Work Harmoniously Together

It is essential for us all to work together in perfect harmony in the post-independence era of the country. Otherwise, the free Burma will no way be able to taste freedom to the full.

(An excerpt of a radio speech by General Aung San in March 1947)
Pyithu Hluttaw speaker meets local communities in Bago Region

South Korea trade exhibition set to open in Yangon

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing takes part in monsoon tree planting ceremony

Myanmar, India discuss bilateral relations, exchange views on regional, int’l affairs

Waso robes offered to monks and novices in Wa region

Myanmar, India discuss bilateral relations, exchange views on regional, int’l affairs

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Myanmar, India discuss bilateral relations, exchange views on regional, int’l affairs
President U Thein Sein urges peace, unity in Kayah State

NAY PYI TAW, 18 July—President U Thein Sein visited Kayah State on Saturday to attend ceremonies for the opening of a bridge and commencement of state-wide electricity supply via the national grid.

In an address, he urged locals to ensure peace and unity in the state.

U Thein Sein met local communities from Loikaw, the state’s capital, and Demoso Township at the state government office.

The president said the newly opened Thanlwin Bridge (Paswang) will help people link with the Mese area, on the eastern part of Thanlwin river near the Thai border, and promote quality of life of residents.

The government has plans to set up a border trade zone at Mese after discussions with the Thai government, U Thein Sein said.

He added small and medium-scale industries are to be set up to produce export items for the neighboring country. The border state is now supplying power to eight townships and 254 villages.

Electricity could be distributed to only five townships and some villages in Kayah state until 2011, although the Beluchang hydropower project has provided electricity to major cities in the state since 1960.

At the meeting, Union Minister for the President’s Office U Hla Tun, Union Minister for Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development U Ohn Myint, Union Minister for Environmental Conservation and Forestry U Win Tun, Union Minister for Electrical Power U Khin Maung Soe, Union Minister for Commerce U Win Myint, Union Minister for Construction U Kyaw Lin Win and Union Minister for Health Dr Than Aung outlined development programmes in Kayah state.

President U Thein Sein and senior government officials visited Thiri-Mingalar Taunggyi Pagoda and Myo-Nan Pagoda in Loikaw in the morning. They returned to Nay Pyi Taw in the afternoon.—MNA

DVB cerebrates its 23rd anniversary of transmission

YANGON, 18 July—The Democratic Voice of Burma celebrated its 23rd anniversary at the Novotel Hotel here on Saturday.

U Aye Chan Naing, director of DVB Multimedia Group, made a welcoming speech at the ceremony which was attended by Deputy Minister for Information U Pike Htway, Minister for Construction U Kyaw Lin Win, Minister for Health Dr Than Aung, Minister for Fisheries and Rural Development U Ohn Myint, Union Minister for Environmental Conservation and Forestry U Win Tun, Union Minister for Electrical Power U Khin Maung Soe, Union Minister for Commerce U Win Myint, Union Minister for Construction U Kyaw Lin Win and Union Minister for Health Dr Than Aung.

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Vice president inspects Western Yangon University

YANGON, 18 July—The education sector budget has been increasing year by year, Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham said Saturday, in a meeting with faculty at Western Yangon University.

Higher learning institutions should be furnished with necessary teaching aids, the vice president said, urging teachers to concentrate on continuous self-improvement so as to nurture academically excellent students. He also pointed out the need to establish mutually beneficial links with overseas universities.

The vice president took a guided tour of the university, inspecting the geological booth, the library and the language lab.

Opened on 29 June 2001, Western Yangon University has nearly 30,000 students.

It is one of around 180 universities and colleges across the country.—MNA

Sombo Japan Nipponkoa begins operating in Thilawa SEZ

YANGON, 18 July—Sombo Japan Nipponkoa Insurance Inc, one of three Japanese insurers granted a license to operate in the country’s special economic zones, kicked off its insurance business operation in the Thilawa SEZ on Saturday.

The government of Myanmar on May 25 this year granted Sompo Japan Nipponkoa the very first license to operate in a special economic zone.

“So far, we are expecting to provide fire insurance, contractor risk insurance, marine cargo insurance and motor insurance”. said Mr. Keiji Okada, general manager of the company’s Yangoon Representative Office, which was opened in January 1996. “As the underwriting capacity of January 1996. “As the underwriting capacity of Myanmar insurers is limited compared with foreign ones, we can serve investors in the Thilawa SEZ with a larger capacity”, Okada said.

The licenses granted to the three Japanese insurers including Sompo allows them to conduct business not only in the Thilawa SEZ but also in the Dawei and Kyaukpyu SEZs. But, they are not allowed to operate outside the SEZs in accordance with the Insurance Law of Myanmar.

The types of products that the foreign insurance companies are allowed to sell in the SEZs are limited to property insurance, motor insurance, marine cargo insurance, contractor risk insurance and cash insurance, said Deputy Minister for Finance Dr Maung Maung Thein.

Although there are around 15 representative offices of foreign insurers in Myanmar, only three have officially been allowed to conduct business here, he added.
Farmers prepare for new cultivation season in Kyaukse Tsp

Kyaukse, 18 July—Local farmers have been ploughing and nurturing paddy saplings using water from the Zawgyi River in Kyaukse Township, Mandalay Region, as of early July. They use tractors and power-tillers to cultivate land that is difficult to plough by cattle. The 25-day paddy saplings are easy to grow on the farmlands, and weeding should be carried out by power-tiller, a local farmer from Kula village said. Local farmers spend K120,000 per acre on ploughing, paddy transplanting, harvesting and winnowing. Each acre of paddy can yield 80 baskets on average.—Khin Maung Lwin

Kyaukdaga Tsp focuses on rural development tasks

Kyaukdaga, 18 July—Kyaukdaga Township will prioritise construction of roads and bridges, electrification and supply of water in its rural development tasks. Township authorities will build 34 road sections, including rural thoroughfares and laterite roads. A plan is under way to build three wooden bridges and five concrete bridges. Five tube-wells will be sunk in Thabayakhon village-tract to address water shortages for the local residents while one 200-KVA transformer will be installed in Nyaungbintha village, Bago Region, Hluttaw MP U Kyaw Hsan Oo said.

Toungoo Tsp residents attend flood demonstration

Toungoo, 18 July—A flood preparedness demonstration was presented recently in Mogaung Village, on the eastern bank of the Sittoung River in Bago Region’s Toungoo Township. The demonstration gave local people knowledge about rescue and rehabilitation tasks after flooding. Officials of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) supervised the demonstration. Those who attended practiced evacuation, rescue and first-aid.

Maung Shwe Win (Pyay)
Chinese premier meets Japan’s national security advisor in Beijing

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang (R) meets with Japan’s National Security Advisor Shotaro Yachi, who came to China to attend the first China-Japan high-level political dialogue, in Beijing, capital of China, on 17 July, 2015. — Xinhua

Philippines remaining poor in Asia despite faster growth

MANILA, 17 July — Despite impressive economic growth during the past few years, the Philippines continues to be among the poorest countries in Southeast Asia as shown by recent findings of two reputable agencies, one foreign and the other locally-based.

In its report, entitled An Outlook for Key Emerging Asian Markets, released this month, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) said the gap between the rich and the poor in the Philippines has continued to widen.

The EIU is the research analysis division of The Economist Group that includes The Economist newspaper which is based in London but with global affiliations.

The EIU said by 2019, the Philippines will remain one of Southeast Asia’s poorest economies, with a lower level of GDP (gross domestic product) per head than the majority of the region’s other major economies.” Despite the robust growth and rising average income per capita, poor Filipinos would be left behind and they would not feel the gains from a fast-expanding economy, the EIU said.

