President sends messages of felicitations to Norway

Dr Sai Mauk Kham pays homage to scholarly monks, visits Yangon Dental University

YANGON, 16 May—Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham and wife Daw Nan Shwe Hmon paid homage to scholarly members of the Sangha here on Saturday.

Officials said 90 outstanding monks were honoured in a ceremony at Mahapasana Cave on Thiri Mingala Kaba Aye Hill in Mayangon Township in the morning.

The event also drew senior monks headed by Sayadaw Athidhaja Agga Maha Suddhamajotika Dr Bhaddanta Kumaraabhivamsa, who is also the Chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee. The vice president, accompanied by union ministers and high-ranking officials, received the Five Precepts from Sayadaw Agga Maha Pandita Bhaddanta Paninsarabhivamsa. The vice president and union ministers presented certificates to learned monks and offerings to the members of the Sangha. (See page 3)

Ecotourism industry operators from around world set to converge on Myanmar

Nay Pyi Taw, 17 May—U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent messages of felicitations to His Majesty King Harald V of Norway and H.E. Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, on the occasion of the National Day of the Kingdom of Norway, which falls on 17 May 2015.—MNA

Gov’t troops take control of insurgent bases

Nay Pyi Taw, 16 May—Government troops on Friday seized a MNDAA base at Point 2202 hill in Laukkai, northeastern Shan State.

The three columns of government soldiers also took control of Point 2071 hill near border point BP-120 as they pursued troops of the MN-DAA, an insurgent group led by Thein Khun Kya-shin, who fled to Sekawlyan area and seized Hohtolin and Setoneswe villages in the area. Following the clashes, the Tatmadaw force found five bodies of insurgents along with weapons and ammunition.

By Ye Myint

YANGON, 16 May—Myanmar will host the 2015 World Ecotourism Conference from 19 to 21 May in Nay Pyi Taw, with discussions focusing on strategies to develop the burgeoning sector in a manner that balances economic growth with environmental conservation.

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism said the conference, taking place in Myanmar for the first time, will include the launch of the Myanmar Ecotourism Policy and Management Strategy. Organized by the ministry and the Nepal-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in collaboration with the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, the conference expects to host around 200 attendees including tourism ministers and officials, representatives of travel agencies, ecotourism experts and media. During the three-day conference, panel sessions will be held at The Kempinski Hotel focusing on (See page 3)
Sunday, 17 May, 2015

GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

LOCAL NEWS

GTU to mark 60th birthday celebration

Villagers take part in emergency drill for natural disaster

Authorities present emergency medicine kits to rural communities

GTU to mark 60th birthday celebration

A ceremony to announce plans for the 60th birthday celebrations of the Government Technological University was held at the university on 15 May.

Rector Dr Hsint Soe and former student, Mandalay City Development Committee member U Khin Maung Tint, gave speeches at the ceremony.

Historian Tampawady U Win Maung explained the casting of a bronze statue for Kyaukmyaung Myoosa U Shwe Oh.

On 20 December 1955, Prime Minister U Nu attended the opening of Government Technological Institute. The military government upgraded it to Government Technological College and then university on 1 October, 1991.

Mandalay, 16 May — Villagers in Pobbathi-ri Township received free emergency traditional medicine kits on 15 May.

At the hall of Township General Administration Department, Head of Nay Pyi Taw Traditional Medicine Department U Htwe Maung spoke about usage of the kits.

Nay Pyi Taw Council member U Than Htay handed over the kits for villages to Township Administrator U Htet Aung Phyoe. The ceremony was also attended by local residents from 73 villages. — Shwe Ye Yint

Mandalay, 16 May — A ceremony to present agricultural aid was held at Ngaphechaung Village in Inlay region, Nyaungshwe Township, on 14 May, with the aim of conserving Inlay Lake.

Shan State Minister for Inn Ethnics U Win Myint spoke on the occasion while Head of Township Department of Agriculture U Zaw Win Tun spoke about protecting Inlay Lake and its surrounding environment.

Officials presented plastic buckets for breeding earthworms and equipment for cultivation of tomatoes, as well as pesticides and fertilizers, to local farmers. — Nay Myo Tha Rein

Local farmers receive agricultural equipment, fertilizers

Nyaungshwe, 16 May — Powerful winds severely damaged 166 houses in Thawda Village on 9 April.

Under the supervision of Deputy Director of Nay Pyi Taw Department of Relief and Resettlement Daw Win Sanda Kyi, local authorities, departmental officials, members of Red Cross Brigade and social organizations, together with local residents, participated in the disaster drill.

A temporary relief camp was opened at the monastery in the village to simulate the emergency accommodation of older persons, disabled persons and children. Medical teams provided healthcare to the victims while social organizations supplied food and water.

Tin Soe Lwin (Tatkon IPRD)
Pyithu Hluttaw speaker Thura U Shwe Mann meets locals in Yedashe

NAY PYI TAW, 16 May—Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann made a visit to Yedashe Township, Bago Region, Saturday, and met the local people for rural development programmes.

The speaker was accompanied by Bago region’s Chief Minister U Nyan Win, the chairman of regional parliament and members of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

Chairman of Township Development Committee U Aung Myin and the Headmistress of Yedashe Township Daw Yin Yin Kyi presented the needs for the rural development programmes and school facilities. Before the public meeting, the Pyithu Hluttaw speaker visited Maha Vizayarmana Buddhist monastery to pay respect and donate offerings to the monks in Yedashe Township.—MNA

One-month campaign targets drug abuse and trafficking

NAY PYI TAW, 16 May—Myanmar will launch a one-month campaign to fight drug abuse, cultivation and trafficking from May 26, the Central Drug Abuse Control said Saturday.

The country saw declines in both cultivation and production of opium in 2014, the committee said, at a meeting at the headquarters of the ministry.

Union Minister for Home Affairs Lieutenant General Ko Ko, the committee’s chairman, said at the campaign has been scheduled to coincide with UN International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on June 26.

The special campaign will take place in three zones of upper and lower Myanmar and Shan State. Myanmar is entering the second year of a five-year project to eliminate narcotic drugs.

The minister said opium cultivation in Myanmar could be reduced to 57,600 hectares in 2014 from 57,800 hectares in 2013, while production volume could be cut to from 870 to 670 tonnes in the same period accounting for 23 percent.

At the meeting officials from the anti-narcotic task forces, the Myanmar Anti-Narcotics Association (MANA), and the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry explained their activities, while holding discussions with representatives from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the National Narcotic Control Commission and the Drug Enforcement Administration.—MNA

Photo depicting elderly woman’s struggle takes top prize in contest

By Khading Thanda Lwin

YANGON, 16 May—The non-profit Gender Equality Network on Saturday announced the winners of its photo documentary contest held in March with the aim of bringing gender issues into focus.

Nine prizewinners, six women and three men, were selected from a field of more than 16 entrants.

First prize went to Daw Rina Khin, second to Daw Myat Thandar Oo and third to Daw Seng Mai. U Arkar Tun Kyaw seized two special prizes while the remaining award went to Daw Saw Wuttmon. Theme prizewinners were U Tun Zaw, Daw Yee Mon and Daw Saw Wuttmon. Theme remaining award went to Daw Myat Thandar Oo and Daw Rita Khin, second to Arkar Tun Kyaw seized an old woman who has a basket full of fire woods inside, making a descent down the hill,” she said, describing her winning entry.

She said her photo depicted the daily struggle of an elderly woman and the difficulties face by women who have to earn their livings like men, she added.

“The award-winning photos will be used in the GEN’s books and publications as well as in its social and cultural norms research, which is expected to be released in September,” Daw Nilar Tun, GEN’s Steering Committee member, told the media at a press conference in Yangon.

This is first time the GEN has organized the photo contest with the aim of ensuring that people know the different impacts of culture and social influences on both males and females through photos, she said.

The NPO plans to continue the contest with the aim of bringing gender issues into focus.

First prize winner Rita Khin is a freelance photographer and a member of GEN.

“I took this photo when I was on tour to Thantaygyi of Kayin State when I accidently saw a 70-year-old woman with a basket of fire woods inside, making a descent down the hill,” she said, describing her winning entry.

Ecotourism industry operators from... (from page 1)

At the meeting officials from the anti-narcotic task forces, the Myanmar Anti-Narcotics Association (MANA), and the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry explained their activities, while holding discussions with representatives from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the National Narcotic Control Commission and the Drug Enforcement Administration.—MNA

Ecotourism industry operators from... (from page 1)

At the campaign has been scheduled to coincide with UN International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on June 26.

The special campaign will take place in three zones of upper and lower Myanmar and Shan State. Myanmar is entering the second year of a five-year project to eliminate narcotic drugs.

The minister said opium cultivation in Myanmar could be reduced to 57,600 hectares in 2014 from 57,800 hectares in 2013, while production volume could be cut to from 870 to 670 tonnes in the same period accounting for 23 percent.

At the meeting officials from the anti-narcotic task forces, the Myanmar Anti-Narcotics Association (MANA), and the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry explained their activities, while holding discussions with representatives from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the National Narcotic Control Commission and the Drug Enforcement Administration.—MNA

American University in Myanmar and others have been conducting research on Myanmar’s ecotourism industry. The country has a rich heritage of natural beauty, a tradition of hospitality, and a long history of ecotourism.

One of the main challenges facing ecotourism in Myanmar is the lack of qualified guide services. Many tourists are interested in guided tours to experience the local culture, traditions, and history.

The Myanmar government has been promoting ecotourism as a means of conserving the natural environment, preserving cultural heritage, and generating income for local communities. The government has also been working to improve the quality of ecotourism services.

The ecotourism industry in Myanmar is expected to grow in the coming years as more tourists visit the country. However, there are still challenges to overcome to ensure sustainable and responsible ecotourism development.

One of the main challenges facing ecotourism in Myanmar is the lack of qualified guide services. Many tourists are interested in guided tours to experience the local culture, traditions, and history.

The Myanmar government has been promoting ecotourism as a means of conserving the natural environment, preserving cultural heritage, and generating income for local communities. The government has also been working to improve the quality of ecotourism services.

The ecotourism industry in Myanmar is expected to grow in the coming years as more tourists visit the country. However, there are still challenges to overcome to ensure sustainable and responsible ecotourism development.

In order to ensure the long-term success of ecotourism in Myanmar, the government and the private sector will need to work together to develop a sustainable ecotourism industry. This will require investment in training and development of local guide services, as well as the promotion of responsible tourism practices.

The ecotourism industry in Myanmar is expected to grow in the coming years as more tourists visit the country. However, there are still challenges to overcome to ensure sustainable and responsible ecotourism development.

One of the main challenges facing ecotourism in Myanmar is the lack of qualified guide services. Many tourists are interested in guided tours to experience the local culture, traditions, and history.

