President U Thein Sein sends message of felicitations to South Africa

NAK PY TAW, 27 April — U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Jacob Gedleyihlekisana Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, on the occasion of the Freedom Day of the Republic of South Africa, which falls on 27 April 2015.—MNA

President U Thein Sein sends message of condolence to Nepali President, PM

NAK PY TAW, 27 April — His Excellency U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of condolence to His Excellency Dr. Ram Baran Yadav, President and His Excellency Mr. Sushil Koirala, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, respectively, on the loss of lives and property caused by the devastating earthquake which struck Nepal on 25 April.—MNA

President U Thein Sein delivers speech at 12th ASEAN Leadership Forum in Kuala Lumpur

KUALA LUMPUR, 26 April — At the invitation of Prime Minister of Malaysia Datuk Seri Mohamadm Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, President U Thein Sein and wife Daw Khin Khin Win left Yangon for Kuala Lumpur at 8 am on Sunday to attend the 26th ASEAN Summit and related meetings.

The president and wife were seen off at Yangon International Airport by Chief Minister of Yangon Region U Myint Swe, the ambassador of Malaysia to Myanmar and officials.

The president and wife were accompanied by Union Ministers U Tin Naing Thein, U Tint Hsan, Dr Kan Zaw and U Ye Hrut, Deputy Minister Daw Sandra Khin, President of Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation Prof Dr Daw Khin Mar Tun and officials. The president and party arrived at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport at 12 noon local time and were welcomed at the airport by Dato’s Sri Ahmad Shabery Cheek and officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, Myanmar Ambassador to Malaysia U Zaw Myint, Military Attaché Brig-Gen Win Maung and embassy families.

Then, the president and party continued to the Istana Hotel. Afterwards, the president attended the 12th ASEAN Leadership Forum together with Chairman of the forum, Sultan of Perak Darul Ridzan Sultan Narzin Muizzuddin Shah, who attended the forum on behalf of the prime minister of Malaysia, Prime Minister of Cambodia Samdeech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Laos Mr. Thongsing Thammavong, (See page 3)

MEPE awards SembCorp Utilities gas-fired power plant

YANGON, 26 April — Myanmar Electric Power Enterprise has awarded notice to Sembcorp Utilities to develop and operate the largest gas-fired independent power plant in Myanmar, according to the press release of the Singapore-based company.

The SembCorp will have at least an 80 percent stake in the project of Myanmar where electricity demand is estimated to increase at a compounded annual growth rate of 13 percent over the next 15 years. The US$300 million worth power plant with 225-megawatt capacity will be constructed in the Myingyan district of the Mandalay region. The project is set to complete in 2017 and the new facility will help to ease the country’s power deficit, with an estimated 500 megawatts during peak periods, the report said.

“Sembcorp is well-positioned to cater to Myanmar’s increasing power needs and support its economic growth,” said Mr. Tang Kin Fei, Group President and CEO of SembCorp Industries. “The new facility will provide a reliable source of power which is integral to the country’s economic development and electrification efforts.”

SembCorp will sign an MoU with Ministry of Electrical Power for the investment, with $300 million to be funded through a mix of limited recourse project financing and equity.

Solar generator helps rural community in Dala with power supplies

YANGON, 26 April — A power supply project has been accomplished in a suburban area of Yangon in April, with Myanmar Red Cross Society saying that the project in Dala is designed to enable the rural community to have access to electricity.

Financed by Belgium-based Bright Foundation, a solar generator was installed in the village of Minyaseikgyi, MRCS said. The device is worth nearly US$60,000, Dr. Maung Maung Hla, director of Health Department at MRCS, told The Global New Light of Myanmar on Sunday.

The solar generator called “Bright 150” is fully integrated and can produce up to 40 kWh of electricity a day. Prof Dr Tha Hla Shwe of MRCS said the machine will provide power to 150 households in the village day and night.

The generator contains stations for DC charging, energy storage, AC inverter and water pumping. Its pumping stations and charging stations will generate income for the village.

It took the project three months to finish.

Another step the village will take is to rebuild an old bridge as part of ensuring smooth transportation in the area. Built more than 100 years ago, the quality of the 30-foot-long wooden bridge is now deteriorating. MRCS has pledged three-fourths of the construction cost, while locals will contribute the rest.—GNLM

IE

Myanmar, China to promote cooperation in politics, business, technology

Army arrests one armed man in Kyaunktaw Tsp

Tatmadaw to continue its offensives for stability in Laukkai

Ensure a fair competition through genuine capability

Time to accomplish unfinished pledges we made solemnly

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Mandalay, 26 April—Sports and Physical Education Institute (Mandalay) recruits new trainees from regions and states for 2015-16 academic year as of 22 April. The institute tentatively selected 134 trainees from Mandalay Region, 262 from Sagaing Region, 101 from Magway Region, 47 from Kachin State and 11 from Chin State totalling 555. Officials of the institute led by Deputy Director-General U Kyaw Hsan of Sports and Physical Education Department and Medical Director Dr Mya Lay Sein examined the new trainees in line with the standards.—Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Mandalay, 26 April—Fertile soil and alluvial lands of Ayeyawady River in Mandalay, Amarapura, Singaing, Kyaukse and Myittha townships produce high yield production of watermelon. The organic fruits are marketable in China through Muse border trade. Brokerages in Shangalek-yun and Myitnge of Amarapura Township, Mandalay District export the fruits with the packages to Chinese market daily. The vendors sell watermelon ranging from K500 to K1,000 along the strand road and 86th street in Mandalay.

As of early April, watermelon is in high demand in the Chinese market, changing price of fruits daily.—Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)

Concrete bridge across Meiktila Lake under construction

Meiktila, 26 April—Bridge Construction Special Group No 14 of Public Works is building the bridge across Meiktila Lake, with a 25-percent completion. The government allotted more than K3.2 billion on construction of new concrete bridge to be paralleled with old bridge to give better transport service to the local residents. The new bridge will be essential for the combine office and No 2 Basic Education High School in Meiktila. Upon completion, the new bridge will contribute towards easing traffic congestions at downtown Meiktila.

Htay Myint Maung

Myanmar’s watermelon in high demand at Chinese market

Mandalay, 26 April—Baleba village emerged champion in the final match with a 2-1 win over Epya village in the inter-village/ward football tournament at the sports ground in Epya village, Singaing Township, on 24 April.

A total of 40 football teams participated in the tournament from 1 March to 24 April.

Maung Maung Thant (Kyemon)

Villagers participate in inter-village/ward football tournament

Singaing, 26 April—Baleba village emerged champion in the final match with a 2-1 win over Epya village in the inter-village/ward football tournament at the sports ground in Epya village, Singaing Township, on 24 April.

A total of 40 football teams participated in the tournament from 1 March to 24 April.

Maung Maung Thant (Kyemon)

Specialists from Sukswat Hospital in Thailand gave health care services to more than 300 monks, nuns and laypersons free of charge with the use of ECG and Echo machines in the precinct of Nanda Aungmyay Monastery of Leikpyakan Kyaungtaik on Shwegondine Road in Bahan Township on 25 and 26 April.

Maung Maung Thant (Kyemon)

Htay Myint Maung

Myanmar’s watermelon in high demand at Chinese market

Mandalay, 26 April—Fertile soil and alluvial lands of Ayeyawady River in Mandalay, Amarapura, Singaing, Kyaukse and Myittha townships produce high yield production of watermelon. The organic fruits are marketable in China through Muse border trade. Brokerages in Shangalek-yun and Myitnge of Amarapura Township, Mandalay District export the fruits with the packages to Chinese market daily. The vendors sell watermelon ranging from K500 to K1,000 along the strand road and 86th street in Mandalay.

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Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)
President U Thein Sein delivers speech . . .

(from page 1) the trade and industry minister of the Philippines, who attended the forum on behalf of the president of the Philippines and ministers and officials from the ASEAN.

The forum was formally opened with the ASEAN Anthem and Malaysian National Anthem. At the forum, chairman of the ASEAN Leadership Forum Tan Sri Dato Michael Yeoh gave an opening speech and the Sultan of Perak Darul Ridzuan extended greetings. The chairman of the forum presented ASEAN Lifetime Achievement Awards to the Sultan and participants posed for documentary photographs. Then, the Sultan formally opened the forum and Minister at the Prime Minister’s Office Dato Sri Abdul Wahid Omar of Malaysia read out the message of the Malaysian prime minister.

Aftewards, the Cambodian prime minister, the Myanmar president, the Laotian prime minister, the chief executive of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the minister of trade and industry of Philippines delivered speeches. Then, the chairman of the forum presented gifts to the leaders who delivered speeches at the forum before the Sultan of Perak Darul gave honorary prizes to Malaysian business leaders who participated in the forum.

