President U Thein Sein attends opening ceremony of 2015 Asian-African Summit

JAKARTA, 22 April—President U Thein Sein attended the opening ceremony Wednesday morning of the Asian-African Conference Commemoration Indonesia 2015 in Jakarta.

Leaders and representatives from more than 100 countries and international organizations will join the summit and a series of events under the theme “Strengthening South-South Cooperation to Promote World Peace and Prosperity.”

Indonesian President Mr Joko “Jokowi” Widodo made opening remarks at the summit.

President U Thein Sein also made a speech, saying that along with Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India, Myanmar was one of the five newly independent states in Bandung, Indonesia from April 18 to 24, 1955. The conference adopted a 10-point declaration on promotion of world peace and cooperation, incorporating the principles of the United Nations Charter.

President U Thein Sein met with Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Jakarta Convention Centre at 3:30 p.m. local time, discussing the establishment of a business corridor among Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar.

The president then discussed with Chinese President Xi Jinping the promotion of bilateral ties, peace and stability at border areas between the two countries. (See page 3)

Myanmar automobile policy due in ‘3 to 6 months’, opening way for assembly plants

By Ye Myint

YANGON, 22 April—A comprehensive policy for Myanmar’s automotive sector will be drafted in the next “three to six months,” paving the way for foreign automakers to establish assembly plants in the country, a meeting in Yangon heard Wednesday.

The meeting, to discuss the formation of a committee to develop the policy, brought together the private sector and government officials, including diplomats and representatives from Japanese and Korean automotive manufacturers.

“It will take the committee the next three to six months to accomplish its task,” Dr So Tun, Chairman of Myanmar Automobile Manufacturers and Distributors Association said.

Comprising 12 or 13 members from the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Myanmar Engineering Society and the MAMDA, the committee will draft the policy in cooperation with the ministries of Industry, Commerce, Finance, and Rail Transportation, the MAMDA chairman added. “The formulation of the policy is drawing attention from foreign countries seeking opportunities to set up auto plants in Myanmar. (See page 3)
Donations invited for construction of Dhammayon

MANDALAY, 22 April—Under the auspices of Abbot Bhaddanta Issariya of Thit-sa Mandating Monastery in Chanmyathazi Township, Mandalay, local residents assisted the building of a new Dhammayon for Ward 9. Well-wishers presented cash donations, including K3 million by U Kyaw Tun Nang and wife Daw Ma Khine Khine Win and family, and K2 million by Ko Kyaw Soe and wife Ma Thet and family, to officials of the construction committee. At present, the building of the Dhammayon is 40 percent complete.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Township authorities pay respect to senior citizens

MYAWADD, 22 April—A ceremony to pay respect to older persons was held in conjunction with the event to release fish in Nyaungdon, a border town in Kayin State, on Myanmar New Year’s Day, 17 April. Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Than Oo, District deputy commissioner U Lwin Ko Oo, Commander of District Police Force Police Lt-Col Moe Nyo and township officials together with social organization members paid respect to 262 residents over 80 at the building in the precinct of Shwemyin-wun Pagoda. They also donated cash and gifts to the aged. The deputy commissioner and party then released fish into the Thaung-yin River.

Tun Tun Oo (Myawady Town)

Housing projects in Mandalay to resettle local residents

MANDALAY, 22 April—The Department of Human Settlement and Housing Development under the Ministry of Construction is building modern and low-cost residential precincts to accommodate government personnel in Mandalay. The DHSHD in cooperation with private construction companies is building condominiums, nine-storey buildings and shopping centres at the Seiktaramah Housing Project in Chanayethazan Township. Upon completion, government service personnel formerly residing at the Pyidawtha Housing will be resettled at the new buildings. The department is also implementing the Myayi Nanda low-cost housing project comprising 27 four-storey buildings in Chanmyathazi Township. According to the department, a plan is under way to construct 20 more five-storey buildings in 2015-16 fiscal year.

Maung Pyi Thu (Mandalay)

Authorities seek help maintaining historic Fort Thabyetan

MANDALAY, 22 April—Authorities have asked local residents to help with the maintenance of historic Fort Thabyetan, located near Inwa Bridge in Amarapura Township, Mandalay District. Construction of the fort, built to repel enemies marching on Yadanabon Royal Palace, began on 3 December, 1874 during the reign of King Mindon, and was completed on 1 January, 1879 in the time of King Thipaw. Forts were also built in Asaykhan Ward of Sagaing and Hsinbyun Village in Inwa city, forming a triangle of fortifications across the Ayeyawady River. In the Third Anglo-Myanmar War, more than 2,000 troops were ready to fight the invaders but were ordered to stand down by the Royal Palace. At present, Fort Thabyetan is being maintained by the Department of National Museum and Library of the Ministry of Culture. Parts of the fort require maintenance, the department said.

Maung Pyi Thu (Mandalay)
Union FM sends message of felicitations to State of Israel

NAY PYI TAW, 23 April—U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Reuven Rivlin, President of the State of Israel, on the occasion of the Independence Day of the State of Israel, which falls on 23 April 2015.—MNA

Myanmar automobile policy due in ‘3 to 6 months,’ opening way for...

(from page 1)
Chinese contributions to Myanmar’s peace-making process and development of the Kyaukphyu special economic zone in Rakhine state.

The two leaders also exchanged views on building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, which is a major component of the “Belt and Road” development framework announced by Chinese President Xi Jinping in late 2013.

U Thein Sein and Xi Jinping also discussed bilateral cooperation in various sectors such as agriculture, industry, finance, electrical energy, as well as rural development and poverty alleviation programmes and the establishment of the Asian Infrastructural Investment Bank.—MNA

Japanese banking giant opens branch in Yangon

YANGON, 22 April—The Bank of Tokyo Mitsubishi UFJ on Wednesday opened its first branch in Myanmar in Yangon’s Botataung Township.

The ceremony to mark the opening of the branch was attended by Governor U Kyaw Kyaw Maung of the Central Bank of Myanmar, BTMU CEO Mr Go Watanabe, Deputy Governor U Set Aung, Ambassador of Japan to Myanmar Mr Tateshi Higuchi and Yangon Region Finance Minister Daw San San Nwe.

At the ceremony, Governor said Myanmar has been selected from eighth standard and matriculation students and Ngwehsaung camp for ninth standard and matriculation students from 25 April to 5 May. They will have the opportunities to attend the scout training course, meet with old outstanding students and participate in excursion tours.

The combine recreation camp for all outstanding youths will be opened at Wunna Theikdi Sports Village in Nay Pyi Taw from 5 to 8 May. The youths will go sightseeing in Nay Pyi Taw.

Media may contact Dr Soe Myint Tun (head of Bagan Camp) on 09-2003236, U Chit Swe (head of Inlay Camp) on 09-5215555, U Aung Kyaw Tun (head of Ngwehsaung Camp) on 09-8532296 and U Soe Win (head of Nay Pyi Taw combine camp) on 09-402513549.

Outstanding youths to take relaxation at recreation camps

NAY PYI TAW, 22 April—A total of 176 outstanding youths each have been selected from eighth and ninth standard and matriculation for 2014-15 academic year.

Bagan recreation camp will be opened for eighth standard students, Inlay camp for ninth standard students and Ngwehsaung camp for matriculation students from 25 April to 5 May. They will have the opportunities to attend the scout training course, meet with old outstanding students and participate in excursion tours.

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Education
**4 toll gates set to open in Mandalay District**

*Mandalay, 22 April*—Four toll gates in Htonbo, Aungpinle, Shwekyin and Shwekyetyet will collect fees from road users in Mandalay District as of 1 May, 2015.

The toll gates will allow exemptions for passenger buses, military vehicles, police vehicles, ambulances, fire trucks, departmental vehicles and government ferries including vehicles that have registered in Mandalay Region.