The Myanmar government has been promoting ecotourism as a means of conserving the natural environment, preserving cultural heritage, and generating income for local communities. The government has also been working to improve the quality of ecotourism services.

The ecotourism industry in Myanmar is expected to grow in the coming years as more tourists visit the country. However, there are still challenges to overcome to ensure sustainable and responsible ecotourism development.

In order to ensure the long-term success of ecotourism in Myanmar, the government and the private sector will need to work together to develop a sustainable ecotourism industry. This will require investment in training and development of local guide services, as well as the promotion of responsible tourism practices.
Myanmar, ADB sign agreement to further strengthen private sector development

**Yangon, 16 May** — The Government of Myanmar and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Friday signed a non-sovereign framework agreement that will allow ADB to provide loans, equity investments, guarantees, and trade financing directly to private companies and projects in the country.

“The private sector is the country’s engine of economic growth, and the government welcomes ADB’s support to private sector ventures in Myanmar,” Deputy Minister for Finance Dr Maung Maung Thein said during the signing ceremony attended by other government officials, ADB Vice-President Stephen Groff, other ADB officials and the media.

ADB estimates that the investment gap for Myanmar that needs to be filled to maintain high economic growth and achieve middle-income country status by 2030 is around $80 billion.

“The role of private sector investment in meeting infrastructure financing requirements and providing important expertise and technology is critical”, said Mr. Groff.

In Myanmar, ADB expects to approve up to $1 billion in non-sovereign investment projects until 2016 in areas ranging from logistics and connectivity, power generation, telecommunications, and urban development, to financial sector and trade finance.

**Cartoon exhibition promotes conservation of Myanmar’s natural resources**

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

**Yangon, 16 May** — A group of local cartoonists concerned about the conservation of Myanmar’s natural resources opened a joint exhibition Friday at River Ayeyawady Gallery in Yangon.

The exhibition, entitled “For Who?,” aims to make international investors aware of the importance of conservation and the negative impacts of businesses, said U Lai Lone, programme officer of environmental NGO Spectrum-Sustainable Development Knowledge Network, which is organizing the exhibition.

All works are aimed at raising public awareness about protection and sustainable management of the environment, as well as showing people the role of cartoonists in the conservation, he added.

The exhibition runs from 15 to 17 May, showcasing 60 works by 20 artists. The works on display are not for sale but anyone who wants to buy items on show may directly contact the artists, U Lai Lone said.

“We, the Spectrum, particularly invite the foreign embassies in the country and civil society organizations, with expectations of about 1,000 visitors at the three-day event,” U Lai Lone said.

Established in 2007, the spectrum plans to provide environmental journalism training to local reporters by the end of this year to polish their skills.

Myanmar, a resource-rich country, has a population of more than 50 million people, most of whom are dependent on forestry. According to a survey, only 25 per cent of Myanmar people are aware of environmental conservation.

**Soap maker says hand washing key to reducing infant mortality**

**Yangon, 16 May** — Midwives can play a big part in preventing common infections and neonatal deaths in Myanmar by educating the public about the importance of washing hands with soap, according to soap brand ambassador Chit Thu Wai.

The Lifebuoy brand ambassador gave a presentation on Thursday at the International Day of the Midwife and Nurse event at Yangon’s University of Nursing.

“The first 28 days of a baby’s life are the most critical,” said Chit Thu Wai. “Every year in Myanmar, 44,000 babies don’t live to turn one month old.

“But many of these deaths are due to preventable infections like diarrhea and respiratory infections.”

“Midwives can act as health messengers to educate the public on proper hygiene practices, especially hand washing with soap which has proven to reduce neonatal mortality by 41 per cent.”

Hundreds of midwives and nurses attended the day along with guest speakers such as Union Minister for Health Dr Than Aung, Region Representative Janet Jackson from UNFPA, Chief of Party from Maternal and Child Survival Program Leah Thayer and representatives of the Myanmar Nurses and Midwife Association.

As an event sponsor, Lifebuoy distributed educational materials explaining the importance of hand washing with soap.

“We’re proud to sponsor the event and work with the Myanmar Midwife and Midwife Association,” said Unilever Myanmar Managing Director Zaw Myo Hlaing.

Professor Daw Yin Mya gave a speech at the event focusing on ASEAN’s regional guidelines for skilled birth attendants. Five midwives were also presented with awards and a few other midwives in attendance spoke about their work experiences. This is the third time Myanmar has marked International Day of the Midwife.
Factory fire puts spotlight on working conditions in Philippines

Manila, 16 May — A fire that killed 72 people in a rubber slipper factory in the Philippines on Wednesday has shone a spotlight on what trade unions say are the often unsafe working conditions in South-east Asia’s fastest-growing country.

The fire, which gutted the two-storey factory in the capital, Manila, started when sparks from a welding machine set ablaze flammable chemicals. It was one of the country’s worst industrial fires.

Labour groups said lax implementation of safety rules and a lack of site inspections by the government were among the reasons why the Kentex Manufacturing Inc factory became a death trap.

“There is a culture of complacency in government,” Akina Tanjusay, spokesman of the Associated Labour Unions-TUCP, the biggest grouping of workers’ unions in the country. Labour Secretary Rosalinda Baldoz initially said Kentex had complied with general labour, safety and health standards. But on Saturday, she said Kentex had illegally subcontracted workers from an unregistered agency.

Baldoz said only three-fifths of businesses across the country were compliant with labour standards last year and the government was stepping up checks and hiring more people to carry them out.

The fire highlighted work safety in developing Asia, and was reminiscent of a factory collapse in Bangladesh in 2013 which killed more than 1,000 people. Eufacia Taylor, Asia analyst at global risk consultant Verisk Maplecroft, said that despite commitments to improve working and safety standards after the Bangladesh factory collapse, problems persisted.

“There remains a gap between the targets of companies and the actions implemented by suppliers throughout Asia,” Taylor said.

Windows on the Philippine factory’s second floor, where most victims were found, were covered with steel mesh that was meant to stop workers from stealing slippers by tossing them out, Kentex lawyer Renato Paragua said in a television interview.

Survivors said the factory’s main gate was padlocked with only a small door open when the fire broke out. Some survivors climbed over a perimeter wall to get out. Companies usually pass regular safety checks imposed by the government because they only need to submit documents, and often no physical inspection is conducted, said Tanjusay.

“They don’t get to see the actual working environment,” he said. Construction worker Emmanuel Madiclom lost his 50-year-old wife, 27-year-old daughter, and a sister in law in the fire. They were all manual workers at Kentex. He said his wife often worked 12-hour shifts, especially when there was a big order, as there was this week. She was paid a maximum of 500 pesos ($11.25) for a 12-hour shift, equivalent to the minimum wage for a regular 9-hour shift, he said.

“At first, she complained of the heat and of a foul smell from the rubber but she got used to it,” Madiclom said, adding his wife did not get social security. Tanjusay said most Kentex workers lived on a quota basis, and were paid just 150-200 pesos a day, below the minimum wage, because of layers of subcontracting.

“Our assumption is almost 90 percent of local factories are problematic, with violations in workplace arrangement, safe working conditions, wages and social benefits,” he said, adding these did not include most multinational firms which he said adhered to strict labour and safety standards.

More than two-thirds of the country’s nearly 40 million workers suffered from labour law violations, Tanjusay said. He added his group has been urging the government to limit labour sub-contracting to three layers from about eight to nine now.

Eight bodies recovered from wreckage of US military chopper in Nepal

Kathmandu, 16 May — Eight bodies have been recovered from the wreckage of a US Marine Corps helicopter found on Friday northeast of Kathmandu after three days of search efforts, the Nepalese Army said on Saturday. “The chopper was carrying two Nepalese Army personnel and six US Marines onboard. All bodies are not recognizable,” the army said in a statement. US military and Nepalese Army personnel are at the site and an investigation is under way, it said.

The UH-1Y Huey was missing while conducting a relief aid flight after a massive earthquake, the second since last month, hit Nepal on Tuesday.—Kyodo News

Chinese warship leaves for Singapore for drills

Beijing, 16 May — A Chinese navy warship has left southern China’s Guangdong province for Singapore for military exercises, the Ministry of National Defence said.

The missile frigate Yunlin will participate in IMDEX Asia 2015, a flagship maritime defence show in the region that runs from 19 to 21 May, and join a multilateral naval exercise hosted by the Western Pacific Naval Symposium. After that, the vessel will also take part in a joint anti-submarine maritime drill, the first of its kind between the two militaries, the ministry said in a report posted on its website.

India launches anti-submarine warfare-class corvette next week

New Delhi, 16 May — India will launch an anti-submarine warfare-class corvette next week, sources said on Friday.

“This corvette, called INS Kavaratti, will in fact be the last of the four anti-submarine warfare class stealth corvettes built by Garden Reach Ship Builders and Engineers,” the sources said.

The vessel can fight in nuclear, chemical and biological wartime conditions. It is 90 percent indigenous, has four diesel engines and can achieve speeds in excess of 25 knots. INS Kamorta, the first ship, was commissioned by the Indian Navy last year.

Strong aftershock hits Nepal, near Kathmandu

Kathmandu, 16 May — A magnitude 5.7 earthquake hit Nepal on Saturday, about 76 km east south east of the capital Kathmandu, at a shallow depth of 10 km, the US Geological Survey said.

A 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck on 25 April, killing more than 8,000 people and there have been a series of aftershocks since then.—Reuters

Japan requests Hiroshima invite to be reinstated in disarmament paper

New York, 16 May — Japan called on Friday for the return of language referring to possible visits by leaders to Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the outcome document of the UN conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty after it was removed from a draft paper at China’s insistence. At a meeting of the committee on disarmament, one of the three panels at the conference, around 10 countries including the Philippines, Australia, Chile, Czech Republic and Nigeria expressed support for the Japanese proposal.

Toshio Sano, a Geneva-based ambassador for disarmament, said at the meeting that the invitation is “one of the most effective ways” to increase awareness about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and is supported by other delegations.

“Therefore, Japan requests that this will reappear in the next draft” of the conference’s outcome document, he added.

The proposal for leaders “to witness with their own eyes the realities” of the 1945 bombings by the United States was made by Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida in his speech on 27 April, the opening day of the review conference of the around 190 member countries of the treaty.

The language had been included in elements for a draft but was later dropped after China strongly opposed the idea. On Friday, Chinese Ambassador for Disarmament Affairs Fu Cong said
Iran prepared for all scenarios in nuclear talks

VIENNA, 16 May — Iran is prepared for “all scenarios” in talks with world powers about curbing its nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief, its top nuclear negotiator said on Friday when asked what would happen if no final deal was reached by July.