“The Philippine economy will also remain marked by wide inequalities of income, and the disparity between the richest and practices in violation of duties, discharging public office and corruption on judicial positions. As stipulated by Section 111 (8), those who, according to court judgments or legal orders, have undermined the fairness of an election, are also banned from politics for life. People involved in minor offenses, such as unethical practices and dishonesty in asset declaration, are banned for five years. It is speculated that the new draft will likely keep former prime ministers Thaksin Shinawatra and his sister Yingluck Shinawatra out of politics. Thaksin, who is in self-exile overseas following the 2008 military coup which ousted him from premiership, was convicted in absentia by the Supreme Court of Corruption which landed him a two-year jail term involving a Bangkok land grab scandal a decade ago. Yingluck was impeached by the National Legislative Assembly early this year for alleged dereliction of duty in a controversial rice subsidy scheme. She also faces criminal charges for alleged negligence in the same rice scheme.

Leetrat was noncommittal about whether Thaksin and Yingluck would be affected by these provisions. Xinhua

Chinese economy to pick up in 2nd half of 2015: US analysts

NEW YORK, 17 July — Wall Street analysts have predicted a pick-up of China’s economy in the second half of this year after its gross domestic product (GDP) data for the second quarter was published well above market expectations.

China’s second-quarter GDP expanded 7 percent year-on-year, remaining unchanged from the first quarter. It grew 1.7 percent over the previous quarter, the National Bureau of Statistics announced on Wednesday.

The growth rate beat the media market forecast of 6.9 percent for the second quarter.

“The economic data points released are positive indications that China’s economy is coming through a bottoming process,” said Brendan Ahern, chief investment officer of the US fund company KraneShares.

“Second quarter GDP generally surprised on the upside. The largest driver appears to be the service sector,” said Qu Hongbin, chief China economist with HSBC in a report.

“The acceleration was broad based: primary, secondary and tertiary industries all rebounced sequentially,” said Song Yu, an economist with Goldman Sachs.

The growth rates of 7.5, 7 or 6.5 percent are still in line with the rest of the world. The most positive is the 10.6-percent growth rate in retail sales, which shows the long-run policy benefit of urbanization and raising domestic consumption.

India, Sri Lanka sign currency swap agreement

NEW DELHI, 18 July — India’s central bank, the Reserve Bank of India on Friday signed a special currency swap agreement with the Central Bank of Sri Lanka to let the latter draw 1.1 billion US dollars in six months, said local media.

The agreement is aimed at helping Sri Lanka in availing a safety net against the probable volatility of its currency and providing short-term liquidity that would contribute to Sri Lanka’s economic recovery.

Signed by officials of the two central banks in Mumbai, the arrangement is in addition to the existing Framework on Currency Swap Arrangement for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) member countries, according to Press Trust of India.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in April approved the agreement with Sri Lanka when he visited Colombo.

The framework arrangement for SAARC members has existed since 2012 to swap 2 billion US dollars among the central banks of these countries up to November this year. Xinhua

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Passengers experience a demonstration flight of the ARJ21-700 jet in Xi’an, capital of Shaanxi province, on 17 July, 2015. The ARJ21, short for Advanced Regional Jet for the 21st Century, is a type of regional airliner designed and manufactured by the Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (COMAC). Over twenty representatives were invited on Friday to experience the one-hour demonstration flight and give feedbacks so as to help improve the overall performance of the jet. — Xinhua

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New Greek ministers sworn in after reshuffle

ATHENS, 18 July
New ministers in Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras’ government were sworn in on Saturday after a reshuffle expelled dissidents from his cabinet and began a new phase of negotiations for a third bailout package.

Tsipras sacked hardline former Energy Minister Panagiotis Lafazanis and two deputy ministers on Friday in a change that marked a split with the main leftist faction in the ruling Syriza party following a rebellion over the bailout terms.

Panos Skourletis, a close Tsipras ally who left the labour ministry to take over the vital energy portfolio, said the reshuffle marked “an adjustment by the government to a new reality”.

The deal, approved with the support of opposition parties on Thursday after 39 Syriza rebels withheld their backing, agrees a painful mix of tax hikes, spending cuts and pension cuts as well as a rollback of collective bargaining agreements.

In addition, 50 billion euros ($54.14 billion) in public assets are to be placed in a special privatisation fund to act as collateral for loans of up to 86 billion euros that must now be agreed with European partners. In place of the rebels, Tsipras named allies of his own or his junior coalition partners, the right-wing Independent Greeks party, aiming to seal the bailout accord with European partners over the next few weeks before like new elections.

“Our aim is to negotiate hard for the terms of the agreement, not just to seal it, but on how it will be implemented. There are many vague terms in the text,” said newly-appointed Labour Minister George Katrougalos.

He said the government, elected in January on an anti-austerity platform, would fight for an agreement that was “socially just” and dismissed suggestions that it would have to take on the powerful Eurozone governments and risk street protests. “The Left is with demonstrations. The Left wants the people on the streets,” he said.

Acceptance of the tough bailout terms marked a turnaround for Tsipras after months of acrimonious talks and a referendum that resoundingly rejected a less stringent deal proposed by the lenders. But opinion polls suggest the prime minister’s own popularity remains high.

A poll published on Saturday in the leftist Efimerida Ton Synaktôn newspaper suggested Syriza would get 42.5 percent of the vote if an election were held next month, almost double a conservative New Democracy’s 21.5 percent.

In addition, 70 percent said they would prefer to accept the bailout deal if it kept Greece in the euro.

Negotiations on the package are set to begin from Monday, with parliaments in Germany and other European countries giving their asset and European authorities approved emergency funding that should enable Athens to avoid defaulting on a 3.5 billion euro debt repayment due on Monday.

The European Central Bank has also agreed to release 900 million euros in emergency credit next week to the stricken Greek banking sector. But banks remain closed until at least Sunday and it is still unclear whether they will be able to reopen immediately.
EU panel urges more pilot screening after Germanwings crash

LONDON / BERLIN, 18 July — A task force set up after the Germanwings disaster has recommended improved psychological screening for new pilots, a European database with details of medical visits and better support networks to reduce the risks of a similar tragedy.

The panel of experts led by Europe’s aviation safety regulator also called for the introduction of random drugs and alcohol testing of pilots and better oversight of the doctors responsible for their regular medical checks. It delivered its findings to the European Commission on Friday.

European Union Transport Commissioner Violeta Bulc ordered the review after a young pilot barricaded himself inside the cockpit and crashed a Germanwings jumbo into the Alps, killing all 150 people on board.

Prosecutors have found evidence that the co-pilot, who had suffered severe depression and may have feared losing his job, had researched suicide methods and concealed an illness from his employer, sparking a debate on supervision and medical secrecy.

“We don’t know everything that happened in this tragedy but we know a certain number of causes,” Patrick Ky, executive director of the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), told Reuters.

The idea is to “minimise the risk of a similar tragedy in the future”, he said in an interview. The psychological tests would apply only to new pilots because it would be difficult to implement them for those currently flying, an EU official said.

Co-pilot Andreas Lubitz broke off his training due to period of severe depression, but Germanwings parent Lufthansa (LHAG.DE) has said he passed all medical and suitability tests again upon resuming training.

The EASA panel is proposing better support schemes to allow pilots or colleagues to come forward with concerns about health or other issues and discuss them confidentially.

Unions backed the proposal.

“It’s important for pilots not to want to hide problems because of the fear they will lose their jobs,” Markus Wahl, a spokesman for German pilots’ union Vereinigung Cockpit, said.

The EASA task force drew from airlines, flight crews, doctors and aviation authorities — did not recommend changes to cockpit doors that were specially strengthened after the 11 September, 2001, attacks in the United States.

But it endorsed a recent shift towards ensuring that there are always two people in the cockpit.

France’s BEA crash investigation agency said that Lubitz took advantage of toilet breaks by the captain, both to rehearse the manoeuvre on the previous flight and then to carry out his plan to destroy the jet on flight 9525.

"The head of the agency welcomed the EASA findings, even though it is still working on its own recommendations. It is studying whether cockpit door-locking systems should be changed and how to balance safety with medical secrecy, a sensitive issue in nations such as France and Germany."

BEA Director Remi Jouty told Reuters that both areas raised difficult dilemmas.

“Can’t imagine a miracle solution (on cockpit doors) that would increase safety without weakening security,” he said.

