Nay Pyi Taw, 27 June—The Ministry of Cooperatives distributed more than K 23.1 billion in cash loans and sold over K9.3 billion worth of agricultural machinery to its members Saturday under the rural development programme in Bago Region.

Vice President U Nyan Tun attended the loan-providing event held at Zegone Township Hall in western Bago Region, together with union ministers, deputy ministers, parliamentarians, heads of government agencies and representatives of township cooperatives.

U Nyan Tun said the loan programme aims to reduce poverty and promote health and education for rural households. He also urged the members of cooperatives to use the loans effectively. The government has targeted a reduction in the poverty rate from 26 to 16 percent in the near future.

Chief Minister for Bago region U Nyan Win explained rural development programmes in the region. He and Union Minister for Cooperatives U Kyaw Hsion presented loans to cooperative societies in Bago, Toungoo, Pyay and Thayawady districts.

Information minister warns broadcasters against biased election reporting

Nay Pyi Taw, 27 June—Union Minister for Information U Ye Htut warned TV and radio stations Saturday that they risk losing their broadcasting licenses if they air biased views and breach the industry code of ethics during the campaign period for the upcoming general election.

The minister made the statement at a meeting to clarify the code of ethics for TV and radio broadcasters. Cherry FM was under investigation for improper expressions in two of its programmes — “Happy Time” and “Don’t Get Angry”— he said, adding that similar incidents are likely to arise at other stations.

Violators must apologize publicly and face closure for a specific length of time and lawsuits, he said. Broadcast media face criticism at home and abroad as there arise question of whether their coverage are fair or not than print outlets given the nature of their partnership with Myanma Radio and Television.

U Ye Htut called for strict measures against political bias in news coverage of the election, urging MRTV-4, MNTV and FM stations to give all parties an equal number of political broadcasts. The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister U Paik Htway and representatives of Forever Group Co Ltd, Shwe Than Lwin Media Co Ltd, Mandalay FM, Pyinsawadi FM, Cherry FM, Padamya FM, FM Bagan and Shwe FM.—MNA

Vice President U Nyan Tun observes farm machinery displayed at loan-providing event held in Zegone, western Bago Region.—MNA

Emporium offers gems through tender, competitive bidding

Nay Pyi Taw, 27 June—The fourth day of the 52nd Myanma Gems Emporium 2015 concluded Saturday with precious stones on sale through open tender and competitive bidding.

Local and foreign merchants submitted proposed prices for 236 lots of gems under the open tender system in the morning, and a total of 87 lots were sold in the afternoon through competitive bidding.

The merchants also presented their proposed prices for 236 lots of gems under the open tender system in the morning, and a total of 87 lots were sold in the afternoon through competitive bidding.

The event will offer 236 lots of gems and 8,608 lots of jade through the open tender system, and 87 lots of gems and 335 lots of jades through the competitive bidding system until 6 July.

New K10,000 notes to enter circulation 1 July

Nay Pyi Taw, 27 June—The Central Bank of Myanmar has announced it will issue new, more-durable K10,000 banknotes with improved security features from next month.

The new, varnished banknotes will not affect the legal tender status of older K10,000 notes issued from 15 June 2012, the bank said, adding that the new bills bear the number 10,000 in emerald green and a new type of watermark.

The new K10,000 notes will enter circulation from 1 July.—MNA
Agricultural officials introduce cultivation techniques to local farmers

Mandaly, 27 June — Farmers in Natogyi Township’s Letwe village have grown 204 acres of summer sesame on cropland irrigated by the Pyaungpya Dam in Mandalay Region.

Hsin Yadana strain sesame plants are thriving on the lands of farmers U Moe Tun and U Sein Ko.

Myingyan District officials recently gave a presentation on cultivation techniques for monsoon paddy, cold season chick-pea, onions and summer sesame plantations in the irrigated area.

Philanthropic school nurtures ethnic orphans

Mahlaing, 27 June — A youth development philanthropic school in Monbinlay village of Mahlaing Township, Mandalay Region, has taught orphans from ethnic minorities since its establishment in 1959.

The school admits ethnic children aged 5 and above, with a school population of up to 1,000 students from primary to high school level.

Among the school’s former students are a Buddhist monk who has passed the two-and-a-half treatises of the Tipitaka examination and 15 civil servants.

Kyaw Kyaw (Mahlaing)

8 injured in accident on Yangon-Mandalay Expressway

Pyawbwe, 27 June — An express bus overturned Friday on the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway in Pyawbwe Township, injuring eight people on board.

The bus operated by the Shwesin Sekkyar company overturned between mile posts 251/1 and 251/2 around 5:30 a.m.

Police have opened a case against the driver of the bus, Aye Min, 41, of Shwepaukkan, Yangon Region.

Police Information

Taungup residents face flooding amid heavy rain

Taungup, 27 June — Recent heavy rains have caused severe flooding in four wards of Taungup, Rakhine State.

Roads in urban residential areas were under 3 feet of water until 10 a.m. on 26 June, following the rains that began two days earlier.

The floods forced the closure of markets, schools and some government offices. Some villages surrounding the urban area were also flooded.

Rakhine State IPRD

U-20 footballer shares anti-drug message with students

Kyaukme, 27 June — Footballer Maung Than Paing, who represented Myanmar at the recent FIFA U-20 World Cup, met students from Basic Education High School Nos. 1 to 4 in Kyaukme, northern Shan State, on 25 June, at the invitation of the township’s Anti-Drug Committee.

The star player recounted his experiences training and playing games, giving the students advice on how to overcome challenges. The player donated five footballs to each school. The U-20 striker also demonstrated his football skills and accepted gifts from students.

Chairman of the Anti-Drug Committee U Tin Maung Thein spoke on the occasion.

Myint Aung (KaMa)
Stability important for electoral period, says Thura U Shwe Mann

NASOGY, 27 June—Government, Hluttaws and election commissions will ensure a successful election, while cooperation of political parties, people and security organizations plays crucial role for the stability of the State, said Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker on Saturday in Mahlaing and Natogyi townships of Mandalay region.

During the meetings with the locals, Thura U Shwe Mann added responsible persons from election committees, health and educational sectors, as well as representatives from political parties and local dignities need to work together with the election commission for a free and fair election which is scheduled to be held in early November this year.

Local authorities explained the development programmes of education, health and agricultural sectors in the area, and the Speaker facilitated the activities. —MNA

Vice Senior General meets Cambodian military chief

NAY PYI TAW, 27 June—Vice Senior General Soe Win, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services and Commander-in-Chief (Army), was welcomed by Gen Meas Sophena, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces and Commander of Royal Cambodian Army, at the latter’s office on 26 June.

Vice Senior General Soe Win also separately met Cambodian Commander-in-Chief Gen Pol Saroeun, Defence Minister Gen Tea Banh and Commander Bodyguard Unit Gen Hing Bunhueng at their offices.

They discussed matters related to creating a new level of friendly relationships between the two armies, military exercises, exchange of visits between sports and cultural teams, and cooperation in resolving armed conflicts and terrorism. —MNA

IKBZ Insurance opens its branch in Pyay

YANGON, 27 June—IKBZ Insurance opened its new branch in Pyay, on 27 June.

Deputy Minister for Finance Dr Maung Maung Thein who is also the chairman of the Myanmar Insurance Business Supervisory Board, and officials opened the new office.

At the opening ceremony, the chairman of the residents evacuated amidst floods in Rakhine State

MAUNGTAW, 27 June—Torrential rain in Rakhine State has caused severe flooding in Buthidaung Township, with landslides blocking the motorway to Maungtaung Township on Saturday. Houses and hospitals were inundated as heavy rains continued a day after some residents left their homes for emergency shelters.

Local government departments and social organizations are now providing relief aid to flood victims. —Maungtauw District IPKD

University of East Yangon installs Wi-Fi, plans campus-wide coverage

YANGON, 27 June—Parts of the University of East Yangon have Wi-Fi Internet access following the connection of a fibre cable and installation of a new server, with plans to connect the entire campus in the near future, rector Dr Kyaw Kyaw Khiong said Friday.

The IT upgrade was carried out with K20 million from the government. The main administrative building and offices currently have Wi-Fi, but the university is seeking additional funds to provide campus-wide coverage, the rector added.

Electronic Information for Libraries (EIBL) has offered IT training for faculty members and students. In addition, the university has set up a homepage to provide information about its courses and activities. —GNLM

Japanese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Tateshi Higuchi welcomes Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe of the Office of the C-in-C (Army) and wife at the reception to mark Japan Self-Defense Forces Day on 26 June. —MNA

Weapons, ammunition, drugs seized in Mandalay Region

MANDALAY, 27 June—Police confiscated weapons, ammunition and stimulant tablets while they inspected a private car near Singu Township, Mandalay region, on Saturday.

