380 aircraft models. Singapore Airlines cabin crew will also be participating in the opening and closing ceremonies.

“As a strong supporter of both sports and tourism, Singapore Airlines is proud to be the Official Airline Partner of the 28th Southeast Asian Games. We are especially honoured to support this milestone sporting event which will be held in Singapore after a 22-year hiatus, as we celebrate the country’s 50th birthday this year,” said Singapore Airlines Executive Vice President Commercial, Mr Mak Swee Wah.

Mr Toh Boon Yi, Chief Community & Corporate Outreach, Singapore SEA Games Organising Committee (SINGSOC) said, “Singapore Airlines is a Singapore icon, and we are very pleased to work with a top-class partner for the 28th SEA Games. They have been involved in the local sporting scene and we hope that its support will set off more investment from Corporate Singapore. We look forward to working with partners like Singapore Airlines to co-create this sporting experience for all.”

In addition to its sponsorship, SIA will offer special fares for officials who are travelling to Singapore for the Games as well as publicity through its proprietary media channels reaching customers travelling worldwide throughout the airline’s extensive network of 60 destinations in 53 countries. The channels include SilverKris, SIA’s inflight entertainment system, Singapore Airlines Public Affairs Department
Mandalay Mayor opens Maha Thingyan festival 2015

Mandalay Mayor and Mandalay Region Minister for Development Affairs U Aung Maung extended greetings at the opening of the Maha Thingyan festival. U Aung Maung extended his greetings to the chief minister, the meeting of the central pandal in progress in Nay Pyi Taw Maha Thingyan festival.

Yangon Region Chief Minister enjoys water festival

Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myin Swe sprays fragrant water on a diplomat at Yangon Region Government Office pandal.

Gov’t to seek facts on introduction to minimum wages

Nay Pyi Taw, 13 April—Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security will hold separate meetings with representatives of employers and employees on April 25 and 26 to discuss about fixing minimum wages of local workers. The ministry has already collected results from tripartite meetings among workers, employers and local authorities in states, regions and Nay Pyi Taw council area, and the upcoming meetings will be reviewed these findings. The meetings will also discuss the living costs of households which was surveyed across the country. The ministry will organize a meeting of Hluttaw members, representatives of political parties, experts, employees and employers in May for fixing minimum wages as soon as possible.

The opening ceremony of Mayor’s central pandal in progress in Nay Pyi Taw Maha Thingyan festival.
**Bodybuilders, physique athletes compete for title**

**YANGON, 13 April** — The Myanmar Bodybuilding and Physical Culture Federation and the Fine Arts Department jointly held the Summer Bodybuilding and Model Physique Sports Contest 2015 at Aung San Gymnasium here on 11 April.

Under the assessment of judges led by Daw Mya Min Min Mu and Daw Khin Wai, 29 bodybuilders and three physique athletes participated in the 60 kilogram, 65 kg, 70 kg, and over-70 kg events.

Ma Khin Hsu Yi finished first, Ma Yin Mar, second and Ma Thuza Aung, third in the model physique contest.

On 27 June, a bodybuilding and model physique contest marking International Olympic Day will be held in Yangon, judges said.

Thant Zin Win

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**Villages receive loans for 2015-16 fiscal year**

**MAHLAING, 13 April** — Authorities on 9 April delivered capital funds to the villages in Mahlaing Township, including for implementation of the emerald green project in the 2015-16 fiscal year.

In meeting with members of the village financial supervisory committee for the project, head of the Rural Development Department U Aung Bo Bo said the department collected interest for the loans in 2014-15 fiscal year. He added that the department will disburse K32.09 million to each village and they must pay back loans to the department at the end of the fiscal year.

Officials presented K32.09 million each to Myinthaung, Nyaungbintha, Kanhtihgyi and Gaunghsaykan villages.

Aung Htay (Mahlaing)

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**Graduates, students of NYRDDC meet at gathering**

**LOIKAW, 13 April** — Graduates and student of Nationalities Youth Resources Development Degree Colleges in Yangon and Mandalay gathered for an annual party at the city hall in Loikaw, the capital of Kayah State, on the evening of 7 April.

Kayah State Social Affairs Minister U Koe Rei and guests attended the party. The gathering was aimed at further strengthening relationships among the students and graduates from the colleges. The event is held in Loikaw, Demawsho, Moebey and other towns in rotation annually.

District IPRD

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**Summer sports course concludes**

Graduates, students of NYRDDC meet at gathering

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**Police seize 199 stimulant tablets in Thakayta Tsp**

**NAY PyiTaw, 13 April** — Members of No 41 anti-drug police squad, acting on a tip-off, searched the bag of Po Kay (a) Po Aye (a) Zeyar on Thumana Street in Ward 3 in Thakayta Township, Yangon, on 11 April.

They seized 199 stimulant tablets and one mobile phone from the bag.

Action was taken against Po Kay (a) Po Aye (a) Zeyar under Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances Law.

Police Information
Cambodia’s reformed election body officially established

PHNOM PENH, 13 April—Cambodia’s newly elected National Election Committee launched operations on Monday, vowing to organize free, fair and transparent elections in the future.

The new committee’s nine members, who were elected at the 41 prefectural and city assembly last Thursday, took office on Monday in a ceremony presided over by Deputy Prime Minister and Royal Palace Minister Kong Sam Ol.

Sek Bunhok, ex-lawmaker from the ruling Cambodian People’s Party (CPP), was named chairman of the committee, while Kuoy Bunroeun, ex-lawmaker from the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), was appointed vice-chairman.

The new committee was introduced after Prime Minister Hun Sen and CNRP President Sam Rainsy reached an agreement on 22 July last year to end the opposition’s 10-month boycott of the National Assembly following the 2013 elections.

Both Hun Sen and Sam Rainsy have confidence that the new committee will ensure free and fair national elections in 2018 and prevent post-election deadlock.

“If realized, it would be the first time since January 2011 for the Japanese and South Korean defense ministers to hold talks.

Kim added that South Korea “has not discussed at all the issue of a possible bilateral accord with Japan known as the Acquisition and Cross Service Agreement.”

Once an agreement is reached, Japanese and South Korean forces will be able to exchange most types of support, including food, fuel and transportation.

Japan is hoping to arrange the defense ministerial talks through a security dialogue in Seoul on Tuesday involving senior foreign affairs and defense officials, Japanese officials said. The security dialogue will be the two countries’ first since December 2009.

Kyodo News

China’s former state-assets chief stands trial for corruption

BEIJING, 13 April—Jiang Jiemin, former head of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission, went on trial Monday for corruption.

Prosecutors accused Jiang of taking bribes, possessing a large number of assets from unidentified sources and abusing power while performing duty for a state-owned enterprise.

Jiang was chair of the board of China National Petroleum Corporation. He is tried at the Hanyang Intermediate People’s Court in Hubei Province.

The court began hearing the case at about 8:30 am. Jiang and his defender appeared at the court.

Xinhua

No plan yet to hold defence talks with Japan in May: S Korea

SEOUL, 13 April—South Korea has no plan yet to hold a bilateral defence ministerial meeting with Japan on the sidelines of Asia’s key security dialogue set to be held in Singapore in late May, a Defense Ministry spokesman said on Monday.

“At the moment, we have not discussed holding defence ministerial talks with Japan and we don’t have a plan for such talks at the Shangri-La Dialogue,” Kim Min Seok said during a Press briefing, referring to the annual security forum by its widely known name.

Kim made the remarks when asked about the South Korea government’s position after Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani expressed eagerness last Friday to meet with his South Korean counterpart Han Min Koo on the sidelines of the forum.