Daily tolls for vehicles will range from K2,000 for those under 1 ton to K10,000 for those over 5 tons.

The vehicles from other regions and states may contact the Revenue Department of Mandalay City Development Committee for permanent running in Mandalay City.

*Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)*

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**MCDC, well-wishers provide assistance for fire victims**

*Mandalay, 22 April*—Mandalay City Development Committee donated 45 bags of rice to fire victims at the Dhammayon of Shwebontha Monastery in Chanayethazan Township on Tuesday afternoon.

Chairman of Township Development Affairs Committee U Soe Myint Aung handed over donations for fire victims to ward administrator U Ko Ko Naing.

On 20 April, Daw Khin Lay Myint, owner of Orchid Hotel and Orchid Jewellery Shop, and family donated food and water to households of victims.

A total of 259 fire victims are being accommodated at the temporary camp in the precinct of the monastery.

*Tin Maung (Mandalay)*

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**Irrigation Department upgrades lakes, small dams in Yamethin Tsp**

*Yamethin, 22 April*—Township authorities supervised the dredging of 15 lakes and small dams in Yamethin Township, Mandalay Region, in fiscal 2014-15, funded by the Mandalay Region Government.

The Irrigation Department dredged the lakes and small dams in rural areas of the township, upgrading the bunds of lakes, dredging drains and repairing retaining walls, while also building spillways and sluice gates.

The improved lakes and small dams are ready to supply water for agricultural purpose and drinking.

*Htay Naing Tun (Yamethin)*

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**Visitors enjoy water festival at Nyaungchaungtha Beach**

*Nyaungdon, 22 April*—Nyaungchaungtha Beach located in Yankin Sanyar Village, Nyaungdon Township, Ayeyawady Region, attracts local and foreign visitors.

The beach, 34 miles from Yangon, is near the confluence of the Ayeyawady River and Panhlang River.

“We can take relaxation at the beach by enjoying fresh air and tasting hygienic foods,” said a picnicker from Mandalay.

People from Nyaungdon Township and around Yangon City relaxed at the beach during the Maha Thingyan festival period.

“We take a rest at the beach free from pressures of works,” said a visitor. “I think breathing fresh air will contribute towards our health.” “Visitors enjoyed this year’s water festival at the beach, in larger numbers than previous years,” a floating hotel owner told media.

About 500 people regularly visit the beach daily, according to local residents.—*Tun Kyaw (Nyaungdon)*

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**Myanmar Football Academy (Mandalay) to recruit new trainees**

*Mandalay, 22 April*—Myanmar Football Academy (Mandalay) will shortlist its trainee intake through a selection trial for the 2015-16 academic year at the school on 16 and 17 May.

Youths may apply to enter the U-11 and U-13 football teams of the academy. The candidates must be born in 2004 and 2005. They must be at least four feet and four inches in height.

The candidates are to submit applications together with three passport-sized photos, original copies of birth registration and household registration, as well as citizenship scrutiny card. The applicants are to contact the staff officers of Township Sports and Physical Education Department.

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Japan to help train 350,000 people in Asia, Africa over 5 yrs

A man runs past heavy seas as sand is blown by heavy winds inland

Super storm lashes Australian east coast for third day

Sydney, 24 April — A cyclonic storm lashing Australia’s east coast for a third day has declared a catastrophe on Wednesday after destroying houses, cutting power to more than 200,000 and causing millions of dollars of damage in Sydney and other cities.

The Bureau of Meteorology warned that a second storm cell was gathering at sea north of Sydney, with gale force winds of up to 100 km per hour (62 miles per hour) and heavy winds hitting the coast.

Several international flights and from Sydney Airport were diverted, while the port of Newcastle, the world’s biggest coal export port, was closed.

“We still have some difficult hours ahead of us as this weather pattern continues to move through,” New South Wales state premier Mike Baird told reporters.

“It’s still very dangerous,” he said. “We’re seeing a continuation of the wind, rain, flash flooding.”

Three people, two men and a woman, were found dead on Wednesday in the town of Dungog, about 200 km (125 miles) north of Sydney. Media reports described them as elderly and said they were trapped in their homes as floodwaters rose.

The State Emergency Services said three people were missing near the town of Maitland, about 165 km (100 miles) north of Sydney, after their cars were washed away by flood waters.

Amateur video showed a house in Dungog floating away as floodwaters swept through the town.

The Insurance Council of Australia declared the storm a catastrophe on Wednesday after thousands of claims worth hundreds of millions of dollars rolled in.

“There’s no doubt there will be a natural disaster declaration ... and obviously we want to get on with the job of recovery as quickly as we possibly can,” Baird said.

Cyclone-strength winds of up to 135 kph (85 mph) and heavy rain across the state have uprooted trees, some crushing cars, and snapped power poles. Transport networks have been hit, with train stations and roads flooded and traffic lights knocked out.

Three hospitals were without power and had to rely on generators as hundreds of schools were closed.

A spokesman said there was no timeframe for reopening the port of Newcastle, which last opened on Tuesday. Some 60 million tonnes of thermal and steel-making coal. Prices for coal cargoes delivered next month from Newcastle to China are off 10 percent since the beginning of the week to $68 a tonne as traders expected export delays due to the storm.—Reuters

China’s Xi calls for fairer int’l order for developing countries

Jakarta, 22 April — Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday pledged the country’s assistance in the training of as many as 350,000 people in Asia and Africa over the next five years as part of efforts to ensure “quality growth” and eradicate poverty in the two continents.

“Japan’s resolve is to turn growth in Asia and Africa into an enduring, not ephemeral, event. With that resolve in mind, over the next five years, we are going to help as many as 350,000 people in the region acquire technology expertise and industrial knowledge,” Abe said in an address on the first day of a two-day summit of Asian and African leaders in Jakarta.

Specifically, Japan plans to provide assistance to the Japanese “ko-zen,” or polytechnic, system in Asia and Africa, as well as the development of higher engineering education facilities in Egypt, India and Malaysia, for example, according to government officials.

“Hand in hand with the young and ambitious in Asia and Africa, we will foster them into a generation that will lead their countries’ industrial development,” Abe said, stressing that Japan “stands behind the empowerment of women.”

The pledge came top of Japan’s provision of $300 billion in official development assistance to promote economic development in Asia and Africa over the past 60 years. Tokyo has also dispatched about 140,000 experts to the two areas for human resource development.

In the address, Abe expressed Japan’s “deep remorse” over World War II, and offered a “heartfelt apology” to the people of Asian nations affected by Japan’s “colonial rule and aggression” during and before the war.

These phrases, which Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi used in 1995, to mark the 50th anniversary of the war’s end, were part of a landmark statement Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama issued 15 years ago, to mark the 50th anniversary of the war’s end.

Abe has said he upholds the Murayama statement “as a whole,” and that he therefore sees no need to repeat exactly the same language in the 1995 statement in a statement he plans to issue in August to mark the 70th anniversary of the war’s end. China and South Korea, however, want him to clearly state these phrases in public.

The 2015 Asian-African Summit is part of events to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Asian-African Conference, also known as the Bandung Conference, which affirmed the principles of “refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country” and “settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means.”

“Japan, with feelings of deep remorse over the past war, made a pledge to remain a nation always adhering to those very principles throughout, no matter what the circumstances,” Abe said.

“Some people continue to feel that the summit is no longer Japan’s aid muscle-flexing to press its territorial claims in the East and South China seas. “The wisdom of our forefathers in Bandung was that the rule of law should protect the dignity of sovereign nations, be they large or small. In the wake of terror incidents such as the killing of two Japanese nationals by Islamic State extremists in Syria, the prime minister condemned “despicable terrorism” around the world and said, “We must give no haven to terrorists anywhere in the world.”