Diplomats have been working in Vienna this week to iron out details of a deal without announcing any breakthrough ahead of a self-imposed on 30 June deadline. The current talks, led by US Under Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, concluded on Friday, a diplomatic source said.

“Even if I’m optimistic, that doesn’t mean that any deal is acceptable. All parties want a good deal, and for Iran it’s only a good deal if our legitimate rights are respected and sanctions are finished,” top negotiator and Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told Australian news agency APA. “We have thought of all possibilities and, accordingly, are prepared for all scenarios,” he said.

Iran, which denies seeking nuclear weapons, has said sanctions must be rescinded as soon as any final deal is signed. The United States wants a gradual lifting of restrictions tied to verified compliance by Iran with its end of the deal, a big sticking point left unresolved so far.

A framework accord reached last month also did not spell out all details about the future of Iran’s atomic research and development programme, the exact scope of the UN atomic watchdog’s monitoring regime, and what kind of uranium stockpile Teheran will be allowed to keep.

“We believe that solving the technical components won’t be difficult if there is verifiable political will. If that is the case, the final deal can very likely be reached before the deadline,” Araghchi said.

On Thursday, he held talks with the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Yukiya Amano. The IAEA is seeking access to Iranian military sites, such as Parchin near Teheran, as part of its investigation into any possible military dimensions to Teheran’s nuclear activities.

Iran, which is extremely reluctant to allow atomic inspectors access to military sites, has been stalling the investigation since last August. Deputy-level talks between Iran and the six powers — the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany — will continue next week, Arashi told Iranian Press TV. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said he was optimistic that Teheran could reach a final nuclear deal with world powers provided that they “mean it seriously,” according to Germany’s Spiegel magazine. — Reuters

Sentenced to death, Boston Marathon bomber could live for decades

NEW YORK, 16 May — Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was sentenced to death on Friday. But his execution may not happen for decades — if ever. A lengthy appellate process, an effective moratorium on federal executions and declining support among Americans for capital punishment all suggest that Tsarnaev’s death by lethal injection is far from a sure thing, according to death penalty experts. Instead, it may end as a purely symbolic judgement.

“With every passing year, the likelihood of execution will diminish,” said Deborah Denno, a law professor at Fordham University who has studied capital punishment.

That said, many of the issues that typically draw criticisms of death penalty sentences, such as inadequate legal counsel and post-conviction exonerations, are not present in the Tsarnaev case. His legal team included one of the most respected death penalty lawyers in the country, Judy Clarke, and she did not attempt to argue his innocence at trial. The absence of those criticisms, along with the sheer horror of the crime, could make Tsarnaev the “perfect test case” for the future of capital punishment, said Douglas Berman, a law professor at Ohio State University who specializes in federal sentencing.

“I think it’s 50-50,” he said. “This could be the case that people have in mind when they say we reserve the death penalty for the worst of the worst.”

Tsarnaev was sentenced to death by a federal jury for helping carry out the 2013 attack that killed three people and wounded 264 others in the crowds at the finish line of the Boston Marathon. The same jury found Tsarnaev guilty last month in the bombing, which was one of the highest-profile attacks on US soil since 11 September, 2001. While Massachusetts has banned the death penalty, Tsarnaev was convicted of federal crimes, which can carry a death sentence under US law. — Reuters

US, China clash over disputed South China Sea

BEIJING, 16 May — The United States and China clashed over a territorial dispute in the South China Sea on Saturday, as China’s foreign minister asserted its sovereignty to reclaim reefs saying its determination to protect its interests is “as hard as a rock”.

After a private meeting with US Secretary of State John Kerry, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi showed no sign of backing down despite Kerry urging China to take action to reduce tension in the South China Sea.

“With regard to construction on the Nansha islands and reefs, this is fully within the scope of China’s sovereignty,” Wang told reporters, using the Chinese name for the Spratly islands. “I would like to reaffirm that China’s determination to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity is as hard as a rock,” he said. “It is the people’s demand of the government and our legitimate right.”

Wang made the comments at a joint news conference with Kerry, who is at the beginning of a two-day visit to China that is likely to be dominated by deepening concern about Beijing’s ambitions in the South China Sea. China claims about 90 percent of the 3.5 million sq km (1.35 million sq mile) South China Sea. The Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, Brunei and Vietnam also claim large parts of the sea.

“China’s rapid reclamation effort around seven reefs in the Spratly archipelago of the South China Sea has alarmed other claimants such as the Philippines and Vietnam. At the same time, China has expressed its concern about a possible US plan to send military aircraft and ships to assert freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

Kerry did not respond when asked to clarify whether the United States intended to follow through on what a US official on Tuesday said was a proposal to send US military aircraft and ships. — Reuters
WORLD

Clinton earned at least $30mln since beginning of 2014

Former US President Bill Clinton and former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton depart the former Governor of New York Mario Cuomo's funeral in Manhattan, New York on 6 Jan, 2015. —REUTERS

WASHINGTON, 16 May — Hillary and Bill Clinton have earned at least $30 million since January 2014, including more than $25 million for delivering about 100 speeches, according to a government filing.

Hillary Clinton, the front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2016, has earned more than $5 million in royalties for her book, “Hard Choices,” which was published in June, according to the form.

The Clintons’ income puts them at the upper end of the top 0.1 percent of earners in the US population, according to government data.

Economic inequality has emerged as an early theme with candidates of both parties vying for the White House in November 2016.

The “one percent” has become a talking point in policy discussions about the divide between rich and poor, cited by politicians to support everything from increased Wall Street oversight to raising wages to overhauling the tax code.

Clinton announced her candidacy last month by saying “everyday Americans need a champion and I want to be that champion.”

In early campaign stops, Clinton has said how she believes the “deck is stacked” against middle-class Americans and that it is time to “reshuffle the cards.”

The Clintons themselves have faced criticism for their privileged status.

Last year, Hillary Clinton said they were “dead broke” when they left the White House in 2001, even though Bill Clinton made millions of dollars giving speeches after his presidency.

Clinton, a former top diplomat, US senator and first lady, has earned as much as $250,000 per speech since leaving the State Department in 2013.

Paid appearances at financial institutions such as Goldman Sachs and Bank of America in particular have drawn fire from the liberal wing of the Democratic party, which fears her campaign will be beholden to moneyed interests.

Clinton, like all presidential candidates who entered the race before 15 April, was required to file an account of her personal finances by 15 May.

The Clinton campaign filed the filing available to media outlets for review.

The Federal Election Commission forms ask candidates to report the values of assets and liabilities in broad ranges, making it impossible to arrive at a candidate’s exact net worth.

The minimum value of the Clinton’s financial assets is $11.3 million, but their net wealth is likely far more, since the value of some assets, including personal residences, are not required to be reported and anything above $5 million is reported in a single category.—REUTERS

Typhoon lashes Guam, nearby islands; power, water supplies cut

YAO, (Guam), 16 May — Power and water supplies were cut in many areas of the Pacific island of Guam on Saturday, a day after a typhoon brought strong winds that uprooted trees and tore off roofs.

There were no reports of injuries. About 1,100 residents took shelter in schools as Typhoon Dolphin hit the US territory late on Friday but some started to go home on Saturday.

There were long lines at gasoline stations.

“We have some water issues. We have more pockets of power outages. They are being restored. The hospital was back up,” Lieutenant Governor Ray Tenorio told Reuters.

The typhoon knocked out power in about 40 percent of Guam, and cut water supplies in more than a tenth of the island, said the island’s utilities providers.

Nimfa Lumang-rica, a resident of the northern village of Dededo in Guam, said the tin roof of her house had been blown away.

“I have a swimming pool in my lounge,” she said. Some streets were flooded.

The eye of the storm, with maximum winds of 110 mph (177 kph), passed through a narrow channel between Guam and Rota island on Friday.

It was a moderate category 2 typhoon when it narrowly missed a direct hit on Guam but strengthened to a category 4, the second strongest on a scale of one to five, as it headed towards Japan.

Rota, a small island north of Guam with fewer than 3,000 residents, is completely without power, officials said.

Reuters

US lower house backs expansion of Japanese forces’ activities

WASHINGTON, 16 May — The US House of Representatives backed Japan’s new policy “Friday of allowing the Self-Defense Forces to play a wider role, including the lifting of a self-imposed ban on the use of the right to collective self-defense.”

The position was included in the annual key defence act outlining budgetary plans for the next fiscal year from October, which the lower house endorsed the same day.

“The United States supports recent changes in Japan’s defence policy, including the adoption of collective self-defense,” said the National Defence Authorization Act for fiscal 2015, which authorized the annual budget worth more than $600 billion.

The Senate is deliberating a bill for the act.

The US legislature recognizes the close alliance with Japan “continues to be enhanced and augmented to meet the needs of the future,” the act said.

The plan to move the Futenma Air Station from a crowded residential area in Ginowan to the less densely populated Henoko seaside area in Nago “remains the only option,” it said.

Kyodo News

World energy experts urge G20 to help Africa solve power crises

ISTANBUL, 16 May — World energy experts called on Friday on the G20 countries to increase their investments in Africa to solve its electricity crises. The appeal was made at the 6th International Energy Forum in Istanbul, Turkey.

More than 400 energy experts are taking part in the event.

Experts agreed at the forum that G20’s primary aim under the G20 countries to integrate with Africa of the rich with the world in the energy field.

Almost two thirds of the population of Africa (620 million people) still have no electricity, according to the data provided by the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Turkey prepares to come up with new suggestions on how to mobilize investments in sub-Saharan countries in the final G20 summit in Antalya that will be held in November, said Fatih Birol, chief economist of IEA.

Speaking about the enormous energy opportunities and resources of Africa, Birol said that solar energy, hydro power, oil and gas are among the major resources of the continent.

“When we talk about oil market, more than 30 percent of the new oil discovery comes from sub-Saharan Africa,” he added.

While Africa has been suffering tremendously from electricity shortage, more than 80 percent of the world energy are consumed within 20 countries, the energy experts said.

Entire electricity that is consumed in Africa is equal to that of New York, Birol pointed out.

Failing to find an unlimited energy source with a good price is among the top targets of G20, said Güler Sabancı, chairman of the board of Trustees of Sabancı University of Turkey, which hosts the forum.

The experts also expressed their hope that the G20 will provide effective solutions to the global energy challenges before Antalya summit. After the summit, Turkey will hand over the presidency to China.

Delegates discuss at the 6th International Energy Forum in Istanbul, Turkey, on 15 May, 2015.—Xinhua

Xinhua
By Aung Khin

Yangon’s traffic congestion has gradually worsened over the years, causing major head-aches for those who commute daily. As com-mercial activity increases with the entry of more business firms to the country, the number of com-muters is also increasing.

The vast majority of people rely on buses, taxis and private cars, as the city does not have other pub-lic transportation systems such as Bangkok’s BTS and MRT which have had a hugely positive impact on that city’s traffic congestion.