If realized, it would be the first time since January 2011 for the Japanese and South Korean defense ministers to hold talks.

Kim also added that South Korea “has not discussed at all the issue of a possible bilateral accord with Japan known as the Acquisition and Cross Service Agreement.”

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Kyodo News

LDP-backed governors win in Hokkaido, Oita, giving boost to Abe

TOKYO, 13 April—The governors of Hokkaido and Oita prefectures won fourth terms in Sunday’s gubernatorial elections, giving a boost to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s efforts to revitalize regional economies and ensure the benefits of “Abenomics” aimed at achieving economic recovery and beating deflation are shared across the country.

The victories reversed losses by Abe’s Liberal Democratic Party in recent gubernatorial contests despite its overwhelming victory in the House of Representatives election in December.

Hokkaido Gov Harumi Takahashi, backed by the LDP and its junior coalition partner the Komeito party, beat Noriyuki Sato, a former television anchor backed by the Democratic Party of Japan and other opposition parties.

Oita Gov Katsusada Hirose defeated Ban Kugimiy, a former Oita city mayor backed by the DPJ.

But in the mayoral election in Sapporo, the capital of Hokkaido, former Sapporo Deputy Mayor Katsuhito Akimoto, backed by the DPJ and the Japan Innovation Party, defeated Nana Honma, a former central government official backed by the LDP.

The elections were part of the first round of unified quadrennial local elections held across Japan to choose governors, mayors and local assembly members.

During the campaigning period, the ruling and opposition parties strove to shore up their support bases ahead of upcoming national elections, including one for the House of Councillors next year.

On Sunday, voters cast ballots to pick governors in 10 prefectures and mayors in five government-designated major cities, as well as assembly members in 41 of Japan’s 47 prefectures and in 17 of the country’s 20 major cities.

The day’s voting was the first part of two-stage local elections, which are held simultaneously every four years to cut election costs and improve voting rates.

A second round is set for April 26 to elect mayors and city assembly members in other areas.

As of 11 pm on Sunday, Kyodo News estimated voter turnout at 49.26 percent, down from 52.77 percent in the 2011 gubernatorial elections for the 10 prefectures plus Tokyo and Saga.

It is likely to end up lower than the record low of 52.63 percent logged in 2003.

Incumbent governors won reelection in all 10 prefectures holding gubernatorial elections. Of those 10 elections, the ruling and opposition blocs squared off in just two prefectures - Hokkaido and Oita.

There were no head-to-head contests between ruling and opposition blocs in the other eight prefectures of Kanagawa, Fukushima, Mie, Nara, Tottori, Shimane, Tokushima and Fukui.

Among the five mayoral elections, the battle in Sapporo was the only one fought between the two blocs.

And of 2,284 seats in 41 prefectural assembly elections up for grabs, the LDP had won 829 as of 11 pm — and was on course to win a majority, according to tallies by Kyodo News.

The DPJ had so far won 106 seats, just a third of the 314 seats it held prior to the elections as it struggles against waning popularity.

In Osaka, the Osaka Restoration Association, linked to the Japan Innovation Party and led by Osa- ka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, was certain to remain the largest force in both the prefectural and city assemblies.

Xinhua
**World military spending inches down in 2014**

**London,** 13 April—Global military spending fell in 2014 for the third straight year, albeit by just 0.4 percent, as increased spending in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia nearly matched cutbacks in the United States and Western Europe, a Swedish think tank said on Monday.

According to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, global military spending in real terms in 2014 decreased 0.4 percent from the previous year to $1.78 trillion.

"While total military spending is mostly unchanged, some regions, such as the Middle East and much of Africa, are continuing to see rapid build-ups that are placing an increasingly high burden on many economies," said Sam Perlo-Freeman, head of SIPRI's military expenditure project.

China boosted its military spending in 2014 by 9.7 percent from the previous year, while Russia's spending grew 8.1 percent. Compared to 2005's figures, China's spending has expanded by 167 percent, Russia's by 97 percent, India's by 39 percent and South Korea's by 34 percent.

The United States, attempting to trim its fiscal expenditure, spent 0.4 percent less in 2014 than in 2005, while France and Britain, fifth and sixth in the rankings, trimmed their spending by 3.2 percent and 5.5 percent respectively.

Japan stood out in Asia with its relative decrease in military spending. Its 2014 expenditure was down 3.7 percent on 2005's figure, although this likely reflected the effect of a weak yen.

Japan ranked ninth in the world's expenditure rankings in 2014, down from seventh place in the previous year after being eclipsed by India and Germany.

While the United States remained the world's top military spender, its share of total global expenditure fell to 34 percent in 2014. Second-place spender China's share rose to 12 percent.

In third place, Russia accounted for 4.8 of global expenditure, followed by Saudi Arabia in fourth with 4.5 percent.

In the face of expansion by Russia, Ukraine's military spending rose 23 percent in 2014 compared with the previous year. The total monetary cost of the Ukraine crisis is expected to be higher, according to the report.

The effect of the crisis extended to nearby Eastern European and the Baltic states, which also ramped up their spending. Among these countries, Poland's spending rose 13 percent.

Saudi Arabia increased its spending by 17 percent compared to 2013, the largest increase among the world's top 15 spenders, as a wave of conflicts continued in the surrounding region.

Notable in Asia was Vietnam's 9.6 percent rise in spending. The country is facing territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea.

**South Korea’s Park to skip Russia World War II event that North’s Kim will attend**

**Seoul,** 13 April—South Korean President Park Geun-hye will not attend an event in Moscow to mark the end of World War Two in Europe and instead send an envoy, an official said on Monday, dashing the possibility for a rare summit with the leader of North Korea.

Russia has said the North's Kim Jong Un would attend the 9 May celebration marking the 70th anniversary of the war's end, which would be his first trip overseas since taking power in 2011 after the death of his father.

"The president will not be going," a South Korean government official said on Monday, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The country's foreign ministry said over the weekend that a ruling Saenuri Party member of parliament's foreign affairs committee, who is also a special aide to Park, would attend as her special envoy.

The government official and the foreign ministry did not elaborate on why Park had chosen not to attend. If Park and Kim were both to travel to Moscow for the event, it would make possible only the third summit between the leaders of the rival Koreas, which remain technically at war under a truce ending their 1950-53 conflict.

Attempts at dialogue between the North and the South are at a stalemate, following the 2010 sinking of a South Korean navy ship and the bombing of an island in the South that Seoul blames on the North. Pyongyang denies any role in the sinking of the naval ship Cheonan.—Reuters

**Hobart Airport website taken offline after cyber-attack**

**Melbourne,** 13 April—Hobart International Airport's website remained shut down on Monday, more than 24 hours after Tasmania Police was forced to take it offline due to a cyber-attack.

A group with ties to radical group Islamic State (IS) reportedly claimed responsibility for the computer hack on Monday.

Police shut down the website in the early hours of Sunday morning, just hours after the hackers placed a pro-radical message on the homepage.

The website has not yet been reinstated.

Tasmania Police issued a statement saying the hackers targeted the web hosts and not the airport's website itself. It has been revealed that thousands of other sites managed by the web host have also been hacked using the same message since late last year, but police said there was no cause for concern for those using Hobart Airport.

"There were no threats made towards the Hobart Airport or flight operations to and from the airport," the statement said on Monday.

"Investigations have shown that identical messages have appeared on thousands of websites worldwide since late 2014." The company that operates Hobart Airport also released a statement confirming the news and stated that measures would be put in place to tighten airport security as well as its online presence.