After a tip-off, the combined team stopped a Toyota Land Cruiser car near mile post 1/0 and found five guns, 252 bullets, two knives, 20 stimulant tablets, walkie-talkies, and accessories. The two suspects on board the car were arrested by the police officer in Singu Township.

Further investigations led to the seizure of some weapons and 19 units of accessories and 18 units of ammunition at Chan Aye Thar Zan Township.

An air rifle was also seized from Soe Thau Aung, 30, and Myint Ko Aung, 31, in the same township. —MNA

Resident of Mandalay

Residents evacuated amid floods in Rakhine State
Japan to launch new body to study extraterrestrial materials

VIENTiane, 27 June — Drug production, trafficking and abuse is a transnational phenomenon with harmful effects for people and communities of both city and countryside of Laos alike, the nation’s Prime Minister said on Friday.

Confirming the country’s resolve in addressing the issue with international partners, Prime Minister Thongsing Tham-mavong said addiction was an issue deeply affecting users and their families in urban, rural and remote areas of the landlocked country.

He also said he will not succumb to pressure to quit as long as he has the support of Malayan and party members.

Sri Lanka to strictly implement election laws during key polls

COLOMBO, 27 June — Sri Lanka’s elections commissioner on Saturday said local elections laws will be strictly implemented and parliamentary elections be held in August.

Elections Commissioner Mahinda Deshapriya said that he will also be writing to all registered political parties seeking clarity on who will be contesting the 17 August parliament elections.

Deshapriya told reporters that the Department of Elections has been given the minimum number of days to prepare for the elections. President Maithripala Sirisena on Friday night dissolved the parliament and declared elections to be held in August, 10 months ahead of schedule.

Deshapriya said his department will prepare for the election within the time it has in hand and ensure everything is in place by election day. He said that over the next week the department will communicate with the political parties which will contest the polls.

The Elections Commissioner said that there are 24 registered parties in Sri Lanka. The Elections Commissioner said that political parties and candidates contesting the polls will be asked not to use the national flag or religious flags when campaigning.

He also said that the campaign office of one political party contesting the election cannot be used to promote another political party also contesting the election.

The use of loud speakers will also be limited to only within the venue of the election related meeting or rally during the campaign period. He said that strict regulations will also be in place for state media on election coverage while private media will be requested to also fall in line with those regulations.

Malaysia’s PM Najib says he will postpone UMNO elections by 18 months

KUALA LUMPUR, 27 June — The United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the biggest party in the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition, will postpone party elections scheduled for next year by 18 months, the country’s prime minister announced on Friday.

“The postponement shall not exceed 18 months from the scheduled date,” Prime Minister Najib Razak said, according to state news agency Bernama.

Razak is the leader of UMNO.

Najib has come under pressure from former premier Mahathir Mohamad to step down over alleged mismanagement of the economy and the performance of a state investment company called 1MDB, whose advisors

Singapore, Australia to ink comprehensive strategic partnership

SINGAPORE, 27 June — Australia Prime Minister Tony Abbott will sign a comprehensive strategic partnership with Singapore during his first visit to the country on Sunday, the Foreign Ministry said on Saturday.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong will sign the partnership deal with Abbott, while a welcome ceremony will be held for his Australian counterpart on Monday. The Australian prime minister will also call on President Tony Tan Keng Yam during his two-day visit, the ministry said.

The agreement will see new levels of integration between the two countries across four sectors: economic, foreign affairs, defence and security, and people-to-people fields.

Abbott will visit the Singapore Botanical Gardens, where an orchid hybrid will be named in honor of the relationship between both countries.

“Prime Minister Abbott’s visit underscores the deep and long-standing ties between the two countries as Singapore and Australia commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations this year,” the ministry said.
Pick of Hiroshima as G-7 venue aimed at encouraging nuke disarmament

Tokyo, 27 June — The Japanese government said on Friday it has picked Hiroshima as the venue for next year’s Group of Seven foreign ministerial meeting to be held ahead of the G-7 summit in May, apparently to call attention to nuclear disarmament by bringing key figures from major powers to the atomic-bombed city.

The announcement of the venue for the meeting, which will see a US secretary of state visit Hiroshima for the first time, comes as local expectations remain strong that US President Barack Obama, who has pledged to seek a world without nuclear weapons, could set foot in the western Japan city devastated by a US atomic bombing in 1945.

Observers say Washington is likely to consider carefully whether the visit of US Secretary of State John Kerry as Hiroshima for the foreign ministerial meeting should be seen as laying the groundwork for a possible visit to the city by Obama.

The Japanese government also said the same day that the G-7 finance ministerial meeting will take place in Sendai, northeastern Japan. At least six more ministerial meetings will be convened in the run-up to the G-7 summit on 26-27 May and their locations will be decided as early as next month.

After the Cabinet decided on the venues for the foreign and finance ministerial meetings, which are likely to be held between March and April next year, Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida told a Press conference, “Hiroshima is an appropriate place for G-7 foreign ministers to gather to send out messages for world peace, prosperity and the future as the city is a symbol of the evacuation from the atomic bombing.”

To promote nuclear disarmament, the Japanese government has called on the world’s political leaders to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the second city destroyed by a US atomic bombing in World War II, to witness the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons.

US Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Russel indicated in April that there remains a possibility that Obama could visit Hiroshima before his term ends in January 2017, saying the president had stated in the past that he would be honored to visit the city.

But the issue is sensitive in the United States where many believe the atomic bombings were necessary to end the war quickly.

Atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima were delighted with the latest announcement as they hope visits by key figures will contribute to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Keiko Ogura, a 77-year-old survivor who has spoken of her terrifying experiences to government officials from other countries, including the United States, said, “I am happy... Realizing what happened in Hiroshima is a step toward realizing a world without nuclear weapons.”

Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui said he will continue to call on Obama and other leaders to visit the city. Meanwhile, Finance Minister Taro Aso explained that Sendai, the venue of the G-7 finance ministerial meeting, has previously hosted international conferences and holding the gathering there “could be a symbol of reconstruction” of Japan’s northeastern region devastated by the earthquake and tsunami in March 2011.

Other ministerial meetings are likely to take up issues such as the environment, energy and economy. The G-7 groups Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.

Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui speaks to reporters in the city on 26 June, 2015, following the Japanese government’s announcement that the 2016 Group of Seven foreign ministerial meeting will be held in Hiroshima. Matsui said he is honored.

Kyodo News

Delivery man beheads boss in suspected Islamist attack on French gas site

Saint-Quentin Fallavier, 27 June — A delivery man with known Islamist connections beheaded his boss and left the body, daubed with Arabic writing, at the site of a US-owned gas factory in southeast France before trying to blow up the complex.

The assailant rammed his delivery van into a warehouse containing gas canisters, triggering an initial explosion, and was arrested minutes later as he tried to open canisters containing flammable chemicals, prosecutors said on Friday.

Police found the head of the victim, the 54-year-old manager of the transport firm that employed the suspect, dangling from a fence. “The head was discovered hanging on the factory’s wire fence, framed by two flags that included references to the shahada, or (Muslim) profession of faith,” Paris public prosecutor Francois Molins told a news conference.

France is still coming to terms with attacks by Islamist gunmen who killed 17 people in January at a satirical weekly newspaper and a Jewish food store.

The latest attack occurred on the same day that a gunman killed at least 37 people in a Tunisian beachside hotel and an Islamic State suicide bomber killed two dozen and wounded more than 200 at a mosque in Kuwait.

“There is no other link other than to say that terrorism is our common enemy,” said President Francois Hollande, returning to Paris from an EU summit in Brussels.

“There should be no doubt as to our country’s ability to protect itself and remain vigilant,” he said, announcing a tightening of national security to levels he said were unprecedented in recent decades.

Hollande said there were reports of a headless body, and police sources said they were in Arabic, but officials did not reveal their content.

 Reuters

Kerry, Zarif see hard work ahead as nuclear talks begin

Vienna, 26 June — Senior US and Iranian officials said hard work was still needed as they met in Vienna on Saturday for what could be their final negotiations to bridge significant differences on an agreement to curb Iran’s nuclear programme.

With a self-imposed deadline approaching on Tuesday, both sides emphasized that major obstacles remained to finalising a deal under which Iran would cut back its nuclear programme in exchange for relief from economic sanctions.

“We have a lot of hard work to do. We have some very tough issues,” US Secretary of State John Kerry said according to a State Department draft transcript. “I agree. Maybe not on the issues. But on the fact that we need to work really hard in order to be able to make progress and move forward,” Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was cited as saying in the transcript.