In his speech at the forum, President U Thein Sein said that the year 2015 is an important year for ASEAN and it will be a significant historic milestone of efforts for ASEAN integration under one vision and one community. It is also a year to finalize post-2015 programmes and objectives to strengthen ASEAN integration and the importance of the forum in the circumstance is recognized by ASEAN leaders, according to the president.

Then, the president continued to say that the forum, which has been organized for twelve years, is a regional leadership programme that enables ASEAN leaders, regional business leaders, civil society organizations, experts and scholars to meet one another. As the forum is scheduled to discuss the questions of 2015 vision and programme of the ASEAN, the discussions will contribute to current and future tasks of the ASEAN community, the president added

In conclusion, the president expressed his hope that development of a regional architecture to achieve objectives of ASEAN integration depends on cooperation of dialogue partners and other regional partners, and the yearly forum will be able to develop useful trends to that end.

At 6 pm, President U Thein Sein received Chief Executive of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Mr Leung Chun-ying at the Citrine Room of the Mandarin Oriental Hotel. They discussed investment of Hong Kong in small and medium enterprises in Myanmar, promotion of cooperation in tourism industry, investment in infrastructure sector on Myanmar and flights between Myanmar and Hong Kong. Hong Kong is the fourth largest foreign investor in Myanmar.

At 8.30 pm, President U Thein Sein and wife attended the Gala Dinner hosted in honour of heads of states and governments by the Malaysian prime minister and wife at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre in Kuala Lumpur.

Myanmar, China to promote cooperation in politics, business, technology

Pyidaungsu and Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann meets Mr H u Chunhua, Secretary of Guangdong Province’s Communist Party of China.— MNA

GUANGZHOU, 26 April — At the invitation of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Pyidaungsu and Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann paid an official visit to China on 25 April. The speaker was accompanied by U Soe Tha, Thura U Aye Myint, U Thein Zaw and U Kyin Myat, all of whom are chairs of Pyithu Hluttaw’s committees. He met Mr Hu Chunhua, Secretary of Guangdong Province’s CPC at the latter’s office on 25 April, and they exchanged views on promotion of bilateral cooperation in politics, business and technology, followed by a dinner hosted in honour of the Myanmar delegation led by Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann.

The military columns cooperate with local people in combing the armed men in Rakhine State.

Tatmadaw to continue its offensives for stability in Lao kka ki

NAY PYI TAW, 26 April — As Tatmadaw launched offensives and has controlled Kokang stronghold hills in Shinkhotelahan and Santeikshan, Kokang insurgents built a defence line on Point-2202 hill near border post 19 between Myanmar and China. Tatmadaw columns launched tough and brave offensives against the insurgent who held upper hand on the hill while trying to avoid strayed shell into the other countries.

As a result, some Tatmadaw officers and other ranks sacrificed their lives and were injuring in the fighting while some other were lost in the area. Those who injured were sent to military hospitals for medical treatments. Tatmadaw will bravely continue its offensive against the insurgents for the stability of Lao kka ki area without fear for losses of lives, according to sources.—Myawady

Expressway traffic accident kills 8, injuries 14

NAY PYI TAW, 26 April — A passenger bus bumped into a Toyota Hilux in front on the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway in the Nay Pyi Taw council area on 25 April, killing eight people and injuring 14 aboard the small car.

The accident occurred between Mile Posts 239/7 and 240/0 in the township of Taikona. The injured were taken to the hospital in Nay Pyi Taw.

On Sunday afternoon, local authorities visited the hospital, where they comforted the patients and their families by fulfilling their requirements.—MNA

Union FM sends message of felicitations to South Africa

NAY PYI TAW, 27 April — U Winna M aung Lwin, Union Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to Her Excellency Ms. Maite M Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, on the occasion of the Freedom Day of the Republic of South Africa, which falls on 27 April 2015.

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Kuala Lumpur, 26 April — The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union will look into resuming their stalled free trade talks after a “stock-taking” meeting at the end of 2015, trade officials from both sides said on Sunday.

The matter was discussed during an informal meeting between ASEAN and EU trade ministers in the Malayan capital where a series of ASEAN-related events are taking place.

“We agreed that by end of the year, at the senior officials level, there will be a stock-taking meeting to see where is the ASEAN integration process and where are we on the different bilateral FTA talks, moving forward from leaving off the last time, identify the difficulties, challenges and priorities and then report to the ministers to see how we take that forward,” EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom said at a press conference at the end of the meeting.

ASEAN and the European Union had started negotiating for a free trade agreement in 2007. But the talks stalled in 2009 due to Europe’s unwillingness to include Myanmar in the discussion over the Southeast Asian country’s human rights violation issues as well as the difficulties posed by the developmental gaps among the 10 ASEAN member states.

Malmstrom avoided mentioning specifics about what could be the stumbling blocks to the resuming talks, merely saying, “any things have changed in Europe and here (in the ASEAN region).”

ASEAN Deputy Secretary General for ASEAN Economic Community Lim Hong Hin said the year-end timing is just right to relook at the regional trade pact.

“We have a lot on our plate,” he said at the joint press conference, noting that ASEAN had been preoccupied with various FTA negotiations with countries like China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand as well as the 11-nation Trans-Pacific Comprehensive Economic Partnership that covers these six countries and the 10 ASEAN members.

“A good timing to re-visit the region-to-region FTA will be after the finalisation of the AEC at the end of 2015,” Lim said.

The AEC is envisaged to become an integrated market and production base with free flow of goods, services and investments, skilled labour and capital.

While ASEAN and the European Union were stuck in their FTA negotiations, the European Union has proceeded with bilateral FTA talks with individual ASEAN members like Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand and Singapore. Of the four, it concluded an FTA with Singapore in 2012.

The European Union was the largest source of foreign direct investment into ASEAN in 2014 at $29.1 billion, an increase of 30.5 percent from the year before.

Malyrian International Trade and Industry Minister Mustapa Mohamad, who chaired the ASEAN-EU meeting, said there are over 10,000 European companies operating in the ASEAN region, with bilateral trade between the two regions grew 0.8 percent in 2014 to $248.2 billion. The European Union is ASEAN’s second largest trading partner while ASEAN is the European Union’s third largest partner outside Europe.

Kathmandu, 26 April — The death toll from the magnitude 7.8 earthquake that struck Nepal on Saturday has risen to more than 2,000 in the Southeast Asian country and neighbouring areas as of Sunday afternoon, with the disaster injuring thousands more and causing extensive damage in the region.

The number of people killed in Nepal has reached 2,152, Nepalese media reported on Sunday, citing a Nepal police official. A total of 53 people have died in India, 17 in China and three in Bangladesh, according to media reports.

While numerous aftershocks have followed the initial tremor, the biggest one yet with a magnitude of 6.7 shook the same region on early Sunday afternoon. Reuters reported that the aftershock caused more avalanches on Mt Everest after the first quake was the strongest to hit Nepal in 81 years — had also triggered avalanches as climbers from around the world were preparing to make their ascent on the world’s highest peak in May when the weather is favourable.

While the Nepalese government continues its search and rescue activities in Kathmandu and other affected areas, other countries have begun to offer assistance, with India, Pakistan and China sending relief goods and disaster assistance teams to Nepal.

Countries like Japan, the United States, South Korea, Australia and European nations have also decided to help through methods such as sending relief assistance and providing financial support.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon said in a statement, “The United Nations is supporting the government of Nepal in coordinating international search and rescue operations and is preparing to mount a major relief effort.”

The Nepalese government on Saturday declared a state of emergency in districts affected by the quake, but the overall situation in Nepal remains unclear, with electricity to Nepal in the capital Kathmandu been cut and communication lines down in many parts of the country.

Malaysia has so far informed seven of the 10 death row inmates, including the Australians and one Nigerian, that they will be executed in a matter of days, possibly as soon as Tuesday. Nationals from Brazil, Ghana and the Philippines are also on Indonesia’s death row. A temporary reprieve was granted to a French citizen who will not be in the next round of executions.

The United Nations opposes the death penalty in all circumstances and in a statement, Ban’s spokesman said the Secretary-General urged Indonesian President Joko Widodo to “urgently consider declaring a moratorium on capital punishment in Indonesia, with a view toward abolition.”

Indonesia has harsh punishments for drug crimes and resumed executions in 2013 after a five-year gap. Six executions have been carried out so far this year.

“Under international law, if the death penalty is to be used at all, it should only be imposed for the most serious crimes, namely those involving intentional killing, and only with appropriate safeguards,” Ban’s spokesman said in a statement.