"The airport website was defaced with pro-Islamic militant messages," it said on Monday.

"The airport is working with our IT service providers to review website security protocols."

**Pair of Miyazaki mangoes fetch 300,000 yen at season’s 1st auction**

A man holds a box of two mangoes under the brand “Taiyo no Tamago” (Egg of the Sun) at the local central wholesale market in the city of Miyazaki, southwestern Japan, on 13 April, 2015. The pair fetched 300,000 yen at the year’s first auction of mangoes the same day, tying the record high.—Kyodo News

MIYAZAKI, (Japan) 13 April —A brand-name pair of mangoes from Miyazaki Prefecture fetched 300,000 yen ($2,495) on Monday in this season's first auction at a local wholesale market, setting the same record high as marked last year.

Mangoes of this variety, called “Taiyo no Tama-go” (Egg of the Sun), are selected under strict criteria such as weight of more than 350 grams each and a high level of sugar content. This year's production is expected to be about 1,100 tons and the peak of shipping will be between May and June, according to the Miyazaki Agricultural Economic Federation.

Among 157 cases containing two mangoes each auctioned on the day, the highest-priced pair were to be sold at a department store in Fukuoka, the largest city in the Kyushu region in southwestern Japan where Miyazaki is located.—Kyodo News

**Niloufar Rahmani gets on a military plane at a military airport in Kabul, Afghanistan on 12 April, 2015. Born in 1992, Rahmani is the first Afghan female fixed-wing Air Force aviator.**—Xinhua
History now made, US and Cuba face bumpy road ahead

Cuban leader Raul Castro and US President Barack Obama.—Reuters

France’s Jean-Marie Le Pen pulls out of regional vote

Brazilians protest Rousseff in second big demonstration of 2015

Most of a city block in Sao Paulo. Nearly two thirds of Brazilians favour impeachment of the president who narrowly won re-election in October, according to Datafolha, but almost as many doubt the corruption scandal will drive Rousseff from office.

Opposition parties have played down the prospects for impeachment, even as prosecutors charge members of Rousseff’s ruling Workers’ Party with corruption.

The US economic embargo, which blocked nearly all trade between the two nations for the last five decades, is firmly in place. Cuba’s human rights record still draws scorn from Washington, as does US foreign policy from Havana.

"Let’s not fool ourselves. We have a lot of differences," said Castro, 83, who has been an enemy of the United States for most of his life and still railled passionately against its past policies even as he praised Obama as "an honest man."

"In other words, we’re willing to talk about everything with patience, with a lot of patience," added the army general and younger brother of revolutionary leader Fidel Castro.

Obama and Castro announced in December they would work to re-establish full diplomatic ties severed in 1961, re-open embassies in each other’s capitals and free up trade and travel.

Restoring diplomatic relations is easy enough, requiring little more than the normalizing overall relations is easy enough, requiring little more than the

Though there is little doubt that Havana will be taken off the blacklist, US officials privately have made clear that they have sought to use the timing of the move as leverage in broader normalization negotiations. A number of unresolved issues have slowed down the process, including Washington’s wish that Cuba allow US diplomats to travel around the island and relax the police presence around the diplomatic mission in Havana, where visiting Cubans are closely watched. "They're building a bazaar, which has blocked many of a city block in Sao Paulo. Nearly two thirds of Brazilians favour impeachment of the president who narrowly won re-election in October, according to Datafolha, but almost as many doubt the corruption scandal will drive Rousseff from office." Rousseff herself is not under investigation in the still-expanding Petrobras probe. She says she knew nothing about the bribery and price-fixing racket that allegedly cost the company billions of dollars while she was chairman from 2003 to 2010.—Reuters

Demonstrators take part in a protest against Brazil’s President Dilma Rousseff in front of Sao Paulo Art Museum on 12 April, 2015.—Reuters
What defines a healthy work environment?

By Myint Win Thein

One of the characteristics of a good working environment is a healthy relationship with superiors and co-workers. Most workers know how to establish a good relationship with superiors, since doing so is obviously in their interest.

Some may seek favourable treatment from superiors while at the same time doing little actual work or claiming credit for the efforts of others. They may tell their superiors they have devoted their lives to the work. They think they have established a good working environment and say that some jealous co-workers are disturbing it. Such a work environment is only beneficial to the self-seekers. Not every co-worker can accept their egotistical behaviour which puts a greater burden on others. Self-seekers offend their co-workers by exaggerating their meagre work and fawning before their superiors.

All workers want a pleasant working environment, but this does not necessarily mean mandating a better working environment than those around them. One may work as long and hard as anyone else, yet never seek any opportunity or advantage. Unfortunately, a few self-seekers in a workplace can demolish a pleasant working environment for many of those around them.

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Myanmar-Spirit and New Year’s Resolutions for Myanmar

By TOMMY PAUK

Myanmar Era 1376 ends and Myanmar Era 1377 comes. We Myanmar celebrate traditional Thingyan Festival known as Water Festival across the country. The literal meaning of ‘Thingyan’ is ‘change’. A four-day long water festival welcomes the new Myanmar Era. It is celebrated to mark a short period of passing over into the new year. Thingyan festival also welcomes everyone to participate and enjoy a lot of fun irrespective of races. Changing is an absolute natural process, but we humans prefer to face the change which gives us positive effect.

The last day of Thingyan Festival (Myanmar term: A-Tet nae) is the Myanmar New Year’s Eve. Normally, Myanmar including all national races or national brethren participate in Thingyan Festival. This festival is enjoyed by all national brethren with joyful, sincere and cordial spirit. Even then, the international tourists, foreign diplomats and foreigners also take part in Thingyan festivities merrily. Thingyan has no discrimination among nationalities or national races although it is a Myanmar traditional festival. Thingyan spirit is significant, friendly, warm and courteous. It also depicts a part of Myanmar culture. That is why the foreigners take part in Thingyan festive celebrations rapturously and independently. The rapturous traditional event reveals the friendliness, fraternity and goodwill. Foreigners are eager to know the essence of Thingyan Festival and love to learn and enjoy the most exciting and joyful Thingyan water festival in Myanmar.

During the water festival period, few youngsters act or imitate or wear outlandish fashions or dresses related to alien cultures. However, we Myanmarers preserve and cherish the traditional festivals including Thingyan festival with great care. Even the tourists from different countries pay respect to Myanmar culture and they really like it and regard or value the essence of Thingyan spirit. Cleansing and dousing each other with clean water and making meritious deeds are practiced during Thingyan festival or Myanmar New Year festival. Meditation centers are specially opened during Thingyan Festival for those who wish to get rid of worries, anxiety, stress, pressure or to calm down grief, anger and delusion. The mer-ry-makers and Thingyan revelers make a lot of lovely and lively fun. This festive occasion or celebration portrays the intimacy among Thingyan revelers. Traditional Thingyan dances and songs entertained to the revelers at the water throwing pandals are very attractive to the foreigners in Myanmar. We also do the chanting of constructive criticism (Myanmar term: THANGYAT) on the inefficient public officials, malpractice, wrong doings done by some people in Myanmar. The style of chanting to the accompaniment of drums is rather amusing and satirical. This shows that we can frankly and independently express to point out the mistakes or faults or immoral behaviors or inefficiency of the public officials as well as citizens concerned so as to change their bad practice to good practice or to correct their mistakes. The chants include the rising prices of commodities, political objections, people’s voice on some difficulties facing in their life in Myanmar. Therefore, Thingyan-spirit leads to the harmony, intimacy, improvement and progress for Myanmar society.