Nonetheless, Kerry also said he was “hopeful” of a successful outcome. His meeting with Zarif ended after 90 minutes. The main differences are on the pace and timing of sanctions relief for Iran in return for its steps to restrain its nuclear programme and on the nature of monitoring mechanisms to ensure Tehran does not cheat on any agreement.

The United States, Israel and some Western nations fear that Iran has been trying to develop a nuclear weapons capability but Iran says its programme is for peaceful purposes only.

In addition to Iran and the United States, the talks include Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia. Foreign ministers from all the nations, as well as the European Union foreign policy chief, are expected in Vienna in the coming days.

The coming days could be extremely difficult and talks could go over the three days, a senior Western diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

In November, the seven nations involved in the talks set a late March deadline for a framework agreement, which they ultimately reached on 2 April, and a 30 June deadline for a comprehensive deal.

The real deadline is not 30 June but 9 July, diplomats say.

The US delegation must present the deal to Congress by 9 July if a mandatory congressional review period before President Barack Obama can begin suspending sanctions is to be limited to 30 days. After 9 July, the review will last 60 days, according to a law passed recently by US legislators.

Negotiators involved in the talks fear that such a lengthy delay, which would also hold up the cancellation of United Nations nuclear-related sanctions by the UN Security Council, would be too long and would sacrifice the opportunity for any deal agreed in Vienna to unravel.

 Reuters

French special police forces escort a woman from a residential building during a raid in Saint-Priest, near Lyon, France, on 26 June, 2015.

Reuters
Newly disclosed Hillary Clinton emails may undercut her earlier claims

A batch of 15 newly disclosed Hillary Clinton emails appears to contradict her assertion last month that memos about Libya she recently did not include an old friend while she was US secretary of state were “unsolicited.”

Clinton did not hand over the emails to the State Department last year when she provided the agency with what she said was a complete record of her work-related emails, the department said on Thursday night.

The disclosure that the record was incomplete, for reasons that remain unclear, has added to criticism of the favours granted to President Barack Obama by Clinton aide Sidney Blumenthal in reply to a memo on the Libya National Transitional Council in October 2011.

The correspondence. The Republican Party said on Friday it was renewing its demands that Clinton relinquish the server to be examined.

“Any other info about it?” Blumenthal was barred from a job at the State Department by aides to President Barack Obama because of lingering distrust over his role advising Clinton’s run against Obama in the acrimonious 2008 Democratic primary, according to the New York Times.

A Clinton spokesman did not immediately respond to questions about whether the newly disclosed emails undercut Clinton’s comments at a campaign stop in Iowa last month on her relationship with Blumenthal.

“He’s been a friend of mine for a long time and he sent me unsolicited emails, which I passed on in some instances,” Clinton said of Blumenthal in May.

In a March 2012 email, Clinton replied to an email from Blumenthal about possible French, British and British actions in Libya.

“This strains credibility based on what I know,” she wrote to Blumenthal. “Any other info about it?”

In a third example, she thanked Blumenthal for sending her intelligence about the Libyan National Transitional Council in August 2011 ahead of a meeting with NTC leaders. “I’m going to Paris tomorrow night and will meet with [National Transitional Council] leaders to discuss the political and additional info useful,” she told him.

Clinton has seen her trustworthiness ratings erode after the revelations in March about her unusual email habits while she was the nation’s top diplomat.

She used a single private email account for all her personal and work correspondence, connected to a computer server kept in her New York home, an arrangement that she said broke no rules.

In March, Clinton deflected accusations of undue secrecy by saying she had “absolute confidence” she had given any emails that could possibly be work-related to the State Department, including all that mentioned Libya. She later called for the entire cache to be made public.

It remains unclear why Clinton apparently did not include these 15 emails when she handed over her records in December, and whether there are other omissions yet to be made public.

State Department spokesman John Kirby said on Friday the department did not know if other emails were missing.

The unsigned emails first came to light after a Republican-led committee of US lawmakers investigating the 2012 attack on diplomatic staff in Benghazi, Libya, obtained Blumenthal’s record of the emails through a subpoena.

Clinton did include a number of emails between herself and Blumenthal in her disclosure last year. Some of those had already been made public, but none of those examples of Clinton actively encouraging Blumenthal’s correspondence.

Nick Merrill, a Clinton spokesman, said Clinton had provided the State Department with all the work-related correspondence she had in her possession. He declined to say whether emails had been deleted at Clinton’s private server at an earlier date, prior to the department’s request.

Blumenthal could not be reached for comment.

Reuters

Greek PM calls referendum on debt deal for 5 July

ATHENS, 27 June — Greece will hold a referendum on 5 July on the latest debt deal proposed by international lenders, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras said in a televised address to the nation in the early hours of Saturday.

The leftist leader made the dramatic announcement a few hours before a critical Euro Group meeting in Brussels, amid heightened anxiety over a possible Greek default next Tuesday that could potentially spark its exit from the eurozone.

“We are obliged to respond to the ultimatum based on the sovereign will of the Greek people,” he said at the end of an emergency cabinet meeting called on Friday evening upon his return to Athens from marathon negotiations in the Belgian capital.

The Greek prime minister said that his government did its best to reach a viable solution to put an end to austerity under the mandate they received on the 25 January general elections.

He said the Greek side was asked on Thursday to accept a draft proposal that undermines efforts to restore growth and social justice, adding that his suggestion for the conduct of the referendum on whether the proposed agreement with creditors should be accepted or not was unanimously accepted by the cabinet.

He did not ask the Greek people to vote no, but his message was crystal clear by the wording.

“We need to respond to authoritarianism and harsh austerity with democracy, cool-headedness and solidarity in the country which gave birth to democracy, must send a strong democratic reply to the European and international community,” he said.

In his televised address, the Greek leader added that he will formally ask on Saturday for the extension of the Greek bailout programme that expires on 30 June, “so that people can make their decision without pressure and blackmail as dictated by our Constitution and Europe’s democratic tradition.”

Tsipras said that European leaders such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Francois Hollande and European Central Bank (ECB) head Mario Draghi as well as the Greek president and opposition political parties’ leaders had been informed on the referendum plan before the address.

Media commentators in Athens said that developments could be rapid and dramatic before 30 June, when Greece has to repay a 1.8-billion-euro loan installment to the International Monetary Fund with state coffers running empty.

In first comments to media after Tsipras’ speech, opposition parties’ MPs said they feared that the high-stakes gamble could lead to a financial meltdown and a Greek exit from the eurozone and the European Union.

The prime minister’s critics talk about an irresponsible initiative that exposed the country to great risks, calling on people to support pro-European forces.

“Greece is and will remain an integral part of Europe and Europe an integral part of Greece. But Europe with no democracy is a Europe without identity and a compass,” the Greek prime minister said before calling on Greeks to decide unanimously “for future generations, for the history of the Greeks, for sovereignty and the dignity of the Greek people.”

The last time a referendum was called in Greece was in 1974 after the collapse of a seven-year military dictatorship when voters were asked to decide whether the monarchy should be restored.

Seven out of ten Greeks voted no.

A “no” vote in the 5 July referendum would most likely lead Greece to default on its debts and a so-called “Grexit,” or Greek exit from the eurozone, analysts said. According to all the latest surveys, seven out of ten Greeks want to keep Greece afloat and within the eurozone.
UN council told sound of helicopters has Syrians ‘watching for death’

UNITED NATIONS, 27 June — The sound of whirring helicopter blades fills Syrian with fear that “hell and fire” is about to fall in a barrel bomb, a rescue worker told the United Nations Security Council on Friday as pressure mounts for the body to take action to stop civilian killings in Syria.

“This sound means watching for death,” said Raud Saleh, an activist with the Syrian Civil Defence, an organization of rescue workers known as white helmets who rush to the site of bomb and mortar attacks to dig through rubble for survivors.

In the past week UN chief Ban Ki-moon, 71 UN states and nearly 100 human rights groups have urged the Security Council to act on the killing of civilians. France and Spain organised Friday’s informal council meeting on barrel bombs.

Saleh said barrel bombs — steel drums of shrapnel and explosives — were the most lethal weapon. He told the Security Council that rescuers were cannibalising ambulances and fire engines to avoid being targeted.

“As a patriotic Syrian I would never have thought of myself asking one day for a foreign intervention,” Saleh said. “However, the souls of innocent women and children who die every day call us to ask for any intervention possible to put an end to the barbaric killing machine led by (President) Bashar al-Assad.”

