AIRPORT TALKS TAKE OFF

Govt, consortium discuss signing of Hanthawaddy framework agreement

GOVERNMENT officials and the consortium that won the tender to build Hanthawaddy International Airport discussed the signing of an initial framework agreement for the project and getting ODA loans from the Japanese government.

It is hoped that the signing will take place shortly, state-run news service MNA said on Friday.

During the same meeting that took place in Nay Pyi Taw Thursday, the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) discussed the traffic allocation policy, which covers how flights will be allocated between Yangon International and Hanthawaddy International Airport in future.

Hanthawaddy International Airport will become a major gateway for Myanmar and a regional aviation hub, said U Nyan Tun Aung, Union Minister for Transport, at the meeting.

A consortium of Yongnam and Changi Airport Planners and Engineering (CAPE) from Singapore and Japan’s JGC Corporation won the contract to build Hanthawaddy International Airport in Bago Region in 2014.

The airport project will be commissioned into service in 2022, four year later than its target due to issues surrounding obtaining Official Development Assistance from investors, according to DCA.

The airport project has been delayed a number of times: it was previously targeted to be completed in 2018 and then postponed to 2020. It is now expected to start operations in 2022, according to DCA.

Investors are seeking ODA loans to inject into the project, which will cost around US$1.5 billion, the Deputy Director of the Department of Civil Aviation U Min Lwin told the Global New Light of Myanmar in August.

Hanthawaddy International Airport is currently being upgraded to handle an increase in foreign travelers, as arrivals to the airport are soon expected to exceed 2.7 million.

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The country saw an inflow of over one million tourists in 2012, a figure that doubled in 2013 and is expected to reach 4.5 million this year. The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is targeting more than six million arrivals in 2017.

The Hanthawaddy International Airport project is the largest of three airport projects being undertaken to accommodate the growing numbers of foreign travelers to Myanmar. It will be constructed on more than 9,000 acres of land on the site of a World War II Japanese army airport.

Located in the Bago region about 48 miles north east of Yangon, the international airport is projected to handle up to 12 million passengers a year.

It takes around 90 minutes to travel to Bago from Yangon by car.—GNLM

First public bus system targets Dec, Jan for launch

A PUBLIC bus service is expected to launch its first phase with 65 brand new imported buses this December or January. The Bus Rapid Transit system will operate along the main routes linking the commercial capital’s north and south.

Yangon’s existing bus system is comprised of a number of private operators who vie for ticket profits by speeding and collecting passengers. Some of Yangon’s buses date back to World War II and they are infrequently crammed, while very few have air conditioning. Although private bus services will not be banned from the roads, they are likely to be less popular than a more efficient and comfortable public service.

The first public company will sell shares to the public in the next 10 days, Dr Maung Aung, who chairs the committee responsible for forming the public company, told The Global New Light of Myanmar.

“We had to push back the launch of the new bus service by a month because we needed to give companies extra time to buy the vehicles that comply with all our criteria,” said Dr Maung Aung.

The buses are imported from China and Korea, as well as Sweden’s well known Scania brand.

Yangon Region Government invited tenders to import buses for the new public bus service last year. The government will retain a 40 percent share, while 60 percent of shares will be available for the public to buy. Myanmar’s Bus Rapid Transit (BRT Lite) system has been established through a Public, Private, Partnership (PPP).

The project is divided into phases, with the capital for the first phase set at K25 billion (US$19.42 million). The government will inject K10 billion ($7.77 million) into the first phase.

The BRT (Lite) system aims to reduce traffic congestion and pollution, as well as providing the public with a more affordable and comfortable method of transport, Chief Minister of Yangon Region U Myint Swe said during a ceremony held in May when the public was invited to buy shares in the scheme.—GNLM
Attorney-General attends chambers meetings in Singapore

MYANMAR’S Attorney-General Dr Tun Shin arrived back in Myanmar earlier after attending the 7th Event of the Attorney-General’s Chambers of Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam in Singapore.

The Attorney-General took part in the three-day event from 28 to 30 September, together with counterparts from three ASEAN member countries whose legal systems are also based on the English common law system.