Traffic congestion has many bad consequences. Yangon city has a large expanse of suburban areas that can accommodate few business firms so they set up their offices in these areas due to poor transportation infrastructure, causing higher proper-ties rates in the downtown business hub. Traffic congestion in this way is a major contributor to the exorbit-ant real estate prices that inhibit economic activity.

In some cases, many offices and bridges link city areas and have only one lane in each direction. There have been incidents in which ambulances have been stuck due to vehicles blocking these narrow thoroughfares.

Employees are frequently late to work due to severe congestion, and some staff must travel nearly two hours to their offic-es, wasting their time and that of their company.

When people are forced to face traffic congestion day after day, their health and happiness suffer. The situation is also a hindrance to the tourism industry, which is a major source of revenue for the country. Traffic congestion should be solved urgently to make Yangon a better place for both residents and visitors.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

May I just deal with two topics which are the most essential in our daily life:

Cost of essential commodities: Prices of these items had risen as soon as Govt. decided to raise the salaries of Govt. employees, actually before the employees could en-joy the benefits. Some mention was made in our newspa-per, saying that the price of meat and fish had remained stable. But how many and how often can an average Govt. servant afford such luxuries? Apart from Govt. servants who might probably get some easement from raised sala ries, what about the rest of our population? Especially growing children who would become our leaders one day, and who need nourishing food to be healthy?

In this respect, I have heard of certain countries where Governments impose very strict actions to make sure that prices of very essential commodities like rice, oil, flour, salt, sugar, etc, remain stable, and where necessary, with government subsidies, while the govern-ments control the prices of fuel, power and gas. Perhaps this idea may be worthy of consideration till we reach our objective in raising our way of life.

Public Transportation: For any developing society, public transportation needs to be safe, convenient and fast. Our public transportation, unfortunately, had been lacking badly in such privileges till now. At the moment, we are blessed with unprecedented congestion of saloon cars, meterless costly taxis, outdated, old, frequently bro ken-down, overloaded buses, while tragic news came on our media, saying Bus Companies were about to be formed with public shares. I hope this venture will earn a lot of pre-planning regarding types of buses, bus routes, recessed bus stops not to interfere with traffic lanes, bus stations well equipped to handle technicalities, well-trained drivers, over head bridges at busy crossings, new rules, etc, etc.

Another important system in public transportation, is the rail. Land transportation needs the support of rail inevi-tably. Rail transportation is not hampered by congestion, accidents or overcrowding. A balance between road and rail transportation can solve a lot of our traffic problems existing at this moment.

I may sound critical of our administration’s efforts in this regard, but we must admit that unless our internal situation is stabilized, foreign investments will be slow in coming, however friendly and promising they may sound.

A patriot

Dr. Aung Soe @ Aung Kyaw Moe
Retired State Medical Superintendent

Nepal Earthquake: Lesson for Safety of Hospitals and Health Centers from Disasters

By Aung Khin

It is an economic as well as a political concern to keep health facilities functional and available in a disaster, which, of course, is utmost difficult in practical point of view. The concept of keeping health facili-ties safe from disaster ini-tiates after the 1975 Mexico earthquake, when most of the health facilities collapsed in Mexico City and there was no way to provides needed health services to the mass of casual-ties.

Mexico earthquake was preceded by Bagan earth-quake in Central Myanmar, which destroyed numerous invaluable ancient national heritages of Myanmar, in ad-dition to loss of human lives and basic structures. A safe health facility constitutes some place that provides clinical and pub-lic health services, which should have structures that are able to withstand the traumas from natural disasters. Non-structured elements con-sist of equipment that will not fail, such as related contin-}

Letter to the Editor

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email wallace.tun@gmail.com with your name and title.

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish “Letter to the Editor” that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

Write for us

Our cost of living

We are open to receiving all types of submissions. For editorial or analysis pieces please forward them to our editors. For articles or reports please use the email address in our contact information.

Due to feedback we are only able to publish 2-3 pieces per week. If you have a longer article please break it down into shorter sections.

Letter to the Editor

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email wallace.tun@gmail.com with your name and title.

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish “Letter to the Editor” that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

Write for us

Our cost of living

We are open to receiving all types of submissions. For editorial or analysis pieces please forward them to our editors. For articles or reports please use the email address in our contact information.

Due to feedback we are only able to publish 2-3 pieces per week. If you have a longer article please break it down into shorter sections.

Letter to the Editor

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email wallace.tun@gmail.com with your name and title.

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish “Letter to the Editor” that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

Write for us

Our cost of living

We are open to receiving all types of submissions. For editorial or analysis pieces please forward them to our editors. For articles or reports please use the email address in our contact information.

Due to feedback we are only able to publish 2-3 pieces per week. If you have a longer article please break it down into shorter sections.

Letter to the Editor

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email wallace.tun@gmail.com with your name and title.

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish “Letter to the Editor” that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.
On Turning Age 74

As we all know, age is the time we pass through from mercurial youth to the slow progress of grey hairs. I have come to be 74 on 1 June. Once we reach the age of 74—only one year short of the average life expectancy of 75 years—we are, of course, approaching the end of the human life span on earth. Not many years remain to us and our own ends may not be too far off in the ordinary course of things. It is also time for us to take a closer look at how far we have come in our studies at the university. But then it only scratched the surface of the subject which I had studied just enough to pass the exam. My reading of English literature has been confined to the Sherlock Homes stories by Arthur Conan Doyle, and some novels by W. Somerset Maugham, Pearl S. Buck, Hemingway, etc. I like the writing styles of S. Buck, Hemingway, etc. I like the writing styles of those writers better than those of any other writers I have read—especially the styles of Arthur Conan Doyle and W. Somerset Maugham, which are simple and easy to understand. Soon after I arrived in Yangon and worked at the office of the Auditor-General and worked in the private sector, my income has risen enough to meet the daily living costs, with a little bit left over to save against a rainy day. These days, when medical care costs have rocketed sky-high, especially at so-called private specialist medical centers in Yangon, it will, of course, be a prudent policy to set aside a certain amount from our monthly earnings for present purposes. Only then will we be able to dip into our savings to meet emergency medical costs that may arise when we are suddenly struck by unexpected diseases that are common in old age rather than in youth. However, whatever savings we may have made over the years can be wiped out completely in case of month-long hospitalization at the most advanced age. There is no need to worry about whether we have capability to engage in any physical activity that can make for the continuation of such practice in future existences, until the final goal of ‘nirvana’ is reached. This is the pattern of life that I have sketched out for myself to follow for the rest of my life, as a way to gain as much merit as I can to save myself from any type of lower planes of existence. However, I must confess that I am not making as much progress as I desire in my efforts at vipassana meditation practice. Unlike at a meditation center, I can’t practice very well at home because of the daily routine that assails me and I can’t give up easily. I keep on trying despite the difficulties I have to face. As they say, there will be light at the end of the tunnel. In the meantime, I should try as best I can to keep myself away from Dosa (anger), Moha (ignorance), Loba (greed), and Mara (conceit)—the factors that can drive one’s mind into hell. As we grow older, it is more or less the fate that has fallen on most of retirees. Some people are afraid of old age, because once they reach old age, with its frailties of mind and body, they do not have any ability to engage in any physical activity that requires the strength and energy of young people. They are prone to many kinds of illnesses, because their bodies have lost resonance powers that can light off an invasion of quite a host of disease-causing viruses and bacteria. To make matters worse, they are prone to many of the sensorial pleasures they used to enjoy in the prime of their life. They are compelled to take great care of their health which has begun to decline with the advancing years of their age. They can’t eat any kind of food they like and their food content has to be cut down to their heart’s content on health grounds. They can’t go on long journeys alone either by car, train, or plane without any trusted companion, or their family members to look after them. As a matter of fact, it is time they put all their pursuits of worldly pleasures behind them and spend the remaining period of their life profitably in their respective fields of pursuit. Of course, it is not likely that they can gain peace of mind and freedom from all kinds of worries and anxieties that may torment them for the rest of their days. Thus, they will be able to live to the full extent of their life span enjoying the fruits of their religious practices not only in the present life but in the life after.

...
Islamic State raises flag over local government headquarters in Iraq’s Ramadi

BAKU, 16 May — Islamic State militants raised their black flag over the local government headquarters in the Iraqi city of Ramadi on Friday and claimed victory through mosque loudspeakers after overrunning most of the western provincial capital.

If Ramadi were to fall it would be the first major city seized by the insurgents in Iraq since Islamic forces and paramilitary groups began pushing them back last year.

The insurgents attacked Ramadi overnight using six suicide car bombs to reach the city centre, where the Anbar provincial government compound is located, police sources said.

Fighting continued in one district of Ramadi, 100 km (60 miles) west of Baghdad, and government forces were still in control of a military command centre to the west of the city.

“The situation in Ramadi is dire, but the city has not fallen and the battle against criminal Daesh is still ongoing,” Anbar governor Sohaib al-Rawi said on Twitter.

Iraqi security forces defend their headquarters against attacks by Islamic State extremists in the eastern part of Ramadi in Anbar Province on 14 May, 2015. — Reuters

Most army and police units have retreated to the area around the operation command to protect it, he said, but some elite counter-terror forces were fighting “for their lives” in the Malaab district of central Ramadi, where they were surrounded.

“If the government does not send any reinforcements and the coalition air force does not rescue us, we will lose all of Ramadi by midnight,” the major said.

“A massacre will take place and all of us will be slaughtered. We have been defending the city for months and we don’t deserve to end like this. It’s humiliating.”

Still, the US military sought to play down the Islamic State gains, telling a Pentagon news conference that the militants were broadly “on the defensive” in Iraq.

Marine Corps Brigadier General Thomas Weidley, chief of staff for US-led coalition operations, said Iraqi forces still controlled most “key facilities, infrastructure and lines of communication” in the Ramadi area.

“(Iraqi forces) will eventually take back the terrain,” Weidley said via teleconference. — Reuters

Egyptian court seeks death sentence for former president Mursi

CAIRO, 16 May — An Egyptian court on Saturday sought the death sentence for former President Mohamed Mursi and more than 100 other members of the Muslim Brotherhood in connection with a mass jail break in 2011.

The court also sought capital punishment for Brotherhood leader Khairat el-Shater and 15 others for coordinating with foreign militant groups against Egypt. The cases, like any capital sentences, will be referred to Egypt’s top religious body, the Grand Mufti, for an opinion before any executions can take place.

Morsi, who was overthrown by the army after mass protests against his Ousted Egyptian President Mohamed Mursi rule in 2013, stood defiant in a conical prison outfit pumping his fists in the air before the sentences were read out.

Human rights groups have criticized Egyptian authorities of widespread abuses in a crackdown on Brotherhood supporters as well as secular activists, allegations they deny.