Assad has denied that his air force uses barrel bombs. In a video message shown to the 15-member Security Council, UN Syria mediator Staffan de Mistura said that while opposition forces used equally indiscriminate “cannons of hell” — improvised mortars and cooking gas canisters — barrel bombs were “more atrociously effective in killing civilians.” “They are dropped by helicopters and the only ones who have helicopters is the government,” de Mistura said. In February last year, the Security Council warned that the warring parties cease attacks against civilians, including the use of barrel bombs. It threatened to take further steps in the case of non-compliance.

But Russia, backed by China, has shielded its ally Syria from any threats of council action during the four-year war. Russian diplomat Andrey Listov told the council on Friday that any moves by the council should be “united and backed by the Syrian government to legitimately fight terrorism.”

UN Ambassador to the United Nations, Samuntha Power said the words of the council were being mocked by the continued use of barrel bombs and that “government and opposition forces should collectively take action to bring this regime are supporting this practice.”

A Syrian government creation on a pro-democracy movement in 2011 led to an armed uprising. Islamic State militants have used the chaos to declare a caliphate in Syria and Iraq. The United Nations has said that some 220,000 people have been killed in Syria and 12.2 million people need help, including more than 5 million children. About 7.6 million are internally displaced and more than 4 million have fled Syria. — Reuters

Islamic State launched an assault on government-held areas of Hasaka early on Thursday and the United Nations says the violence is estimated to have displaced up to 120,000 people. Islamic State said in statements on Saturday it attacked areas east of the city and in a video posted online claimed to have entered western areas. State television quoted the head of the police in Hasaka as saying its special forces had “eliminated Daesh terrorists” in the city, using an Arabic acronym for the group.

Hasaka is divided into areas run separately by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s regime and Kurdish authorities and has a mixed population of Arabs, Kurds and Christians.

Islamic State has been hit by military bases across Yemen on Friday, residents told Reuters, and the country’s foreign minister was quoted as saying there was no need to convene another peace summit after the first round of talks failed. Talks in Geneva last week ended without a resolution to the conflict, which has claimed more than 2,800 lives, as the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen said they would not hold talks in Switzerland with the United States and Saudi Arabia.

Power said the words of the council were being mocked by the continued use of barrel bombs and that “government and opposition forces should collectively take action to bring this regime that is supporting this practice.”

Kurds secure Syria’s Kobani after Islamic State attack

IRBIL, 27 June — Kurdish fighters said they fully secured the Syrian border town of Kobani on Saturday and killed more than 60 Islamic State militants, two days after the hardline group attacked it with suicide bombers.

Redur Xelil, spokesman for the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia said around eight members of Islamic State had also died of...
Diplomacy, a delicate and yet a demanding mission, difficult to be accomplished

By Aung Khin

In some schools in rural areas, voluntary workers with little training in educational methodology are taking teaching roles, as schools do not have enough teachers. Although this substitution is useful in the short term, it is not a long-term solution.

In remote areas, people without qualifications provide medical treatment for the sick. They cannot be as reliable as certified medical workers, and lives might be lost due to ill-advised treatment.

Unlicensed drivers are to blame for a number of highway accidents that have cost passengers their lives.

In many organizations, managers have insufficient knowledge and experience, meaning they are unable to properly lead the firm and implement long-term strategies.

For a safe society, professionalism is needed across a wide range of roles. Putting unskilled people in positions for which they are not qualified cannot achieve good outcomes.

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.

Reference:
1. Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary
2. Diplomatic Handbook (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
3. Significant terms and their meanings in international law, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Law and Treaties Division Volume (I)
4. The Strait Times newspaper, 31-5-2015 (To be continued)
Emulation Drive For Democracy

Kyi Mun

* Not to go forward is to turn back; And not to be gaining is to be losing. —St. John
* Ever climbing, ever reaching, Ever striving, ever surpassing. Ever gaining, ever accumulating. For Leaders these alone are the ways to attain. —Lao-Tzu
* Emulation means : Trying to do something as well as somebody else because you admire them. —Oxford Dictionary

Democracy is a national affair that must be undertaken by the whole nation as well as by the entire people. Democracy should be built as a WHOLE by the WHOLE people for the WHOLE PURPOSE. Democracy should be completely and fully whole in character and wholesome in quality. So, to establish a WHOLELY BUILT WHOLESEOME Democracy, we should emulate each other in contributing to the nation building in WHOLESEOME DEMOCRACY in the following manner. *E for Effectiveness in Building Democracy M for Managing for Democratic Values U for Unique Character of Our Beliefs & Culture L for Live & Move & Have your Being FOR Democracy A for Awareness of Drive, Strive, Thrive, Arrive & Revive for Democracy T for Think & Grow Strong In Democratic Practices I for Integrity in Building Genuine Democracy O for Out-contribute to Fully Embracing Democracy N for Never Give Up Building Democracy

**EFFECTIVENESS IN BUILDING DEMOCRACY**

To be effective in building democracy, the following aspects will be essentially necessary:

- To be Dedicated
- To be Earnest
- To be Sincere
- To be Integrity-driven
- To be Responsible
- To be Efficient

The meanings of Effectiveness are:

- Doing the RIGHT things
- Being Fully aligned with Vision, Mission & Values
- Consistently & Continuously Advancing towards the Goal & Objective
- Being able to execute the Strategic Plan on time & within Budget
- Being able to get Results, to add Value, to create Wealth & spur Growth
- Results are the measure of effectiveness

**MANAGING FOR DEMOCRATIC CORE VALUES**

In establishing democracy, it is very important to manage the maintenance and development of the democratic Core Values such as:

- Liberty, Equality, Fraternity
- Freedom of Assembly, Speech, Publication and Belief
- Human Rights
- Material, Mental & Moral Development for the Entire people
- Separation and Independence of Executive, Legislative & Judicial Spheres of Power
- National Unity in Diversity
- Development of Peace, Progress & Prosperity

**UNIQUE CHARACTER OF OUR BELIEFS & CULTURE**

National traditions, customs, rites & rituals, ceremonies, cultures, arts and crafts are usually unique both in forms and contents. Just as there should be unity in diversity, there should be tolerance and understanding with regard to the differences in socio-cultures. Just as the features and properties of the multifarious flowers and fruits are different and unique by nature, disparities in various national cultures and arts must be understood and tolerated with perfect awareness of the natural and traditional differences. Even under the influence of the globalization, the uniqueness of the various national cultures must be heartily appreciated with real broadmindedness.

**LIVE & MOVE & HAVE YOUR REIGNING FOR DEMOCRACY**

Just as we don’t live to eat but we eat to live; so also, we should not live to be oppressed, but we should not be oppressed to live. Just as we should live and move and have or being in Dhamma or God, we should certainly live and move and have our being in democracy and for democracy. In the following manner:

- Where there is Hatred, we must sow Love
- Where there is Injury, we must sow Pardon,
- Where there is Sadness, we must sow Joy,
- Where there is Despair, we must sow Hope,
- Where there is Doubt, we must sow Faith,
- Where there is Darkness, we must sow Light
- Where there is Oppression, we must sow Freedom,
- Where there is Dictatorship, we must sow Democracy.

**Awareness of Drive, Strive, Thrive, Arrive & Revive for Democracy**

Broad-based movements should be strategically staged and mobilized with tremendous force and drive. Every nook and corner must be saturated with the blitz of mass movement for democracy and economic development and modernization. There is a saying that you would be able to keep the Precepts or Commandments, only if

**CONCLUSION**

In the emulation drive for democracy, choose your own hero, model or the exemplary figure and emulate him or her in somewhat like the following theme:

This one thing I do. Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the MARK! **

GE donates equipment to hospitals for mothers, newborns

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

YANGON, 27 June— With the aim of reducing maternal and child mortality rates in Myanmar, General Electric International Operations Co. on Saturday donated medical equipment to women’s hospitals in Yangon.

The U.S-based multinational, which makes a vast range of electrical products including medical equipment, gave goods including incubators, ultrasound and LED phototherapy units to Central Women’s Hospital, South Okkalapa Maternal and Children’s Hospital, and Thanlyin District Hospital.

Prof Dr Daw Aye Aye Thein of Central Women’s Hospital said the equipment is “essential for infants and will be used in the Neonatal Intensive-care Unit of the hospital which was established in mid-2014.”

George Washington University said the equipment being used in the unit is GE-brand,” she said at a donation event at the Central Women’s Hospital on that day.

Despite assistance from the government and NGOs, the Central Women’s Hospital is in need of machines like ultrasound and cardiotocography (CTG), a hospital official said.

Currently, there are around 70 infants and 650 mothers at the hospital, which has provided a wide range of medicines free of charge since the government increased its funding two years ago.