As part of Japan’s efforts to boost growth in Asia, the country will host a summit in July with five ASEAN states situated along the Mekong River at which the leaders are expected to craft a new strategy for Tokyo to contribute to sustainable development of the Mekong region beyond 2015.

The five Mekong states are Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. They form the Association of Southeast Asian Nations together with Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore.

“I say to you that Asian and African nations are no longer Japan’s aid muscle-flexing,” Abe said. “They are Japan’s partners for growth.”

Similarly, Japan and Africa will hold an Africa development summit next year for the first time in Africa. The Tokyo International Conference on African Development, which a Japan cosponsors with the United Nations, the World Bank and the African Union Commission, has taken place every five years in Japan since 1993.

“We have built up human capacities or infra-structure, all will be an investment into the future,” Abe said.—Kyodo News

Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe addresses a summit of Asian and African leaders in Jakarta on 22 April, 2015. Kyodo News

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe addresses a summit of Asian and African leaders in Jakarta on 22 April, 2015.
50-cm drone with camera found on roof of prime minister’s office

**Tokyo, 22 April**—A four-propeller drone about 50 centimetres long equipped with a miniature camera has been found on the roof of the prime minister’s office in Tokyo, police said on Wednesday.

The drone, which was also carrying a flare and a 10-centimetre plastic bottle, apparently fell onto the roof from the sky, the Metropolitan Police Department said. A staff member of the prime minister’s office found the drone around 10:30 am. An investigative source said a low level of radiation was detected from the drone, which bore a radioactive symbol.

“We don’t think it poses any danger,” a government source said. When asked about the possibility that it was an attempted terrorist act, the source said “We don’t know.”

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is currently in Indonesia for the Asian-African conference where he delivered a speech on Japan’s contributions to global peace. The prime minister’s office is located in the central Tokyo and near government ministries and the National Diet Building.

In January, a drone crash at the US White House spurred security concerns.

Japan has no rules regarding low-flying drones and no official licenses are required to fly them. There are around 20,000 drones in the country, according to the Japan UAS Industrial Development Association.

Under the aviation law, people do not need to report to authorities unless they fly drones at an altitude of 150 metres or higher under flight routes used by regular aircraft, and 250 metres or higher in other areas, the transport ministry said. —Kyodo News

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**In North Korea, solar panel boom gives power to the people**

**Seoul, 22 April**—In a country notorious for a lack of electricity, many North Koreans are taking power into their hands by installing cheap household solar panels to charge mobile phones and light up their homes.

Apartment blocks in Pyongyang and other cities are increasingly adorned with the panels, hung from balconies and windows, according to recent visitors to the isolated country and photographs obtained by Reuters. “There must be at least a threefold increase in solar panels compared to last year,” Simon Cockerell, who visits North Korea regularly as general manager of Beijing-based Koryo Tours, told Reuters from Pyongyang. “Some are domestically made, so that may have driven prices down.”

North Korea has long suffered from electricity shortages which plague large parts of the country into darkness, providing a stark contrast in night-time photos taken from space to prosperous and pow- er-thirsty South Korea.

The soaring sales of cheap and easily-installed solar panels reflect rising demand for electricity in North Korea as incomes rise and people buy electronic goods like mobile phones and the “noel” media player that need regular recharge for a decent playtime. A set such as a TV, laptop, mobile phone, rice cooker and washing machine costs around 850,000 won ($8,000) in North Korea, whereas the same products are sold to North Koreans since 2012.

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### France warns Indonesia of damage to ties over death-row Frenchman

**London, 22 April**—Indonesia will face repercussions from France if it goes ahead with the execution scheduled for a Frenchman convicted of drug offences, Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said on Tuesday.

Serge Atlaoui lost an appeal for a retrial. He is among 14 convicted traffickers, including two Australians, due to be executed despite appeals for clemency from their governments.

“We remain hopeful for clemency but we are extremely pre-occupied by this decision and this death threat which, if carried out, would obviously have consequences for the relationship between this country and France,” Fabius told a news conference. Two weeks ago, the Australians lost a challenge to the Jakarta administrative court’s decision not to hear an appeal against President Joko Wido-do’s refusal to grant them clemency.

Indonesia has harsh penalties for drug trafficking and resumed executions in 2013 after a five-year halt.—Reuters

### South Korea says reaches deal with US to revise nuclear energy pact

**Seoul, 22 April**—South Korea and the United States reached a deal on Wednesday to revise a 40-year-old agreement that has limited South Korea’s ability to enrich uranium for nuclear power generation and to reprocess spent fuel, the foreign ministry in Seoul said. No further details about the revised agreement were immediately available.

Officials of the two countries are scheduled to initial the revised agreement later on Wednesday in Seoul, the ministry said.

South Korea operates 23 atomic plants that provide one-third of the country’s power needs, and has pushed for greater liberty to manage its nuclear fuel and sought to revise the original pact with Washington so it can process spent fuel.

Nuclear reactors add a total of 750 tonnes of spent fuel every year to the 13,300 tonnes that filled 71 above-ground dry storage capacity as of 2013, according to operator Korea Hydro and Nuclear Power Co Ltd, owned by state-run Korea Electric Power Corp.

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**Solar panels face the sun from balconies of an apartment building in Pyongyang.**—Reuters
Britain, France urge UN action on Middle East, NZ drafting text

United Nations, 22 April — Britain and France urged the United Nations Security Council on Tuesday to set a framework to broker peace between Israel and the Palestinians as council member New Zealand said it had started working on a draft resolution to kick-start the process.

France said last month that it planned to begin talks on a draft text to lay “parameters” for ending the Middle East conflict and had hoped to win over the United States, which has traditionally shielded its ally Israel from any UN action.

The United States has said it would “reassess” its options on US-Israel relations and Middle East diplomacy after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took a stand against Palestinian statehood during his election campaign.

Palestinians seek a state in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, lands Israel captured in 1967.

“It’s the responsibility of this council to adopt a consensual and balanced resolution that sets the parameters of a final status and a timeline for the negotiations,” French UN Ambassador Francois Delattre told a council meeting.

France and New Zealand signalled that now was the time for the Security Council to act after Israel held its election last month and before the US presidential campaign ramps up ahead of a November 2016 poll.

“We have been working on a text that might serve the purpose of getting negotiations started,” said New Zealand’s UN Ambassador Jim McLay.

He added that New Zealand was preparing to see how the French-led push for a resolution played out first.

“We have not seen the latest French text, but if it has a chance of succeeding, New Zealand stands ready to engage and to be helpful,” McLay said.

Britain’s UN Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant said that Britain saw merit in a council resolution “setting out the parameters for a peaceful and negotiatable solution.”

“But this will require proper consultation to achieve the full backing of the council,” he told the council.

In December, the United States voted against a Palestinian-drafted resolution calling for an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem and the establishment of a Palestinian state by late 2017.


“It is critically important that leaders urgently reengage in efforts to achieve peace, which is the most effective way to prevent such tension from escalating, as it has too many times before,” Power told the Security Council.

 retries

Obama says US has warned Iran not to send weapons to Yemen

Washington, 22 April — President Barack Obama said on Tuesday the US government had sent “very direct messages” to Iran warning it not to send weapons to Yemen that could be used to threaten shipping traffic in the region.

The Pentagon said on Tuesday the presence of a large convoy of Iranian cargo ships in the Arabian Sea was one factor in the US decision to deploy additional warships in the waters off war-torn Yemen.

But Army Colonel Steve Warren, a Pentagon spokesman, dismissed reports the carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt and cruiser USS Normandy had been sent to the region to intercept Iranian ships carrying arms to Iran-backed Houthi rebels fighting forces loyal to the US-backed Yemeni president. In a televised interview on Tuesday on MSNBC’s “Hardball,” Obama said Washington had been “very straightforward” with Teheran about the issue. “Right now their ships are in international waters.”