The attorney-general held discussions with attendees about legal and economic theories and gave a presentation summarising the key highlights and issues of the five years he’s been in office.

The world’s largest floating book fair docks in Yangon

THE world’s largest floating book fair docked at Alone International Port Terminal in Yangon yesterday.

Its crew is made up of 400 volunteers from 68 countries, while the ship is stocked with more than 5,000 titles. Book lovers can peruse titles on science, sports, hobbies, cookery, arts, medicine, languages and philosophy including children’s titles, academic texts, dictionaries, atlases and more – for very affordable prices.

The floating book fair will remain in Yangon from 3 to 14 October.

Entrance is free to the public on Sunday, from 1pm to 6pm. Book sales will be in Myanmar currency and there will be a food and drink service onboard, Dr Go Cun Zam, Director of Operation Mobilisation said The Global New Light of Myanmar.

The first time the Logos Hope docked in a Myanmar port was in 1998, and then again in 2002.

The ship is a charitable venture, which will carry out projects in Myanmar – as it does wherever it goes, said Mr Ronald Lappin, Managing Director of Logos Hope.

The Logos Hope is supported by German Christian charitable organisation. It was established in 1970 and has travelled to 160 countries, bringing the joy of reading to millions around the world.

The American Red Cross with relief supplies provided by the Coca-Cola Foundation.

Japan extends emergency grant for to rebuild schools hit by floods

THE government of Japan announced on 2 October that it will extend its emergency grant aid to Myanmar.

The funds, which total US$10 million, will go towards the reconstruction of schools hit by the floods of July and August, as well as the provision of study materials and workshops on disaster risk reduction organised by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). According to a statement issued on Friday, the grant aims to help students in flood affected communities resume their studies as soon as possible. — GNLM

Coca-Cola donates $100,000 to flood recovery

Jessica Mudditt

THE Coca-Cola Foundation has donated $US100,000 to its longtime partner American Red Cross for flood recovery efforts in Myanmar, according to a press release issued on 2 October.

Coca-Cola’s bottling partner in Myanmar, Coca-Cola Pinya Beverages Myanmar (CCPBM), also provided relief in the immediate aftermath of the floods that swept through the country in July and August. The company dispatched more than 450 local employees to flood-hit areas to donate water, food and other relief supplies. The company donated 350,000 bottles of its Max20 water brand in some of the worst-affected states and regions, including Bago, Sagaing, Magway, Pyay, Monywa, Nyaung Oo, and Rakhine.

“Coca-Cola is committed to supporting the Myanmar people and we hope this donation will have a positive impact on the many people across the country that have been affected by the recent floods,” said Irial Finan, President and EVP, Bottling Investments Group, The Coca-Cola Company.

On 25 September, a fire at Coca-Cola’s warehouse in Mingaladon Township caused almost a million dollars in damage. The blaze took 415 fire fighters, one of whom was injured, several hours to extinguish and whose cause has not yet been established. A Coca-Cola Myanmar spokesperson told Myanmar Business Today on 28 September that there were no immediate impacts on the ability of the world’s largest beverage company to produce and distribute its products in Myanmar.

Malaysia’s Maybank opens branch in Yangon

Khaing Thanda Lwin

MALAYSIA-based Maybank officially opened its branch in Yangon yesterday, offering a wide range of wholesale banking services to its clients, focused primarily on trade-related transactions.

Ms Pollie Sim, CEO of Maybank International, said: “Our focus will be on supporting wholesalers and corporate clients as well as domestic banks with services such as deposit accounts, working capital financing, transaction banking, cash management, treasury and capital market solutions.”

She added, “The bank will leverage on its expertise in the financing of power, utilities, oil and gas as well as the telecommunications sectors, which are also priority growth areas for Myanmar.”

She said that lending will be mainly driven by working capital financing and transaction banking by the country’s growing international trade and demand for cash management, especially as projects are completed and commerce operations.

Maybank offered a representative office in Myanmar in 1994 and has a registered capital of US$75 million.

The bank said it has plans to continue to roll out a variety of training sessions for staff at local banks, with a particular focus on the capital market, international trade and capacity building.