GE was the first U.S. company to enter Myanmar after the U.S. government eased sanctions in mid-2012, opening its office in Myanmar in 2013.—GNLM
KFC challenges Indian report on bacteria found in fried chicken

MUMBAI, 27 June — The Indian unit of fast food chain KFC, owned by Yum! Brands Inc (YUM.N), on Friday challenged the results of a test showing the presence of bacteria linked to food poisoning in a sample of its fried chicken, describing them as “false allegations”.

Food safety has hit headlines in India after government food safety inspectors found excess lead in grammettes delivered via the state’s Maggi instant noodles.

The company disputes the test results and a subsequent recall order, but it has become India’s worst safety scare involving packaged food in a decade.

On Friday, a children’s rights group in the southern state of Telangana said it had submitted samples of KFC’s fried chickens legs to the state food laboratory on 18 June. The laboratory report, which was seen by Reuters, detailed traces of bacteria such as E.coli, which indicates the presence of sewage or animal waste, and salmonella.

In a statement, KFC said it had not heard from any authorities and was unclear about the circumstances in which the samples were obtained.

**Conakry, 27 June —** Guinean authorities have launched a home confinement operation in localities affected by Ebola virus in the Basse-Guinea region.

Eleven people in the city died from the virus in Conakry, local sources have said. In Conakry, the authorities confirmed that one person had died recently from the virus. The home confinement began on Tuesday and aims to limit the movement of population in and out of affected areas.

The national anti-Ebola agency said it would provide foodstuff to affected families during the confinement period.

Ebola-hit Sierra Leone also quarantined three doctors and 28 nurses after a woman who had recently given birth tested positive for the deadly virus last Saturday. The Ebola epidemic, believed to the worst on record, has killed more than 11,000 people, mostly in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia since last year.

Liberia was announced Ebola-free in May, but Sierra Leone and Guinea are still in flight with the virus.

Honda cuts FY 2014 net profit on additional air bag recall costs

**Tokyo, 27 June —** Honda Motor Co said on Friday that it had cut its net profit figure by 6% for the last fiscal year as it booked additional costs to replace airbags supplied by Takata Corp.

Japan’s third biggest automaker by volume after Toyota Motor Corp and Nissan Motor Co said it posted a group net profit of 493.01 billion ($4.9 billion) yen in the fiscal year ended 31 March, smaller than the previously reported 522.76 billion yen.

The new figure represents a 14.1 percent drop from the previous year, bigger than the 8.9 percent fall in its earlier earnings report.

Honda also booked extra recall-related costs of 44.8 billion yen after agreeing in May with Takata — the airbag maker — and the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration on a large scale recall of vehicles equipped with the air bags, a Honda spokeswoman said.

At least seven people driving Hondas were killed by faulty Takata air bags after inflators ruptured and hurled metal fragments inside the vehicles.

The deeper on-year profit drop is the latest setback for the Japanese automaker, which is also struggling following recent repeated recalls of its flagship compact Fit model in Japan. The maker of the Civic and Accord sedans had its first net profit fall in three years last fiscal year.

Honda said group operating profit dropped 19.1 percent to 606.88 billion yen in the fiscal year ended March, compared to a 13.1 percent decline to 651.62 billion yen in its previous earnings statement.

Group sales were left unchanged at 12.65 trillion yen, up 6.8 percent. — Kyodo News

Online tools can help manage pain

**Sydney, Australia, 27 June —** People with chronic pain may be able to use online tools to manage their symptoms, lessening the need for frequent doctor visits, an Australian study suggests.

Researchers tested a series of web-based pain management tutorials on a group of adults who had been suffering symptoms for more than six months. Regardless of how much contact the patients had with clinicians, they all experienced significant reductions in disability, anxiety and average pain levels at the end of the eight week experiment as well as three months down the line.

“While face-to-face pain management programmes are important, many adults with chronic pain can benefit from programmes delivered via the internet, and many of them do not need a lot of contact with a clinician in order to benefit,” lead study author Blake Dean, a psychology researcher at Macquarie University in New South Wales, said by email.

Dear and colleagues recruited patients online, then-whitened the group down to 490 adults who had seen a doctor to assess their pain within the past three months, had no psychotic illnesses or severe depression and had regular access to a computer and the internet.

Participants were divided into one of three treatment groups to receive the web-based tutorials along with regular contact with clinicians during the study, optional contact with providers or no contact.

A control group was told they would receive the web-based programme and carried on with their usual treatment with their doctors.

Patients in the regular contact group were required to have weekly phone or email communications with clinicians trained in psychology, while people in the optional contact group were told this was available if they wanted to do it and the non-contact group was told clinicians were only available if they had technical difficulties or a mental health emergency.

The regular contact group had an average of 68 minutes of contact with clinicians over the six-week treatment period, compared with 13 minutes for the optional contact group and about 5 minutes for the group with only emergency contact.

During that time, people in the treatment groups also had five web-based lessons that focused on pain management using cognitive-behaviour therapy techniques.

At the end of the eight weeks, patients in the treatment groups had average reductions of at least 18 percent in disability, 32 percent for anxiety, 36 percent for depression and 12 percent in typical pain levels.

These improvements were sustained or even improved after three months, indicating no significant differences between the intervention groups based on how much contact people had with clinicians.

Cafe Coffee Day files for $181 million IPO

**Mumbai, 27 June —** The firm behind Cafe Coffee Day, India’s biggest home-grown coffee chain, has filed a draft prospectus for regulators for an initial public offering (IPO) to raise as much as $181 million. The company was valued between $1.5 billion and $2 billion in a round of funding in 2014.

Cafe Coffee Day, which has more than 1,500 outlets across India, is owned by Rakesh Ad齐v and his son Siddhartha Ad齐v.

The bankers declined to be identified as they are not authorized to speak to the media.

The company was also valued at $1.5 billion in a round of funding in 2014.

The IPO proceeds will be used to expand into new markets abroad and to support the company’s operations in existing markets.

A worker cleans an exterior of a building next to a KFC restaurant in Beijing

**Guinea, Sierra Leone impose new quarantine after new Ebola cases**
Facebook staff diversity little changed over past year

While Delphi is running a $39,800 JPY, putting the sales goals at 3 billion JPY. Xinhua

Panasonic releases new LED lighting product “TOLSO”

Two rival self-driving cars have close call in California

China’s Beidou navigation system more resistant to jamming

A 3D plastic representation of the Facebook logo is seen in this illustration in Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 13 May. — Reuters

OneWeb sets record launch plan after $500 million funding

Aratana’s experimental appetite stimulator succeeds in study on dogs

Mumbai / Cape Canaveral, 27 June — Privately owned OneWeb announced what it called the world’s largest commercial rocket deal on Thursday after raising $500 million from a group of global investors to support its plans to bring broadband to billions of people via satellite.

The fund-raising attracted backing from Richard Branson’s Virgin Group and Europe’s Airbus Group, which will also build 900 “micro-satellites” designed to extend its reach to remote corners of the world.

OneWeb plans to put a network of 648 small satellites into orbit to provide global broadband and mobile telephone services. The rest of the satellites will be kept on the ground as spares.

The company, based in Britain’s Channel Islands, plans over 65 launches including 39 from Virgin’s spaceflight company, Virgin Galactic, and 21 from Europe’s Arianeuspace using Russian-made Soyuz rockets.

It has estimated the cost of the project at between $1.5 billion and $2 billion.

No other backers in the $500 million funding include Indian billionaire Sunil Mittal’s Bharti Enterprises, Qualcomm, Coca-Cola Co, Mexico’s Grupo Salinas, Hughes Network Systems [HGS-HGU], a unit of EchoStar and Intelsat.

Virgin Galactic expects to be able to fly two or three of OneWeb’s satellites at a time on its small LauncherOne rocket, Chief Executive George Whitesides said.

LauncherOne flies on a carrier jet aircraft called WhiteKnightTwo, which serves as an high-altitude launch platform.

Terms of the contract were not disclosed. Virgin has said LauncherOne will cost less than $10 million per flight.

OneWeb, which plans to start launching satellites from 2017 and aims to start services in 2019, must put its proposed network of low Earth orbit, geosynchronous satellites into space before 2020, or risk losing licenses awarded by international radio spectrum regulators.

Airbus Space and Defense has formed a joint venture with OneWeb to build a high-volume satellite production factory.

OneWeb’s goal is to provide affordable broadband Internet services to rural and underserved regions, enabling voice and data communications via user terminals on the ground.

Before starting OneWeb, Greg Wyler co-founded satellite venture O3b Networks and briefly worked at Google Inc on another project to beam Internet access from space.