There’s a reason why we keep some of our ships in the Persian Gulf region and that is to make sure that we maintain freedom of navigation,” Obama said. “What we’ve said to them is that, ‘If there are weapons delivered to factions within Yemen that could threaten navigation, that’s a problem,’” he added. “And we’re not sending them obvious messages. We send them very direct messages about it.”

The Pentagon spokesman Warren said he did not believe Navy warships patrolling the region had been in direct contact with the Iranian oilfiotta of nine cargo ships.

He said he the United States did not know what the Iranian cargo ships were carrying and declined to say whether the US warships would stop and board Iranian vessels if they attempted to enter Yemeni territorial waters.

The aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) operates in the Arabian Sea conducting maritime security operations in this US Navy photo taken on 21 April, 2015. —Reuters

Italy PM Renzi urges collective EU action to tackle migrant trafficking

Rome, 22 April — The European Union must take a collective stand to tackle migrant trafficking at its source in African countries, Prime Minister Matteo Renzi said on Wednesday.

Renzi, in an address to the lower house of parliament after hundreds died in the latest Mediterranean disaster at the weekend, said the EU should have a more visible role, with UN backing, in sub-Saharan countries where migrants originate.

Speaking a day before an extraordinary summit of EU leaders on the crisis, he said he was very optimistic that the bloc could “change tack” on migration issues.

Up to 900 migrants were feared dead after their boat sank on its way from Libya in the night between Saturday and Sunday, leading to calls for more concerted action to stop the flow of people fleeing war and hardship in Africa.

The EU on Monday agreed to a 10-point plan to prevent such tragedies, including reinforcing its patrols in the Mediterranean by giving them more money and equipment.

Under the plan, the bloc would also make a systematic effort to capture and destroy vessels used by people smugglers.

France says foiled suspected church attack by heavily armed man

Paris, 22 April — French police are holding a heavily armed man they suspected of planning an imminent armed attack on one or two churches in France, Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said on Wednesday.

The man, a 24-year-old information technology student, was arrested on Sunday in the southeastern 13th arrondissement of Paris. A car was also seized along with handguns, other weapons and bulletproof vests, Cazeneuve said. An Interior Ministry source said the man was an Algerian national. “Detailed documents that were also found established beyond doubt that the individual was planning an imminent attack, probably on one or two churches,” Cazeneuve said.

France heightened surveillance of potential attackers by its intelligence services and has boosted to about 10,000 the number of troops patrolling sensitive sites after Islamist militants killed 17 people in January in attacks on the offices of the Charlie Hebdo satirical weekly and a Jewish food shop. —Reuters

“Bully” New Zealand PM apologizes for pulling waitress’s ponytail again and again

New Zealand Prime Minister John Key Wellington, 22 April — New Zealand Prime Minister John Key apologized on Wednesday for pulling the ponytail of a waitress who accused him of bullying, media reported.

The unnamed waitress in an Auckland cafe said on a blog site that Key had pulled her hair over several months and initially she thought he was being “playful and jolly”. However, she said Key kept pulling her hair when he visited the cafe over a six-month period and she became increasingly annoyed.

“He was like the school yard bully tugging on the little girl’s hair trying to get a reaction, experiencing that feeling of power over her,” the waitress said in the blog.

She said she finally confronted Key in late March and threatened to hit him if he did not stop. She said Key returned to the cafe and gave her two bottles of red wine and said sorry.

Key, en route to Turkey for the commemoration of World War One battles, said he visited the cafe, close to his house, often and he had a “fun relationship” with the staff.

“There’s always lots of horsing around and sort of practical jokes and that’s all there really was to it,” he told reporters during a stopover in Los Angeles.

“I realised she had been very straightforward about the issue,” Key said.

“Both of us are sorry.” —Reuters

French police hold a heavily armed man suspected of planning an imminent attack on one or two churches in France, Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said on Wednesday.
Land reform should benefit the poor

By Aung Khin

Food, shelter and clothing are basic human needs. Among them, shelter is the most fundamental, yet it is denied to many people in Myanmar who are homeless or living as squatters. Their plight tarnishes the country’s image.

Land confiscation has become a hot topic since the country opened up its economy to the global market. With skyrocketing property prices amid a huge inflow of foreign investment, land prices have increased in both urban and rural areas. In some rural areas connected to major highways, many local dignitaries have purchased paddy farms and applied to reform them into residential plots.

Land reform cannot be avoided as the population increases and the country’s economy develops. However, land plots should be used for those living in homelessness and as squatters. Wealthy persons purchase paddy farms and set up fences for their own interests while officials in the respective areas have approved land reform from paddy farms to other uses.

Large land plots changed from paddy farms should be used for the poor. Instead of giving such power to the wealthy, housing projects should be developed for the homeless.

Many local business tycoons have received many paddy fields and established industrial zones or luxury real estate. These projects have been beneficial to their own wealth. While such land reform processes may not be illegal, they are certainly inhumane to grassroots people.

If low-priced housing projects cannot be established for ordinary people, living costs will continue increasing and purchasing power will decrease, despite rising incomes. While a handful of tycoons are benefiting from the resources of the country, the majority of ordinary people are struggling to fulfill their fundamental needs—food, shelter and clothing.

To ensure the sustainable development of the country and happiness of the people, land reform plans should favour the ordinary people of the country.

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments, 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.

Yangon Thingyan and Hmyaw-zin-gyun

By Dr. Saw Mra Aung

The afternoon sky of Yangon was partly clouded. It was well over 1 p.m. (of 14 April 2015). The day-time temperature decreased more than that of the previous days. I, on the persistent requests of my younger sisters, set out in a taxi for the Hmyaw-zin-gyun (Island of Watch Tower) at Kandawgyi (Royal Lake) near the foot of Singuttara Hill where the golden Shewdagon pagoda stands stately.