Desert as deadly as sea for surge of Europe-bound migrants

Dakar, 16 May — At least as many migrants may be dying of hunger and thirst in the Sahara as are drowning in the Mediterranean during this year’s huge surge of human traficking from Libya to Europe, the International Organization for Migration said on Friday.

The number of people travelling through Niger’s vast desert wases to reach North Africa and Europe could more than double this year to 100,000, the global migration body’s Niger office said.

The migrants are often abused by traffickers who abandon them to die in the desert if they run out of food.

More than 170,000 migrants crossed the Mediterranean to Italy last year, and more than 3,000 drowned. With the number attempting to cross surging this year, the IOM expects the death toll will be many times higher.

The issue raised particular concern in Europe last month after more than 800 people were believed to have drowned in the ship-wreck of a single fishing boat, the worst disaster of its kind. Most of the victims were locked below decks.

Smuggling rings have profited from lawlessness in Libya to ferry tens of thousands of people to Europe in unsafe boats. The migrants are first brought to Libya from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East.

Niger’s desert town of Agadez is one of the main transit points in the Sahara for migrants leaving impoverished West African nations on route for North Africa and then Europe.

“Libya is an open door,” said Giuseppe Loprete, IOM head of mission in Niger. “In 2015, we estimate that 100,000 migrants will transit across Niger, roughly double the figure last year.”

Loprete said there was little Niger could do to stop the flow of migrants as many came from countries in the West African bloc ECOWAS — such as Nigeria, Mali, Gambia and Senegal — which allows freedom of movement between its 15 member states.

According to the latest IOM figures, an estimated 38,000 migrants crossed into Italy between January and mid-May, with the largest numbers coming from Eritrea, Somalia and Nigeria, followed by Gambi­a, Syria, Senegal and Mali. The summer peak season for the sea crossing has barely begun.

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime estimates migrant smuggling in Libya may be worth more than $300 million a year.

 Reuters

Fighters of the Popular Resistance Committees man a checkpoint in Yemen’s southwestern city of Taiz on 14 May, 2015. — Reuters

Fighting continues in Yemeni city despite truce, 10 killed

ADEN, (Yemen), 16 May — At least 10 people were killed in heavy clashes in Yemen on Friday despite a five-day humanitarian truce, while aid distribution to the millions deprived of food, fuel and medicine by weeks of fighting and air strikes continued.

Saudi Arabia, leading a coalition of Arab states backed by the West, has pounded Iranian-allied Houthi forces and fighters loyal to Yemen’s former leader since 26 March, aiming to restore President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

The ceasefire, which began on Tuesday, appeared to be mostly holding on Friday despite heavy ground fighting between local militia and the Houthis in the city of Taiz, residents said. A medical source said 10 were killed.

In the city of Dhalea residents also reported clashes on Friday but there was no information on casualties.

“Nothing has changed with this truce. People are still fighting and the Houthis are still in control,” said Alawi al-Afnun, a resident in the southern city of Aden. using an Arabic name for Islamic State.

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi met with military and security leaders on Friday as well as the heads of the air force and counterterrorism and pledged to intensify efforts to “expel the terrorists from Ramadi.”

He later spoke about the Ramadi attacks with US Vice President Joe Biden, who pledged expedited US aid to Iraqi forces including heavy weaponry, AT-4 shoulder-held rockets, ammunition and other supplies, the White House said.

Ramadi has been fought over for months, but the insurgents renewed their offensive there in April, crushing government forces’ efforts to retake Anbar, Iraq’s largest province, and move north to the Islamic State stronghold of Mosul.

An army major whose regiment is positioned near the Anbar operations command described the situation as critical and said the militants had taken control of the only major supply route into the city, making it difficult to send reinforcements.

“We the legitimate Yemeni government is scattered abroad and has no authority inside.”

Officials from Hadi’s government in exile live mostly in Riyadh and have little influence on the ground in Yemen.

Meanwhile, tribal sources said on Friday Houthi fighters have withdrawn from the border area between Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

Impoverished and stilt-ageen even before the war, Yemen is now mired in war, strife-torn even before the anarchy. The country has been devastated by the late 2011-2012 Arab Spring and then mass protests against the rule of President Ali Abdullah Salih.

“The legitimate Yemeni government is scattered abroad and has no authority inside.”

Officials from Hadi’s government in exile live mostly in Riyadh and have little influence on the ground in Yemen.

Meanwhile, tribal sources said on Friday Houthi fighters have withdrawn from the border area between Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

Impoverished and stilt-ageen even before the war, Yemen is now mired in war, strife-torn even before the anarchy. The country has been devastated by the late 2011-2012 Arab Spring and then mass protests against the rule of President Ali Abdullah Salih.

“The legitimate Yemeni government is scattered abroad and has no authority inside.”

Officials from Hadi’s government in exile live mostly in Riyadh and have little influence on the ground in Yemen.

Meanwhile, tribal sources said on Friday Houthi fighters have withdrawn from the border area between Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

Impoverished and stilt-ageen even before the war, Yemen is now mired in war, strife-torn even before the anarchy. The country has been devastated by the late 2011-2012 Arab Spring and then mass protests against the rule of President Ali Abdullah Salih.

“The legitimate Yemeni government is scattered abroad and has no authority inside.”

Officials from Hadi’s government in exile live mostly in Riyadh and have little influence on the ground in Yemen.

Meanwhile, tribal sources said on Friday Houthi fighters have withdrawn from the border area between Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

Impoverished and stilt-ageen even before the war, Yemen is now mired in war, strife-torn even before the anarchy. The country has been devastated by the late 2011-2012 Arab Spring and then mass protests against the rule of President Ali Abdullah Salih.

“The legitimate Yemeni government is scattered abroad and has no authority inside.”

Officials from Hadi’s government in exile live mostly in Riyadh and have little influence on the ground in Yemen.

Meanwhile, tribal sources said on Friday Houthi fighters have withdrawn from the border area between Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

Impoverished and stilt-ageen even before the war, Yemen is now mired in war, strife-torn even before the anarchy. The country has been devastated by the late 2011-2012 Arab Spring and then mass protests against the rule of President Ali Abdullah Salih.
Google’s self-driving cars to hit roads, with steering wheels

**Detroit, 16 May** — Google Inc (GOOGL.O) will begin testing self-driving cars of its own design on public roads this summer, but they will have steering wheels and brakes, which is not what the company described a year ago.

Engineers will operate 25 prototype vehicles, which use the same software as Google’s self-driving Lexus RX450h sport utility vehicles that have been in operation for several years, the company said on Friday.

When the Internet search company announced a year ago that it planned to build a fleet of self-driving cars, project creator Chris Urmson said the prototypes “won’t have a steering wheel, accelerator pedal or brake pedal ... because they don’t need them.”

It turns out, however, that the prototypes will need those critical control devices after all because California requires that self-driving vehicles have manual controls during testing.

Built in Detroit by auto supplier Rossh Industries, the prototypes will be equipped with removable steering wheels, brake pedals and accelerator pedals so test engineers can “take over driving if needed,” Urmson said in a blog post on Friday.

Google describes the pod-like prototype, which seats two people, as “the world’s first fully self-driving vehicle.”

The company also said it would test new passenger vehicles bearing their trademarks.

A Google self-driving car is shown in this handout photo released to Reuters on 15 March, 2015. **Reuters**

**Sydney, 16 May** — Australia will more than double an area near the Great Barrier Reef subject to special curbs on shipping in a bid to protect the environmentally sensitive World Heritage area — by 43 miles east of Great Keppel Island in this 4 April, 2010 picture. **Reuters**

A Google self-driving car is shown in this handout photo released to Reuters on 15 March, 2015. **Reuters**

**Almaty, 16 May** — A Proton-M carrier rocket carrying a Mexican satellite malfunctioned and crashed in Siberia soon after launch on Saturday, the latest in a series of mishaps for Russia’s space industry.

The third stage of the rocket carrying the MexSat-1 communications satellite suffered a problem about 500 seconds after launch from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, Russian media quoted Russian space officials as saying.

The cause of the accident, which meant the satellite was not put into orbit, was not immediately established. RIA news agency quoted one space official as saying that all launchers of carrier rockets of this type would now be suspended.

The final stage of the Proton rocket is still propellant, when it came down in the Chita region of Siberia, one space official was quoted as saying. Russia’s workhorse Proton rocket, known at the time under its UR-500 code, made its first test flights in the mid-1960s.

It was originally designed as an intercontinental ballistic missile to carry a nuclear warhead targeting the Soviet Union’s Cold War foe the United States. But it was never deployed as a nuclear weapon.

Russia’s space industry, which pioneered space exploration with the launch of the first satellite and put the first man into space, has been haunted by accidents which have tarnished its reputation.

In late April, Russia abandoned a 2.6 billion rouble ($51 million) mission to supply the International Space Station (ISS), after an unmanned Proton-M-27M cargo ship, carrying almost 3 tonnes (2,722 kg) of supplies, was unable to dock with the ISS because of problems.

In July 2013, a Proton mishap rocket carrying three navigation satellites worth around $200 million crashed shortly after lift-off from the Russian-leased Baikonur cosmodrome.

Just a few hours before Proton’s crash on Saturday, the Progress M-26M space ship docked at the ISS failed to ignite its engines and correct the orbit of the space outpost, Russian media reported.

The lives of the crew are not in danger, they said.

The cause of the latest accident with the Proton rocket was not immediately established. RIA news agency quoted one space official as saying that all launches of carrier rockets of this type would be suspended.—Reuters

**New York, 16 May** — A group of luxury goods makers sued Alibaba Group Holding Ltd (BABA.N) on Friday, contending the Chinese online shopping giant has been allowing counterfeiters to sell their products to customers in the United States.

The lawsuit, disclosed that its self-driving vehicles were involved in 11 accidents on public roads near its Mountain View, California, headquarters.

“A not once was the self-driving car the cause of the accident,” Urmson said in the blog post. No one was injured in the accidents, he added — “we had been hit from behind seven times, mainly at traffic lights, with a majority of the accidents being on city streets rather than on freeways.”

Google said its self-driving cars have been logging about 10,000 miles a week and have accumulated nearly 1 million miles.

Google shares were down 3.6 percent at $545.60 on Friday afternoon.

People ride a double bicycle past a logo of The Alibaba Group at the company’s headquarters on the outskirts of Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province on 10 Nov, 2014. **Reuters**

Google shares were $5 each by a Chinese merchant to buyers seeking at least 2,000 units. The authentic Gucci bag retails for $795, the complaint said.

Alibaba has allowed counterfeit sales to continue even when it had been expressly informed that merchants were selling fake products, the lawsuit said.