Wyler left Google in 2014 to work on his own satellite project, named WorldVu, which later became OneWeb.

Google, along with Fidelity, invested $1 billion earlier this year and other Internet-traffic-satellite project being developed by California-based SpaceX, which was founded by Te sla Motors Chief Executive Elon Musk.— Reuters

A woman poses for photos with Japanese electronics giant Panasonic’s new LED lighting product “TOLSO” in Tokyo, Japan, on 26 June, 2015. Panasonic has put the “TOLSO” series on the market with the price from 12,800 to 39,800 JPY, putting the sales goals at 3 billion JPY. Xinhua

Two rival self-driving cars have close call in California

BEIJING, 26 June — China has made breakthroughs in the anti-jamming capability of its Beidou satellite navigation system (BDS), the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Daily said on Thursday.

The new technology, developed by Wang Feixue and his team from the National University of Defence Technology, has made the satellites 1,000 times more secure, the newspaper said.

In March, China launched the 17th BDS satellite, the first step in expanding the regional system to a global one.

The first BDS satellite was launched in 2000 to provide an alternative to foreign satellite navigation systems. In December 2012, the system began to provide positioning, navigation, timing and short message services to China and some parts of the Asia Pacific.

The BDS global network will have 35 satellites, five of which will be in geostationary orbit. The complete network should be installed by 2020.

China’s Beidou navigation system more resistant to jamming

BGNOVEMBER, 26 June — Facebook Inc (FB.O) released new diversity data on Friday that showed the number of women and minorities has remained little changed over the past year.

The number of women increased only 1 percent, age point, from 31 percent to 32 percent. The number of black people, Hispanics and people of two or more races remained unchanged at 2 percent, 4 percent and 3 percent, respectively.

Diversity among the social network’s tech workers was far less even, with 84 percent men and 16 percent women. Among non-tech workers, 48 percent are men and 52 percent women.

Facebook’s senior leadership is still overwhelmingly white and male. Women comprise only 23 percent of the senior leadership while men comprise 77 percent, unchanged from last year.

More Asian people made up senior leadership with 21 percent this year, compared to 19 percent last year, but the number of senior level Hispanics decreased from 4 percent to 3 percent.

In a blog post, Face book listed several initiatives to increase its diversity. They included a Facebook University training programme, which invites college freshmen from underrepresented groups to spend a summer working alongside Face book mentors, and a training course geared toward conversations about stereotypes and bias.

Reuters

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Reuters
Pakistan heat wave eases after more than 1,150 die

KARACHI, 27 June — Sea breezes brought lower temperatures on Friday to ease a heat wave that killed more than 1,150 people around Pakistan’s trading port city of Karachi during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. Mass funerals were held for 50 unidentified victims on Friday before their bodies were hastily buried. The extreme heat of up to 44 degrees Celsius (111 Fahrenheit) — the hottest test since 1981 — coincided with power failures and triggered sharp criticism of the government’s response in the city of 20 million people.

On Friday, the daily high temperature was about 36 degrees Celsius (97 Fahrenheit), according to Dr Mohammad Hanif of the Director National Weather Forecasting Centre.

The heat, however, left many without fans, water or light at the beginning of Ramadan, when many Muslims fast from dawn till dusk during daylight hours.

“How by Friday, at least 1,150 people have died in the government-run hospitals,” said Anwar Kazmi of the Edhi Foundation, a private charity that runs a network of ambulances and morgues. The stench of rotting corpses pervaded one of those morgues on Friday as workers offered funeral prayers for 50 victims. Afterwards, workers removed the bodies from a hallway so full it was hard to walk through and then piled them into ambulances to be taken to a graveyard. “We waited for three days for any claimants to come forward, and now we are going to bury the 50 bodies,” Edhi’s Amanullah Khan told Reuters, adding that some of the victims appeared to be homeless.

“We are preparing photographs and sue tag numbers in case any claimants turn up later and can identify the body.”

The crisis — following a heat wave in India last month that killed about 2,500 people — illustrates how ill-prepared many developing nations are for the extreme weather conditions that scientists say will accompany global climate change in coming decades. “These types of events are taking place across the world,” Edhi Foundation.

EU urges more defence spending in dangerous times

BRUSSELS, 27 June — European Council President Donald Tusk urged European leaders to spend more on defence on Friday as deadly attacks in France, Tunisia and Kuwait drove home his point about dramatic changes to the security situation in Europe and its neighbourhood. Although their talks were overshadowed by the Greek debt crisis, Britain’s attempt to renegotiate its membership in a row over migration, European Union leaders also discussed at a Brussels summit how to strengthen Europe’s defence industry and how to make Europe a stronger player in the security arena.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg joined the 28 EU leaders to talk about “the new threats facing Europe at a time of hybrid warfare, global terrorism and cyber attacks,” Tusk said.

“Europeans must invest in their own defence to deal with a dramatically changed security environment,” he told a news conference after the summit. Underlining his point, Islamic State claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing that killed 25 people at a mosque in Kuwait, 37 people were killed in a shooting at a Tunisian hotel, and a decapitated body was found after an explosion in France. Many European countries have slashed defence spending since the 2008 financial crisis. That has raised concern in the United States and NATO about Europe’s declining military capabilities, especially at a time of heightened tension with Russia over Ukraine. The spending fall has hit orders for European defence companies, leading them to slash money for research projects, the leaders gave the green light for a pilot scheme that could pave the way for the bloc to help fund defence research projects. Until now, EU research funding has been limited to civilian projects. Stoltenberg’s presence symbolized how NATO and the EU are working more closely together to counter so-called “hybrid” warfare.

The term covers unconventional techniques such as Russia’s use of soldiers without military insignia in Crimea, as well as cyber attacks, economic pressure, propaganda and the use of social media by Islamist militants to recruit supporters. As part of the work, the EU is studying how to counter what it says is deliberate misinformation coordinated by the Kremlin over Moscow’s role and aims in Ukraine and elsewhere in Europe. Russia denies sending soldiers and weapons to fan the separatist conflict in its former Soviet neighbour. The EU launches its own military missions, ranging from training soldiers in Somalia to a new initiative to counter migrant-smuggling from Libya, but it believes it does not gain enough recognition for its efforts.

Obama delivers ‘Amazing Grace’ at funeral of slain pastor

CHARLESTON, (SC), 27 June — An impassioned President Barack Obama addressed thousands of mourners in singing “Amazing Grace” on Friday as the funeral of a slain pastor in Charleston and urged Americans to eliminate symbols of oppression and racism, including the Confederate battle flag. In a speech likely to be considered one of the most memorable of his presidency, Obama paid an emotional tribute to the nine people shot to death at the church and pleaded for Americans to use this tragedy as a way to bridge racial divide.

The shootings last week sparked an intense dialogue over the legacy of slavery and its symbols after photos of the white man charged in the shooting surfaced showing him posing with the Confederate flag on a website that also displayed a racist manifesto.

Politicians and business leaders quickly sought to distance themselves from the Civil War-era battle flag of the Confederacy amid calls for the flag to be lowered from the grounds of South Carolina’s State House.

Obama called the flag “a reminder of systemic oppression and racial subjugation.” “For too long we were blind to the pain that the Confederate flag stirred in too many of our citizens.”

Obama made frequent reference to God’s grace and the failure of the Charleston alderman killed Dylann Roof, 21, to sow bitterness, as witness by the power of forgiveness shown by the victims’ families. “It was a powerful, powerful speech,” said David Rivers, 68, a health professional who was in the crowd. “He had a little reverend in him too. Sounded like Reverend Obama,” he added.

Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal church.

At the end of his speech, Obama launched into a rendition of the 18th century hymn, written by a former slave trader after his conversion to Christianity and often in need of inter-African-American struggles. It was a poignant scene for America’s first black president who has often been reluctant to play up his racial heritage. For a moment, he was alone on stage intoning the hymn before purple-clad mainline ministers beside him smiled, stood up and joined him. Then a church organ kicked in and the mostly African-American crowd of about 5,000 people added their voices.

After the hymn, Obama called out the names of the Charleston shooting victims into the microphone. The crowd responded “Yes,” to every name. The cadence of his speech was more like that of a sermon than an address.

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UN urges EU states to make “concrete commitments” on refugees

GENEVA, 27 June — The United Nations refugee agency said on Friday that the European Union’s decisions on refugees would need to be followed by “concrete commitments” from member states to ease the pressure on Italy and Greece.

European leaders argued into the early hours of Friday over how to handle the crisis in the Mediterranean, agreeing a plan to share out the care of desperate people fleeing war and poverty in north Africa and the Middle East.