As it seemed to be the access for the water-throwers and revellers, the water-throwing pandals on the road-sides were almost empty. The traffic was even lighter than that of the normal days. Our car reached the gate into Hmyaw-zin-gyun within half an hour. We espied a long queue of various kinds of shapes, models and types waiting for the entry permission. We were forcibly discharged across the road from the gate by the taxi-driver who was restless with negligence. Oh! How painful the feeling of regulation was! Only when we were on the verge of leaving the unsociable restaurant out of burial, one of my sisters noticed that a table at the further end of the restaurant had been already taken by people. The waiters and waitresses were as busy as a bee plying from the table they were assigned to the kitchen. So we had to stand amidst the tables, being at a loss for a few moments what to do—whether to remain or to go out. I tried to catch the eye of the waiters and waitresses. But our effort came to futility. Our patience was overtaxed and we became overserved with shyness resulting from negligence. Oh! How painful the feeling of regulation was! Only when we were on the verge of leaving the unsociable restaurant out of embarrassment, one of my sisters noticed that a table at the furtherest end of the restaurant had been already occupied by the visitors. To our last resort, we had to choose a restaurant which was at the water-edge. Gaily we walked into the restaurant. Alas! Every table inside the restaurant was already taken by people. The waiters and waitresses were as busy as a bee plying from the table they were assigned at the kitchen. So we had to stand amidst the tables, being at a loss for a few moments what to do—whether to remain or to go out. I tried to catch the eye of the waiters and waitresses. But our effort came to futility. Our patience was overtaxed and we became overserved with shyness resulting from negligence. Oh! How painful the feeling of regulation was! Only when we were on the verge of leaving the unsociable restaurant out of embarrassment, one of my sisters noticed that a table at the furtherest end of the restaurant had been already occupied by the visitors. To our last resort, we had to choose a restaurant which was at the water-edge. Gaily we walked into the restaurant. Alas! Every table inside the restaurant was already taken by people. The waiters and waitresses were as busy as a bee plying from the table they were assigned at the kitchen. So we had to stand amidst the tables, being at a loss for a few moments what to do—whether to remain or to go out. I tried to catch the eye of the waiters and waitresses. But our effort came to futility. Our patience was overtaxed and we became overserved with shyness resulting from negligence. Oh! How painful the feeling of regulation was! Only when we were on the verge of leaving the unsociable restaurant out of embarrassment, one of my sisters noticed that a table at the furtherest end of the restaurant had been already occupied by the visitors. To our last resort, we had to choose a restaurant which was at the water-edge. Gaily we walked into the restaurant. Alas! Every table inside the restaurant was already taken by people. The waiters and waitresses were as busy as a bee plying from the table they were assigned at the kitchen. So we had to stand amidst the tables, being at a loss for a few moments what to do—whether to remain or to go out. I tried to catch the eye of the waiters and waitresses. But our effort came to futility. Our patience was overtaxed and we became overserved with shyness resulting from negligence. Oh! How painful the feeling of regulation was! Only when we were on the verge of leaving the unsociable restaurant out of embarrassment, one of my sisters noticed that a table at the furtherest end of the restaurant had been already occupied by the visitors. To our last resort, we had to choose a restaurant which was at the water-edge. Gaily we walked into the restaurant. Alas! Every table inside the restaurant was already taken by people. The waiters and waitresses were as busy as a bee plying from the table they were assigned at the kitchen. So we had to stand amidst the tables, being at a loss for a few moments what to do—whether to remain or to go out. I tried to catch the eye of the waiters and waitresses. But our effort came to futility. Our patience was overtaxed and we became overserved with shyness resulting from negligence. Oh! How painful the feeling of regulation was! Only when we were on the verge of leaving the unsociable restaurant out of embarrassment, one of my sisters noticed that a table at the furtherest end of the restaurant had been already occupied by the visitors.

As our puzzlement was already solved. We were contradicted to all inside the restaurant. All tables occupied by people, especially young men and women under 30 years, were full of beer-tins or alcohol-bottles of different brands, local or foreign made, and various Chinese dishes scattered about. Apart from young men, young women helped themselves to beers and alcohols to their heart’s content. Some of them were being intoxicated with beer. Most young men were wearing long pants and jean jackets or shirts or sport-shirts. But some girls were wearing just shorts and vests, exposing part of their belly. It seemed that they did not feel uneasy at all due to theThingyan songs which I thought would be more humiliating to that extent, when this face-book culture could spoil the morality of the young people, into whose hands we were to hand over the future of our nation and why the responsible personnel did not enact and enforce effective laws to protect this face-book culture which could have transboundary impacts. In fact, I was a school teacher. So I had to deal with young people daily. I was not a foggy nor a traditionalist. I tried to keep myself updated by reading as many books as I could lay my hands on and having recourse to other channels. I had no objection to the proper use of the internet. But I could not be taken by surprise to allow it to abuse it.

I looked around again. The table adjacent to ours was taken by a couple of lovers in their teens. Both were very young and light-heartedly. Both were wearing black spectacles which I thought would be priced at more than a lakh kyats. To be frank, I had never thought of wearing such expensive spectacles no matter how rich I would be. Out of great surprise, we watched them. They did not think of divorcing off the cherished desire of my beloved sisters. So we marched again towards the stage-show, shouldering our rambunctious dark jam and handicapped with our guests. Half on the way, we had to cross a small vaulted concrete bridge under which a stream flowed out to join the water stretch of Kandawgyi. From the mound where the bridge was, some boys were dashing down into that sub-confluence and sporting about merrily in the water in
Union minister inspects hydropower project

Aye San of the Hydropower Projects Implementation Department reported to the union minister and party on construction of the main dam, tunnels, sluiceways and other facilities. After hearing reports, the union minister urged the officials to exert efforts to timely completion of the project, meeting construction standards and implementing measures for prevention of natural disasters. Afterwards, the union minister and party viewed the project site. After the completion of the project, the dam will generate 267 million kilo-watt-hours of electricity per year.

The union minister and party proceeded to the Kengtawng Hydropower Plant and inspected the generators. The plant can generate 377 million kilo-watt-hours of electricity and supplies power for regional development tasks.

MNA

Nay Pyi Taw, 22 April—Government military columns arrested two armed insurgents and ammunition after clashes with them in Rakhine state on Tuesday morning.

Two armed insurgents—Kyaw Naing, 35, and Maung Ba Aye, 26—were arrested with weapons and ammunition.

While clearing the area and chasing other insurgents in the afternoon, some sorts of ammunition and food items were found stored in 16 huts.

Military units are now trying to get rid of insurgents to restore peace and stability of the western Myanmar state.

Union Election Commission

The Union Election Commission announced public remonstration in the dailies dated 10-3-2015 with its title, flag and emblem. According to the directive of the Union Election Commission, the party submitted changes of its flag and emblem. It is hereby announced that those who want to remonstrate with the UEC about the party’s flag and emblem may submit a complaint along with the strong evidences within seven days starting from issuance of this announcement in line with Section 14 (d) of the Political Parties Registration Rules.

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Developing an efficient fish breeding method and implementing a systematic approach to fishing from the sea and rivers are the two biggest challenges for Myanmar’s fishing industry, according to Myanmar Fisheries Federation.

Photo: Aye Min Soe

Yangon Thingyan...

(from page 8)

The intense sun-rays charged with high percentage of ultra-violet. What a great hazard to their health! No security staff prohibited them. Everyone shut their eyes to their mischief. I did not know who was responsible to ban them from that irrational action. But I saw an ambulance not far from the bridge. When we got to the stage-show, it had already started. An ocean of the audience had already been present before the stage. We had to elbow our way into the audience as far as a place from which we could see the vocalists on the stage. As the stage was under some shady tall trees and the audience was hosed down by water-pipes from all sides, we did not suffer the attacks of the intense heat of the scorching sun. I noticed that some audience sang together with vocalists, dancing with their hands held up. The whole atmosphere echoed with the songs sung in unison and the musical notes amplified by the high powered sound-boxes.

While listening to the songs, I remembered the classical songs we sang in front of Inya Hostel and Muller Hostel to the medallin played by my friends on some summer nights during my university days. After three vocalists had finished singing, we returned from Hmyaw-zin-gyun.

To my understanding, Thingyan is a Myanmar cultural festival held on the cusp between the two consecutive years to bid a farewell to the by-gone year and to welcome the forth-coming year. Throwing water at one another during Thingyan symbolizes washing away the impurities of the old year. In other words, it can be said this festival is an auspicious occasion we make a wish or a resolution that the consequences of our offences committed in the old year be removed and our new works to be undertaken with renewed strength and vigour in the new year be accomplished. At the time of making a wish or a resolution, it is necessary for our minds to be serene and concentrated and to be free from mental deprivations. Only then our prayers would be answered and our wish realized immediately. Instead, if we are being intoxicated with alcohol at that time, our minds would be distracted and beclouded with delusion (Moha) or ignorance (Avijjha) and our prayers and wishes would never come true. Therefore, drinking beer and alcohol should be a taboo during Thingyan.

Wearing of eye-catching over-exposed clothes runs counter to the dressing way of the Malays who emphasize moral shame and moral fear for misdeeds. This can arouse greed (Lobha), thereby causing undesirable events like crimes, violence, etc. However, to my delight, the reveling young people at Hmyaw-zin-gyun seemed to be more patient, flexible, civilized and understanding than those of previous years. Some of them, despite being intoxicated with alcohol, did not exchange harsh speech, insults and blows. As the stretch of land in front of the stage-show was crammed with audience, it was hard for the late comers to secure a standing room. But, surprisingly, the early comers, especially young men, willingly made way for the elderly people and girls and helped them get the room. They did not tease or mock at the girls mischievously.