We the entire people of Myanmar have to make New Year’s resolution. We should discard the bad things and create good morals in the year to come. We also may vary according to their circumstances and situations. Nevertheless, every one of us wishes to have better, comfortable and prosperous life with change which must be a positive effect.

Let us practically implement our New Year’s resolutions with concerted effort.

May cool and fragrant Thingyan water freshen the Myanmar citizens to be able to serve their motherland with vigorous strength and ability. The New Year 1377 will have more perplexity, tranquility and pleasantness indeed. Hopefully, the entire Myanmar citizens will be happy, healthy and wealthy in the New Year. To radiating or showing more compassion, sympathy, empathy and religious tolerance should be included in New Year’s resolutions. Individuals may have made New Year’s resolutions differently. Maybe some might want to extend the business of their own or some have vowed to quit or give up smoking or drinking alcohol or chewing betel etc. Actually, their plans or decisions to do for New Year may vary according to their circumstances and situations. Therefore, we must prepare for New Year’s resolutions made by Myanmar citizens. Moreover, Myanmar New Year will have more prosperity, tranquility and pleasantness in deed. Hopefully, the entire Myanmar citizens will be happy, healthy and wealthy in the New Year. To radiating or showing more compassion, sympathy, empathy and religious tolerance should be included in New Year’s resolutions. Individuals may have made New Year’s resolutions differently. Maybe some might want to extend the business of their own or some have vowed to quit or give up smoking or drinking alcohol or chewing betel etc. Actually, their plans or decisions to do for New Year may vary according to their circumstances and situations. Nevertheless, every one of us wishes to have better, comfortable and prosperous life with change which must be a positive effect.

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Residents honour religious title recipient Sayadaw

MYAWADY, 14 April — A ceremony to honour Dr Ashin Paññananda, who has received the religious title of Maha Saddhamma Jotikadhaja, was held at Sasana Hitkari Dhammayon in the precinct of Shwemyinwun Pagoda in Myawady, Kayin State, on 11 April.

Secretary of the Township Sangha Nayaka Committee Bawdi monastery, Abbot Bhaddanta Rajadhamma, read the biography of the title-recipient Sayadaw.

The district’s deputy commissioner U Lwin Ko Oo spoke on religious affairs, while well-wishers donated offerings and shared merits. — Tun Tun Oo (Myawady Town)

Well-wishers donate cash for storm victims

MYINGYAN, 13 April — The Interfaith Friendship Group provided cash assistance to storm victims at the office of Layeindan village, Myingyan Township, Mandalay Region, on 10 April.

A storm hit Dahkyun, Tasaung and Aungpyo villages in Myingyan Township on 2 April, destroying or damaging 46 homes.

“As humanitarian aid, we presented cash assistance to the storm victims because we all are living in the same country, through thick and thin,” an official of the group said. “We believe our assistance will contribute towards rehabilitation of the victims.”

On the occasion, the organization donated K330,000 to the victims, while the Township Maternal and Child Welfare Association and departmental personnel contributed K432,000.

On 9 April, the Relief and Resettlement Department provided textiles, personal goods, kitchen utensils and other equipment to the victims. Additionally, Myanmar Red Cross Society presented provision kits to the families.

Zaw Min Naing (Myingyan)

Volunteers clean Chaungtha Beach

PATEIN, 13 April — Local residents and workers came together to clean the beach in Chaungtha village, Pathein Township, Ayeyawady Region, on 8 April.

Around 150 people, including police, hotel workers and staff of local authorities participated in the cleanup of Chaungtha Beach under the auspices of Abbot U Paduma of Ywama Monastery.

Shwechaungyan Township Development Committee helped the volunteers dispose of waste they collected. — Maung Maung Myint (IPRD)

Police seize heroin, stimulant tablets in Myothit Tsp

NAY PYI TAW, 13 April — Members of No 7 anti-drug squad (Tamu), acting on a tip-off, stopped a motorcycle driven by Thang Kho Ram on Tamu-Zedi road in Than Village, Myothit Township, Sagaing Region, on 11 April.

The police seized 0.252 kilo of heroin and 202 stimulant tablets from the motorcycle. Action was taken against Thang Kho Ram, 42, under Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances Law. — Police Information

Earthen pots occupy market share during Thingyan festival

NYAUNGSOWE, 13 April — Atar pots (earthen pots) are marketable in Shan State as an activity of Maha Thingyan festival.

Kyauktawing village in Inlay region, Nyaungswe Township, sends earthen pots to the market.

Local pottery industries mainly produce Atar Thingyan pots and drinking water pots in the months of Tabang and Tagu (March and April) yearly. Moreover, local pottery makers produce different sizes of vases, stoves, cup of oil lamp and toys made of clay.

These pots are sent to the market in Nyaungswe, Taunggyi, Phekone and Lawk. They sell K300 per Atar pot depending on the sizes, a local resident said.

Kyauktawing Village in Nyaungswe Township is engaged in production of earthen pots for many years. — Nay Myo Thurein
Deal or not, many US states will keep sanctions grip on Iran

WASHINGTON, 13 April — As the United States and Iran come closer to a historic nuclear deal, many US states are likely to stick with their own sanctions on Iran that could complicate any warming of relations between the longtime foes.

In a little known aspect of Iran’s international isolation, around two dozen states have enacted measures punishing companies operating in certain sectors of its economy, directing public pension funds with billions of dollars in assets to divest from the firms and sometimes barring them from public contracts.

In more than half those states, the restrictions expire only if Iran is no longer designated to be supporting terrorism or if all US federal sanctions against Iran are lifted — unlikely outcomes even in the case of a final nuclear accord. Two states, Kansas and Mississippi, are even considering new sanctions targeting the country.

The prospect of unwavering sanctions at the state level, or new ones, just as the federal government reaches a landmark agreement with Iran risks widening a divide between states and the federal government on a crucial foreign policy issue.

Though US states have often coordinated their measures with federal sanctions on Iran, their divestment actions sometimes take a tougher line on foreign firms with Iran links than is the case under federal policy.

“Our investment sanctions are not tied in any way to President Obama’s negotiations with the Iranians,” said Gaetz, a Republican Florida state senator who sponsored legislation in 2007 punishing companies with investments in Iran’s energy sector. “They would have to change their behaviour dramatically and we would not be necessarily guided by President Obama or any other president’s opinion about the Iranians,” Gaetz said. A final accord, which is still being negotiated ahead of a 30 June deadline, would likely lift US sanctions on Iran’s crude oil sales to other countries and放松 restrictions on Iran’s financial system. Federal sanctions on Iran tied to issues such as human rights and terrorism would remain in place.

Among around a dozen states contacted directly by Reuters, legislators and state officials said they had no intention of changing their Iran policies even in light of a federal deal. State officials in Connecticut and Illinois said new local legislation would be needed to change their divestment policies, even if a deal were signed.

Officials in New York and Oregon told Reuters they would look to changes in law at the federal level in the case of a nuclear deal to determine how it would affect their policies. Officials at Iran’s mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment from Reuters on the state policies. White House spokeswoman Bernadette Meehan did not respond directly to a Reuters query about states’ sanctions policies, though she stressed that only sanctions related to Iran’s nuclear programme would be affected by a deal.

The first divestment campaigns gathered steam in 2008 and 2009, and received a federal stamp of approval in 2010 with passage of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act, which encouraged states to pass such measures.

Clinton’s 2016 White House launch contrasts with her 2008 bid

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, 13 April — Hillary Clinton cast herself as a champion for conveying a sense of hope and for economic equality, even as her campaign events this week were signed.