One question to be examined is whether the roles can be changed without creating disproportionate risks, he added.

The medical database proposed by EASA would initially only record the dates and places of specialist “medical” check-ups and whether a pilot had been deemed fit to fly.

That would not have helped in the case of Lubitz, who is suspected of concealing notes written by a general practitioner, but would prevent what Ky called “medical tourism” or going abroad to get a favourable certificate for the pilot licence.

EASA called for a deeper examination of medical secrecy in all 28 EU nations. Some such as Britain already advise doctors to report any concerns where public safety is at stake.

The BEA is looking at whether concerns between pilots and general doctors should also come under scrutiny, but officials agree that it is unlikely to trigger a difficult debate about privacy that goes beyond aviation.

Reuters

Israel signals may ask for more US military aid over Iran deal

JERUSALEM, 18 July — Israel signalled on Friday that it would ask the United States for increased military aid to counter any threats that may emerge as a result of the international agreement on Iran’s nuclear programme.

Israel gets $3 billion (£1.92 billion) in annual military aid from Washington under a package due to expire in 2017 and has in recent years secured hundreds of millions of dollars in additional US funding for missile defence.

Israel and the United States had been in talks on future grants but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu suspended them in the run-up to Tuesday’s agreement which curtails Iran’s nuclear projects, which he condemned as insufficient.

Netanyahu plans to lobby the US Congress next month to approve the nuclear deal.

But Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon on Friday appeared to regard congressional ratification as a foregone conclusion and described the deferral of aid discussions with Washington as an opportunity to assess the ramifications of the agreement.

“We talk about the American defence aid, it is clear that the situation here has changed and must be studied,” Yaalon told Israel’s Channel 2 TV.

Yaalon said Teheran’s economic gains from a lifting of Western sanctions could boost Iran-backed guerrillas in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. It could also lead to an arms race with Arab states unfriendly to Israel, he said.

“We will ultimately, of course, have to go and talk about the trade-offs that Israel has coming to it in order to preserve a qualitative edge,” he said, referring to Israel’s military superiority in the Middle East.

This would not be next week, when US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter visits Israel, he said.

“It will be in several months, certainly, after the (Iran) deal is approved and studied.”

Before Netanyahu’s suspension of aid talks, the two sides were close to a new package of grants starting in 2017 and worth $3.6 billion-$3.7 billion. US and Israeli officials said.

That sum would likely rise once talks resumed, they said.

In the interim, defence-related contacts between the allies have not ceased completely. Yediot Ahronoth newspaper said Defence Ministry director-general Dan Harel was in the United States this week to assay the Obama administration’s planned military aid to Gulf Arab states and its impact on the Israeli “qualitative edge”.

A US official confirmed Harel’s US trip to Reuters but did not comment on Yediot’s account of what was discussed.

Isaac Herzog, centre-left leader of Israel’s parliamentary opposition, closed ranks with Netanyahu against the Iran nuclear deal and said he would go to Washington “to work on advancing a package of security measures befitting the new situation”.

Reuters

Brazil’s Rousseff warns against anti-democratic moves in region

BRASILIA, 18 July — Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff told regional peers on Friday there is no room for “anti-democratic adventurism” in South America, a day after the speaker of Brazil’s lower house said he was weighing legal arguments for her impeachment.

Speaking to the heads of state of the Mercosur trade bloc, Rousseff said political leaders should strive for dialogue to resolve ideological differences.

Rousseff comments came just two hours after the speaker of the lower house of Congress, Eduardo Cunha, broke ties with her government.

White House says restoring Cuba ties has strong support in Congress

WASHINGTON, 18 July — US restoration of relations with Cuba has strong support in Congress except for a vocal minority with “entrenched partisan interests” who have tried to block the move, the White House said on Friday.

Spokesman Josh Earnest said the Obama administration will try to move forward on US-Cuba relations using all the authorities it has. He said he does not expect the Republican-dominated US Senate to move rapidly on any nominee the administration puts forth to become ambassador to Cuba.—Reuters
Corruption stands in way of development

By Aung Khin

The current administration has vowed to ensure a “clean government and good governance” since taking office in 2011. It has passed a number of laws aimed at improving the management of government agencies. Despite the liberalizing reforms of the government, corruption remains one of the biggest concerns and barriers to development for Myanmar. Although the government has warned civil service staff about accepting bribes, people are still reporting having to pay extra money at government offices, including additional charges for documents. Small-scale, bureaucratic or petty corruption is the everyday graft that undermines the image of government.

People encounter such petty corruption at public service branches including schools licensing authorities, police and taxation authorities, just to name a few. This petty corruption can undermine the trust between the people and the government, while chronic corruption can damage the economy of an entire country.

The administration and government agencies are like the locomotive and the carriages. If the carriages derail, the locomotive will not move forward. Ensuring the cars are on the right track is like tightening law enforcement. Any plan, at state level or among private firms, needs proper oversight to avoid corrupt activities.

Fighting corruption is necessary to achieve a fair and just society. Without making these efforts, the goals of the government cannot be achieved.

Yaza Kumar Stone Inscription which the credit of World Cultural Heritage is long overdue (Part II)

Unlike in the case of Yaza Kumar Inscription, the background history of the discovery of the Rosetta inscribed stone is different. It was first discovered by chance by an amateur collector of antiquities, who was a French soldier named Pierre-Francois Bouchard, of the Napoleonic Expedition to Egypt. During the Battle of the Nile between Britain and France under Napoleon Bonaparte fought in 1799, the said French soldier strolled around the nearby ruined monuments whenever the fighting was suspended. It was near a village named Rosetta on the delta of the Nile that he found the stone among the debris in 1799. In 1801, when the British defeated the French and took over the ancient Egyptian seaport capital Alexandria, Rosetta stone inscription was taken to England. Now it is on display at the British Museum, London. This Rosetta stone of 3 feet 9 inches high, 2 feet 4 ½ inches wide and 11 inches thick has the upper portion and the right side corner broken and the brokeneries are still at large.

As in the case of Yaza Kumar stone inscription, the Rosetta stone inscription gives clues to the deciphering of Hieroglyphics [Pictorial writing of ancient Egypt]. From other two scripts Demotic and ancient Greek clues were obtained. An English philologist named Thomas Young first picked out the word “Prolemy” from Egyptian Hieroglyphics through Demotic and ancient Greek. But it was the French scholar Jean-Francois Champollion in Paris who was able to transliterate the entire Egyptian Hieroglyphics in 1822.

The text of the Rosetta was a decree issued at Memphis, ancient Egypt in the year 196 B.C. on behalf of King Ptolemy V. After the coronation of King Ptolemy V the decree was issued establishing the divine cult of the new ruler and permitting other cults to exist by a congress of priests. So like Yaza Kumar stone inscription, the Rosetta stone inscription was the essential key to modern understanding of ancient Egyptian literature and civilization. The term Rosetta Stone is now used in other contexts as the name for the essential clue to a new field of knowledge.

Just as the Rosetta Stone continues to be a popular subject of study among scholars, so also is Yaza Kumar Stone Inscription.

Myanmar People, both monks and laymen alike are very much thankful to the UNESCO for enlisting the world’s largest marble Book at Mandalay in the memory of the world and three ancient Pyu city states of Vishnu, Sri Kestra and Hanlin admitted into the World Cultural Heritage. They are also hopeful that Yaza Kumar Stone Inscription and other inscriptions of similar nature and value across the country queues up for UNESCO’s attention would get their deserving places in the world.

Maha Saddhama Jotika dhaja
Sithu, Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

(Continued from 18-7-2015)

Scholars across the world are tempted to compare Yaza Kumar Stone Inscriptions with other stone inscriptions of similar nature, particularly the Rosetta Stone Inscription.

“The Rosetta stone is a granodiorite stele” inscribed with three scripts on one page, apportioned into three divisions. In upper division is the text in ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, in the middle is the same text in Demotic script and the lower division bears the same text in ancient Greek. Because it presents essentially the same text in all three scripts [with some minor differences among them], it provided, like Yaza Kumar Stone Inscription, the key to the modern understanding of Egyptian hieroglyphs.