The lawsuit seeks a court order that, among other things, would block Alibaba from offering or facilitating the sale of counterfeit products and unspecified damages that could include $2 per counterfeit item under a statutory regime.—Reuters

Alibaba sued in US by luxury brands over counterfeit goods

**Almaty, 16 May** — A group of luxury goods makers sued Alibaba Group Holding Ltd (BABA.N) on Friday, contending the Chinese online shopping giant had knowingly made it possible for counterfeiters to sell their products throughout the world. The lawsuit was filed in Manhattan federal court by Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent and other brands owned by Paris-based Kering SA (PRT.PA) seeking damages and an injunction for alleged violations of trademark and racketeering laws.

The lawsuit alleged that Alibaba had conspired to manufacture, offer for sale and traffic in counterfeit products bearing their trademarks without their permission.

A spokesperson for Alibaba declined to comment.

Concerns over fake products on Alibaba’s platforms, including online marketplace Taobao, have dogged it for years, although the US Trade Representative removed Taobao from its list of “notorious markets” in 2012 in light of progress made.

Friday’s lawsuit marked the second time in less than a year that the Kering brands had sued Alibaba over the alleged sale of counterfeit products.

An earlier lawsuit was filed in July only to be withdrawn the same month with the ability to refile it while the Kering units worked towards a resolution with Alibaba, according to court records.

The lawsuit alleged that Alibaba and its related platforms provide the marketplace advertising and other essential services necessary for counterfeiters to sell their counterfeit products to customers in the United States.

The lawsuit cited, for example, an alleged fake Gucci bag offered for $2 to $5 each by a Chinese

**Australia to widen curbs on shipping around Great Barrier Reef**

**Sydney, 16 May** — Australia will more than double an area near the Great Barrier Reef subject to special curbs on shipping in a bid to protect the environmentally sensitive World Heritage site — by 43 miles east of Great Keppel Island in this 4 April, 2010 picture. **Reuters**

Oil is seen next to the 230-metre (754-ft) bulk coal carrier Shen Neng I about 70 km (43 miles) east of Great Keppel Island in this 4 April, 2010 picture. **Reuters**

**Almaty, 16 May** — A Proton-M carrier rocket carrying a Mexican satellite malfunctioned and crashed in Siberia soon after launch on Saturday, the latest in a series of mishaps for Russia’s space industry.

The third stage of the rocket carrying the MexSat-1 communications satellite suffered a problem about 500 seconds after launch from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, Russian media quoted Russian space officials as saying.

The cause of the accident, which meant the satellite was not put into orbit, was not immediately established. RIA news agency quoted one space official as saying that all launchers of carrier rockets of this type would now be suspended.

The final stage of the Proton rocket is still propellant, when it came down in the Chita region of Siberia, one space official was quoted as saying. Russia’s workhorse Proton rocket, known at the time under its UR-500 code, made its first test flights in the mid-1960s.

It was originally designed as an intercontinental ballistic missile to carry a nuclear warhead targeting the Soviet Union’s Cold War foe the United States. But it was never deployed as a nuclear weapon.

Russia’s space industry, which pioneered space exploration with the launch of the first satellite and put the first man into space, has been haunted by accidents which have tarnished its reputation.

In late April, Russia abandoned a 2.6 billion rouble ($51 million) mission to supply the International Space Station (ISS), after an unmanned Proton-M-27M cargo ship, carrying almost 3 tonnes (2,722 kg) of supplies, was unable to dock with the ISS because of problems.

In July 2013, a Proton mishap rocket carrying three navigation satellites worth around $200 million crashed shortly after lift-off from the Russian-leased Baikonur cosmodrome.

Just a few hours before Proton’s crash on Saturday, the Progress M-26M space ship docked at the ISS failed to ignite its engines and correct the orbit of the space outpost, Russian media reported.

The lives of the crew are not in danger, they said.

The cause of the latest accident with the Proton rocket was not immediately established. RIA news agency quoted one space official as saying that all launches of carrier rockets of this type would be suspended.—Reuters

**New York, 16 May** — A group of luxury goods makers sued Alibaba Group Holding Ltd (BABA.N) on Friday, contending the Chinese online shopping giant had knowingly made it possible for counterfeiters to sell their products throughout the world. The lawsuit was filed in Manhattan federal court by Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent and other brands owned by Paris-based Kering SA (PRT.PA) seeking damages and an injunction for alleged violations of trademark and racketeering laws.

The lawsuit alleged that Alibaba had conspired to manufacture, offer for sale and traffic in counterfeit products bearing their trademarks without their permission.

A spokesman for Alibaba declined to comment.

Concerns over fake products on Alibaba’s platforms, including online marketplace Taobao, have dogged it for years, although the US Trade Representative removed Taobao from its list of “notorious markets” in 2012 in light of progress made.

Friday’s lawsuit marked the second time in less than a year that the Kering brands had sued Alibaba over the alleged sale of counterfeit products.

An earlier lawsuit was filed in July only to be withdrawn the same month with the ability to refile it while the Kering units worked towards a resolution with Alibaba, according to court records.

The lawsuit alleged that Alibaba and its related platforms provide the marketplace advertising and other essential services necessary for counterfeiters to sell their counterfeit products to customers in the United States.

The lawsuit cited, for example, an alleged fake Gucci bag offered for $2 to $5 each by a Chinese merchant to buyers seeking at least 2,000 units. The authentic Gucci bag retails for $795, the complaint said.

Alibaba has allowed for counterfeit sales to continue even when it had been expressly informed that merchants were selling fake products, the lawsuit said.

The lawsuit seeks a court order that, among other things, would block Alibaba from offering or facilitating the sale of counterfeit products and unspecified damages that could include $2 per counterfeit item under a statutory regime.—Reuters
Rescuers recover six bodies from flooded Colombian mine

BOGOTA, 16 May — Six corpses of miners who were trapped when a gold mine flooded have been retrieved, Colombia’s disaster response service said on Friday.

The accident, caused by a power cut in the mine, happened on Wednesday in the Riosucio municipality in Caldas department, 220 km (136 miles) northwest of the capital Bogota.

The power cut shut off pumps that the miners used to keep water out of the mine from a major river that passes nearby, local daily El Universal reported.

Dozens of workers managed to escape before the water levels rose too high, but it is believed that 16 people were trapped inside.

Around 80 rescue workers from the disaster response service, the Colombian Red Cross and the armed forces were on hand shortly after news of the disaster broke, local media reported.

The first four bodies were discovered on Thursday night and have been identified. Another two bodies were retrieved on Friday and have yet to be identified.

Colombia’s President Juan Manuel Santos said on Thursday that the “families of the Riosucio miners are in our hearts.”

The process of recovering all the bodies may be slow because rescue services do not want to risk the lives of the rescuers, local daily El Tiempo reported.

The mine was in the process of becoming legal, which meant that the illegal miners would be allowed to obtain licenses once they agree to adhere to certain norms.

President Santos said on Thursday that the “families of Riosucio miners are in our hearts.”

The other driver, according to her account, said he had reported to a train dispatcher that his windshield had been cracked by a projectile that he believed was either fired from a gun or thrown at his train, and that he had made an emergency stop as a result, Sunwall said.

The conductor told investigators that Bostian then replied that he believed his own New York-bound Amtrak train had been similarly struck, Sunwall said.

It was moments later that the Amtrak train began to round the curved section of track at twice the authorized speed and derailed in the city’s Port Richmond neighborhood along the Delaware River, according to her account.

Sumwalt said FBI agents would arrive on Friday night to examine a portion of the lower left-hand corner of the locomotive’s battered windshield that appeared to have been cracked by a flying object of some type.

The Philadelphia Inquirer and other media outlets reported on Friday that a third train, an Amtrak Acela, had also been hit by an unidentified projectile that cracked a window on one of the cars about five minutes before it entered the 30th Street station, citing an account of a passer-by.

CBS News cited federal safety investigators as saying they were aware of the report of a third train being hit.

The Wall Street Journal, citing anonymous sources, reported late on Friday that the Federal Railroad Administration has ordered Amtrak to modify its current signal system to guard against overspeeding at several curves along the Northeast Corridor, including the site of Tuesday’s derailment.

Reuter

UN Security Council calls for peaceful solution to Burundian crisis

UNITED NATIONS, 16 May — The UN Security Council on Friday voiced its “serious concern” over the ongoing unrest in Burundi, and “stressed the urgent need for dialogue and reconciliation” to resolve the current crisis.

“The members of the Security Council called on all parties to exercise restraint, not to resort to violence or retaliatory attacks, to settle disputes peacefully and to prioritize Burundi’s peace and stability above all else and in the best interests of the nation,” the 15-nation UN body said in a statement issued to the press here.

Burundi was plunged into chaos on Wednesday as the former head of Burundi’s National Intelligence, Major General Godefroid Niyombare, announced from a radio station that the army had overthrown President Pierre Nkurunziza and stakeholders were working on a transitional government.

Later in the evening, however, Burundian Army Chief of Staff Major General Prime Niyongabo said, “A group of insurgents has attempted a coup,” stressing that the situation was under “control.”

More than 105,000 people have fled Burundi to neighbouring Tanzania, Rwanda and to the province of South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Members of the Security Council condemned the violent unrest in Burundi and specifically those who facilitated violence of any kind. They called on the Burundian authorities to address the crisis, while respecting fundamental freedoms and the principles of fair trials and due process.

“The members of the Security Council called for the swift return of the rule of law and the establishment of a genuine dialogue between all Burundians to create the necessary conditions for the holding of peaceful, transparent, inclusive and credible elections in the spirit of the Arusha Agreements, including fundamental freedoms and peaceful assembly,” the statement said.

Reuters

Venezuela charges former counter-narcotics boss with money laundering

CARACAS, 16 May — Venezuela has indicted a former head of counter-narcotics at the CICPC investigative police on money laundering charges, part of a bigger scandal linking the South American OPEC nation and tax haven Andorra.

Norman Puerta had been under investigation for allegedly transferring more than $1 million from Panama to the Blanca Privada d’Andorra (BPA), Venezuela’s public prosecutor’s office said in a statement on Friday.

Andorra’s financial authority took control of BPA in March after the United States said the lender was under suspicion for money laundering. The US allegations included that BPA facilitated the movement of about $4.2 billion in transfers related to Venezuelan money laundering.

The public prosecutor’s office did not mention other allegations or investigations. No one at the office was immediately available for comment.

Xinhua

Philadelphia train may have been hit by projectile before wreck

PHILADELPHIA, 16 May — The Amtrak train that derailed in Philadelphia and a separate commuter train in the vicinity may have been hit by projectiles of some kind shortly before the wreck, a US transportation official said on Friday, after investigators interviewed members of the Amtrak crew.