“Drug-related offenses generally are not considered to fall under the category of ‘most serious crimes,’” he said.

UN chief appeals to Indonesia not to carry out executions

Indonesia has for several years pursued death penalty for drug-related offenses. In October, an Australian embassy staff member shows self portraits made by death row inmate Muhammad Sukarnam after they returned from a visit to the prison island of Nusakambangan in Central Java, Indonesia on 25 April, 2015 in this photo taken by Antara Foto.

UNited Nations, 26 April — United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appealed to Indonesia on Saturday not to execute 10 prisoners, including two Australians, for drug-related crimes.

A man cries as he walks on the street while passing through a damaged statue of Lord Buddha a day after an earthquake in Bhaktapur, Nepal on 26 April, 2015.

Reuters

Malaysian, a sudden Philippine call for stronger ASEAN stand on S China Sea

Kuala Lumpur, 26 April — Malaysia has rejected the Philippines’ proposal for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to take a stronger stand against China over territorial disputes in the South China Sea, foreign ministers said Sunday.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario tried to galvanise the support of ASEAN foreign ministers at their meeting on Sunday in Kuala Lumpur, asking the 10-member regional grouping to be more critical of China’s land reclamations in the disputed waters.

“This is not time for ASEAN to say to our northern neighbour that what it is doing is wrong and that the massive reclamations must be immediately stopped,” del Rosario told his counterparts, according to a Philippine official.

He warned that if China’s land reclamations activities persisted, it would render ASEAN’s efforts for the implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea “irrelevant” and undermine the establishment of a Code of Conduct.

The Philippines has been pushing for stronger words to be used on the South China Sea issue in the Chairman’s Statement to be issued by Malyrian Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak at the ASEAN leaders’ summit to be held in Malyria on Monday, the sources said.

Manila had suggested wording such as calling for “avoidance of destabilising activities such as massive reclamations.”

However, Malaysia, as this year’s ASEAN chair, rejected the Philippine proposal, the sources said.

Malaysia has instead come up with a draft of the statement that only says, “We share the concerns expressed by some leaders on the land reclamations being undertaken in the South China Sea, which has eroded trust and confidence and may undermine peace, security and stability in the South China Sea.”

“In this regard we instructed our foreign ministers and this matter constructively under the framework of ASEAN-China relations,” said Malaya’s draft document circulated to ASEAN officials, which was obtained by Kyodo News.

Malaysia, which is also one of the claimant states in the South China Sea, has close economic ties with China and has so far kept a low profile on the issue. — Kyodo News.
Abe departs for 8-day US visit, to hold talks with Obama

Tokyo, 26 April — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe left Japan on Sunday for an eight-day official visit to the United States during which he will hold talks with President Barack Obama on Tuesday to reaffirm their countries’ robust bilateral alliance.

One of the highlights of Abe’s visit will be delivering a speech to a joint session of Congress, the first time for a Japanese prime minister to do so. The expected 40-minute speech will be closely watched as it is expected to foreshadow a statement he will issue in summer marking the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II.

During their summit talks, new Japan-US defence cooperation guidelines, negotiations on a US-led Pacific free trade initiative, and a proposed China-led development bank to revive East Asia’s “new economic cooperation” with ASEAN and other partners are likely to top the agenda, diplomatic sources and Japanese officials said.

“I hope to send a message for the creation of peace and prosperity in the 21st century and opening a new era by taking advantage of the strong Japan-US bond,” Abe told reporters at Tokyo’s Haneda airport shortly before leaving for the United States, explaining the aim of the visit.

On his planned speech to the US Congress, he expressed hope to tell of a vision about what Japan is going to do with the United States and what kind of world it seeks to realize.

Abe also said he plans to affirm with Obama a plan to alleviate Okinawa’s burden of hosting US bases, based on a trustworthy relationship between Japan and the United States.

The Abe-Obama talks will come a day after the “two-plus-two” meeting of the foreign and defence chiefs of Japan and the United States, which is expected to lead to an early conclusion of the TPP. Abe has expressed optimism in moving forward with the deal.

During his US trip, Abe is scheduled to offer flowers at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia that honours US veterans, an accustomed practice for Japanese prime ministers and defence ministers, and visit the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Such schedules are widely seen as a way for Abe to fend off criticism from Asian neighbours — China and South Korea — that he is not remorseful of Japan’s wartime past, observers say. While Japan’s peace-related efforts since World War II have been recognized in the United States, Abe is viewed by some as having revisionist historical views, according to political analysts. Abe will also visit Boston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, and meet with business leaders and local communities. “It’s a good thing to reaffirm Japan’s ties at the local level” through his visits to cities other than the US capital, a Japanese official said. — Kyodo News

Malaysia foils attacks in capital by suspected militants

Kuala Lumpur, 26 April — Malaysian police have arrested 12 people linked to the militant group Islamic State and seized explosives, foiling a plan to attack several locations in and around the capital city.

The male suspects, aged 17 to 41, were arrested on Saturday and Sunday from Ulu Langat and Cheras, suburbs near Kuala Lumpur, police chief Khalid Abu Baker said in a statement on Sunday.

The men were suspected of planning attacks on “strategic targets and governmental interests around the Klang Valley”, he said.

The plans were in response to calls by Islamic State (IS) to launch terrorist attacks on secular Islamic countries seen as “enemies of IS”. Authorities said previous arrests of suspected IS militants was another reason behind the intended attacks.

The explosives seized included 20 kg of ammonium nitrate and 20 kg of potassium nitrate, the statement added.

Security was heightened in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday as leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) started arriving in Kuala Lumpur for the ASEAN summit, which opens officially on Monday.

But it was not clear whether any of the planned attacks were linked to the summit.

At the summit, Malaysia aims to push for regional cooperation to fight terrorism. The Southeast Asian country has not seen any significant militant attacks but has arrested 92 citizens on suspicion of links to IS.

Authorities have identified 39 Malaysians in Syria and Iraq. — Reuters

Man arrested for flying drone onto PM’s office sent to prosecutors

Tokyo, 26 April — Police sent to public prosecutors on Sunday a man arrested for flying a small drone onto the prime minister’s office. He had allegedly flown the drone, which bore a container holding sand with trace amounts of radioactive cesium, in protest at the government’s energy policy. — Kyodo News

Tokyo, 26 April — Police sent to public prosecutors on Sunday a man arrested for flying a small drone onto the prime minister’s office earlier in the week.

Yasuhiro Yamamoto, 40, was arrested on Saturday on suspicion of forcible obstruction of business and interfering with the operations of the office of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who turned himself in to police on Friday and said he had flown the drone, which bore a container holding sand with trace amounts of radioactive cesium, in protest at the government’s energy policy.

The police also started searching his home on Sunday in the western Japan city of Kyoto.

Yasuhiro Yamamoto, 40, is taken to court on Wednesday, 22 April, 2015, in Tokyo. — Kyodo News

N Korea requests “formal partnership” with ASEAN

Kuala Lumpur, 26 April — N Korea has requested a formal partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a top Malaysian Foreign Ministry official said on Saturday. Othman Hashim, secretary general of the ministry, said North Korea, along with Norway, Ecuador and Mongolia, have applied for formal partnerships with the 10-member ASEAN.

He said there are different categories of partnership with the grouping and ASEAN is evaluating the requests to decide what category is suitable for each of these countries in their engagement with ASEAN.

The official made the remarks to reporters at the end of the first day of the meeting of ASEAN senior officials to prepare for the ASEAN summit that will be held in Kuala Lumpur and Langkawi on Monday.

North Korea’s engagement with ASEAN so far has been through its membership to the ASEAN Regional Forum, a multilateral ministerial forum on security that is spearheaded by ASEAN and which is attended by the North Korean foreign minister. ASEAN already has a “dialogue partnership” with South Korea, a status that the grouping offers to countries that are its biggest economic partners, such as the United States, Japan and China.

Through this dialogue partnership, ASEAN has regular meetings with the top leaders and the trade and foreign ministers of these countries regularly on the sidelines of ASEAN meetings.

ASEAN groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. — Kyodo News

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Soldiers of the local public security frontier corps give tourists free porridge at a checkpoint of Zhamgu Township in Nyalam County, on 25 April, 2015. More than 500 tourists stranded by a powerful earthquake in Nepal have been properly relocated at the Zhamgu checkpoint. Xinhua
WASHINGTON, 26 April — At the gathering he jokingly called “a night when Washington celebrates itself,” US President Barack Obama took light-hearted aim on Saturday at a range of political friends and foes, including the people running to succeed him.