They eventually agreed a voluntary scheme aimed at taking in 60,000 people and granted an exclusion for Hungary, which had earlier described the plan as absurd, and Bulgaria, one of the EU’s poorest countries.

People are seen bathing while others cool off from the heat as they are sprayed with water jetting out from a leaking water pipeline in Karachi, Pakistan, on 25 June, 2015.—Reuters
Iran, Venezuela to expand economic cooperation

Iran, Venezuela to expand economic cooperation

Iraq, Venezuela to expand economic cooperation

WEATHER REPORT

BAY INFLUENCE: Monsoon is vigorous in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 28th June, 2015: Rain will be fairly widespread in Sagang, Mandalay and Magway Regions and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of regionally heavy falls in Taninthayi Region, Rakhine, Kayin and Mon States and isolated heavy falls in Bago, Yangon and Ayeayawady Regions, Chin State. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Occasional squalls with rough sea will be experienced off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (45) m.p.h.
“STAR TREK 3” starts filming in Canada

LOS ANGELES, 27 June — The third installment of “Star Trek” movie series has reportedly begun production at the Squamish Boulders, near Vancouver, Canada.

“Star Trek” has begun filming since Thursday, 25 June, under the working title “Washington”, reported Ace Showbiz.

Stars Zachary Quinto and Zoe Saldana took to Instagram to share some images teasing the filming of the movie.

Quinto uploaded a photo showing off his character’s iconic hair style. “someone is preparing to emerge,” he captioned the photo.

The actor also posted a very close-up photo of his eyebrow which is appropriately trimmed to fit his role. Meanwhile, Saldana shared a picture of herself sitting in a makeup chair while reading a magazine. “Trailer time #star-trek,” she captioned the photo. She also posted a funny arm tattoo video which she captioned, “#boredatwork.”

Although the production has been underway, many details of the movie, like the title, have not been confirmed yet.

In April, rumours surfaced that the movie would be called “Star Trek Beyond”. As for plot details, they are being kept under wraps but the story is said to involve the Enterprise going on their five-year mission.

Justin Lin is directing from a script by Simon Peg and Doug Jung. Saldana and Quinto are joined by the likes of Pegg, Chris Pine, Karl Urban, John Cho, Anton Yelchin, Sofia Boutella and Idris Elba.

JJ Abrams, who directed the previous two films, is producing the third film. It is slated for a release in US theatres on 8 July, 2016.—PTI

Male strippers return for one last show in ‘Magic Mike XXL’

LOS ANGELES, 27 June — The world of male stripping returns to the silver screen in “Magic Mike XXL,” with the performers back in the spotlight for one last show.

Picking up the story three years on from 2012’s “Magic Mike”, the sequel sees the cast reunite in the stripper saga, which was loosely based on producer and actor Channing Tatum’s experiences in his career.

“The first movie was a bit of an expose into the darkness of this lifestyle and this was a celebration,” actor Adam Rodriguez said at the film’s premiere on Thursday night. “This is why these guys are friends, why they managed to live this life for so long as they have together and it’s their farewell to it.”

The sequel has expanded the cast and also aims to leave audiences, particularly men, with a positive message, actor Joe Manganiello said.—PTI

Jimmy Fallon injures hand, cancels ‘Tonight Show’ taping

NEW YORK, 27 June — Jimmy Fallon, host of NBC’s “Tonight Show,” had minor surgery after injuring his hand in his New York apartment, his representative said, forcing the cancellation of Friday’s taping of the show.

The 40-year-old comedian is expected to make a full recovery.

“He guys, unfortunately tonight’s taping has been canceled,” NBC said on Twitter. “He’s totally fine, but we’ll be airing a repeat.”

The network said fans with tickets for the taping would be contacted about rescheduling.

Fallon replaced Jay Leno as host of the Comcast Corp-owned network’s flagship late-night talk show last year.

Harry Potter play to hit London stage next year, says Rowling

LONDON, 27 June — Harry Potter, the world’s most famous boy wizard, is set to make his debut on the London stage next year, according to reports which have been created in collaboration with author JK Rowling.

Rowling said on her Twitter feed that the new play was the result of a collaboration between herself and writer Jack Thorne and director John Tiffany.

“I don’t want to say too much more, because I don’t want to spoil what I know will be a real treat for fans,” she said on Twitter. “However, I can say that it is not a prequel!”

One of the world’s best-selling authors, Rowling said she had countless offers to extend the “Harry Potter” story over the years, but felt the play was the only proper medium for a new story.

Tickets for the play, which will open next summer at the Palace Theatre, will go on sale in the autumn. Further details on tickets will be announced on the play’s official website in late July.

The author had previously announced plans for a theatrical production in 2013, exploring the untold story of Harry’s early years as an outcast and orphan.

Her seven “Harry Potter” novels have sold more than 450 million copies around the world, and spawned an eight-part film franchise that grossed more than $7 billion at the worldwide box office.

Rowling is also set to make her screenwriting debut with “Harry Potter” spin-off movie “Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them”, which will see Oscar-winning actor Eddie Redmayne play the lead character of magzoologist Newt Scamander.—Reuters

Come to the theater, ride a chandelier, play a role in show

NEW YORK, 27 June — Aerialists descend in a giant chandelier and lift a guest back up with them, a showgirl leads an audience member back in time to a 1920s Parisian nightclub and actors single out guests for a mysterious experience yet to come.

Immersive theater productions such as “Sleep No More,” an adaptation of “Macbeth” that has been running in New York since 2011, have brought audiences into the performance. But simply putting on a mask to follow the action through vast, rambling warehouses or old hotels is not enough for some audiences.

The latest immersive theater lures them in by giving them roles and responsibilities. “It is a necessary step in the evolution of the form,” said Noah J Nelson, editor of the immersive and interactive theater guide No Proscenium. “Somebody had to try this and there is a real chance it could take off.”

Cynthia von Bühl, the creator of “Speakeasy Dollhouse: Ziegfeld’s Midnight Frolic” which is playing in New York, believes directors and producers are just touching the surface of what is possible in immersive theater.

In her show based on the death of Ziegfeld Folies showgirl and actress Olive Thomas in 1920, guests are transported back to Prohibition-era New York and the Ritz hotel in Paris, where Thomas died.

Audience members, many dressed in period costumes, enter a hidden theater in New York’s Times Square for a show within a show. Guests are given roles and some create their own, blurring the lines between the audience and actors.

“I want to keep pushing it further, like how immersive can you get?” said von Bühl.

A few blocks away, American playwright and producer Randy Weiner has transformed the former 1940s Diamond Horseshoe nightclub in the basement of the Paramount Hotel for his show, “Queen of the Night,” based on Mozart’s opera “The Magic Flute.”

Costumed performers escort guests into the club. Some are whisked away for private meetings or given markers, signifying a role in the show that includes circus acts, dance and a sumptuous feast.

 Reuters

Delysia La Chatte performs as Josephine Baker in “Speakeasy Dollhouse: Ziegfeld’s Midnight Frolic” at the Liberty Theater in New York, in this undated handout photo provided by Matt Ross Public Relations.—Reuters

British writer JK Rowling

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Male strippers return for one last show in ‘Magic Mike XXL’

LOS ANGELES, 27 June — The world of male stripping returns to the silver screen in “Magic Mike XXL,” with the performers back in the spotlight for one last show.

Picking up the story three years on from 2012’s “Magic Mike”, the sequel sees the cast reunite in the stripper saga, which was loosely based on producer and actor Channing Tatum’s experiences early in his career.

“The first movie was a bit of an expose into the darkness of this lifestyle and this was a celebration,” actor Adam Rodriguez said at the film’s premiere on Thursday night. “This is why these guys are friends, why they managed to live this life for so long as they have together and it’s their farewell to it.”

The sequel has expanded the cast and also aims to leave audiences, particularly men, with a positive message, actor Joe Manganiello said.—PTI

Jimmy Fallon injures hand, cancels ‘Tonight Show’ taping

NEW YORK, 27 June — Jimmy Fallon, host of NBC’s “Tonight Show,” had minor surgery after injuring his hand in his New York apartment, his representative said, forcing the cancellation of Friday’s taping of the show.

The 40-year-old comedian is expected to make a full recovery.

“He guys, unfortunately tonight’s taping has been canceled,” NBC said on Twitter. “He’s totally fine, but we’ll be airing a repeat.”

The network said fans with tickets for the taping would be contacted about rescheduling.

Fallon replaced Jay Leno as host of the Comcast Corp-owned network’s flagship late-night talk show last year.

Harry Potter play to hit London stage next year, says Rowling

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British writer JK Rowling
Back to the future as moribund tactic is revived

London, 27 June — The yellowing obituaries are looking premature as serve-and-volley tennis creeps, with a few tweaks, towards a renaissance of sorts.