But when questioned for the first time about the crash on Tuesday night, the Amtrak engineer who was driving the train said he had no memory of anything that happened shortly before the wreck, which killed eight people and injured more than 200 others, said Robert Sunwall, a member of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was called in to examine a remnant of the Amtrak locomotive’s shattered windshield with a circular damage pattern, Sunwall said.

The revelation that Amtrak train No 188 might have been struck by a bullet, rock or other object added an unexpected twist to a crash probe that initially focused on why the train that day had been unrecoverable until a few minutes after pulling out of Philadelphia’s 30th Street station, the last stop before the accident, Sunwall said.

At that point, she heard the engineer, 32-year-old Brandon Bostian, talking by radio with the driver of another train from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA).

The other driver, according to her account, said he had reported to a train dispatcher that his windshield had been cracked by a projectile that he believed was either fired from a gun or thrown at his train, and that he had made an emergency stop as a result, Sunwall said.

The conductor told investigators that Bostian then replied that he believed his own New York-bound Amtrak train had been similarly struck, Sunwall said.

It was moments later that the Amtrak train began to round the curved section of track at twice the authorized speed and derailed in the city’s Port Richmond neighborhood along the Delaware River, according to her account.

Sumwalt said FBI agents would arrive on Friday night to examine a portion of the lower left-hand corner of the locomotive’s battered windshield that appeared to have been cracked by a flying object of some type.

The Philadelphia Inquirer and other media outlets reported on Friday that a third train, an Amtrak Acela, had also been hit by an unidentified projectile that cracked a window on one of the cars about five minutes before it entered the 30th Street station, citing an account of a passer-by.

CBS News cited federal safety investigators as saying they were aware of the report of a third train being hit.

The Wall Street Journal, citing anonymous sources, reported late on Friday that the Federal Railroad Administration has ordered Amtrak to modify its current signal system to guard against overspeeding at several curves along the Northeast Corridor, including the site of Tuesday’s derailment.

Reuter

Xinhua
Two Philippine soldiers died in ambush by unidentified armed men

Manila, 16 May — Two government soldiers were killed and another was injured when they were ambushed by unidentified armed men in central Philippine province of Samar on Friday morning, the military reported on Saturday. Amado Gutiérrez, public affairs officer of the Army’s 8th Infantry Division, said the soldiers were unarmored and wearing civilian clothes when they were attacked in Paranenses town at around 8:30 am.

He added the soldiers were on the way back to the camp in San Jose de Buen town after buying supplies when they were waylaid. Two other soldiers survived the attack unscathed. The Army’s Central Command spokesman Jim Alagao said the two are undergoing debriefing.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 17th May, 2015: Rain or thunderstorms are likely to be fairly widespread in Tanimbunan Region and Mon State, scattered in Sagaing, Mandalay, Yangon and Ayeyawady Regions. Kachin, Shan and Kayin States and isolated in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Continuation of thundery showers in the Southern Myanmar areas.

OPEC works on deal to stabilize oil prices

Caracas, 16 May — The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is trying to reach a deal to stabilize world oil prices, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said on Friday.

"Venezuela and OPEC’s greatest interest ... is to be able to stabilize prices around 100 USD barrels" in the medium term," Maduro told reporters, following a private 90-minute meeting with the visiting Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

OPEC members will continue to hold meetings to "progressively stabilize the international price of crude," the state-run Venezuelan News Agency (AVN) reported.

Prices have plummeted in recent months due to overproduction, mainly on the part of the United States, the AVN said. Maduro’s announcement comes three weeks before OPEC members are set to meet to decide whether to cut production to shore up prices. OPEC decided at its last meeting not to cut output even though crude has lost around half its value since selling for 115 dollars a barrel in June of last year.

Venezuela was against that decision, which was promoted by the close US ally Saudi Arabia, and has been campaigning for steps to boost prices.

Maduro said he has "high hopes" that an eventual agreement will stabilize the oil market, "not only for the second half of the year, but for years to come."

The Venezuelan leader also announced a "new map of cooperation" with Qatar, which includes exchanges in the energy and gas fields, as well as agriculture, infrastructure and tourism.

"It was an extraordinary and fruitful visit to continue boosting our bilateral relations and deepening the South-South bonds between Qatar and Venezuela, between the Arab world and Latin America," Maduro said.

This is the second time this year the two leaders meet, as Maduro visited Al Thani in Doha in January.

Al Thani arrived in Caracas on Friday for a private visit after meeting with US President Barack Obama and other leaders of Gulf oil-producing nations in Washington. —Xinhua

Gunman kills four, wounds at least five in Naples shooting

NAPLES, (Italy), 16 May — A man shot dead four people, believed to include his wife and other members of his family, and wounded at least five more after opening fire from the balcony of his home in the southern Italian city of Naples on Friday, police said.

As well as his wife, the 48-year-old nurse with no previous criminal record was believed to have killed his brother, sister-in-law and a local policeman with a pump-action shotgun in the Capodimonte neighbourhood, police officials said. At least five people, believed to include at least two police officers, were wounded when the gunman opened fire onto the street outside his house. Police forced their way into the house, arrested the gunman and took him away in a police car. — Reuters

5.8-magnitude quake hits 98km NNW of Curup, Indonesia

HONG KONG, 16 May — A 5.8-magnitude earthquake jolted 98km NNW of Curup, Indonesia at GMT202655 on Friday, the US Geological Survey said.

The epicenter, with a depth of 149.95 km, was initially determined to be at 2.6472 degrees south latitude and 102.1751 degrees east longitude. — Xinhua

Colombia gov’t confirms suspension of aerial coca spraying

BOGOTA, 16 May — Colombia will suspend aerial fumigation of illegal coca plants in light of a number of studies linking the herbicide involved to cancer, a move that marks the end of a decades-long strategy in the country’s fight against drug trafficking.

Spraying coca leaves, which are used to make cocaine, has been a key part of Colombia’s efforts to curb production of some 300 tonnes of cocaine a year that make it one of the world’s biggest producers of the drug.

For two decades, the Andean country has used the herbicide glyphosate to eradicate coca, with financial and technical help from the United States. The strategy also included spraying of poppies, used to make heroin.

“...we’ve taken the decision by a majority of seven to one, to suspend the spraying of areas with glyphosate,” health minister Alejandro Gaviria said, referring to a vote taken by the National Narcotics Council late on Thursday. Various scientific reports, including one by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March, have suggested that the weed killer is likely carcinogenic to humans, Gaviria said.

Spraying will be halted after administrative formalities are completed, which could take several weeks, he added. More than 1.6 million hectares (3.9 million acres) of land in Colombia have been sprayed using the chemical.

Glyphosate is a key ingredient in the world’s most widely used herbicide Roundup, produced by Monsanto Co. Monsanto officials have said the chemical has been proven safe for decades and the company has demanded a retraction from the WHO over its report linking the herbicide to cancer.

Reuters
Rihanna’s 25 kg Met dress thrusts Chinese designer Guo Pei into spotlight

BUENOS AIRES, May 16 — Among the opulent outfits on display at last week’s Met Gala, one dramatic design stole the show.

Stylist Rihanna’s canary-yellow cape dress, trimmed with fur the colour of egg yolk and embroidered with flowers, swept behind her in a seemingly endless trail as she arrived for the ball at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, one of the biggest nights in the fashion season.

Social media lit up with chat about the dress, and the fashion magazine Vogue promptly put it on the front cover of its Met Gala Special Edition, catapulting its Chinese creator Guo Pei into the international spotlight.

Cannes ‘Lobster’ film suggests crustacean could be you

CANNES, (France), 16 May — In the warped world of Greek filmmaker Yorgos Lanthimos’s “Lobster”, society has decreed that single people or those who have lost their mates must find someone during a hotel “dating game” or be turned into an animal of their choice.

The film, in competition at the Cannes film festival where it was shown on Friday, features a somewhat bloated-looking Colin Farrell as an architect whose wife has left him.

He decides upon arrival at the luxury hotel, which is actually in southwest Ireland, that if he fails to find a mate within the 45-day deadline he will become a lobster because it lives 100 years and has blue, as in royal, blood.

The hotel manager applauds him on his choice because most people choose to become dogs.

A critique of the straight-jacket of social convention? The director would not be drawn on the film’s meaning and the lead actors seemed unsure as to what it was all about.

“We really just want to ask the questions and make people consider how we organize our ways of life and, you know, if all the rules that we follow make sense, should we rebel against them, should we make new ones, all these kinds of questions,” Lanthimos said.

One of his previous films, “Dogtooth”, was deeply romantic despite its absurdist trappings.

Farrell, who said he was thrilled the film was made in his native Ireland, added: “I have no clue what it’s about except a sense of the deep loneliness that permeates (modern life).”

Guo, a brand designer already well known in China, says the empress-style gown, one of her most ambitious creations, took some two years to make from its conception in 2008.

“Just designing, choosing the cloth, confirming the colour and getting the material woven in Italy took almost half a year, more or less,” Guo said at her studio in north Beijing.

The designer, who admitted she did not know much about Rihanna when she received the call from the Grammy Award winner, said the 25-kg (55-pound) outfit was designed to be difficult to wear to reflect the responsibilities and challenges of an empress.

“It was really not convinced that she would be able to wear it because… it’s very heavy,” Guo said. “But she later told me ‘This piece of clothing is so beautiful’ (and that)… she gained the courage (to wear it). I really admired that.”

The gown is now back with the designer, who hopes to display it in a museum one day.

Guo says she is now getting used to being in the spotlight. “I have no requirement to gain a certain level of fame,” she said. “I just want to do really beautiful designs that everyone likes.”—Reuters

Celebrities arrive at Vienna for Life Ball 2015

VIENNA, 16 May — Prominent guests are arriving in the Austrian capital of Vienna ahead of Saturday’s Life Ball, one of the largest European charity events for AIDS and HIV awareness.

Paula Abdul, Carmen Electra, Kelly Osbourne, and Dita von Teese were among those to arrive on Friday, and were greeted at the Vienna International Airport by Life Ball founder and organizer Gery Keszler.

Keszler said the fact that numerous celebrities attend the event each year is testament to “a build-up of trust over many years,” and that “one must achieve a certain standing.”

Actress Charlize Theron will attend the event as will her partner and fellow Hollywood star Sean Penn on Saturday. The couple, who Thursday attended the première of the new “Mad Max” film in Cannes, are expected to arrive in Vienna on Friday.

Theron will take part in the First Ladies Lunch-eon at the Belvedere palace where she will deliver a keynote speech on her charity the “Charlize Theron Africa Outreach Project.”

Penn had previously already attended the Life Ball in 2012, the year of the event’s 20th anniversary.—Xinhua

Woody Allen says his TV series will be a ‘cosmic embarrassment’

CANNES, (France), 16 May — Award-winning film Woody Allen fears his first foray into directing for the small screen will be a disaster, saying that he should never have signed up to make a television show for Amazon.com.