It measures 45 inches high, 28.5 inches wide and 11 inches thick. The date of the inscribed stone is 196 B.C. very much older than Yaza Kumar Inscription. But like the latter, the Rosetta is not the oldest but only one of old Egyptian inscriptions. However both the Rosetta and Yaza Kumar deserve the credit of a certain degree of antiquity in the context of the histories of their respective countries.

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Secretariat Building tells story of Martyrs’ Day

General Aung San and his colleagues were assassinated at 10:37 a.m. on Saturday, 19 July 1947 while they were gathered to discuss the rebuilding of newly independent Myanmar at a meeting room in the Secretariat Building in Yangon.

The photos taken by Ye Khaung Nyunt and Myat Thandar Maung of the Myanmar News Agency on 17 July 2015 show the historic places where General Aung San and other leaders were assassinated.

The building in which the martyrs were assassinated.

Stairs leading to the meeting room.

The corridor in front of the meeting room.

The stairs used by the assassins.

A place where General Aung San sat and where he was assassinated.

Monument to the Martyrs:
The inscription reads, “Minister General Aung San, Deputy Chairman of the Executive Council of Burma, born on 1st Waxing Day of the month of Taboung, 1276 (Myanmar Era) and died at 10:45 am on Saturday, 2nd Waxing Day of the month of Wagaung, 1309 (Myanmar Era)”. 
15 killed in tribal clashes in southern Libya

Baghdad, 18 July — More than 100 people were killed in a suicide car bombing at a busy market in an Iraqi town on Friday, in one of the deadliest attacks carried out by Islamic State militants since they overran large parts of the country.

The blast brought down several buildings in Khan Bani Saad, about 30 km (20 miles) northeast of Baghdad, crushing to death people who were celebrating the end of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, police and medics said.

Islamic State, which controls large parts of northern and western Iraq, has claimed responsibility for the attack in the mixed eastern province of Diyala where Khan Bani Saad is located and said the target was "rejectionists", as the group refers to Shi'ite Muslims.

Angry crowds went on the rampage after the explosion, smashing the windows of cars parked in the street in grief and anger. Body parts were flung onto the roofs of nearby buildings by the force of the blast, police said.

"Some people were using vegetable boxes to collect children's body parts," said police major Ahmed al-Tamimi from the site of the explosion, describing the damage to the market as "devastating".

An officer from the Diya police command said rescue crews were still retrieving bodies from under the debris so the death toll could rise.

The Diyala provincial government declared three days' mourning and ordered all parks and entertainment places to close for the rest of the Eid al-Fitr holiday to pre-empt any further attacks.

Islamic State said in a statement issued on Twitter that the attack was to avenge the killing of Sunni Muslims in the northern Iraqi town of Hawija, and that the suicide car bomb was carrying around three tonnes of explosives.

Iraqi officials declared victory over Islamic State in Diyala earlier this year after security forces and Shi'ite paramilitaries drove them out of towns and villages there, but the insurgents remain active in the province.

Security forces and militia groups are currently focussed on the western province of Anbar, where they have been gearing up for the rest of Ramadan, police and elders reconciliation efforts.—Xinhua

Islamic State used poison gas in northeast Syria — Kurds, monitor

A Civil Defence member carries a damaged canister in Ibleen village from what activists said was a chlorine gas attack, on Kannaja, Ibleen and Ijaz villages, Idlib countryside on 3 May, 2015.—Reuters

Brussels, 18 July — The Islamic State group used poison gas in attacks against Kurdish-controlled areas of northeastern Syria in late June, a Syrian Kurdish militia and a group monitoring the Syrian conflict said on Saturday.

Two UK-based organizations investigating the attack said they had confirmed Islamic State’s use of chemical weapons against Kurdish forces and civilian targets in Syria and Iraq, where they said chemical agents were also used in an attack on an Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga position on 21 or 22 June.

Kurdish forces are playing a vital role in the fight against Islamic State in both Syria and Iraq. The ultra-radical group has seized wide areas of both countries, declaring them part of a cross-border "caliphate" claiming to rule all Muslims.

The Syrian Kurdish YPG militia said Islamic State had "fired "makeshift chemical projectiles" on 28 June at a YPG-controlled area of the city of Hasaka, and at YPG positions south of the town of Tel Brak to the northeast of Hasaka city.

It was the first Islamic State attack of its kind against the YPG, said Redur Xelil, spokesman for the militia.

The type of chemical used had not been definitively determined, he said. None of the YPG fighters exposed to the gas had died because they were quickly taken to hospital.

The White House said it was aware of the reports of chemical weapons use and was seeking additional information.

"We continue to monitor these reports closely," Alistair Baskey, a spokesman for the White House National Security Council, said in a statement.

The YPG has emerged as an important partner for the US-led campaign against Islamic State. Backed by US-led air strikes, the YPG has seized wide areas of northern Syria from Islamic State in recent battles — has long sought the prize of the city of Raqqa, Islamic State’s eastern capital, and fighters in Yemen’s south — the setting for most of the recent battles — has long sought independence from the North, the Houthis’ home.

Residents said Houthis forces and their allies in Yemen’s army made an attempt to regroup and take back northern fringes of Aden on Friday, firing rockets at the Khor Maksar district.

Their push was repelled, anti-Houthi fighters said, and an offensive backed by air strikes is underway to take Amad air base, one of Yemen’s largest, 60 km (40 miles) north of Aden.

50 killed as twin blasts hit Muslim praying ground in Nigeria: official

Abuja, 18 July — Fifty people were killed in twin blasts that hit a Muslim praying ground in northeastern Nigeria on Friday, an official told Xinhua.

The incident took place in Damaturu city, capital of Yobe state, which is the heart of Nigeria’s northeastern state of Yobe, as local residents gathered for prayers on Eid al- Fitr, which marks the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Spokesperson for the Nigerian army Col Sani Usman said 43 people were killed in the first blast which occurred at about 7:40 am local time (0640 GMT), as some Muslim faithfuls arrived at the praying ground located in Layin Gwange in central Damaturu.

A second blast, which followed two minutes later, killed seven other people, he said, adding several people were injured.

Usman said two female suicide bombers carried out the attacks, adding that the first attack was carried out by an elderly woman and the second bomb was detonated by a 10-year-old girl.

The attack occurred less than 24 hours after Gombe, another northeastern state in Nigeria, witnessed two bombings in a local market on Thursday which killed at least 25 people and injured more than 30.

Local people are blaming the terrorist group Boko Haram for recent attacks in Nigeria. The group usually claims responsibility for such attacks in the West African country.

Boko Haram has killed more than 13,000 people in violent attacks carried out since 2009 in Nigeria. Africa’s most populous country.

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Their push was repelled, anti-Houthi fighters said, and an offensive backed by air strikes is underway to take Amad air base, one of Yemen’s largest, 60 km (40 miles) north of Aden.

Reuters

Military vehicles of the Southern Resistance fighters move during clashes with Houthis fighters on a street in Yemen’s southern port city of Aden on 17 July, 2015.—Reuters

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Reuters
Aerobic exercise helpful for asthma

NEW YORK, 18 July — People with moderate to severe asthma who add aerobic exercise to their treatment regimen may have an easier time controlling common symptoms than people who rely on drugs alone, a small study suggests.

Patients randomly assigned to a three-month treadmill exercise regimen showed decreases in two aspects of the illness that make it difficult to breathe: inflammation and heightened sensitivity in the airway.

While it’s not surprising that asthma patients may benefit from aerobic exercise, the findings offer new evidence that physical activity can help even in people who are already controlling symptoms with medication, said lead author Dr Celso Carvalho, a researcher at the University of Sao Paulo School of Medicine in Brazil.

“This information strongly suggests that aerobic exercise has an anti-inflammatory effect in asthma,” Carvalho said by email. The findings point to a potential benefit of exercise for enhancing the effectiveness of treatment with drugs, he said.