This showed that the mindset of our younger generation started to change. At any rate, I hope that Thingyan will assume a more and more typical Myanmar cultural festival in the years to come.

BY KHAING THANDA LWIN

TANGON, 22 April—ASEAN members plan to discuss the plight of Myanmar fisherman used as forced labour on Indonesian boats at a summit on human trafficking this week in Brunei, the head of Myanmar’s anti-trafficking police unit said Tuesday.

Police Brig-Gen Win Naing Tun, head of the Myanmar Police Force’s Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division, said the case of the fishermen, reported by the Associated Press on 25 March, will be taken up at the 28th ASEAN Heads of Anti-trafficking Specialist Unit (HSU) Meeting from 22-23 April.

The meeting aims to implement a judicial system among ASEAN countries for trafficked victims and to forge close international cooperation to reduce the number of human trafficking cases, Pol Brig-Gen Win Naing Tun told The Global New Light of Myanmar on Tuesday.

GNLM

The Global New Light of Myanmar

Nay Pyi Taw, 22 April—Union Minister for Electricity Power U Khin Maung Soe, together with Chief Minister U Sao Aung Myat of Shan State and officials, inspected the Upper Kengtawng Hydropower Project being built on the Nantain Creek on Tuesday.

Director-General U Aye San of the Hydropower Projects Implementation Department reported to the union minister and party on construction of the main dam, tunnels, sluiceways and other facilities. After hearing reports, the union minister urged the officials to exert efforts to timely completion of the project, meeting construction standards and implementing measures for prevention of natural disasters. Afterwards, the union minister and party viewed the project site.

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Taleban announce plans to ramp up attacks in Afghanistan

KABUL, 22 April — The Afghan Taleban announced the start of its annual spring offensive on Wednesday, warning it would ramp up attacks on foreign embassies and government officials as well as military targets.

“If the foreign occupiers really want to relieve themselves from this nuisance of fighting, they should immediately withdraw,” the Taleban said in a statement.

The Islamist militant group has been fighting the Afghan government and its US-backed forces since it was ousted from power by US-backed Afghan forces in 2001.

It typically intensifies its military efforts when warmer weather facilitates the transit of vulnerable targets and weapons.

This year’s offensive has been dubbed “Azmi” or “Resolution” — similar to the name chosen for the NATO-led coalition’s two-year “Resolute Support” mission that started in January.

The Taleban made no mention of the much discussed peace process, which the Afghan president said was close to restarting several months ago.

Afghan and foreign officials say hopes for talks have flickered out and many expect the upcoming fighting season to be the most violent yet.

Last year was the worst for civilians since the United Nations began keeping records in 2009, with more than 10,000 civilians killed or injured in the conflict.

It said a new phase called “Operation Restoring Hope” was beginning. It would combine political, diplomatic and military action but would focus on “the political process that will lead to a stable and secure future for Yemen.”

Saudi spokesman Brigadier General Ahmed Asseri said the alliance was ready to get a peaceful political arrangement for Yemen, which has a long history of internal fighting.

Saudi Arabia had earlier signalled a change in its policy by ordering its carrier and guided-missile cruiser to leave the area.

The Saudi carrier and guided-missile cruiser had gone to the Persian Gulf along with other Muslim Brotherhood leaders.
Japan stocks at 15-year peak, oil down as Saudi ends Yemen air campaign

Tokyo, 22 April — Japanese shares rallied to a 15-year high on Wednes- day on expectations of improved corporate earnings, while oil sagged after Saudi Arabia ended its military campaign in Yemen, easing tensions in the energy-rich Middle East.

Japan’s Nikkei rose 1.1 percent to a high not seen since April 2000, with foreign investors buying on hopes of a strengthening recovery in the world’s third-biggest economy and growth in corporate earn- ings. In a mixed session for the region South Korea’s Kospi gained 0.5 percent and Chinese and Hong Kong shares also rose. Australian, Malaysian and Indo- nesian stocks fell.

MS&I’s broadest index

Sony trims FY 2014 net loss estimate to 126 bil yen from 170 bil yen

SINGAPORE, 22 April — Sony Corp on Wednesday revised its group net loss estimate to 126 billion yen ($11 million) for the business year 2014 ended March from the previously forecast 170 billion yen, cit- ing recent improvement in its performance, video game and other busi- nesses.

The Japanese electronics company raised its group operating profit out- look for the year to 68 bil- lion yen from 20 billion yen estimated in February. It expects 8.21 trillion yen in sales, up from 8 trillion yen expected earlier.

Sony said results of its finance, music and some of its home electronics busi- nesses are likely to have outperformed earlier expec- tations. The company will report its earnings for the just ended business year on 30 April.—Kyodo News

Gold slips as dollar firms; Greek debt crisis eyed

Gold, often seen as a safe-haven investment, tends to see a drop in de- mand when equities are doing well. The dollar held firm against a basket of major currencies on Wednesday, after putting up a mixed performance overnight.

Greece, which is quickly running out of cash, pledged to its euro zone partners in February that by the end of April it would agree with creditors on a comprehensive list of reforms to get 7.2 billion euros remaining from its bailout. But no package will be ready by Friday, when euro zone ministers are to meet in Riga, and it was also unlikely one will be ready by the end of the month, according to a sen- ior euro zone official.

In currencies, the euro was little changed after the British medical journal JAMA that they found no difference in the incidence of autism between vaccinated and un- vaccinated children, and now the 860 did.

The MMR vaccina- tion rate for children with non-autistic siblings was 84 percent at two years old and 92 percent at five years old. In contrast, the rate for children with autistic sib- lings was 73 percent at two years old and 86 percent at five years old.

The researchers re- ported Tuesday in the US journal JAMA that they found no difference in the incidence of autism between the vaccinated and unvaccinated children, re- gardless of whether their older siblings had the dis- order.

In an accompanying editorial, Bryan King of the University of Washington and Seattle Children’s Hos- pital said: “The only con- clusion that can be drawn from the study is that there is no signal to suggest a re- lationship between MMR and the development of autism in children with or without a sibling who has autism.”

“Taken together, some dozen studies have now shown that the age of onset of ASD (autism spectrum disorders) does not differ between vaccinated and unvaccinated children, the severity or course of ASD does not differ between vaccinated and unvaccinated children, and now the risk of ASD recurrence in families does not differ be- tween vaccinated and unvaccinated children,” King wrote.—Xinhua

Measles vaccine not linked to autism, even in high-risk kids

WASHINGTON, 22 April — The measles-mumps-ru- bella (MMR) vaccine does not increase the risk of au- tism, even among children considered at a high risk for the disorder, according to a study of about 95,000 chil- dren with autism.

Researchers at the Lewin Group, a US health- care consulting firm, exam- ined the incidence of au- tism in 95,727 US children, who all have older siblings. Among these children, 1,929, or 0.2 percent, have an older sibling with autism.

Overall, 994 children in the study were diag- nosed with autism during follow-up. Of those, 134 had a sibling with the con-
South Korea seeks bigger role in global arms bazaar

SEOUL, 22 April — When South Korean president Park Geun-hye stopped off in Peru this week, her diplomatic agenda included drumming up interest in her country’s home-grown light fighter jets. While Park did not come away with a new contract, state-run Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI) is in the running for a contract to supply Peru with 24 of its FA-50 fighter jets, worth as much as $2 billion (1.3 billion pounds).

Park’s efforts are part of a broader push to turn the South Korean defence industry into an export powerhouse.

With South Korea’s arms makers experiencing sluggish domestic growth, its defence exports have grown from $144 million in 2002 to $2.5 billion in 2014, with an average annual gain of 31 percent over the past five years.