A campaign aide said Clinton left her home in Chappaqua, New York, for the drive to Iowa, where she will attend her first campaign events this week. In the tweet from a stop in Pennsylvania, Clinton said: “Met a great family when we stopped this afternoon. Many more to come.”

But showing a more down-to-earth side while connecting with ordinary voters will be a challenge for Clinton, one of the most famous figures in the United States after decades as the wife of former President Bill Clinton, a US senator and secretary of state. Indeed, her launch drew praise from French and German government ministers.

While Clinton enters the race as prohibitive favourite to be her party’s presidential nominee, a crowd of potential candidates are vying for the Republican nomination.

Clinton’s campaign will be based around her plans to address economic inequality and will tout the historic nature of her effort to become the first woman US president, aides said.

In announcing her presidential bid in 2007, Clinton spoke to the camera alone while sitting on a couch and asked voters to join her later for a series of Web chats.

This time, her video featured a mix of Americans talking about their futures and their economic troubles, along with images of Clinton in listening mode and only a small snippet of her speaking.

Her announcements featured strong words but no specific policy proposals about the struggles of working Americans and the need for economic equality. That included a shot at executive salaries that reflected populist rhetoric to a degree that could raise alarm among her Wall Street backers.

“Families have fought their way back from tough economic times. But it’s not enough — not when the average CEO makes about 300 times what the average worker makes,” Clinton said in an email to supporters.

Islamic State militants claim attacks on embassies in Libya

TRIPOLI, 13 April — A bomb exploded at the gate of the Moroccan embassy in the Libyan capital early on Monday, causing some damage but hurting nobody, a security official said, only hours after gunmen attacked South Korea’s mission in Tripoli.

Militants claiming loyalty to the Islamic State said on Twitter they were responsible for both attacks, the latest strikes against foreign embassies, missions or embassies or embassies in Libya. It was not possible to verify the authenticity of the claims.

Islamic State militants have exploited chaos in the North African country where two governments allied to a host of armed groups fight control four, linked with the on-going ousting of Muammar Gaddafi.

The bomb damaged the gate and a residential building next to the Moroccan embassy located in the up market Ben Ashour district, a security official and Reuters reporter at the scene said.

Nobody was hurt by the blast early on Monday, the official said. In addition, gunmen fired shots at the South Korean embassy in Tripoli, killing two local security guards and wounding a third person, South Korean and Libyan officials said.

Saudi minister in Pakistan after lawmakers reject troop request

ISLAMABAD, 13 April — Saudi Arabia’s minister for religious affairs arrived in Pakistan late on Sunday, two days after the country’s parliament rejected a Saudi appeal for support for its military intervention in Yemen.

His arrival follows a visit by the Iranian foreign minister last week, in which the Iranians urged Pakistan to support dialogue in Yemen rather than sending troops.

On Friday, Pakistan’s parliament voted not to join the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen, dashing Riyadh’s hopes for powerful support from outside of the region in its fight to halt Houthi rebels, some of whom have links to Iran.

Saudi Arabia had asked fellow Sunni-majority Pakistan to provide ships, aircraft and troops for the campaign, now in its third week, to stem the influence of Shi’ite Iran in what could develop into a proxy war between the Gulf’s two dominant powers.

“The resolution passed by Pakistan’s parliament is Pakistan’s internal matter,” Saleh bin Abdul-Aziz bin Mohammad al-Sheikh told reporters at the airport.

He added: “We have very good relations with Pakistan, and we expect a lot of good from it. Pakistan is a very important country, it is a big country in the Islamic world.” “Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have had very strong relations ever since Pakistan’s creation...we should try and improve these ties as best we can.”

He is expected to return to Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, a foreign office official said. His schedule was not made public.

Reuters
World Bank cuts East Asia growth forecast, warns of risks to outlook

SINGAPORE, 13 April — The World Bank cut its 2015 growth forecasts for developing East Asia and China, and warned of “significant” risks from global uncertainties including the potential impact from a strengthening dollar and higher US interest rates.

The Washington-based lender expects the developing East Asia and Pacific (EAP) region, which includes China, to grow 6.7 percent in each of 2015 and 2016, down from 6.9 percent growth in 2014.

That’s down from its previous forecast in October of 6.9 percent growth this year and 6.8 percent in 2016.

China’s growth is likely to slow due to policies aimed at putting the economy on a more sustainable footing and tackling financial vulnerabilities, the World Bank said in its latest East Asia and Pacific Economic Update report on Monday.

The World Bank said China’s economic growth likely to slow to 7.1 percent in 2015 and 7.0 percent in 2016, from 7.4 percent in 2014. The previous forecast was for growth of 7.2 percent in 2015 and 7.1 percent in 2016.

While the impact of low oil prices will vary from country to country, the World Bank said the prospect of a sustained period of low oil costs will help underpin growth in the region, as will an expected recovery in high-income economies.

However, due to uncertainties in the global economy, there are “significant risks” to the regional outlook, it added. “Higher US interest rates and an appreciating US dollar, associated with monetary policy divergence across the advanced economies may raise borrowing costs, generate financial volatility, and reduce capital inflows more sharply than anticipated,” the World Bank said.

Any downturn in Japan and the euro area would dent the region’s exports, it said. Another risk is a significant slowdown in China, although that is unlikely since the world’s second-biggest economy enjoys policy buffers including large foreign reserves, and ample fiscal room to deploy fiscal stimulus or bail out debtors, the report added.

China’s central bank has cut interest rates twice since November in a bid to spur an economy growing at its slowest pace in decades.

Growth in developing East Asia and Pacific excluding China is expected to accelerate to 5.1 percent in 2015 and 5.4 percent in 2016, from 4.6 percent in 2014, the World Bank said.

Malaysia, the region’s largest oil-exporter, is likely to see growth slow in 2015, as low oil prices hit capital spending in the energy sector and private consumption cools due to the implementation of the goods and services tax in April, it said.

IEA sees sharp rise in Iran oil output in 3-5 years post nuclear deal

NEW DELHI, 13 April — World oil markets will not see a significant rise in Iranian supplies for up to five years even if the OPEC member and world powers clinch a final nuclear deal by end-June, Fatih Birol, chief economist and future head of International Energy Agency (IEA) said.

While the likelihood of an immediate jump in Iranian supplies looks slim, the chance of a steep fall in deliveries from other regions is rising as IEA estimates companies will cut investments by as much as $100 billion (68 billion pound) in 2015 in oil exploration and production due to lower prices.

Iran and six world powers reached a framework nuclear agreement on April 2, spurring hopes for a final deal by end-June that would lift economic sanctions imposed by the West against Tehran’s disputed nuclear programme.

“In three to five years we may see stronger (oil production) growth coming from Iran assuming Iran and global powers strike a final deal in June,” Fatih Birol, who will head the IEA from September, told Reuters in an interview in New Delhi.

He said there may not be a big growth in Iranian oil production immediately as Teheran’s huge and geological complex fields have not been maintained “in the best way” due to the sanctions.

Western sanctions have cut Iran’s oil exports by more than half to around 1.1 million bpd from a pre-2012 level of 2.5 million bpd, with the loss of oil income making it difficult to invest in new development and pay for the equipment and services needed to keep its production operating smoothly.

Biol said sees a limited impact of the lifting of sanctions on Iran on global oil prices, which have been halved since June on supply glut mainly from the United States.

Global economic growth mainly in Asia and Europe and investment in boosting oil output will be important factors determining movement in future global oil prices.