Globally, an estimated 235 million people suffer from asthma, according to the World Health Organization.

The incurable chronic disease leads to sudden attacks of breathlessness and wheezing. During attacks, the lining of the bronchial tubes swells, narrowing the airways and restricting the flow of air in and out of the lungs.

Many people with asthma routinely or periodically take daily anti-inflammatory medications to reduce swelling and mucus production in the airways, which can help control or prevent symptoms.

In addition, asthma patients may use drugs known as bronchodilators, which come in long-acting forms to control symptoms and short-acting versions to help stop sudden attacks. These drugs relax the muscle bands that tighten around the airways, letting more air in and out of the lungs.

Carvalho and colleagues studied the impact of exercise on 43 asthma patients between 20 and 59 years old, whose symptoms had been well managed by drugs for at least 30 days and who had been monitored by their doctors for at least six months.

They excluded patients who had cardiovascular, musculoskeletal or other chronic lung diseases, as well as current or former smokers and people who already regularly got plenty of exercise.

Regardless of whether or not they were assigned to the exercise group, all patients received yoga breathing classes twice a week for 12 weeks. The exercisers also worked out on treadmills for 35 minutes twice a week.

By the end of the study, bronchial hyper-responsiveness, or extreme sensitivity that causes narrowing of the airways, decreased significantly in the exercise group but not in the other patients.

Exercise also appeared to curb levels of some proteins, known as cytokines, linked to inflammation.

One limitation of the study, in addition to its small size, is that the cytokines, which were measured in blood tests, may not necessarily reflect airway inflammation specifically, the authors acknowledge in the journal Thorax.

Another concern is that exercise may actually trigger an asthma attack, said Dr Simon Bacon, an exercise science professor at Concordia University and director of the Rehabilitation Centre at Sacred Heart Hospital of Montreal in Canada.

To minimize the risk, patients may need to use an inhaler before they start exercising, and also take care to cool down properly at the end of a workout, Bacon, who wasn’t involved in the study, said by email.

“With the growing evidence that aerobic exercise seems to help, and certainly doesn’t seem to harm, patients with asthma, I think doctors can start suggesting this as a good add-on to regular asthma treatments,” Bacon said.— Reuters

China home prices rise for second month in June

BEIJING, 18 July — Chinese home prices rose for a second month in a row in June, on a monthly basis, indicating that government efforts to boost the struggling property sector have started to gain traction. Average new home prices rose 0.4 percent in June versus May, according to Reuters calculations from official data published on Saturday. That was a faster gain than the 0.2 percent rise in May, the first monthly increase since April 2014.

The second month of rising prices is a sign ofbottoming out for one of the country’s key sectors and should ease fears of a sharp slowdown in China’s economy. On Wednesday, China reported annual growth of 7 percent in the second quarter of this year. A mild recovery in the market could be welcomed by the government as long as it does not turn into a swift rebound, which would risk of rekindling property bubbles.

Sheng Laiyun, spokesman of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), said on Wednesday the property sector had shown marked improvement in the second quarter, boding well for the broad economy.

Still, high inventories of unsold homes have weighed in most small cities and developers have slowed the pace of construction, underscoring the unlikeliness of a quick recovery in the property market this year.— Reuters

Panasonic launches 3-D figurine portrait service in Osaka

A model stands at a space inside Panasonic Center Osaka for producing a figurine portrait by using 3-D scanning technology on 17 July, 2015 in the western Japanese city.

KYODO NEWS
Osaka, 18 July — Panasonic Corp on Friday began offering a figurine portrait service employing newly developed 3-D scanning technology.

Images of customers are taken using 120 digital cameras, creating 3-D data for the production of a figurine a tenth the size for about 60,000 yen ($483).

The system was developed in cooperation with 3-D printing and scanning company Uet Inc. The new service is being offered at Panasonic Centre Osaka. The new service is being offered at Pana- sonic Centre Osaka. Kyodo News

JPMorgan reaches $388 million settlement in mortgage securities case

NEW YORK, 18 July — JPMorgan Chase & Co (JPM.N) agreed to pay $388 million (249 million pounds) to settle a suit by investors claiming that the largest US bank had misled them about the safety of $10 billion worth of residential mortgage-backed securities it sold before the financial crisis.

The lawsuit said that after Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc failed, the certificates were worth at most 62 cents on the dollar. JPMorgan agreed to a $13 billion settlement with the Justice Department in 2013 over allegations that the bank had misled investors in mortgage-backed securities about the soundness and risks of the investments that helped bring on the subprime-mortgage crisis of 2008.

Throughout the litigation process, JPMorgan has said that the poor performance of the certificates was not due to the quality of the loans, but was caused by the collapse of the overall economy.

The $388 million settlement was disclosed in a court filing on Friday. It is subject to approval by a judge.

The case, whose caption names a different plaintiff, is Fort Worth Employees’ Retirement Fund v JPMorgan Chase & Co, US District Court, Southern District of New York, No 09-03701.— Reuters

A view of the exterior of the JP Morgan Chase & Co Corporate headquarters in the Manhattan borough of New York City, on 20 May, 2015.— Reuters
Suspect in slaying of US Marines made 2014 trip to Mideast

CHATTANOOGA, 18 July — The suspect in the fatal shootings of four US Marines travelled to Jordan and possibly other Middle Eastern countries for seven months last year, authorities said on Friday, as the investigation focussed on any signs of a connection to Islamist militants.

Mohammad Yousuf Abdulazeez, a Kuwaiti-born naturalized US citizen, died on Thursday in a firefight with police after a rampage at two military facilities in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The 24-year-old engineer travelled to Jordan, from around April to November, US government sources and friends of Abdulazeez in Chattanooga told Reuters. One childhood friend, speaking on condition of anonymity, said he went there for a job opportunity.

Investigators will try to establish if he was part of an organization or the latest “lone wolf” militant, radicalized US Muslims acting on their own who President Barack Obama has said pose a greater risk to the country than a large-scale operation.

Friends were shocked by the actions of Abdulazeez, who they said lived about 150 miles (241 km) away in Franklin, Tennessee, but had returned to his hometown to visit family for the holy fasting month of Ramadan, which ended on Thursday.

“He was a friend of mine, a good Muslim. But there were no red flags, nothing unusual. It is shocking,” said another childhood friend, who prayed with him at the Islamic Centre of Greater Chattanooga over the past month.

A little more than 24 hours after the shooting, the FBI said it continued to investigate it as an act of terrorism and that it was “premature” to speculate on the motive.

“We are exploring all travel that he has done and we have asked our intelligence partners throughout the world to provide us with any information they may have.” Ed Reinhold, FBI special agent in charge, said during a news conference.

Born to Palestinian parents and raised in a Chattanooga suburb, Abdulazeez may have family in Jordan and may have made several stops, said a government source, adding that a visit to Yemen, long viewed as a training ground for Islamic militants, has not been ruled out.

As the investigation focussed on the potential of terrorism and that it was “premature” to speculate on the motive, the FBI said.

The latest “lone wolf” militant, President Barack Obama has said pose a greater risk to the country than a large-scale operation.

The suspect in the slaying of US Marines made 2014 trip to Mideast

Dozens flee homes as wildfires rage in Greece, PM urges calm

ATHENS, 18 July — Forest fires fanned by strong winds and high temperatures broke out around Athens and in other parts of southern Greece on Friday, sending residents fleeing as clouds of smoke billowed over their homes.

The wildfires created a new problem for the government of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, which is struggling to obtain a fresh bailout from foreign creditors.

The police said 34 separate fires had broken out on four main fronts in a region stretching from the island of Evia, northeast of Athens, to the southern Peloponese. A 58-year-old died after inhaling flames and suffering respiratory problems but there were no other reports of casualties.

Tsipras urged calm as more than 140 firefighters with 80 fire engines and 11 aircraft battled the flames near Athens, which a Reuters photographer said were near homes. A neighbourhood playground was razed and flames surrounded the local church. Dozens of people, including elderly women covering their faces with headscarves, tried to put out the flames with buckets of water. “We all need to stay calm,” Tsipras told reporters.