A number of top men are leading the charge and, in a curious twist, the same blend of technology and lung-busting fitness blandness for all-but killing off this style of play is behind its resurgence.

As players hit harder shots, miss fewer balls and run for hour upon hour, competitors need a ploy to shorten points.

Introducing... the serve-and-volley. It is an old-school move which, used selectively, might just become the newest potent weapon in the armoury of modern players. “At the moment you see the guys winning the slams from the baseline,” former tour pro and leading coach and tennis analyst Darren Cahill told <em>Reuters</em>.

“But then you see the great players of today working on their net games because they know it saves them physically because they have to work so hard to win points.”

“Over the course of a grand slam, seven matches, best of five, they are looking at ways to shorten points to save as much energy as they can. “I think Novak, Rafa and Roger are coming in way more than they were four or five years ago,” Ca hall said of Djokovic, Nadal and Federer.

Time was that unless you know the dark arts of serve-and-volley, you could forget about winning Wimbledon.

Even baseliner Bjorn Borg would roll his rounded shoulders into the ball and race to the net at the All England Club, punching his wooden racket through the white ball.

Not as frequently as John McEnroe, of course, who elevated serve-volley to a higher art form — nor the likes of Pat Cash, Boris Becker and Pete Sampras who followed him.

But, all the same, Borg knew his way around the net — a fact mostly overlooked because his baseline play was so preternatural.

<em>Reuters</em>

Novak Djokovic of Serbia hits a volley to Jeremy Chardy of France in their men’s singles tennis match at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships, in London on this 29 June, 2013 file photo. <em>Reuters</em>

FIFA President Blatter says has not resigned

ZURICH, 27 June — Sepp Blatter has added to speculation he may try to stay on as head of world soccer’s governing body but a source told <em>Reuters</em> on Friday the 79-year-old still intends to stand down as FIFA president.

Blatter’s comments to Swiss newspaper <em>Blick</em> — in which he said he had not resigned — seemed to be less final than on 2 June when he told <em>Reuters</em> that his decision to stand for re-election in 2015 had been taken in the wake of a corruption scandal.

However, a FIFA source close to the story told <em>Reuters</em> on Friday that Blatter’s stance has not changed.

“The he is going,” the source said. “He did not use the word resign on 2 June but he did say he was laying down his mandate and that is exactly what he intends to do.”

Blick said Blatter was speaking on Thursday in his first public appearance since the 2 June news conference.

“I have not resigned, rather I am offering my mandate at an extraordinary congress,” Blatter was quoted as saying in the article published on Friday.

A FIFA spokesman said by email: “We can confirm the quotes in <em>Blick</em> are accurate. They are in line with the speech of the President on 2 June.”

A former Blatter adviser had said previously that the long-serving FIFA president could go back on his promise to stand down from his role.

FIFA said at the time that Klaus Stoehlker, who advised Blatter during this year’s FIFA election campaign, was no longer working with Blatter.

Fueling scepticism over Blatter’s departure was his decision to stand for re-election in 2015 following not to run again in the run-up to his 2011 victory. Blatter, who was re-elected in May, is under pressure to leave sooner rather than later as US and Swiss authorities investigate suspected bribery and corruption at FIFA. Blatter has not been charged with any wrongdoing.

Domenico Scala, the official overseeing the choice of a new president, has said Blatter’s departure is an “indispensable” part of planned reforms to soccer’s governing body.

Blatter spoke at an event for workers building the planned FIFA museum in Zurich, <em>Blick</em> reported.

Also on Friday, one of seven soccer officials arrested in Zurich last month on suspicion of racketeering following a US extradition request had a request for bail rejected, with a Swiss court saying he posed a “risk of flight.” —<em>Reuters</em>

Poland’s Agnieszka Radwanska celebrates winning her semi final match during Aegon International at Devonshire Park, Eastbourne on 26 June, 2015. <em>Reuters</em>

Former champion Radwanska reaches Eastbourne final

LONDON, 27 June — Agnieszka Radwanska continued her pre-Wimbledon tune-up by reaching the final of Eastbourne grass court tournament with a 6-1, 6-7 (3), 6-2 win over America’s Sloane Stephens on Friday.

Radwanska, a Wimbledon runner-up in 2012, will face Belinda Bencic in the final. The 18-year-old Swiss advanced after second-seed Caroline Wozniacki retired while trailing 3-0 in the first set. Radwanska, who won at Eastbourne in 2008, lost to Serena Williams in the Wimbledon final in 2012.

In the men’s event in Nottingham, 12th seed Sam Querrey beat Ukraine’s Alexandr Dolgopolov 4-6, 6-3, 7-5 to set up a final against Uzbekistan’s Denis Istomin, who beat Marcos Baghdatis when the Cypriot retired early in the first set.

<em>Reuters</em>
Tevez holds nerve as Argentina reach Copa America last four

Argentina’s players celebrate the victory at the end of the Quarterfinals match of the Copa America Chile 2015, against Colombia, held in the El Sausalito Stadium, in Vina del Mar city, Chile, on 26 June, 2015. Argentina won 5-4 on penalties.—Xinhua

US beat China 1-0 to face Germany in World Cup semis

OTTAWA, 26 June — The United States set up an early clash with Germany after beating China 1-0 here on Friday in the quarter-final of the 2015 Canada Women’s World Cup.

Carli Lloyd scored the winner with a header in the 51st minute for the Americans, while Germany edged off France 6-5 in penalty shootouts as their game ended 1-1 after extra time.

Friday’s matchup between China and the US rekindled fans a lot about the 1999 World Cup finals between the two sides, which was the milestone of the women’s football history when the US won by penalty shootouts.

China, which missed the 2011 Germany version, are unexpected qualifiers for the last eight round, while the US, which were depletion with starting midfielders Lauren Holiday and Megan Rapinoe, are not at their peak any more.

Facing one of the best defensive teams in the tournament, the US found it hard to break the blocks with only Alex Morgan at front. With Abby Wambach, Rapinoe and Holiday on the bench, the US had to settle with a scoreless first half.

But the US did not wait long for the scoring as Lloyd jumped high in the air to catch a through ball from Julie Johnston and sent the ball into the left corner with her head six minutes after the break.

Lloyd said, “This is the moment I’m waiting for, and preparing for mentally and physically. It was not myself at the beginning, but later I felt freedom to create chances. This win is huge for us on confidence to go into the semis. Everybody feels so happy for the win.”

China put up some attacks after that but did not have clear chances to score against the solid back of the US, which conceded only one goal so far in the tournament.

US head coach Jill Ellis said, “China are noble opponents. We moved ball very well. We made very good choices, good rhythm, and good decisions. The team stepped up at the big moment. Everybody was ready to be pitched in and just did a great job.”

Chinese head coach Hao Wei said he was not happy with himself, but satisfied with the players.

“It’s all my fault for the loss. The players were doing great, prefect. I think the US team is not the one we can quick succeed.

The Arsenal keeper dived low to parry clear Aguero’s drive and somehow bounced straight back to his feet to palm away Messi’s header from the rebound.

Colombia remained under siege as Cristian Zapata almost deflected Angel Di Maria’s cross into his own net before Ospina again came to the rescue.

Ospina’s inspired form continued in the second half. Just minutes after the restart he charged out of the box to punch the ball clear of an onrushing Di Maria after Messi’s deft through ball.

Colombia had a rare chance to score just after the hour but their counterattack was brought undone when James Rodriguez directed a feeble header straight at Romero.

Argentina’s Ever Banega replaced Pastore in the 77th minute and he almost made an immediate impact, sending a rasping shot just over the bar after Messi’s deft through ball.

Argentina had one last chance to put his team ahead late in injury time but his downward header from a corner bounced over the bar.—Xinhua

Singapore seeks deferment of Quah’s service until after Rio

SINGAPORE, 26 June — Singapore can forget about a relay medal at next month’s swimming world championships unless multiple Southeast Asian medallist Quah Zheng Wen is allowed to defer his mandatory national service until after Rio 2016.

The 18-year-old picked up 12 medals at the SEA Games earlier this month, including seven golds, to become the most decorated athlete at the 28th edition of the biennial event.

The next stop should be the world championships which begin on 24 July in Kazan, Russia, but Quah is scheduled to begin two years of full time service within a fortnight, having head coach Sergio Lopez in the dark.

“The strategy for the men’s (medley) relay team is uncertain,” Lopez told local media at the ongoing national championships.

“Hopefully, we will get a deferment. If we don’t, we will have to forget about the relays. It is as simple as that.”