The industry, developed mostly with American technology during a decades-long standoff with North Korea, is hoping to sustain that growth by selling beyond its main export markets in Southeast Asia into Latin America, Europe and the United States.

“They’ve got a strong combination of technology, skills, reasonable costs, an export-driven economy, and a domestic defence market that’s large enough to justify home-grown products,” said Richard Aboulafia, vice president at the Virginia-based Teal Group.

Although it is a close ally of the United States, South Korea lacks the diplomatic baggage that hinders some players in the global arms trade, such as China, Israel and Russia. Regional rival Japan only released its ban on weapons exports last year.

“For the armed forces’ technical modernisation, the South Korean forces’ resilience to be effective, the so-called anti-missile shield ... had to become the priority of priorities,” said Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski.

Poland, a NATO member since 1999, had accelerated the process to select a supplier for the missile system after Russia’s annexation of Ukraine’s Crimea Peninsula last year prompted great concern among NATO members in Eastern Europe.

Since the end of the Cold War, Poland has usually kept closer defence and security ties with the United States.

But in the past few years, policymakers have been lobbying for a stronger security relationship with the rest of Europe, especially after the Obama administration scaled back its missile defence shield plans in Eastern Europe.

Poland also named the Caracal EC725 of Airbus Helicopters as its preferred choice in a $3 billion utility helicopter tender, subject to army testing, dropping US and Italian competitors.

It trimmed the potential order from an original 70 helicopters to 50. This would still represent Poland’s biggest defence acquisition from Western Europe since the end of the Cold War. Deliveries could begin as early as 2017.

“The helicopter decision was seen as delicate because rival bidders Sikorsky, United Technologies Corp’s helicopter unit in the United States, and AgustaWestland, owned by Italy’s Finmeccanica, have factories in Poland whose unions had warned of job losses,” a French defence official said.

A French defence official said the Caracal helicpoters and their Turbomeca engines would both be assembled in Poland as part of a wide-ranging industrial pact. Airbus has offered what could evolve into “fifth nation” status for Poland alongside its Western European founders to support its bid.

The official said Poland had monitored France’s decision last year to suspend delivery of warships to Russia over its role in the Ukraine crisis, but denied any explicit link between that move and Poland’s decision to buy French hardware.

Poland said that because of “changing security circumstances” it had decided to speed up a separate acquisition of attack helicopters. Four companies have expressed interest in supplying some 30 units in a deal already brought forward by two years in light of the crisis in Ukraine.—Reuters

Warsaw, 22 April — Poland said on Tuesday it would buy Raytheon Co’s Patriot missile system from the United States and provisionally selected French Airbus Group helicopters as it speeds up the modernization of its military amid tensions with Russia.

The choice of suppliers, in deals potentially worth $9 billion, strikes a trans-Atlantic balance as Eastern Europe’s largest economy re-arms itself on NATO’s frontline while edging towards a bigger role in Europe’s defence industry.

“For the armed forces’ technical modernisation, the Polish armed forces’ resilience to be effective, the so-called anti-missile shield ... had to become the priority of priorities,” said Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski.

Poland will enter exclusive talks with the US government on the Patriot missile defence system. It plans to buy eight missile batteries by 2025, including two within three years of signing.

A consortium of France’s Thales and European group MBDA was also competing for the $5 billion missile defence contract — the largest in Poland’s military history.

Washington DC, 22 April — The number of foreigners visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum rose by some 34,000 from a year earlier to a record 234,360 in fiscal 2014 that ended in March, the museum said on Wednesday.

An official of the museum attributed the rise to factors as favourable word-of-mouth opinions on some US travel websites and the growing number of foreign tourists to Japan amid the weaker yen and fast-growing budget airlines.

The total number of visitors dropped 69,000 to 1.31 million, which the official attributed to the museum’s partial closure due to renovation work.

The Hiroshima National Peace Memorial Hall for the Atomic Bomb Victims, located within the Peace Memorial Park along with the museum and related facilities, said it also saw a record of 252,592 visitors in fiscal 2014, up from 214,572 the previous year. It opened in 2006.

Kenji Shiga, head of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, said on Wednesday that the museum was trying to cope with the growing number of foreign tourists visiting the site, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Opinions among foreign visitors are mixed, with some expressing concern about the nuclear bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, and others saying they were inspired by the anti-war message of the museum.

The museum, which receives about 3 million visitors a year, is facing a budget shortfall of about 100 million yen ($885,000) this fiscal year due to cuts in government funding.

The museum, which is run by a public corporation, has been seeking a new budget system that would allow it to generate income from its museum shop and other operations.

Keiko Yamada, head of the museum’s communication division, said the museum had been working to improve its online presence to attract more visitors.

The museum has also been holding events such as lectures and workshops to educate visitors about the history of the nuclear bomb and the importance of peace.

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One dead, 20 sick with Botulism symptoms after church potluck

COLUMBUS, 22 April — One person has died and at least 20 others were sick with symptoms of foodborne Botulism following a weekend church potluck in Ohio, hospital officials said on Tuesday. The Fairfield Medical Centre said in a statement that the patients, five of whom were in a critical condition, had all attended a picnic at Cross Pointe Free Will Baptist Church in Lancaster on Sunday.

The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention had sent anti-toxin to treat the sick, the hospital said, while local health officials investigated the cause of the outbreak. Botulism is a rare but potentially fatal paralytic illness caused by a nerve toxin that is produced by certain bacteria, according to the CDC. Symptoms include drooping eyelids, slurred speech and muscle weakness, which can progress to paralysis of the limbs and respiratory muscles, the CDC said.

The hospital said Botulism is not contagious, so there is no threat to the public at-large or people at the hospital. Symptoms generally begin showing up within 36 hours of eating the contaminated food, but can start as many as 10 days after.

Reuters
Sienna Miller, Jake Gyllenhaal in Cannes jury

**Los Angeles, 22 April** — Actor Ben Affleck said Tuesday he regretted asking PBS to edit out slave-owning ancestor.

The Oscar-winning actor-director added that he assumed the show “will respect your willingness to participate and not look to include things you think would embarrass your family.”

Ben Affleck says he regrets asking PBS to edit out slave-owning ancestor

Scarlett Johansson, co-stars reunite at ‘Avengers 2’ London premiere

**Los Angeles, 22 April** — Actor Ben Affleck said Tuesday he regretted asking a PBS documentary show profiling his ancestors to not include a relative who was an owner of slaves, saying he was embarrassed by the revelation.

Affleck’s ancestry was traced by Harvard scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr, known as Skip, for an episode in the second season of his Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) series “Finding Your Roots,” in which well-known personalities can discover more about their family history.

“I didn’t want any television show about my family to include a guy who owned slaves. I was embarrassed. The very thought left a bad taste in my mouth,” Affleck said in a statement on his Facebook page.

“I regret my initial thoughts that the issue of slavery not be included in the story,” he added.

Representatives for PBS and Gates did not respond to requests for comment.

The issue came to light after anti-secrecy website Wikileaks released a searchable database of more than 30,000 documents that were stolen by hacker from Sony Corp’s Sony Pictures Entertainment in a massive cyber attack last year.

Affleck said in his statement that Gates had final say in what was included in the episode, which aired last October, and he had “lobbied” Gates on what elements of his family history to use in the show.

The Oscar-winning actor-director added that he assumed the show “will respect your willingness to participate and not look to include things you think would embarrass your family.”

“While I don’t like that the guy is an ancestor, I am happy that aspect of our country’s history is being talked about,” he said.

Madonna denies texting during off-broadway performance

**Los Angeles, 22 April** — Madonna’s representative has denied reports that the pop diva was texting during a performance of “12 Years a Slave” at the New York City’s Public Theater.