He said he had asked the air force and armed forces for help and had also appealed to other European countries for assistance with extra fire-fighting aircraft.

Forest fires are common during the summer months in Greece but memories remain vivid of the huge damage and heavy loss of life in 2007, during the most serious outbreak of the past few years.

“The situation is difficult,” said Michalis Karagiannis, deputy mayor of Vyronas, one of the suburbs near the flames.

Energy Minister Panagiotis Lafazanis, who spoke to Greek TV from the scene with a protective mask across his face, said: “We are all making an effort to stop the worst.”

He was heckled by angry residents who accused him of doing “micro politics” and urged him to “take off your jacket and help”. In the region of Laconia in the southern Peloponese one fire-fighting aircraft was forced to make an emergency landing.

“Things are very bad,” Peloponese Governor Petros Tatoulis told state television. “The situation is critical. We are working to prevent casualties.”

Adamantia Koroni, deputy head of a hoteliers’ association on the nearby island of Cythera, said about 40,000 visitors and residents were left without power on the popular tourist destination “probably until Sunday”, and four hotels were forced to share one generator.

At least 250 people are wounded in a trains crash on the evening in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 17 July, 2015. — Xinhua

More than 200 passengers injured in train collision in Johannesburg

JOHANNESBURG, 18 July — More than 200 people were injured in a train collision in Johannesburg on Friday night, authorities said.

Currently there was no report of deaths after the accident took place near the Booysens station in the city, said Netcare, a private emergency service.

“The service put the number of injured at about 250 and said more injuries were expected as some passengers were still trapped in the wreckage.”

Some of the injured are in serious condition and have been sent to various hospitals for treatment, Netcare spokesperson Sanzi Steimmann said.

There are currently still patients at the scene, so the number might even increased to approximately 300,” he said.

A group of paramedics were at the scene to rescue the passengers still trapped in the wreckage.

Witnesses said one train overturned when it collided with another train. But the cause of the accident could not be determined right now, police said.

This was the second train collision in Johannesburg in less than three months. In late April, two trains collided at a station east of Johannesburg, killing one and injuring more than 200 others. — Xinhua

Quake measuring 6.9 magnitude sparks brief tsunami warning for Solomons

SYDNEY, 18 July — An undersea earthquake measuring 6.9 magnitude struck near the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific on Saturday, prompting a short-lived tsunami warning for the area. The quake, initially recorded at 7.5 but later downgraded, struck at a depth of 33 km (20 miles) near the Solomon’s Santa Cruz islands, said the US Geological Survey.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawaii issued a warning, saying “hazardous tsunami waves from this earthquake are possible within 300 km (186 miles) of the epicentre along the coasts of the Solomon Islands”.

But 30 minutes later, the Centre said there was no longer a tsunami threat, but that small sea level fluctuations above and below the normal tide may continue for a few hours. — Reuters
**Claim 1**: Consignees of cargo carried on MV PANJA Bhum VOY NO (057N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 19.7.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

**Claim 2**: Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claims Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

**Shipping Agency Department**

**Myanmar Port Authority Agent For: MS Wan Hai Lines PTE LTD**

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**UN chief pays tribute to victims of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 one year after tragedy**

UNITED NATIONS, 18 July — UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Saturday paid tribute to the victims who lost their lives one year ago aboard the “tragic” Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, which crashed in eastern Ukraine.

“As the international community marks this sombre anniversary, the secretary-general’s thoughts are with the families of those who lost their loved ones,” the statement issued here late on Saturday said.

A total of 298 people, 196 of them Dutch, were killed after the commercial passenger plane crashed in the Donetsk area of eastern Ukraine. The Boeing 777-200LR, operated from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, went down when it crashed over Ukraine.

A preliminary report published last September said the plane “broke up in the air probably as the result of structural damage caused by a large number of high-energy objects that penetrated the aircraft from outside.”

“The pain caused by this tragedy cannot be erased, the victims must be honored by a collective effort to ascertain the truth about the incident and ensure that any persons determined responsible will be held to account,” the statement said.

“The secretary-general welcomes the progress made by the independent international investigation in accordance with Security Council Resolution 2166,” the statement said.

The resolution was unanimously adopted on 21 July, 2014, and it expressed support for the “efforts to establish a full, thorough and independent international investigation into the incident in accordance with international civil aviation guidelines” and called on all United Nations member states “to provide any requested assistance to civil and criminal investigations.”

“The report of the investigation into the crash of flight MH17 is expected to be published in the first half of October,” the Dutch Safety Board told Xinhua in The Hague on Thursday.

The board refused to comment on CNN reports saying that the investigation pinned the downing of MH17 on “pro-Russian rebels.”

“This anniversary is another stark reminder of the continuing dire situation in eastern Ukraine and the need to bring an urgent end to this conflict,” the statement said.

The Netherlands is leading the international investigation into the crash with representatives from Australia, Malaysia, Russia, Ukraine, Britain and the United States. Excluding Russia, then a UN Security Council member, on Tuesday asked the UN Security Council to establish an international criminal tribunal to be responsible for the downing of the passenger jet. Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday expressed opposition to the move, saying of an international tribunal: “This anniversary is an other stark reminder of the continuing dire situation in eastern Ukraine and the need to bring an urgent end to this conflict,” the statement said.

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**Weather Report**

BAY FORECAST: Monsoon is strong to vigorous in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 19th July, 2015: Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in Mawgaw Region, Kachin and Kayin States, widespread in regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavy falls in Sagaing, Mandalay, Bago Regions, Shan, Rakhine, Kayin and Mon States. 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 (40) m.p.h.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of increase of rain in the Southern Myanmar areas.

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**Claims Day Notice**

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**MV JRS CARINA VOY NO (1507-19N)**

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**Shipping Agency Department**

**Myanmar Port Authority Agent For: MS Wan Hai Lines PTE LTD**

Phone No: 2301185

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**Swimming beach opens in Tokyo after decades of restriction**

TOKYO, 18 July — A bathing beach was opened in Tokyo on Saturday for the first time since all beaches in the capital were closed for swimming in the 1960s due to pollution.

The beach is part of Kasai Rinkai Park in Edogawa Ward, southeast of the city’s central business district.

The Tokyo metropolitan government will open it for swimming through the end of August and monitor water quality before deciding whether to keep it permanently during the swimming season.

A nonprofit organization in Tokyo has held swimming events since 2013 with the Tokyo government’s permission and some 15,000 people participated in last year’s, which was held for 20 days. According to the group, all bathing beaches in Tokyo disappeared in the 1960s.

Mami Tsukuda, 40, who visited the beach with her 4-year-old daughter, said, “It is surprising to be able to swim in central Tokyo. I would like to see it become cleaner as we try harder to take care of the environment.”

**Mass killer Breivik to study at Oslo University, from jail**

OSLO, 18 July — Norwegian mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik won a place on Friday to study at Oslo University from solitary confinement in prison, despite outrage at his massacre of 77 people four years ago.

“He meets the admission requirements. We stick to our rules and he will be admitted,” Oslo University rector Ole Petter Ottersen told Reuters, saying prisoners are eligible to study as long as their academic grades are good enough.

Many were appalled when Breivik, who holds far-right anti-Muslim views and has shown no remorse, applied for the three-year bachelor’s course in political science. Some students now at the university suffered his attacks, while others had friends or relatives killed.

“I realise there are many feelings involved here. He tried to demolish the system. We have to stay faithful to it,” Ottersen said.

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**Norwegian mass killer Anders Behring Breivik adjusts his tie as the Oslo Court delivered the verdict of his trial in Oslo Courthouse on 24 Aug, 2012.—Reuters**

The course includes study of democracy, human rights and respect for minorities. Breivik, now 36, planted a bomb on 22 July, 2011 in central Oslo that killed eight people and destroyed the government headquarters.

He then travelled to an island where the then-ruling Labour Party was holding a summer camp and shot dead 69 people, many of them teenagers.