“We see a sluggish economic growth prospects in Europe which is very important to determine the demand of oil growth,” he said. — Reuters

Australian doctors, parents back hardline stance against anti-vaccination families

CANBERRA, 13 April — Medical organizations and parent groups aired strong support on Monday to the hardline stance taken by Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott against parents who choose not to vaccinate their children.

Abbott announced on Sunday parents who were objectionable to childhood vaccinations would be stripped of family tax and childcare payments worth 11,700 US dollars per year. “The choice made by families not to immunize their children is not supported by public policy or medical research nor should such action be supported by taxpayers in the form of child care payments,” Abbott said on Sunday.

Although Australia’s childhood vaccination rates remain relatively high — at around 97 percent — the number of children under seven years of age recorded with conscientious objections rose for the 15th consecutive year in 2014 to 1.77 percent. Opposition Leader Bill Shorten said he would support the payment restrictions and he did not accept people putting kids at risk by “claiming some sort of loose, undefined conscientious objection.”

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) and Early Childhood Australia objects to the proposed laws but called for more public education to dispel anti-vaccination fears.

AMA President Professor Brian Owler said the message for vaccinations benefits had to continue year in year out. He said on Monday many new parents had become complacent because they haven’t encountered these diseases in their lifetime. The parents of four-week-old Riley Hughes who was killed by whooping cough last month before he could be vaccinated said they welcomed the decision and hoped the money saved could be put towards a register of immunized adults.

New generation of antibodies highly effective against HIV

BERLIN, 13 April — A new generation of antibodies can significantly reduce the number of strains of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in the blood of infected persons, said a new study published in Wednesday’s issue of the journal Nature.

More than 30 years after the discovery of HIV as the cause of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), an international team of scientists with the participation of the University Hospital of Cologne and the German Center for Infection Research (DZIF) has tested a new generation of antibodies on humans for the first time.

The study showed, the special feature of this antibody is its ability to effectively neutralize a large number of different HIV variants. According to the researchers, HIV infection can be easily treated with a combination of different antiviral drugs today. However, the drugs sometimes cause severe side effects, are expensive, and must be taken for life.

Finally, the antibody was well tolerated and showed even more advantageous pharmacological properties.

“Neutralizing antibodies have a different mechanism of action and different pharmacological properties than existing HIV drugs,” said the study’s co-author Prof Florian Klein.

As the study showed, in addition, a significant decrease in viral load in the blood was found in patients who were treated with the highest dose level (30 mg per kg body weight).

“Thus, the antibodies showed comparably potent as the drugs that we currently use in therapy,” said Cologne epidemiologist Prof. Gerd Paetkenhener at DZIF.

As the new therapy could be only observed for up to 28 days after administration of the antibody, the study revealed. The team’s current plan is to do clinical trials wherein the efficacy of neutralizing antibodies in relation to the cure of HIV will be investigated.

Xinhua
N Korea unveils revamped 150,000-seat stadium

**Pyongyang, 13 April — North Korea on Monday unveiled its May Day Stadium, the world's largest soccer stadium by seating capacity, to Kyodo News, the first among foreign media. The 150,000-seat multipurpose stadium in Pyongyang, which for many years served as the venue for the Arirang mass games, has been remodelled to enable it to host more international sports events, North Korean officials said.**

While the number of seats remains the same as before, the stadium now has a soccer pitch with artificial turf, surrounded by a running track covered by rubber mats. The spectators' seats are in red, blue and white, the colours of North Korea's national flag, while about 700 lights stretching around the roof of the stadium have been modernized, the officials said.

The stadium, inaugurated on 1 May, 1989, is also equipped with new rooms for players, coaches, referees and sports officials, as well as a press centre, with FIFA logos and Olympic rings being ubiquitous.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has been eager to strengthen his country's athletic prowess since inheriting power following the death of his father, Kim Jong Il, in December 2011.

In September 2013, he ordered officials to refurbish the stadium, located on Rungra Islet in the Taedong River that runs through the capital city, to have world-class functions.

The renovation work began last April and finished in October, the officials said. But the stadium has yet to host an international event since the completion of the remodeling.

"I expect more Asian or international games will be held here," said Kim Yong Ok, 44, who works at the stadium.

The mass games, or the highly choreographed shows, are not scheduled this year in North Korea.

The decline in output also reflected the growing number of new companies entering the electricity market ahead of a major power sector reform next April that will bring an end to the utilities' regional monopolies on supplying power to households.

All 10 utilities saw declines in the amount of electricity generated and purchased from a year earlier, with Kansai Electric Power Co posting the largest — a 4.2 percent drop — followed by Tokyo Electric Power Co and Kyushu Electric Power Co, which saw a 3.9 percent and 3.7 percent respectively.

The combined amount of thermal power output decreased 3.5 percent to 649.2 billion kilowatt-hours. The capacity utilization rate of nuclear reactors was also zero.

A total of 48 commercial reactors currently exist in Japan, excluding six reactors at the crisis-hit Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant owned by TEPCO. Utilities have recently decided to scrap five aging reactors.

*Kyodo News*

**Tokyo, 13 April — Japan’s nuclear power output stood at zero throughout fiscal 2014 for the first time since the disaster at its first nuclear plant in fiscal 1966, the Federation of Electric Power Companies of Japan said on Monday.**

All of Japan’s commercial reactors were shut down by the end of September 2013 and have remained offline since as none of them have yet to complete the safety procedures required to restart operations, the federation said.

"I expect more Asian or international games will be held here," said Kim Yong Ok, 44, who works at the stadium.

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*Kyodo News*

**US marines arrive for six month deployment to Australia**

**Sydney, 13 April — More than 1,100 US marines have begun training in Darwin on Monday for a six month rotation to train with Australian troops in the far north of the country, local media reported.**

They are the fourth rotation of US marines to arrive in Darwin after Australia and the US struck a deal in 2011 to raise the number of US troops based in Australasia.

The goal is to have 2,500 marines serving in Australia at Darwin by 2017.

They will live in the Australian defense base in Darwin and train in the harsh outback area of the Northern Territory.

Meanwhile 70 Australian defense personnel continue to participate in the Exercise Balikatan war games with the US and Philippines on the islands of Luzon and Palawan which run until 30 April.

*Xinhua*

**French parliament debates bill to give spies more power**

**Paris, 13 April — French spies could get more powers to bug and track — would-be Islamist attackers inside the country and require Internet companies to monitor suspicious behaviour under a bill to be debated in parliament on Monday.**

Web hosting companies have raised concerns the legislation could frighten away clients, while civil liberties advocates say it lacks adequate privacy protections — concerns dismissed by the government.

"More than three months after 17 people were killed in attacks by three Islamist gunmen in Paris, the government is pushing measures that will allow spy agencies to tap phones and emails without seeking permission from a judge," Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said in an interview with the newspaper Liberation published on 11 April. "On the contrary it aims to target people who we need to monitor to protect the French people."

France is monitoring an estimated 1,200 Islamists and about 200 people who have returned from fighting with militant groups in Syria and Iraq.

France's intelligence services earned about 425 million euros (307 million pounds) to recruit thousands of extra police, spies and investigators to beef up surveillance and boost national security and intelligence.

Former US National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden last year disclosed classified details about the breadth of the intelligence gathering, triggering an international outcry.

Among those critical of the French bill are web providers who in a column published on 9 April threatened to relocate outside France because the bill would allow intelligence services to place "black boxes" on their infrastructure with algorithms to filter communications.

*Reuters*
Cambodian court frees five opposition activists, three monks on bail

Phnom Penh, 13 April — A Cambodian court decided on Monday to release bail five opposition figures, charged with involvement in an insurrection, and three Buddhist monks accused of taking part in an illegal protest, opposition leader Sam Rainsy confirmed.