Obama’s comedy routine at the annual White House Correspondents’ Dinner included a skit dig at Hillary Clinton, the current front-runner to be the Democratic candidate in the 2016 presidential election.

Noting that some Americans are living in a time of uncertainty, Obama said, “For example, I have one friend just a few weeks ago, she was making millions of dollars a year and she’s now living out of a van in Iowa.”

Clinton, who as a former secretary of state, former senator and former first lady is one of America’s best-known figures, traveled around in a van this month in a deliberately low-key trip to the state that holds an early contest in the election primary season. Obama, now in office for six years, is a polished performer at an event that draws journalists, politicians and celebrities to a cavernous ballroom in the Washington Hilton.

Some of his jokes are stock, including a reference to how much his time as president has aged him. “I look so old,” he said this year, “that John Boehner has already invited Netanyahu to speak at my funeral.”

Obama was angered when Boehner, the Republican leader of the House of Representatives, invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to speak at Congress last month against a nuclear deal with Iran that the Obama administration was negotiating with other world powers.

The comedian at the dinner, Cecily Strong of NBC show “Saturday Night Live,” also fired freely around the audience. Taking a jab at some media coverage of women politicians, she had the audience repeat after her, “I solemnly swear not to talk about Hillary’s appearance, because that is not journalism.”

Strong also took aim at the Secret Service that protects the president, which has seen a slew of embarrassing recent bungles. Referring to a series of deaths at black men’s hands of law enforcement that have provoked protests around the country, she said, “They’re the only law enforcement agency that will get in trouble if a black man gets shot.”

On a serious note, Obama noted there were journalists around the world who were unjustly imprisoned, and cited the example of Jason Rezaian, a Washington Post, an American-Iranian who is in prison in Iran.

“For nine months, Jason has been imprisoned in Iran for nothing more than writing about the hopes and the fears of the Iranian people,” Obama said, adding that he had told Rezaian’s brother Ali that he would not rest “until we bring him home to his family safe and sound.”

The case represents a point of friction with Iran at a time when the Obama administration is seeking with five other major powers to conclude a nuclear deal with Tehran after reaching a framework agreement earlier this month.

The dinner, a long-running tradition organized by the White House Correspondents’ Association, has morphed from being a relatively low-key gathering of journalists and their sources from around town.

UK’s Labour rules out informal deal with Scots nationalists after May election

London, 26 April — The leader of Britain’s opposition Labour Party on Sunday ruled out a formal deal with Scottish nationalists after a 7 May election if his party fails to win an overall majority, saying it would be disastrous.

If the polls are accurate, the rise of the SNP could dash Miliband’s dreams of winning the election and thrust recessionist ‘kingmakers’ to the heart of British power.

Conservatives have warned that SNP support for a Labour minority government could spark new referendums and trigger a constitutional crisis by undermining the legitimacy of the United Kingdom’s government in the eyes of English voters.

If Miliband did try to rule with a minority government that had neither a formal constitutional deal nor an informal support deal in the Westminster Parliament, its future could be much more uncertain than any British government since the 1970s.—Reuters

Russian hackers read Obama’s unclassified emails last year

WASHINGTON, 26 April — Russian hackers who penetrated sensitive parts of the White House computer system last year read President Barack Obama’s unclassified emails, the New York Times reported on Saturday, quoting US officials.

“There is no evidence that the president’s email account itself was hacked, White House officials said. Still, the fact that some of Mr Obama’s communications were among those retrieved by hackers has been one of the most closely held findings of the inquiry,” the paper said.

A White House spokesman declined to comment on the report but the White House earlier this month confirmed the breach, saying it took place last year and that it did not affect classified information.

The New York Times said on Saturday the breach had been “far more intrusive and worrisome than has been publicly acknowledged.”

It said that although no classified networks had been compromised, officials conceded that the unclassified system still contains highly sensitive information such as email exchanges with diplomats, exchanges about personnel moves and legislation, presidential schedules and discussion about policy.

Officials did not disclose the number of Obama’s emails that were read by the hackers nor the sensitivity of their content, the New York Times said. It added that the president’s email account itself was apparently not hacked.

The paper said that Senior White House officials had known for months about the depth of the intrusion.—Reuters

China International Search and Rescue Team arrives in Nepal to carry out humanitarian mission

KATHMANDU, 26 April — The 62-strong China International Search and Rescue Team arrived in Nepal on Sunday to carry out humanitarian mission following a 7.9 magnitude quake struck the country.

Shankar Koira, Nepal’s joint secretary of the Office of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers, warmly welcomed the Chinese team at the Kathmandu airport, terming their arrival as a timely assistance.

The joint secretary said his country will do its best to facilitate the Chinese team so that they can rescue more Nepali people. Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Wu Chuntui wished the Chinese team success in carrying out their assignment.

Xinhua

Google executive killed in Mount Everest avalanche after quake

KATHMANDU, 26 April — Dan Fredinburg, a Google Inc executive based in California, was among those killed on Saturday in an avalanche on Mount Everest caused by a devastating earthquake in Nepal, the company said.

Fredinburg was climbing the world’s tallest peak with three other Google employees when the avalanche struck. None of his colleagues were injured. Lawrence You, a company official, said in a statement.

Fredinburg, a Google veteran, was head of privacy at Google X, a research division at the Mountain View, California-based company. Fredinburg suffered a major head injury during an avalanche, his sister Megan said on social media. “His soul and his spirit will live on in so many of us,” she said on an Instagram posting.

Fredinburg, an experienced climber, was making his ascent up Everest with Jeggat Globe, a company that organizes mountain treks. In continuing Fredinburg’s death, the company said that two other team members suffered non-life threatening injuries in the avalanche that stuck his base camp.

An Indian army Mountaineering team found 18 bodies on Everest, an army official said. Reuters

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Xinhua
Saudi-led air strikes hit Yemeni capital, ships shell Aden

At least five air strikes hit military sites and an area near the presidential palace compound in the Yemeni capital Sanaa at dawn on Sunday while warships pounded a port area close to the southern city of Aden, residents said.

The bombings were the first raids on Sanaa since a Saudi-led alliance said last week it was scaling back a campaign against Iran-allied Houthi militias, which control Sanaa and have powerful allies in Yemen’s factionalized armed forces.

“The explosions were so big they shook the house, waking us and our kids up. Life has really become unbearable in this city,” a Sanaa resident who gave his name as Jamal told Reuters.

Eyewitnesses in Aden said foreign warships pounded Houthis armed positions around the city’s main commercial port and dockyard, the first time the port area has been shelled, residents said.

Aden residents reported heavy clashes between local armed militia and Houthi fighters backed up by army units, and sources in the militia said they were retaliating for the first time with tank and Katyusha rocket fire against the Houthis advance.

In the southern province of Dalea, the militiamen said they had fought for hours to retake several rural districts with the help of Saudi-led air strikes, in fighting which left around 25 of the Houthis and six of the pro-government men dead.

The Houthis, which monitors the grinding civil war, said combatants have attacked oil terminals in Yemen, the world’s top oil exporter and a key US ally in the region.

Residents flee Jisr al-Shughour town after rebels took control of the area

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A girl runs for shelter during an air strike in Sanaa on 8 April, 2015.— Reuters

Egypt’s trial of Mursi ‘badly flawed’—Human Rights Watch

The trial of former Egyptian President Mohamed Mursi, deposed by the army and sentenced to 20 years in jail, was “badly flawed” and appears to have been politically motivated, Human Rights Watch said on Sunday.

A court on 21 April convicted Mursi and 12 other Muslim Brotherhood members of violence, kidnapping and torture over the deaths of protesters in 2012. They were acquitted of murder, which carries the death sentence.

The rise to power of the Brotherhood, a decades-old Islamist movement, after the Arab Spring uprisings polarised Egypt’s population and led to months of unrest.

The army ousted Mursi in mid-2013 after mass protests against his rule. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, army chief at the time, went on to win presidential elections last year.

Human Rights Watch said Mursi’s detention without charge for more than three weeks after his removal from office violated Egyptian law, and it criticised the prosecution’s heavy reliance on the testimony of military and police officers.

Whatever political responsibility (Mursi) may have, the prosecution didn’t establish his criminal guilt in this case”, the rights group said in a statement entitled “Egypt: (Mursi) Trial Badly Flawed”.

It also cited a spokesman for the defence team saying the lawyers were only allowed to visit Mursi once in November 2013. Another lawyer was cited as saying the defence did not call witnesses out of fear for their safety.