Under the terms of his sentence, Breivik is held in solitary confinement and will be unable to attend lectures or seminars. All his work will go via prison access to books but not the Internet. Norway will open a “22 July Centre” next week in Oslo with information and exhibits about the attacks. Some relatives and survivors fear it takes becoming a Breivik “hall of fame.”—Reuters

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Obama to appear on one of Jon Stewart’s final ‘Daily Show’ episodes

WASHINGTON, 18 July — President Barack Obama will tape his seventh appearance on Jon Stewart’s “Daily Show” in New York on Tuesday, the White House said on Friday.

Obama has appeared on Comedy Central’s satirical news show twice as president and four times prior to that.

This is likely to be the last appearance Obama makes since Stewart has announced that he will be leaving the show on 6 August.

The White House did not announce when the segment with Obama would air. — Reuters

Marvel reverses scale, elevates comedy with compact hero ‘Ant-Man’

LOS ANGELES, 18 July — After going intergalactic with “Guardians of the Galaxy,” and hanging an entire city from the sky in “Avengers: Age of Ultron,” Marvel is reversing its scale but still packing the punches with an insect-sized superhero.

“Ant-Man,” out in movie theaters on Friday, sees a new addition to Disney-owned Marvel’s expanding universe as Paul Rudd steps into the Ant-Man suit, which allows the wearer to shrink and gives him super strength.

The film follows the origins of Ant-Man, otherwise known as Scott Lang. Unlike Iron Man’s billionaire alter-ego Tony Stark or Captain America’s patriotic soldier Steve Rogers, Lang is decidedly less heroic — a deadbeat father and petty criminal who has spent time in jail. Lang is recruited by scientist Hank Pym (Michael Douglas) to wear the shrinkable superhero suit and save the world from the villainous corporation tycoon Darren Cross (Corey Stoll), with the help of Hope van Dyne, Pym’s feisty daughter (Evangeline Lilly). “He made some pretty questionable decisions in his life, things are not working out for him. He has to decide if he’s going to do the right thing,” Rudd told Reuters of Lang. “The heart of the film lies in the father-daughter relationship between Pym and van Dyne, and Lang and his estranged daughter Cassie.” — Reuters

Bacharach tunes soar again in London cast of off-Broadway hit

Burt Bacharach performs on the Pyramid stage at Worthy Farm in Somerset during the Glastonbury Festival in Britain, on 27 June, 2015. — Reuters

LONDON, 18 July — The 1960s and 1970s hit songs that Burt Bacharach wrote with his late lyricist, Hal David, are most often heard now in elevators and hotel lobbies, but a musical that opened in London this week

gets into the spirit by singing and clapping along with the exuberant young seven-member cast.

“Do You Know the Way to San Jose?”, “Walk on By”, “Raindrops Keep Fallin’ On My Head” and “(There’s) Always Something There to Remind Me” haven’t sounded this fresh, or drawn such attention to David’s often artful and clever lyrics, since they were hits for the likes of Dionne Warwick, Dusty Springfield, Cilla Black and BJ Thomas decades ago. The question in the title is the signature line from Bacharach and David’s theme song for the 1966 Michael Caine movie “Alfie”, about a London cab who uses women. The question minus the mention of Alfie — pops up repeatedly, even in other songs, as something of a “what is the meaning of life” trope, but that’s as profound as things get.

The show, set to run through 5 September, is the branchchild of its music director and lead performer, Kyle Riabko. The programme notes say he sold the now 87-year-old Bacharach on the idea of a reithink of Bacharach’s songs some years ago, when Riabko sang demos of new arrangements of some of Bacharach’s songs for the composer at a Los Angeles studio.

The resulting 90-minute tune fest was an off-Broadway hit. It ran for more than a year at the New York Theater Workshop, won several awards and was extended twice before closing in February of last year.

Riabko, an almost alarmingly fresh-faced Canadian with the energy of a young Pete Townshend, reprises his role as lead singer and guitarist, this time with a cast that draws on talent from both sides of the Atlantic.

Anastacia McCleesey, the troupe’s strongest soul-Motown voice, brings down the house with a soaring version of Warwick’s “Don’t Make Me Over”. She hails from Nashville while guitarist-singer Daniel Balen, who was in the off-Broadway cast, is from New York City.

The British-based talent includes singer-songwriter Greg Coulson, keyboardist-vocalist Renato Paris and singer-percussionist James Williams. Singer and instrumentalist Stephanie McKeon, who sings a wistful “Walk On By”, is from Ireland.

The stage in the production directed by Steven Hoggett is set to resemble a ramshackle urban apartment. Chairs, sofas and a variety of table lamps are dotted about, suggesting the type of environment where Bacharach and David would have worked to come up with the tunes and lyrics that made them into a hit factory. That gives license for Riabko and his cast to, as the title has it, “remaginie” Bacharach, as if the songs are being dreamed up and performed for the first time.

Other than that, there is no attempt to provide a backstory, or any plot at all. What you see and hear is what you get — performers who weren’t even born when Bacharach and David wrote these songs making them sound as if they were written yesterday. — Reuters
Zoo animals in Athens at risk as crisis hits food imports

ATHENS, 18 July — A group of Madagascan lemurs surround Jean-Jacques Lesueur, founder of Attica Park in Athens, unaware that the special biscuits he is handing out to them are running low and they may soon not have enough to eat.

Three weeks after capital controls were imposed on Greece’s moribund banking system, supplies of the special imported dietary supplements needed to feed 2,200 animals from 345 species at Athens’ only zoo are under threat.

Like other foreign companies, suppliers of products ranging from frozen fish from the Netherlands to meal worms from Germany or special additives from France who were paid 60 days after delivery are now demanding payment in advance. “Many of our animals require a special diet, which demands specific nutrition that can only be imported,” Lesueur, a 71-year-old Frenchman who has lived in Athens for more than 45 years, told Reuters.

Two weeks ago on 7 July, he received a call from his suppliers, telling him that the regular three-week delivery due in two days time would have to be paid in advance.

Lesueur tried to keep calm but realized that with the banks closed, he could not meet the payment.

“You can’t do this, we’re talking about animal lives here,” he told the suppliers, who eventually relented and agreed to make an exception. But they warned that future orders would have to be paid in advance.

Walking through the zoo, he points to ant-eaters, which get through around a tonne of meat worms a year or seals, pelicans, penguins or dolphins which rely on frozen herring from the Netherlands. Meanwhile, he tries to find other solutions such as using domestically produced horse feed adductives for rhinos. Already suffering as visitor numbers have dropped since the European crisis, the privately owned zoo is also bracing for the shock of a steep rise in value added tax, which has jumped to 23 percent with immediate effect under the latest bailout deal.

But it is the plight of the animals which gives Lesueur the most urgent headaches.

“We want to pay them, we just don’t have a way at the moment, the country is blocked, I can’t get money out and our frozen supplies won’t last more than two weeks,” he said. “After that it will become very urgent to get supplies. It’s a matter of life or death for the animals.”

— Reuters

Old Lisbon market cooks up food-to-media concept to go global

LISBON, 18 July — In the past year, Lisbon’s 19th-century riverside market has soared from dilapidated oblivion to a top attraction on a zesty blend of fine food, drinks, arts and hip shopping — a concept its owners now plan to replicate in London and New York.

Aside from serving as a gigantic window display for downtown renovation and the Portuguese capital’s tourism boom, the two-storey Mercado da Ribeira also gives a physical dimension to the mostly-digital Time Out magazine, which owns the expanding project.

The Lisbon unit of the London-based media brand, which provides tips to dozens of cities worldwide, has given its journalists and critics the handpick their favourite chefs, bars and shops for the market.

“This is a magazine, with various of its sections, brought to life,” said Joao Cepeda, director of Time Out Lisbon. “It’s a project that means to “use our know-how to save the local edition”.”

Cepeda said the project was meant to “use our know-how to save the local edition”.

During Portugal’s 2010-2014 economic crisis, revenues from advertising and website views fell. So when city hall offered a 20-year concession to renovate and run the market in 2011, the magazine seized the opportunity.