“The Phnom Penh Municipal Court decided this (Monday) morning at 10:30 (local time) to allow eight prisoners to be bailed out,” Sam Rainsy, president of the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), wrote on his Facebook page. “Those prisoners will be freed this afternoon.”

Am Sam Ath, a senior investigator for the human rights group LICADHO (Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights), who monitored the bail hearing on Monday, also confirmed that the court decided to release those activists on bail.

The opposition figures, including Meach Sovannara, head of the CNRP’s information department, were arrested in November last year for their alleged involvement in an insurrection that left more than 40 people injured, mostly security guards, while the three monks were imprisoned for holding an illegal protest.

The release of the activists came just four days after lawmakers from the ruling and the CNRP approved the nine members of the new National Election Committee, a central component of the July political deal that ended the CNRP’s 10-month boycott of parliament following the 2013 national elections.

Last Saturday, the country also released 10 female activists, who had been imprisoned on protest-related convictions last year, after King Norodom Sihamoni granted them a royal pardon. — Xinhua

Fifteen killed in wildfires in Russia

Local residents stand amidst the debris of a burnt building in the settlement of Shyra, damaged by recent wildfires, in Khakassia region on 13 April, 2015. (REUTERS)

Moscow, 13 April — Wildfires in the Russian region of Khakassia in southern Siberia have killed 15 people and caused damage worth at least $96 million, the region’s leader said on Monday.

In a video link with Emergencies Minister Vladimir Puchkov broadcast on state television, Vladimir Zimin, head of the Khakassia Republic’s government, said 78 people had been hospitalized during several days of fires raging through grasslands in dry and windy weather.

Primary schools and other public infrastructure and private homes have been destroyed and many cattle have been killed, he said, adding that the initial cost of damages was at least five billion rubles ($96 million).

Wildfires in Russia often start when locals set grass on fire rolling over hillsides. Often, they are brought under control after the winter, a widespread practice criticized by environmentalists as well as state officials.

Wildfires in the hot summer of 2010 caused dozens of deaths in Russia. Some scientists and environmentalists suggest the number of indirect deaths caused by the heat wave and wildfires of five years ago may have been much higher. — Reuters

Pope sparks row with Turkey by calling Armenian massacre genocide

Turkey was swift to protest. “The pope’s statements, which are far from historical and judicial facts, cannot be accepted,” Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on his Twitter account.

“Religious offices are not places to incite hatred and revenge with baseless accusations,” he said.

The foreign ministry called its ambassador to the Holy See back to Ankara and summoned the Vatican’s ambassador, saying Francis’ remarks had caused a “problem of trust” in diplomatic relations.

Pope John Paul II and Armenian Apostolic Church Supreme Patriarch Kurekin II called the massacre “the first genocide of the 20th century” in 2001, but that was in a joint written statement.

Francis, who has disregarded many aspects of protocol since becoming pope two years ago, uttered the phrase during a private meeting at the Vatican with an Armenian delegation in 2013, prompting a strong protest from Ankara.

As archbishop of Buenos Aires, Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio had already publicly described the killings as genocide before he was elected leader of the world’s 1.2 billion Catholics in 2013. In November, the Argentine-born pontiff made an official visit to Turkey as part of his efforts to strengthen relations with Muslims.

At the start of the commemorative Mass, the pope described the “senseless slaughter” of 100 years ago as “the first genocide of the 20th century” and noted it was followed by Nazism and Stalinism.

“It is necessary, and indeed a duty, to honour their memory, for whenever memory fades, it means that evil allows wounds to fester. Concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it!” he said. — Reuters
SINGAPORE, 13 April — Singer-songwriter Jess Glyne topped the British singles chart for the third week in a row, fending off the challenge of US artist Nick Jonas by 5,000 sales, the Official Charts Company said on Sunday.

Glyne’s song “Hold My Hand” came in ahead of “Jealous”, Jonas’s debut solo single, and former number-one “King” by Years & Months. “Enemy” by The Prodigy and “Iron Man” Robert Downey Jr were also in the top five.

“The race to the top of the album chart was won by US band All Time Low whose sixth album “Future Hearts” earned them their first UK number one.”


From film to fashion, Dubai bids to be creative capital for Arab world

DUBAI, 13 April — Move over, Cairo, Beirut and Casablanca. Dubai is launching a drive to become one of the Arab world’s top centres for art, design, film and fashion - areas that have traditionally been dominated by old Arab cities outside the Gulf.

Success is not certain. The wealthy emirate is much better known as a trading and banking hub and luxury shopping destination than as a centre for the arts. It lacks the established citie’s centuries of history and culture.

But Dubai has advantages which the old cities can find it hard to provide: security, cosmopolitan lifestyles and comprehensive travel links to the rest of the Arab world.

It is throwing hundreds of millions of dollars and the latest technology into its efforts, using state-linked companies to develop the project in the same way that it’s successfully jump-started other industries.

“We want to encourage local and emerging talent from within the region,” said Anan Aal Ristamani, group chief executive of TECOM Investments, a business park operator owned by Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum.

Other cities have allowed neighbourhoods of artists and designers to emerge over decades. Dubai is not leaving that to chance; TECOM is creating a purpose-built 21 million square foot (2 million square metre) area called the Dubai Design District.

Tenants of the district are to include galleries, studios, workshops, boutique stores and museums, plus office and residential space. The first phase, to open this year, will cost 4 billion dirhams (£744 million). TECOM is creating a purpose-built 21 million square foot (2 million square metre) area called the Dubai Design District.

Dubai is not leaving that to chance; TECOM is creating a purpose-built 21 million square foot (2 million square metre) area called the Dubai Design District.

One of the world’s specialties will be Islamic design. The council intends to act as an incubator for new design businesses, providing technical support and advice. Eventually, Dubai state funds could be invested in some of the businesses, along with private sector money.

To some, Dubai’s top-down approach to culture may seem stifling or sterile. But executives see no contradiction; they argue that just as the emirate has attracted traders and bankers from the region by giving them an environment in which they can prosper, it can lure artists, designers and film makers.

MALAK SULTAN AL MALEK, chief executive of TECOM Business Parks, said Dubai’s design drive followed naturally from its growth in other areas - for example, growth of its information technology and media sectors - but was spurred by demand for designers. — Reuters

Hundreds targeted in Asia for illegally sharing Dallas Buyers Club

LONDON, 13 April — Singer Glynne tops the British singles chart for the third week in a row, fending off the challenge of US artist Nick Jonas by 5,000 sales, the Official Charts Company said on Sunday.

Glyne’s song “Hold My Hand” came in ahead of “Jealous”, Jonas’s debut solo single, and former number-one “King” by Years & Months. “Enemy” by The Prodigy and “Iron Man” Robert Downey Jr were also in the top five.

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Toil and trouble: researchers link Shakespeare to disputed play

WASHINGTON, 13 April — “This is the short and the long of it,” as William Shakespeare wrote in “The Merry Wives of Windsor.”

A play called “Double Falsehood” published in 1728 by a man who claimed it was based on a lost Shakespeare play but has long been dismissed as a forgery may indeed be the real deal.

University of Texas researchers have unveiled a sophisticated new study of “Double Falsehood” that used text-analysing software that helped create a “psychological signature” of the playwright.

“I am quite confident that Shakespeare had a direct hand in writing ‘Double Falsehood,’” Pat me down for 97 percent confident,” University of Texas social psychologist James Pennebaker, co-author of the study published in the journal Psychological Science, said on Friday.