“It’s not true. She was invited backstage four different times. She tested post show when they were doing their fundraising pitch. Madonna had already made a generous donation,” her rep Liz Rosenberg addressed the incident in a statement.

Tony winner Lin-Manuel Miranda, the star, author and composer for the show, had made a pointed reference to an unnamed celebrity audience member, who practised poor theatre-going etiquette.

“I regret my initial thoughts that the issue of slavery not be included in the story,” he added.

Representatives for PBS and Gates did not respond to requests for comment.

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I don’t want to be a role model: Charli XCX

**Los Angeles, 22 April** — Singer Charli XCX says she has told her fans and followers to expect mistakes from her.

The 22-year-old “Boom Clap” hitmaker has urged her fans not to consider her a role model, because it is inevitable she will make mistakes as her career progresses.

“Even though I probably am a role model, because certain people look up to me, that’s never been an aim of mine. But I understand that’s a responsibility that comes with the territory, even if you don’t ask for it. “I’m OK with that, as long as they know I’m definitely gonna make some mistakes along the way,” she said.— PTI

Charli XCX says it is inevitable she will make mistakes as her career progresses.—PTI

Nicole Perlman, Meg LeFauve to write ‘Captain Marvel’

**Los Angeles, 22 April** — Marvel has confirmed “Captain Marvel” will be penned by female writers Nicole Perlman and Meg LeFauve. Perlman is credited with hit movie “Guardians of the Galaxy” and LeFauve wrote the upcoming film “Inside Out”.

They will now help bring superhero Carol Danvers to the big screen in her first solo cinematic adventure due in theaters on 2 November, 2018, reported Aceshowbiz.

No director and actress has been announced for “Captain Marvel”, which will become Marvel’s first superhero movie led by a female character, but Adam McKay could be a contender to helm the project since Kevin Feige says McKay is being eyed for all future Marvel flicks.—Reuters

Scarlett Johansson

Betany, and director Joss Whedon at the Westfield London for the European premiere. The superhero movie has hit international theaters but will not arrive in until 1 May.

It will be Whedon’s last “Avengers” movie after he directed the first two installments.

The next entries “Avengers: Infinity War Part I” and “Avengers: Infinity War Part II” are set to be helmed by Anthony and Joe Russo.

“Yeah it’s sort of like sending your kid off to college, it’s like wow, they really don’t need me anymore, do they?” Whedon said on the red carpet.

“At the same time it’s like, ‘My kid’s gone, party all night!’ You know, I’m going to pick my actual kids up from school, I’m going to read books, it’s going to get crazy,” Whedon added.

PTI

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Hollywood actors Sienna and Jake Gyllenhaal

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Scarlett Johansson, co-stars reunite at ‘Avengers 2’ London premiere

Nicole Perlman, Meg LeFauve to write ‘Captain Marvel’
Nishikori cruises into Barcelona 3rd round

Barcelona, 22 April — World No 5 Kei Nishikori started his title defence at the Barcelona Open with a convincing 6-3, 6-4 win over Russia’s Yury Gambashvili in their second-round match on Tuesday.

Nishikori, the top seed here, never lost his serve and dismissed his 85th-ranked opponent in a little over an hour. “I played a good two sets today,” said Nishikori. “It wasn’t easy for my first match on clay this year, but I served great. It’s always special to come back and defend the title here, where there are such great facilities.”

Nishikori will meet either No 15 seed Santiago Giraldo, the player he beat in the 2014 final, or Joao Sousa in the next round.

Nishikori is now 22-5 on the season, including his eighth ATP World Tour title at Memphis and a runner-up finish in Acapulco.

Last year, the Japanese ace became the first Asian player to capture the Barcelona Open championship. It was also his first clay-court title.—Kyodo News

Bayern dreaming of treble after ‘amazing’ 6-1 victory

Munich, 22 April — Bayern Munich’s 6-1 demolition of Porto on Tuesday for a spot in the Champions League semi-finals was just what the doctor ordered for an injury-plagued team chasing a treble.

Despite a string of absences, including Arjen Robben, David Alaba, Franck Ribery and Medhi Benatia, and internal turmoil following the sudden departure of their long-time doctor, Bayern were sublime in the first half scoring five times.

“It is difficult to find the right words to explain this,” Bayern’s Thomas Mueller, whose goal made him Germany’s all-time top scorer in the competition with 27, told reporters. “It could not have worked better than it did. “A lot was said before the game about us but to play such a first half is absolutely amazing.”

Bayern, with Bastian Schweinsteiger back from injury but left on the bench, struck three times in 13 minutes and added two more late in the first period to blow away the Portuguese and wipe out the 3-1 first-leg deficit.

“Now we can joke about it but it was a huge piece of work. When you’re with you back to the wall then sometimes that is a good thing,” Mueller said.

“There are times in a season when you win something from a game and that was one such game,” he added, referring to the confidence boost from such an important victory.

Bayern, who could clinch the Bundesliga title this weekend and are also in the German Cup semi-finals, are attempting to repeat their 2013 treble-winning season and add a sixth European crown to their collection of silverware.

Neymar double helps brilliant Barcelona down PSG

Barcelona, 22 April — Neymar scored twice as Barcelona reached the Champions League semi-finals for the seventh time in the last eight seasons by comfortably beating Paris St Germain 2-0 on Tuesday to complete an emphatic 5-1 aggregate victory.

The Nou Camp crowd were brought to their feet for Neymar’s first goal as midfielder Andres Iniesta ran from his own half, skipping past three challenges, before delivering a perfect pass for the Brazilian, who rounded keeper Salvatore Sirigu and slid the ball home after 14 minutes.

PSG offered little resistance as Barca swept the ball around midfield and the Catalan side went further in front when Neymar headed home a curling cross from fullback Dani Alves after 34 minutes.

Barca eased off in the second half and were happy to hold on for a victory that keeps them on course to repeat their treble success of 2009. “We did the same that we did in Paris, we came out and played our game and scored the goals we needed,” Neymar said in an interview with Spanish television broadcaster TVE. “I think we are on good form, in the Champions League, in La Liga, everywhere and hopefully we can continue the same way.”

PSG were without injured duo Thiago Motta and Thiago Silva but they did have former Barca striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Marco Verratti back from suspension.

Their Brazilian defender David Luiz, who had a torrid time against Luis Suarez in the first leg, was booked after just three minutes for a reckless challenge on Ivan Rakitic.—Reuters

Chelsea face striker crisis ahead of Arsenal showdown

London, 22 April — Champions-elect Chelsea may have to go into Sunday’s top of the table showdown against Arsenal at the Emirates without their three main strikers.

Spain striker Diego Costa has only just returned to training after missing two games with a recurring hamstring injury while a calf strain sidelined France forward Loic Remy for last Saturday’s 1-0 win over Manchester United.

Didier Drogba featured against United but sustained an ankle injury that kept him out of Monday night’s 12th Match Against Poverty, a game in St Etienne dedicated to the victims of the Ebola epidemic in Africa.

“Disappointed not to be able to play the #MAP2015 because of an ankle injury but still supporting #EbolaResponse,” said the 37-year-old Ivory Coast forward on his Twitter account. Chelsea go into Sunday’s game holding a 10-point lead over second-placed Arsenal and manager Jose Mourinho may have to thrust one of his young strikers into the fray.

Dominic Solanke, 17, was on the bench against United and could be promoted to the starting line-up while former West Bromwich Albion forward Isaiah Brown, 18, is another option for Mourinho.

Costa is the third highest scorer in the league this season, his first at Chelsea, with 19 goals. Remy has been his main understudy and grabbed important goals in the 3-2 victory at Hull City on 22 March and in the 2-1 win over Stoke City on 4 April.—Reuters
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Mingalar Yat Yar Zar
(On Auspicious day in Myanmar Calendar)