With 60,000 visits on a good week, the commercial success has exceeded initial expectations almost two-fold, he said.

Time Out is choosing locations to open a market in London by 2017 and another in New York by 2018. In the meantime, it is also looking at Portugal’s second-largest city of Porto. Day and night, tourism and locals sit at long wood-en tables and bar counters sampling fusion food and local dishes made in 20 busy, see-through kitchens.

Popular choices are salt-and-pepper fish with seaweed on cuttlefish ink bun, salad with goats cheese and ice cream or fish tartar with avocado puree.

Rave reviews on travel websites frequently label the spot a “foodies’ paradise”, with many praising it as a pioneering “cross between a food court, a Shoreditch food market and a chef’s restaurant”, while others highlight its “hipster aura” and modest prices considering a vast choice of quality food.

Cepeda calls it “a simplified version of fine dining experience”, which sets it apart from souped-up street food generally served at similar venues abroad, including New York.

The chefs are happy too as client numbers keep growing.

“Now, over a year on, the business is better than when we opened, way past the novelty peak, and it has all the goings of improving further,” said Susana Felicidade, a prominent chef who runs Cozinha da Felicidade (Kitchen of Joy) in the market and a popular restaurant called Pharmacia in an old quarter nearby.

The chef, who specializes in Portuguese-inspired “petiscos” — a more elaborate and heartier cousin of Spain’s tapas — says the success of the food court also supports the remaining part of the old market where locals buy vegetables, meat and seafood.

She buys some 80 percent of all ingredients from the market.

The renovation and a new riverside promenade helped boost the dining and scene in the hip Cais do Sodre area where 14 restaurants and bars have opened up in the past year.

— Reuters

Montana train derailment spilled 35,000 gallons of crude oil

Tuesday, 15 July — A train derailment in rural eastern Montana spilled 35,000 gallons (132,489 liters) of crude oil and forced the evacuation of about 30 people, a US official said on Friday in an email to state officials.

About 20 cars on the Berkshire Hathaway-owned BNSF [BNSF,U]$ crude oil train went off the rails east of Culbertson, Montana, on Thursday evening, officials said. There was no fire and no injuries were reported. A hazardous materials team from BNSF responded to the scene and contained the spilled oil with earthen dams, Michael Turnbull, an official with the US Department of Transportation, said in an email to Montana officials that was released to the media.

The spilled crude did not reach any waterways, the email said.

Culbertson authorities temporarily evacuated about 30 people from an area a half-mile around the accident site, Turnbull’s email said.

The spilled crude came from three breached tank cars on the train, which in total had 110 loaded tank cars along with two buffer cars and two locomotives, according to Turnbull.

An investigation into the cause of the derailment is under way, Turnbull’s email said. The segment of railroad where the accident occurred is expected to reopen for travel at midnight on Friday, he said. A BNSF spokesman did not immediately return calls on Friday.

In 2013, the derailment of an oil train at Lac-Méga- ntic, in the Canadian province of Quebec, killed 47 people in an explosion that flattened the centre of the town.

— Reuters
Dibaba breaks world women’s 1,500 metres record

MONACO, 18 July — Ethiopia’s world indoor champion Genzebe Dibaba broke the 22-year-old 1,500 metres world record on Friday when she clocked three minutes 50.07 seconds at the Monaco Diamond League meeting.

Running the last lap on her own after the pacemaker dropped out, the 24-year-old dipped inside Chinese Qu Yunxia’s previous mark of 3:50.46 set in Beijing on 11 September, 1993.

“I am very happy,” Dibaba told the track announcer as the crowd stood and applauded.

Dibaba, the younger sister of three times Olympic champion and 5,000 metres world record holder Tirunesh Dibaba, said on Thursday she would decide whether to run the 1,500 or the 5,000 at next month’s Beijing world championships after Friday’s race.

She told reporters she had been concentrating on her speed in training this year.

Five personal bests were set in the race.—Reuters

Delph performs U-turn and quits Villa for Man City

LONDON, 18 July — Manchester City signed England international Fabian Delph from Aston Villa on Friday, with the midfielder performing a dramatic U-turn a week after assuring fans he would be staying at Villa Park.

Delph has signed a five-year contract, the twice Premier League champions said in a statement.

The 25-year-old was thought to be close to moving to City last week when reports said the north west club had triggered a release clause in his contract, but he issued a statement stating his desire to remain at Villa.

Delph, however, has now changed his mind and arrives at the Etihad Stadium for a fee reported to be in the region of 8 million pounds ($12.5 million).

“Leaving Aston Villa is the hardest decision I’ve ever had to make,” he said in a statement.

“My decision to stay initially was purely based on the emotion and feelings that I hold for the club rather than looking at the football opportunity that had been placed in front of me.”

“I am now excited for the future with Manchester City.”

Delph moved to Villa from Leeds United in 2009, making 128 appearances. He made his England debut against Norway last year and now has six caps.

“Fabian Delph is an excellent player and I am looking forward to working with him,” City manager Manuel Pellegrini told the club’s website (www.mcfc.com).

“He has made a huge impact in recent seasons at Aston Villa, and is now one of the brightest young midfielders in the Premier League.—Reuters

Schneiderlin scores on debut to give United 1-0 win

SEATTLE, 18 July — Morgan Schneiderlin took less than five minutes to score on his Manchester United debut in a 1-0 win over Mexico side Club America on Friday.

The French midfielder, who signed a four-year contract and cost United a reported 25 million pounds ($38.9 million), got on the end of a cross from Juan Mata to score with a looping header in the International Champions Cup friendly in Seattle.

Schneiderlin, who joined United after seven seasons with Southampton, was one of four big summer signings to debut in the first match of the team’s pre-season American tour.

Forward Memphis Depay and defender Matteo Darmian also played the first half, before manager Louis van Gaal substituted his entire starting XI at half-time.

Germany captain Bastian Schweinsteiger came into the game for the second half and the former Bayern Munich midfielder quickly established his presence.

United should have gone 2-0 up when Andreas Pereira sent a dangerous cross into the six-yard box in the 53rd minute that Adnan Januzaj somehow failed to make contact with from point-blank range.

Club America almost equalised in the 73rd minute when Alejando Diaz hit the post at CenturyLink Field, home of the NFL’s Seattle Seahawks.

United, who will return to the Champions League this season after finishing fourth in the Premier League, will play their next game on their American tour against the San Jose Earthquakes on Tuesday. —Reuters

Beckham group presents new plan for Miami soccer stadium

MIAMI, 18 July — A group led by David Beckham has solidified plans to build a Miami stadium to house its Major League Soccer team on city-owned land next to the Miami Marlins baseball park.

In a statement after a conference call with Miami’s mayor, a spokesman for the Miami Beckham United group confirmed the new site, saying “we’re excited about sharing our plans with the city, county and community soon.”

Miami Mayor Tomas Regalado told a Press conference that he spoke with one of Beckham’s partners, Sprint Corp chief executive Marcelo Claure, a soccer-mad, Bolivian-born billionaire, who told him the group had chosen the new site.

“We’re still in the early planning stages and several viable options still exist, but our preferred stadium location is the former Orange Bowl site,” the Miami Beckham United group spokesman said. The site was formerly home of the city’s famous Orange Bowl stadium, which was demolished in 2008 to make way for the Marlins baseball park.

Beckham’s group, which includes “American Idol” creator Simon Fuller and fellow Briton Simon Fuller, has explored stadium options for months and saw two earlier downtown waterfront sites blocked by local politicians and business interests.

The 40-year-old former England soccer captain, who played several seasons for LA Galaxy late in his career, announced he would exercise his option to become the owner of a new MLS franchise in Miami in February, 2014 but struggled to find political support for his stadium plan.

He has said he wants to build a 20,000-seat stadium with $250 million in private financing and launch the team by 2018-2019.

The group previously spurned the Orange Bowl site, about two miles west of downtown, which was long promoted by city officials.—Reuters