“Double Falsehood” was published by Shakespeare expert Lewis Theobald, who said it was based on Shakespearean manuscripts later destroyed in a fire. Many experts considered it an original work by Theobald that he sought to pass off as Shakespearean. The lost play is thought to be “The History of Cardenio.”

Recent scholarship has reopened the debate. In 2010, Nottingham University literary expert Bren Hammond said he was convinced the play was Shakespearean.

Pennebaker and fellow University of Texas social psychologist Ryan Boyd examined 33 Shakespearean plays, 12 by Theobald and nine by John Fletcher, Shakespeare’s occasional collaborator. The texts were scrutinized for the use of pronouns, articles and prepositions, words relating to emotions, family, sensory perception and religion’s and other qualities.

In doing so, the researchers formulated a psychological signature for each author. They then found that the profile of this play very closely matches the psychological profile of Shakespeare, and also find some parts where the psychological profile is very close to Fletcher,” Boyd said.

“Yes, there’s just very, very little similarity to Theobald to the point that it is practically impossible that he wrote it,” Boyd said.

Pennebaker noted that Theobald was considered to be “orderly, structured, detailed and rigid” and his language matched that profile. “The writing of ‘Double Falsehood’ suggested that the author was reasonably sociable, more relaxed, and educated, someone like Shakespeare,” Pennebaker added.

Boyd suspects this is not the final word on the matter.

India’s Mirza climbs to top of doubles ranking

NEW YORK, 13 April — Sania Mirza, the first Indian to climb to the top of the WTA doubles ranking after she teamed up with Swiss great Martina Hingis to claim the Family Circle Cup title.

The 28-year-old won her third successive doubles title with Hingis, following triumphs in Indian Wells and Miami, to achieve the top ranking milestone.

“When you start off as a child playing tennis, you dream of being No 1 in the world. It’s a dream for everyone and very few get there. I feel extremely honoured to be No 1, it’s something that I’ve worked for all my life,” Mirza said in a statement.

“I hope this makes girls in India believe that anything is possible; we can achieve anything we want if we put our mind and body to it.”

Mirza had once been tipped for success as a singles player after she became the first Indian to win a WTA singles title in 2005. She followed up her success in her hometown of Hyderabad by reaching the forecourt of the US Open in 2005 and two years later broke into the top 30.

But then from her singles career went freefall, with injuries taking a toll.

On the doubles court, however, her career prospered as she became the first Indian woman to claim a grand slam title when she partnered Mahesh Bhupathi to the 2009 Australian Open mixed doubles crown.

When the new WTA rankings are released on Monday, Mirza’s run of winning 14 successive doubles matches with Hingis will see her leapfrog Italians Sara Errani and Roberta Vinci at the top of the standings.

“It’s a truly remarkable accomplishment for Sania Mirza to become the first Indian woman to reach the WTA World No 1 doubles ranking,” WTA Chairman and CEO Stacey Allaster said.

“She has attained many milestones throughout her successful career and this achievement is a fitting recognition of her talent, dedication and success.

“I am sure Sania will continue to create history and inspire our ever-growing fan base in India and the wider Asia-Pacific region.”

Only three other Asian women have achieved the top WTA doubles ranking: Japan’s Ai Sugiyama, China’s Peng Shuai and Taiwan’s Hsieh Su-wei.

Leander Paes and Bhupathi are the only other Indians to achieve number one rankings in tennis when they dominated men’s doubles in the late 1990s.—Reuters
Ayeyawady United, Yadanabon FC to play one more group match each

Yangon, 13 April — Fourth group match of the AFC Cup will take place on 15 April (Akyat Day of Maha Thingyan Festival).

Ayeyawady United FC will meet with New Radiant SC of Maldives at Youth Training Centre in Thwana, here, at 3:30 pm on 15 April while Yadanabon FC will vie with Global FC of the Philippines in the Philippines at 6:30 pm local time on the same day. Yadanabon stands third with three points in one win and two losses. In the first leg, Yadanabon beat Global 2-0 at home. South China (Hong Kong) stands first with nine points, followed by Pahang (Malaysia) with four points and Global (the Philippines) one point.

Ayeyawady United FC stands with five points in one win and two draws in the first leg matches. Bandung of Indonesia leads the group with seven points. In the first leg, Ayeyawady routed New Radiant 3-0.

European roundup — Barca lead cut while United thump City

Barcelona’s Luis Suarez is seen after the end of their Spanish first division soccer match against Sevilla at Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium in Seville, 11 April, 2015. (Reuters)

Germany

Bayern Munich edged closer to a third successive Bundesliga title after the top four all won, leaving the Bavarians 10 points clear with six matches to play.

Bayern beat Eintracht Frankfurt 3-0 with two goals from Robert Lewandowski and one from Thomas Mueller. Bayern have 70 points from 28 games, with VfL Wolfsburg on 60, Borussia Moenchengladbach on 53 after beating Borussia Dortmund 3-1 and Bayer Leverkusen on 51. There is then a 10-point gap to fifth-placed Schalke 04.

Italy

Runaway leaders Juventus saw their lead cut to 12 points after they suffered a shock 1-0 defeat at bottom club Parma.

Argentine teenager Jose Mauri scored the only goal for Parma, declared bankrupt in March. Juventus stayed on 70 points with four rounds of the season left.

France

Monaco moved up to third in the Ligue 1 standings after a goal by Anthony Martial and Bernardo Silva’s double earned them a 3-0 win at Caen. Monaco, who travel to Juventus for a Champions League quarter-final first leg on Tuesday, have 58 points from 32 games and lead fourth-placed Olympique de Marseille by one point. OM lost 1-0 at Girondins de Bordeaux.

Paris St Germain, who beat Bastia 4-0 in the League Cup final on Saturday, top the table with 62 points and have a game in hand.

Netherlands

Champions Ajax Amsterdam stayed in the Dutch league title race for at least another week as they won from 32 games and lead fourth-placed PEC Zwolle 3-1, will win the championship next Saturday if they beat Heerenveen at home. —Reuters

Pirlo dilemma for Juve coach Allegri

Milan, 13 April — Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri faces a tricky dilemma for their Champions League clash against AS Monaco as he tries to decide whether to field Andrea Pirlo after the playmaker’s recovery from injury.

Pirlo has not played since he suffered a calf strain during Dortmund’s seven weeks ago and, at 35, it could be a risky move to throw him straight into Tuesday’s quarter-final first leg in Turin.

Although he retains the ability to change a game with a single slide-rule pass or majestic free kick, the odd sign of vulnerability has crept into his game especially when trying to play his way out of a tight spot near his own penalty area.

On the other hand, Saturday’s shock Serie A defeat against bottom-of-the-table Parma, when Juventus rested a number of regular players, has suggested his strength in depth may not be quite as impressive as pundits previously thought.

Juventus are also missing their other key midfielder Paul Pogba and, facing Monaco’s misfiring defence, Allegri is likely to need all the creativity he can muster to stifle attacking duo Carlos Tevez and Alvaro Morata.

Juventus, Italy’s most successful domestic team, are attempting to reach the Champions League semi-finals for the first time since 2002/03.

In the meantime, they have spent one season in Serie B after being demoted in the wake of the Calciopoli match-fixing scandal and then several seasons struggling to re-establish themselves among the Serie A elite.

Now, they are once more the dominant force in Italian football and are well on course for a fourth successive Serie A title with a 12-point lead at the top despite Saturday’s setback.

The form book points to a win for Juventus, who have not lost in any of their last 11 European games at home and have only been beaten once in 16 European matches since the new Juventus Stadium was opened in 2011. —Reuters