Amazon announced in January it had secured a deal for Allen to write and direct a series of half-hour episodes for its streaming television service.

“It is a catastrophic mistake,” the 79-year-old Allen told a news conference in Cannes, where he was presenting his latest movie “Irrational Man”.

“I am doing my best with it. I am struggling with it at home. I should never have gotten into this.”

Allen said he expected shooting 30 minute episodes would be a stroll, but it was turning out to be very tough.

“It’s very hard for me. I thought it was going to be easy. Doing a movie is a big long thing, but to do six half hours I figured it would be a cinch. I do a half hour, I do another half hour, … but it’s not, it’s very, very hard and I just hope I don’t disappoint Amazon,” he said.

“I am struggling with it, I am not good at it, I don’t watch any of those television series really, so I don’t know what I’m doing. I’m floundering. I expect this to be a cosmic embarrassment when it comes out.”

Filmmakers such as Martin Scorsese, Steven Soderbergh, David Fincher and Guillermo del Toro have all made recent forays into television, helping end the stigma that used to be attached to small screen productions in the eyes of the cinema greats.

Allen’s online series is due to come out next year.—Reuters

Woody Allen says his TV series will be a ‘cosmic embarrassment’
Hull suspend Livermore after positive cocaine test

LONDON, 16 May — Hull City have suspended midfielder Jake Livermore after he tested positive for cocaine, British media reported on Friday.

The Premier League club issued a statement confirming that Livermore, 25, had been suspended but gave no reason.

“Following suspension by the FA the club has subsequently suspended Jake Livermore pending further investigations to be made by the FA and our own internal disciplinary procedures,” Hull said in a statement on their website (hullcitytigers.com).

“The club is unable to make any further comment during this process.”

According to the Daily Telegraph, Livermore, who has made one appearance for England, failed a random drug test after the 2-0 win over Crystal Palace last month.

Livermore’s suspension will be a blow to Hull manager Steve Bruce, whose side are scrambling to avoid dropping into the Championship. They are 18th, the final relegation spot, with two matches remaining.

Livermore joined Hull for eight million pounds from Tottenham Hotspur last year.—Reuters

Los Angeles mayor urges city to keep conserving water despite rain

LOS ANGELES, 16 May — A rare May storm has brought much-needed rain to drought-affected Southern California, but Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti on Friday urged residents of the second-largest US city not to slack off on water conservation.

A storm originating in the Gulf of Alaska brought a wave of showers across central and Southern California beginning on Thursday afternoon, delivering up to half an inch (1.3 cm) of rain to parts of the state.

The National Weather Service has called those rainfall totals impressive for late spring in Southern California, a region struggling into its fourth year of a devastating drought that has prompted strict water conservation measures across the state.

“Every little bit of rain helps, but our drought emergency remains critical,” Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said in a statement as a light rain fell across the city.

“Angeleinos must continue aggressive conservation efforts, and in the wake of this storm, sprinklers should be turned off for at least a week,” Garcetti said.

The mayor also reminded residents that Los Angeles was offering rebates to install so-called smart sprinklers that adjust to changing weather and to adopt low-water landscaping.

California’s drought has prompted Governor Jerry Brown to impose the state’s first-ever mandatory conservation measures across communities.—Reuters

Rain clouds move in over downtown Los Angeles, California on 2 March, 2015. Reuters

United duo Rooney and Shaw to miss Arsenal game

LONDON, 16 May — Manchester United captain Wayne Rooney and left back Luke Shaw will miss the Premier League game against Arsenal on Sunday due to injury.

Rooney suffered a dead leg in last weekend’s 2-1 win at Crystal Palace and Shaw sustained a facial injury, the latest in a succession of fitness problems to plague the 19-year-old in his first season at Old Trafford.

United manager Louis van Gaal said he did not want Shaw to play for the England under-21 team at this year’s European Championship. “When you are not playing for Man United you cannot play for other teams,” Van Gaal told reporters on Friday.

“He needs the rest because he has over-crossed the line. He is 19. We have to protect him. I hope the coach of the under-21 team understands that.”

United are fourth in the table, six points ahead of fifth-placed Liverpool, and with a vastly superior goal difference they should secure a place in the Champions League qualifying round even if they lose to Arsenal and Hull City in their last two games.

Victory over the Gunners would lift United one point above their opponents into third but Arsenal have a game in hand.

Influential midfielder Michael Carrick will also miss Sunday’s game but striker Robin van Persie is available to face his former club along with Argentine defender Marcos Rojo.—Reuters

Phelps finishes third in 100 butterfly

WASHINGTON, 16 May — Michael Phelps finished third in the 100 meters butterfly at the Arena Pro Swim Series meet in Charlotte, North Carolina on Friday and conceded he still has a lot of work to do in his bid to return to Olympic competition in Rio next year.

Phelps, competing in his second meet following a six-month ban for a drunk driving conviction, finished behind winner Tom Shields and runner-up Ryan Lochte.

“My turns are still pretty terrible,” the 18-times Olympic gold medallist told reporters. “But it’s a lot better than what it was last year.”

Phelps, the fastest 100 butterfly swimmer in the world last year with a best time of 51.17 seconds, clocked 52.50 on Friday.

Shields won in a time of 52.12. Earlier in the day, Phelps failed to qualify for the 200 freestyle final after clocking 1:56.86.—Reuters

Los Angeles mayor Eric Garcetti urges residents to conserve water despite May storm

Rain clouds move in over downtown Los Angeles, California on 2 March, 2015.: Reuters

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti on Friday urged residents of the second-largest US city not to slack off on water conservation.

A storm originating in the Gulf of Alaska brought a wave of showers across central and Southern California beginning on Thursday afternoon, delivering up to half an inch (1.3 cm) of rain to parts of the state.

The National Weather Service has called those rainfall totals impressive for late spring in Southern California, a region struggling into its fourth year of a devastating drought that has prompted strict water conservation measures across the state.

“Every little bit of rain helps, but our drought emergency remains critical,” Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said in a statement as a light rain fell across the city.

“Angeleinos must continue aggressive conservation efforts, and in the wake of this storm, sprinklers should be turned off for at least a week,” Garcetti said.

The mayor also reminded residents that Los Angeles was offering rebates to install so-called smart sprinklers that adjust to changing weather and to adopt low-water landscaping.

California’s drought has prompted Governor Jerry Brown to impose the state’s first-ever mandatory conservation measures across communities.—Reuters

Los Angeles Woman urges city to keep conserving water despite rain

Los Angeles, 16 May — A rare May storm has brought much-needed rain to drought-affected Southern California, but Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti on Friday urged residents of the second-largest US city not to slack off on water conservation.

A storm originating in the Gulf of Alaska brought a wave of showers across central and Southern California beginning on Thursday afternoon, delivering up to half an inch (1.3 cm) of rain to parts of the state.

The National Weather Service has called those rainfall totals impressive for late spring in Southern California, a region struggling into its fourth year of a devastating drought that has prompted strict water conservation measures across the state.

“Every little bit of rain helps, but our drought emergency remains critical,” Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said in a statement as a light rain fell across the city.

“Angeleinos must continue aggressive conservation efforts, and in the wake of this storm, sprinklers should be turned off for at least a week,” Garcetti said.

The mayor also reminded residents that Los Angeles was offering rebates to install so-called smart sprinklers that adjust to changing weather and to adopt low-water landscaping.

California’s drought has prompted Governor Jerry Brown to impose the state’s first-ever mandatory conservation measures across communities.—Reuters

Phelps finishes third in 100 butterfly

WASHINGTON, 16 May — Michael Phelps finished third in the 100 meters butterfly at the Arena Pro Swim Series meet in Charlotte, North Carolina on Friday and conceded he still has a lot of work to do in his bid to return to Olympic competition in Rio next year.

Phelps, competing in his second meet following a six-month ban for a drunk driving conviction, finished behind winner Tom Shields and runner-up Ryan Lochte.

“My turns are still pretty terrible,” the 18-times Olympic gold medallist told reporters. “But it’s a lot better than what it was last year.”

Phelps, the fastest 100 butterfly swimmer in the world last year with a best time of 51.17 seconds, clocked 52.50 on Friday.

Shields won in a time of 52.12. Earlier in the day, Phelps failed to qualify for the 200 freestyle final after clocking 1:56.86.— Reuters
Nadal upset by Wawrinka as Federer, Djokovic advance

Rafael Nadal of Spain returns the ball to Stan Wawrinka of Switzerland during their men’s quarter-final match at the Rome Open tennis tournament in Rome, Italy, on 15 May, 2015.—Reuters

Roger Federer of Switzerland returns the ball to Pablo Carvass of Uruguay during their tennis match at the Rome Open tennis tournament in Rome, Italy, on 13 May, 2015.—Reuters

Middlesbrough swat away Bees to reach playoff final

Middlesbrough’s Kike celebrates scoring their second goal during Middlesbrough vs Brentford, Sky Bet Football League Championship Play-Off Semi Final Second Leg, at the Riverside Stadium on 15 May, 2015.—Reuters

Shanghai 16 May — Head-to-head featuring the world’s leading athletes are the best way forward for the beleaguered sport of track and field, according to Olympic 400 metres champion Kirani James.

The Grenadian 22-year-old puts his beliefs into action by never shying away from battle with his main rival for one-lap supremacy, American world champion LaShawn Merritt.

On Sunday, the pair will meet for the 14th time over the distance at the IAAF Diamond League meeting in Shanghai, with James adamant that building up such rivalries is key for a sport whose popularity has taken such a hit from doping scandals and ineffective promotion.

The issue has been highlighted again with the likelihood that Justin Gatlin, currently the world number one sprinter, and Usain Bolt, the great Olympic and world champion, are unlikely to race all season until the world championships in Beijing in August.

“Some athletes have different circumstances and their own reasons why they don’t compete in certain meetings and that’s up to them, but I think head-to-head rivalries bring a lot more excitement to the sport,” James told Reuters on Friday.

Individual rivalries can revive athletics

Kirani James of Grenada holds his national flag as he celebrates winning the men’s 400 metres at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland, on 30 July, 2014.—Reuters

Jeff Henderson, with other major attractions including a sprint hurdles showdown between Olympic champion Aries Merritt and world champion David Oliver on the program, James believes athletics still has the sort of cast lists to ensure a revival for a wounded sport.

“There’s a lot of great athletes out there and events like mine, like the men’s high jump and both men and women’s hurdles that are really competitive,” said James.

“I think somewhere, something has gone wrong in the marketing of the sport but if the right people are in the right positions, I still think the sky’s the limit for track and field.”

Middlesbrough, coached by Spaniard Aitor Karanka, will meet Norwich City or Ipswich Town in the final at Wembley on 30 July, 2014.