Reuters could not immediately reach a foreign ministry spokesman for comment on the report, but a government statement last week rejected criticism of the Mursi’s sentencing as “unacceptable interference in (Egypt’s) internal affairs, let alone disrespect of the rulings of the Egyptian judiciary.”

Mursi and his co-defendants deny the charges against them and are expected to appeal. Their case is part of a wider crackdown on the Brotherhood launched after the army overthrew the Islamist president.

Harsh rulings against thousands of Mursi supporters, including death sentences handed down in mass trials, have been widely condemned abroad, including by rights groups, the United States and the European Union.

HRW also said the authorities had not investigated the killings of Mursi supporters at the 2012 demonstrations, creating “an appearance that the case was politically motivated against the Brotherhood”.

Mursi faces charges in four other cases including leaking secrets to Qatar, conspiring with the Palestinian militant group Hamas to destabilise Egypt, and organising a jailbreak during the 2011 uprising against Hosni Mubarak.
Time to accomplish unfinished pledges we made solemnly

By Kin Mg Oo

Little as their effort put in their work is, the ultimate goal of a student is to pass their exam and be in a higher class in the new academic year to come. The ambitious and the un-ambitious usually want to live completely free from the great burden of school lessons just after releasing exam results. Now students passed that border line. Their happiness and sorrow flew into us vicariously. As per usual, it is satisfying to see a high success rate of normal school students. Unlike previous years, final tests of 9th and 5th grades were examined by their respective exam boards. Compared to prior ones, pass rate was low, though some of the successful candidates got high passing grades As & Bs. There can be seen a gap between the past and the present. Why? We need to find out the solution.

I am a school-teacher manokhe by profession. I am not an educationist. But I want to say that I am interested in the present. Why? We need to find out the solution. The Education Department, the Education University and colleges have been producing professional teachers on and on, as in the olden days. Yet, it is undeniable that the numbers of teachers we need for schools are not available to the full. To fill the gap, the then government hired teachers who were subjected to inefficiency due to a bad system entered our noble teaching field. In consequence of such a disappointing situation, our children, grandchildren and their peers are now having a desperate education. We need lots and lots of educated people worthy of their degrees in our community in building up our nation into a developed one. I never intend to arouse a furor among our readers, especially scholars, academia and authorities concerned of the department. The initially said story is not an invented one. Such stories were heard when I was young. I used to be so anxious and afraid to take a glance at exercise books of our children. In olden days as well, there were ones who were weak in their studies, but I dare say they knew the very basic knowledge of the subjects—especially English and Math. I did not mean all well students in their respective subjects. Being taught by unqualified teachers, any students will surely find their higher class courses and degree courses were found possessing the remarkably miserable language skill level whereas few were excellent and some were under mediocre level. The proportion of the qualified and the unqualified can be said to be dramatic. If someone will ask me whether our degrees in a developed nation without proper knowledge about foreign languages, my stock reply is "yes". It is generally said that the standard of a country can be ranked by its education. Having spent nearly one and a half decades learning a foreign language, I firmly believe that the Pidgin English any students learn in school shall be much longer. They should have known how to write simple and correct English. Ungrammatically incorrect English found in face-book pages depicts the true situation of our children.

A teacher who will share his knowledge with pupils must have a deep capacity in their respective subjects. Being taught by unqualified teachers, any students will surely find it difficult to have an access to higher learning. If the burning issue goes unsolved urgently, most of the human resources of our country will be wasted and the nation will be threatened. Leaders-to-be in consultation with professional economists, scholars and academicians. Farming and gardening produce such as fruits, vegetables and flowers go to consumers and users—flowers to the high altar and heads of belles and girls; fruits and vegetables to kitchens and dining tables. Graduates and holders of different degrees that our schools produce, go to the ranks of our society. A high yield or a good harvest determines the economy as a whole, with encouraging enterprises and industries. It can help bringing about benefits to the economy. An atmosphere of monopoly and cronyism is not suitable for a democratic society. It can help bringing about benefits to the economy.
Outstanding youths join recreation camp (Inlay) in Khaungdaing Village, Inlay region

NyauNgshwe, 26 April — Outstanding students from ninth standard arrived at the youth recreation camp (Inlay) in Khaungdaing Village, Inlay region, Nyaungshwe Township, Shan State, on 25 April evening.

The youths were welcomed by Shan State Minister for Social Affairs Dr Myo Tun, Township Administrator U Kyaw Zaw Hla and officials together with ethnic cultural troupes. According to the schedules, the youths will attend the scout course and educative talks and make interviews with former outstanding students. They will visit Phaungdaw U Pagoda and Ałowapauk pagodas in Inlay Lake, agricultural farms, silversmiths and weaving industries.

Officials will send them to Pindaya, Taunggyi and Hopong on their excursion tours.— Myat Thu (IPRD)

Election commission to hold election for new members of MCDC

Mandalay, 26 April — Mandalay Region Minister for Electricity and Industry U Kyaw Myint on 24 April made an inspection tour of Myotha Industrial Park in Ngazun Township.

In meeting with officials, the minister said that according to the approval at the 5th regular session of Mandalay Region Hluttaw, region government assigned duty to Myotha Industrial Park Construction Public Company to implement the industrial city project.

As the phase 1 and phase 2B will be completed soon, arrangements are being made to import cranes and heavy machinery to be used in construction of Hsimeekhon Port, he added. The minister explained Kokke and Ngamya villages will receive a 66KV Sub-power station for electrification.

The meeting was also attended by local authorities, departmental officials and local residents.— Maung Pyi Thu (Mandalay)

Plan to implement Hsimeekhon Port at Myotha Industrial Park

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MCDC builds offices, staff quarters, maintains buildings

Mandalay, 26 April — Building and Warehouses Department under Mandalay City Development Committee places emphasis on construction of buildings in the city under the plan.

The department has carried out maintenance of the roofs and gutters of Zaygyodaw Market, construction of a steel structure at Yanaung market, a five-storied staff quarter and fencing of park and land plots of the committee.

The department also constructed staff quarters for general workers of the committee between 65th and 66th streets and a car parking for the committee. Moreover, it built offices and staff quarters on 62nd street and maintained the staff quarter buildings. — Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)

Residents enjoy smooth transport on laterite road in Ingapu Tsp

Ingapu, 26 April — Head of Department of Rural Development U Yin Min Oo and staff inspected progress in construction of a two-mile-long Htugyi-Ywathaya laterite road in Ingapu Township, Ayeyawady Region, on 22 April. The department assigned duty to Golden Icon Company with K106.4 million fund to construct the laterite road in 2014-15 fiscal year.

Thanks to the road, more than 10,000 local residents in Htugyi Town and seven villages enjoy smooth transport for their domestic products to the market in time.— Township RDD
Up to 150,000 Bangladesh workers lost jobs after Rana Plaza safety overhaul

Delhi, 26 April — Some 220 garment factories have shut down in Bangladesh with the loss of up to 150,000 jobs after the collapse of Rana Plaza shone a light on unsafe working conditions in the ready-to-wear industry, triggering a wave of inspections, according to a report on Saturday.

More than 1,100 workers were killed when the building collapsed in 2013, creating urgent demands for global retailers to do more to ensure the safety of their workers in Bangladesh, the world’s second biggest garment exporter after China.

Since then, the $2 billion (16 billion pound) industry has been in the throes of a massive safety overhaul, with more than 2,000 of 3,500 exporting factories inspected by the government’s safety overhaul, with more than 16 billion pound) industry has experienced drastic changes in the past decades, having struggled with chronic underperformance, falling sales, a lack of innovation and a declining profitability at its core autos division.

The number of confirmed and presumed HIV cases stemming from abuse of intravenous prescription drugs has increased to 142 in a rural part of southeastern Indiana and more cases are being identified every day, a state health official said on Friday.

The comment came at a time when VW is cutting billions of euros of costs and revamping structures, having struggled with chronic underperformance in the United States and declining profitability at its core autos division.

The uncertainty had to be released from the plant of German carmaker Volkswagen in Wolfsburg, 26 April — Ferdinand Piech, a towering figure at Volkswagen (VOW.DE) for more than two decades, resigned as its chairman on Saturday after losing a showdown he had unexpectedly isolated in a five-to-one vote of Volkswagen’s supervisory board last week, as labour representatives, the state of Lower Saxony and its many thousand staff.

The remaining standing part of the collapsed Rana Plaza building collapses during a rescue operation by the army in Savar on 2 May, 2013. — Reuters

Ferdinand Piech, chairman of the supervisory board of Volkswagen, is pictured during a welcoming ceremony at the plant of German carmaker Volkswagen in Wolfsburg on 23 April, 2012. — Reuters

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The HIV outbreak, the biggest in state history, is centered on Scott County near the Kentucky border and now includes at least five cases in neighbouring Jefferson County, officials said.

“It is feared that if the process continues, up to 700,000 workers may face loss of jobs.”

The government has released the survey results, saying most of the closures were among the subcontractors.

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Ancient papers reveal how Egyptians cure drunken hangover

CAIRO, 24 April — Have you ever had a terrible memory of a drunken hangover? Most of those who do would certainly remember things like dizziness, stomach ache, nausea and vomiting. Modern science and medicines have now provided heavy-drinking crowds with a variety of cures to ease the pain of getting drunk. But can you imagine how ancient Egyptians brought back their sobriety?

Experts have recently translated and published a number of some 1,900-year-old pieces of papyrus with Greek writings that show how Egyptians practiced their hangover cure. The translation has been part of a research into these centuries-old documents that has been underway at the University of Oxford and University College London. These texts were unearthed a century ago along with a stash of over half a million documents in the ancient Egyptian town of Oxyrhynchus.

According to the writings, Egyptians would string together leaves of the Alexandrian laurel shrub, and wear it just as a necklace. The plant in Greek and Roman times was used along with crown distinguished athletes, orators and poets. So far, whether the remedy works or not for the alcoholics has not been experimentally confirmed.

Besides the hangover treatment, the recent publication also contains some other 30 medical papyri, which is "the largest single collection of medical papyri," Vivian Nutton, professor at University College London, wrote at the start of the published materials named as volume 80.

The latest collection encompasses medical documents for a host of illnesses, such as hemorrhoids, ulcers, tooth problems, and eye surgery. — Xinhua

Alibaba, China Telecom tie up to sell phones

SHANGHAI, 26 April — Chinese e-commerce leader Alibaba Group Holding Ltd and state-owned China Telecom Corp Ltd have tied up to sell inexpensive smartphones aimed at boosting mobile commerce in smaller cities and rural areas.

The phones, dubbed "Tianyi Taobao Shopping Handsets", will come installed with either an app or a line shopping platform or its home-grown YunOS mobile operating system, it said in a statement late Friday. Buyers will be eligible for four months of free 2G data service.

The partnership is a bid to deepen Alibaba’s e-commerce base in less developed parts of the country and promote its mobile operating system in a shrinking, cut-throat handset market.

Six models produced by Coolpad, Hiphone and TCL would come with the Mobile Taobao app pre-installed. Mobile Taobao is China’s most popular mobile shopping app with more than 200 million monthly active users, it said. Another eight models, made by lesser-known brands including Uniscope, Cytion and Kingsun, will run YunOS, providing buyers with an Alibaba account for shopping and cloud-based storage, and other preloaded services, it said.

Some 557 million people in China access the internet via mobile devices, according to government data. But shipments in China were 389 million phones in 2014, down from 423 million the previous year, according to China’s Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Still, mobile shopping is on the rise. In January, Alibaba said the number of mobile monthly active users nearly doubled in the third quarter from the same period the previous year to 265 million. The proportion of gross merchandise volume derived from mobile also grew. Alibaba says it has an 86 percent share of China mobile commerce market.

In February, Alibaba announced that it was taking a $590 million stake in its mobile operating system, which is “the largest single collection of medical papyri,” Vivian Nutton, professor at University College London, wrote at the start of the published materials named as volume 80.

The latest collection encompasses medical documents for a host of illnesses, such as hemorrhoids, ulcers, tooth problems, and eye surgery. — Xinhua

First teeth of anatomically modern humans detected in Italy

MILAN, (Italy), 26 April — A team of researchers found that two teeth from prehistoric sites in northern Italy are the oldest modern human remains overlapping in time with the last Neandertals. The team, composed of Italian and German researchers, analyzed two deciduous teeth from the prehistoric sites of Riparo Bombrini in Western Ligurian Alps and Grutta di Fumane in Western Lessini Mountains, in northern Italy. The teeth, a deciduous incisor and an upper deciduous incisor, were respectively found in 1976 and 1992 but so far it had been impossible to establish their origins.

"Today it was possible thanks to new technologies and digital methods such as ancient DNA and high-resolution computed tomography as well as radiocarbon dating," the team said.

The team led by Stefano Benazzi, a physical anthropologist of the University of Bologna, revealed in a study published on Friday, Benazzi said the teeth represent ancient humans, which likely disappeared around 39,000 years ago. Benazzi went on explaining to Xinhua/Xinhua

No plans for EU online regulator — officials

BRUSSELS, 26 April — Draft plans for a pan-European regulator for online businesses did not win backing and have been scrapped, EU officials said on Friday. An EU-wide strategy for the digital economy is due to be announced next month, reflecting concerns in Europe about the power of big US tech companies like Google and Amazon.

"It didn’t get any political backing," one EU official said of the plan, which was at odds with pledges from the new EU executive to avoid heavy top-down regulation on business.

Prepared in February and seen by Reuters, the paper spoke of a framework for supervising “systemic digital actors” by an “EU-wide body” with power to intervene in disputes.

But EU officials said the idea did not gain enough backing within the EU executive and an updated version of the European Commission’s strategy for creating a digital single market, also seen by Reuters and expected to be unveiled on 6 May, makes no mention of setting up a new EU regulator.

The EU executive now plans to help prepare the Digital Single Market Strategy have by now been superseded, “Commission spokesman Mina Andreeva said. “One of the aims is to create the right conditions and a level playing field for digital networks and innovative services to flourish. In this context, the Commission will look into the role of online platforms and digital networks and possible future actions.”

Brussels is under pressure from some politicians and European companies and countries and expected to be doing something to tame US online giants and nurture Europe’s own, limited, tech sector. The EU antitrust chief last week charged Google with abusing its power in Internet search in a long-running, high-profile case.— Reuters

High-school students participate Robotics Competition final in US

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UN chief hopes humanitarian calls will inspire disarmament resolve

NEW YORK, 26 April — UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has highlighted international efforts over the past few years to draw attention to the inhumanity and severe consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, expressing hope that this approach “inspires governments with new resolutions” to pursue a world free of nuclear weapons.

A head of a multilateral conference on nuclear disarmament, Ban also noted the advanced age of many of atomic bomb survivors in Japan, saying this fact should prompt the international community to take urgent action toward the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Ban made the remarks in a written interview with Kyodo News just days ahead of the UN review conference on the non-proliferation treaty set to start on Monday in New York. Since the last review conference in 2010, the humanitarian dimension and catastrophic nature of the use of nuclear weapons has emerged as one of the focuses of UN discussions and statements. Three international conferences have been staged so far on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, with the last one in Vienna in December.

“The humanitarian approach has energized civilized society and governments alike” Ban has said. It has generated “a new sense of urgency” about the need for progress in disarmament, he added.

“All states share a common interest in preventing the catastrophic consequences that would result from any use of nuclear weapons,” he said. “I expect that discussions on the humanitarian aspect of nuclear disarmament will play a big role” in the just starting NPT review conference.

The meeting is held in the 70th anniversary year of the atomic bombings of the two Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

“As the only country to have experienced the use of nuclear weapons in war, Japan has a unique moral authority that it can bring to bear in guiding the international community’s efforts to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again,” he said.

Given the advanced age of many atomic bomb survivors, “this may be one of the last major anniversaries where individuals with distinct memories of the bombings can pass on their experience directly to future generations,” he said.

“I hope this fact can inspire new urgent action by the international community to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world,” he added.

On calls for a treaty to outlaw nuclear arms by some non-nuclear weapon states, Ban touched on proposals he made in the past in urging states to start negotiations. “It does not matter which path is taken as long as it achieves our common objective of a world free of nuclear weapons,” he said.

He cited recent rising Easter Sunday bombings, perhaps with the Ukraine crisis in mind that has increased antagonism between Russia and the United States, the two powers that control over 90 percent of the world’s nuclear weapons arsenal.

He expressed concerns that “the re-emergence of such tensions is ‘jeopardizing prospects for further nuclear reduction.’

“During the Cold War, fear and public anxiety caused by the arms race once gave impetus to nuclear disarmament and arms reductions efforts,” he noted. “We need to return to a common understanding that international peace and security and the easing of international tension can be pursued through progress in disarmament.”

The UN chief welcomed the continuous decrease in the overall nuclear arsenal of the world since the last NPT review meeting in 2010. But he criticized nuclear weapon states for continuing to modernize their nuclear weapons and related infrastructure.

Kyodo News

Chile volcano ash cloud reaches Brazil; some flights canceled

SANTIAGO, 26 April — Ash from the Chilean volcano Calbuco, which erupted without warning this week, reached as far as southern Brazil on Saturday and prompted some airlines to cancel flights to the capitals of Chile, Argentina and Uruguay.

Calbuco, considered one of the most dangerous along Chile’s chain of around 2,000 volcanoes, erupted twice in 24 hours on Wednesday and Thursday, sending up a spectacular 17-km-high (11-mile) cloud and coating nearby towns in a thick layer of gray ash.

Authorities have set up a 20-km (12-mile) corridor around Calbuco, in the scenic Los Lagos region, around 1,000 km (620 miles) south of the capital Santiago, evacuating more than 6,500 people in the area.

“The dangerous nature of volcanic activity like this, plus the volcano’s current instability that could lead to more intense activity in the short term, indicates we should maintain the perimeter,” Chile’s national office of emergency said in its latest report.

Authorities allowed people who had been evacuated to return briefly on Saturday to check their houses and animals, and to pick up clothes and medication.

Some houses and schools located close to the volcano have collapsed under the weight of the ash.

The ash also presents a threat to air traffic, as particles in the atmosphere can cause problems for planes. With winds blowing the ash cloud northeast into Argentina, Argentine air traffic has been the worst affected so far. Delta Air Lines (DAL.N), Air France (AAL.O), Air Canada (ACN.AX) and American Airlines (AAL.O), Air Florida (FLA.O), Air France (AF.FR), American Airlines (AA.N) and Quantum Airways (QAN.AX) have all suspended flights from and to the airports of Santiago, Buenos Aires and Montevideo as a precautionary measure.

But Chile’s LAN LAN, LAN and America Airlines’ operations were flying as usual from those airports.

“The situation is much better than yesterday,” said a spokesman for Argentina’s National Civil Aeronautic Administration.

 Some flights had also been canceled in southern Brazil, near Rio Grande do Sul, broadcaster O Globo reported. Officials from the Brazilian aviation agency Infraero were not immediately available for comment.

The head of Chile’s mining and geological service said on Friday the volcanic process could last for weeks.

Chinese wingsuiter sets milestone for fly without oxygen

HORHOT, China, 26 April — Chinese wingsuiter Zhang Shupeng set a new benchmark for the wingsuit flying record when he leapt from a hot-air balloon from an altitude of 8,250 metres without wearing an oxygen mask on Sunday.

Zhang leapt from the world record for 8,000 metres jump set by a Swiss man Remo Lang last year.

A1517 am, he took off in a large hot-air balloon at China’s well-known pastoral area Xilingol grassland and Inner Mongolia’s Ulan Bator region.

After about one hour flying, he started his flying with a vertical dive for the first 100 metres and made a spiral fly, seldom using wingsuit flyers, for over 2,000 metres.

Zhang adopted a vertical-fly style when he was below 6,000 metres in altitude and released the parachute at the height of 800 metres.

He successfully landed at 6:27:33 am after a five-kilometer fly.

Wearing a wingsuit, his freefall lasted three minutes 26 seconds and after that he slid with a parachute within one minute 12 seconds. “My success proved that Chinese wingsuiters have abilities to fulfill their dreams,” Zhang said. — Xinhua

Pakistan security agencies to investigate activist’s murder

ISLAMABAD, 26 April — Pakistan’s military intelligence agencies will investigate the murder of a human rights activist, shot dead after she hosted a talk on disappearances and killings in Baluchistan Province where the army is fighting separatists, the military said on Saturday.

Sabeen Mahmud was leaving her Karachi cafe, where she held art exhibitions and talks, when gunman on a motorcycle attacked her on Friday evening. Her mother, who was with her, was wounded, police said.

Military spokesman Asim Bajwa condemned the killing in a message on his Twitter feed and said the intelligence agencies had been tasked to help investigators apprehend the perpetrators.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and the US embasssy in Islamabad also condemned the killing.

Mahmud had just hosted a seminar called “Unsilencing Baluchistan” focusing on the disappearances and killings of separatists in the southwestern province. Rights activists accuse the military security agencies of carrying out extra-judicial killings of separatists in the province.

The army has vowed to end the Baluchistan insurgency being waged by separatists who say their province’s mineral and gas resources are unfairly exploited by Pakistan’s richer provinces.

Reuters

Kyodo News

A general view of Calbuco Volcano spewing ash and smoke is seen during sunset from Alerce town on 24 April, 2015. — Reuters

A general view of Calbuco Volcano spewing ash and smoke is seen during sunset from Alerce town on 24 April, 2015. — Reuters

A general view of Calbuco Volcano spewing ash and smoke is seen during sunset from Alerce town on 24 April, 2015. — Reuters
The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Energy
Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise
(Invitation for Open Tender)
(7/2015)

Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in United States Dollars.

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Tender Closing Date & Time: 25-5-2015, 16:30 Hr
Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 27th April, 2015 at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise
Ph.+9567 -411097/411206

Two Swedes abducted by Nusfra
Front in Syria freed

Stockholm, 26 April — Two Swedes who were abducted in 2013 by al-Qaeda’s Nusra Front in Syria were released on Friday, news agency TT reported on Saturday, quoting Sweden’s Foreign Ministry and Palestinian ambassador to Sweden. The identities of the men were not disclosed but TT said one of them belonged to a Pentecostal church.

Negotiations for their release had taken more than two months and were conducted by the Palestine security service, in cooperation with Jordanian and Swedish security services, Hala Husni Fariz, Palestinian ambassador to Sweden, told TT, in a written statement to TT, Sweden’s Foreign Ministry Margot Wallstrom extended her gratitude to countries involved in working for the release of the Swedes, including Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. A ministry spokesman declined to comment further. — Reuters

US official denies report of Islamic State plot in California

WASHINGTON, 26 April — CNN reported on Saturday that the FBI was investigating a possible Islamic State-inspired terrorism plot in California but a US law enforcement official in Los Angeles denied there was any such threat.

“There is no known or specific threat to Los Angeles or any airport in our territory,” an official in Los Angeles told Reuters.

The official declined to be identified.

CNN had said earlier that an investigation had been initiated because of intercepted communication and other intelligence information and security being enhanced in the state.

Homeland Security Department spokesman Peter Boogaard declined to discuss specific intelligence, but said the authorities had made a number of “security adjustments” in the last few months “reflecting an evolving threat picture.”

He said there was an increased law enforcement presence at US federal facilities in February and many extra security arrangements were still in place.

Venezuelan president says to build new homes in cooperation with Chinese companies

CARACAS, 26 April — Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said on Saturday that the government will work with Chinese companies to build new housing units as part of an ambitious plan to provide homes for those without proper or adequate dwelling in the country.

During an event in the 23 de Enero slum in the west of Caracas, Maduro announced that his government has reached a preliminary agreement with Chinese company Sany Heavy Industry Co for the latter to participate in the “Great Housing Mission” that aims to build three million homes in the Latin American country by 2019. The government will sign a contract with Sany, the world’s sixth largest heavy machinery company, to import new equipment so as to accelerate the construction of at least 400,000 new apartments this year.

“We are going at a faster pace and we have to install Chinese companies here in our country to do everything that we are bringing over from China,” Maduro said.

The Venezuelan leader said that over 220 new cranes imported from China were already in use for the renovation of residential buildings in poor areas of the country, under a program called “Barrio Nuevo, Barrio Tricolor.”

According to Ricardo Molina, Venezuela’s minister of housing, Chinese companies have helped build over 14,000 homes in the country in the last three years and 15,000 more are now under construction.

Afghan province sees second police chief killed in six weeks

KANDAHAR, 26 April — The acting police chief of southern Afghan province was shot and killed by a fellow officer, about a month after his predecessor was also assassinated, authorities said on Sunday.

The death of the second police chief for Uruzgan province to be killed in six weeks appeared to be an insider attack, but it was unclear what motivat ed the junior police officer to open fire.

“The acting police chief, Gulab Khan, was in a meeting with a friend late last night when his colleague opened fire and killed both of them,” provincial governor Amullah Timori told Reuters.

“The policeman is detained and an investigation is ongoing.”

The arrested officer was a member of the criminal investigation department in Uruzgan.

Gulub Khan had been acting police chief since his powerful predecessor, Mullah Khan, was killed in a suicide attack while visiting the Afghan capital Kabul in mid-March.

Taleban insurgents claimed responsibility for the attack on Mullah Khan. On Sunday, Taleban spokesman for southern Afghanistan Qari Yousef Ahmadi, declined to comment on the Uruzgan shooting, saying he was still gathering information.

The Taleban have sometimes claimed that insider attacks reflect their ability to infiltrate the enemy, but Afgahan and coalition forces say incidents more often arise over misunderstandings or arguments.

An Afghan soldier opened fire on US soldiers in eastern Nangarhar province in early April, killing one American. The shooter himself was also killed and two Afgahan soldiers were wounded in the shootout.
‘Everybody Loves Raymond’ child star Sawyer Sweeten commits suicide at 19

LOS ANGELES, 26 April — Sawyer Sweeten, the actor who starred as Ray Romano’s twin kid Geoffrey Barone on hit sitcom “Everybody Loves Raymond”, has committed suicide. He was 19.

A source said that Sawyer “was visiting family in Texas. He went on the front porch and killed himself with a gunshot to his head.” The source added, “Sawyer’s entire family is absolutely devastated by this tragedy.”

Sawyer’s twin brother Sullivan Sweeten starred as Michael Barone on the sitcom.

Sawyer and Sullivan joined the show when they were 16-month-old in 1996. They jointly played a character in a 2000 episode of Disney’s “Even Stevens” and shared a small role in 2002’s “Frank McKlusky, CI”.

Kim Kardashian makes mental health awareness documentary

LOS ANGELES, 26 April — Reality TV star Kim Kardashian is making her production debut with a mental health awareness documentary called #RedFlag.

The ‘Keeping Up with the Kardashians’ star is executive producer for the TV documentary.

I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer at 25: Cobie Smulders

LOS ANGELES, 26 April — Former “How I Met Your Mother” star Cobie Smulders has revealed that she battled ovarian cancer when she was 25-years-old.

The 33-year-old actress made the revelation in an interview for Women’s Health, reported Ace Showbiz.

“I had tumours on both ovaries, and the cancer had spread into my lymph nodes and surrounding tissues,” Smulders said.

For the next couple of years, she underwent many surgeries to remove the cancerous tissue in her body, which then left her with one third of an ovary. Being told by doctors who treated her that she would never be able to get pregnant naturally, Smulders in fact has two children with her actor husband Taran Killam.

“I don’t think I’ll ever feel like I’m cancer-free. Now that I’m five years out, I’m trying to think of it as a positive thing and what can I learn from it. And if I can create more awareness, I’ll do it,” she said.

Justin Bieber settles lawsuit with Miami paparazzo

LOS ANGELES, 26 April — Pop sensation Justin Bieber has settled a lawsuit filed against him by a Miami photographer named Jeffrey Binion in 2013.

Jeffrey previously sued Bieber, 21, and his bodyguard Hugo Hesny, claiming Hugo and other bodyguards attacked him outside a recording studio in Miami in June 2013, reported Ace Showbiz.

Jeffrey’s attorney Mark DiCowden confirmed the settlement between his client and the “Never Say Never” singer but refused to comment further.

He said the terms of the agreement were confidential.

“It’s unknown when the agreement was reached or if it involved a financial agreement. Bieber’s lawyer Jeremiah Reynolds also confirmed the agreement.

While Jeffrey case has been settled, Bieber is still facing another lawsuit filed by another Florida photographer named M-anuel Munoz back in 2014.

Manuel claimed in his suit that he was locked in a subway restaurant’s restroom and was beaten by Bieber’s bodyguard after he tried to take photos of the singer.

Salma Hayek stumbles during shopping trip

LOS ANGELES, 26 April — Actress Salma Hayek took a tumble during a shopping trip recently.

The 48-year-old actress was, however, quick to regain her balance and she avoided hitting the pavement.

The movie beauty was making her way out of a store in central London when the minor incident happened.

Some nearby builders ended up cheering on her for her quick save.
Lille at the Parc des Princes with a 6-1 demolition of Paris St Germain on Saturday, notching a hat-trick as Ezequiel Lavezzi rediscovered his scoring touch on his 22nd minute and Maxwel. mitte completed the rout. Ezequiel Lavezzi hat-trick leads six-goal PSG to the top

PSG have 68 points of form as 10-man Barcelona, who had previously netted four league goals this season, struck twice in the first half and again after the break. Edinson Cavani, with a double, and Maxwel completed the rout. Ezequiel Lavezzi hat-trick leads six-goal PSG to the top

Korean pop music concert draws thousands of Japanese fans

Satama, (Japan), 26 April — Thousands of fans have turned out near Tokyo to see their favorite "K" pop stars in a display of how popular South Korean pop music is in Japan despite years of chilled relations between the two countries.

Groups such as INFINITE, Block B, GOT7, Supernova, SISTAR were among the musicians performing at the indoor Satama Super Arena for their showcase concert "M Countdown:"

Organizers expanded the musical event into a cultural and economic exhibition, with dozens of South Korean companies setting up booths to showcase food and other products outside the concert venue on Wednesday evening.

"I think they really care about us. I can feel it," 30-year-old Supernova fan Kyoyori Watanabe said of the K-pop stars. Korean pop has made major strides in the Japanese music market, the world's second largest after the United States, in the last five years. The structure of Korea's relatively small music market means the singers, known for their young, cool image and distinct dance choreography, search for success abroad. Psy's "Gangnam Style", which became a global YouTube hit in 2012, fueled international interest in other Korean singers, who want to follow him onto the mainstream pop scene.

"I feel that the six games we needed to win six games. We have now got five to go and we'll have to look to win them to give ourselves a chance," he told reporters. "You never know what happens above you, that's the thing with football — you just never know. But what you have to do is make sure that you keep the pressure on.

We have to rely on other teams, but we can only do our job and that is still the plan."

Cavani was sent off in the 59th minute but the north-wingers, who are eighth on 50 points, had long given up hope.

Things got even worse for the visitors when Corchia held Lavezzi's shirt in the 59th minute but the northern-wingers, who are eighth on 50 points, had long given up hope.

Defender Basta headed in a Lille corner in the 59th minute but the north-wingers, who are eighth on 50 points, had long given up hope.

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**Mandalay, 26 April —** Myanmar Football Academy (Mandalay) held a preliminary selection of new trainees for 2015-16 academic year on Saturday morning at its hall in Chamyathazhi Township.

Principal U Soe Nyant and officials together with coaches conducted sports tests and examination of 75 trainees under the rules and regulations to be able to form the U-11 and U-13 football teams. Youthfuls from Mandalay, Madya, Sagaing, Mawlu and Amarapura townships participated in the examinations of the academy.

The result of the trainees will be announced at the academy on 28 April morning.

At the same time, sports officials recruited tentative trainees in Thayet and Hpa-an on 25 April, Shwebo on 26 April, Mawlamyine, Lashio and Magway on 28 April, Monywa on 29 April, Bago, Chauk and Hinthada on 1 May, Taunggyi on 3 May, Pyay, Pathein on 4 May, Katha and Nay Pyi Taw on 5 April, Loikaw on 6 April, Aung San Stadium in Yangon on 7 May and Mawlamyine on 8 May.

The second round selection of trainees will be held at the academy on 16 and 17 May.

**Berlin, 26 April —** Bayern Munich scraped past Hertha Berlin 1-0 on Saturday thanks to a late goal from Bastian Schweinsteiger and the Bundesliga title will belong to the Bavarians if VfL Wolfsburg fail to win on Sunday.

Pepe Guardiola’s league leaders are 15 points clear with four matches left and will celebrate their third successive domestic crown if second-placed Wolfsburg cannot manage a victory at Borussia Moenchengladbach on Sunday.

“We may not be champions mathematically but in theory we are,” the Spaniard told reporters. “The title is almost ours, but we have to concentrate on other tasks. Our legs were a bit heavy today.”

Guardiola rested several players who helped crush Porto 6-1 in midweek to advance to the Champions League semi-finals.

Trebbe-chasing Bayern had Schweinsteiger fit again and Spaniard Javi Martinez back on the bench for the first time since tearing knee ligaments last year but never hit top form against Hertha.

A fine run from Mitchell Weiser and left-back David Alaba decided the outcome as well as Wolfsburg’s slip-up.

Bayern Munich’s Jermone Boateng watches as Hertha Berlin’s Salomon Kalou (L) stumbles during their German Bundesliga first division soccer match at the Allianz Arena in Munich on 25 April, 2015. – Reuters

Bayern Munich's Jerome Boateng chases Hertha Berlin's Salomon Kalou as they battle for the title.

Bayern Munich and Manchester City both had three goals each in their match. Bayern Munich scored the first goal against Burnley in the 36th minute while Manchester City scored the first goal against Burnley in the 40th minute.

Bayern Munich's Jermone Boateng watches as Hertha Berlin's Salomon Kalou (L) stumbles during their German Bundesliga first division soccer match at the Allianz Arena in Munich on 25 April, 2015. — Reuters

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