Maybank was one of nine foreign banks to be awarded a licence from the Central Bank of Myanmar on 1 October 2014. Foreign banks may provide loans to foreign investors in Myanmar, but retail banking services are not permitted. Foreign banks may provide loans to local businesses if they do so in cooperation with local banks. — GNLM
President inspects waterway conservation projects

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein inspected a number of projects in Shan State yesterday that aim to protect the ecology of the region.

During a visit to Inlay Lake in Nyaung Shwe Township of Shan State, the president oversaw silt removal for the proper flow of water in Inlay Lake and its waterways, which is necessary to protect the lake from being damaged.

Other restoration and conservation works include the dredging of sediment along Ngaphe waterway as it leads to Phaungdaw U Pagoda and the fencing the waterways to prevent farmlands from encroaching the waterway.

The president continued on to Phaungdaw U Pagoda, where he paid his respects, donated cash and greeted local residents. The president stressed the need for a coordinated approach to reforestation, ensuring effective land use and modernising agricultural techniques. The president announced that a dredger is on its way from the Netherlands soon and will soon become a vital part of efforts to conserve the area’s natural waterways.

During his inspection of Nadi Lake in Nyaung Shwe Township, the President was briefed on the progress made to date on its restoration. Nadi Lake feeds water into more than 800 acres of farmland and supplies water to Inle Lake when the latter’s water level drops.

The President then heard reports from the Waminn group of companies on the installation of water treatment equipment for Laphawkhon village and plans to provide 8,000 people a day in potable water using a water treatment solution.

The president also donated provisions to monks at Namtu monastery.—MNA

What they stand for: campaigns aired

The Public Service Students’ Democracy Party, Red Shan (Tailai), Northern Shan Ethnic Solidarity Party and the Guiding Star Party broadcast campaign speeches on Friday.

Chairman U Min Min Tun said that the policies of his party are based on independence, peaceful coexistence, building a modern military and the development of cooperative societies, as well as small and medium size enterprises and public companies.

Chairman U Aung Khinn and General Secretary U Saw Win Tun clarified the history and policies of his party. The party aims to build a federation of human rights and democracy, to participate in national development tasks, to promote the interests of local people, to preserve traditions and cultures of ethnic groups and to unify its ethnic nationals dispersed in the entire country.

Chairman U Aye Myint said that his party was once famous for its efforts to promote the interests of workers, farmers and child soldiers. He pledged to work in the interests of the people in accordance with the law and to expose unfair treatment whenever it occurs.—GNLM

UEC chair explains electoral processes in Putao

UNION Election Commission Chairman U Tin Aye discussed electoral procedures with local officials and election commissions in the town of Putao in Myitkyina on Friday. Putao is the northernmost town of Kachin State and is home to various ethnic groups.

U Tin Aye also highlighted the importance of holding credible elections, as well as the role played by electoral tribunals and the registration and supervision of political parties.

According the 2008 Constitution, the commission is responsible for holding an election every five years, within 90 days of the time the parliamentary term expires. The term of the current parliament ends on 30 January 2016.

The chairman urged all stakeholders to play a constructive role in helping to make the upcoming election a success in cooperation with the commission.

The chairman pledged that the Union Election Commission will do its best to hold a free and fair election on November 8.—MNA

Three party speeches to be broadcast today

CAMPAIGN speeches delivered by representatives from the New Society Party, Inn National Organization Party and 88 Generation Democracy Party will be broadcast on state radio and television networks on 3 October. MRTV, the Hluttaw channel, Myawady TV, Myanmar Radio and Shwe FM will broadcast the speeches.—GNLM
School renovated in Takon

A MIDDLE school building in Ayaukku village in Tatkon Township, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area has been renovated with government funding and was opened to students on Thursday. The facility cost nearly K15 million ($11,600) to renovate and occupies 2.37 acres. It was originally constructed as a primary school back in 1975 and a middle school was added in 2012. During the 2015-16 academic year, 437 children were enrolled at the school.—Tin Soe Lwin

Trade fair aims to link local and Japanese investors

THE Mandalay Investment Fair Under was held on Wednesday at Mandalay Resort Hotel. The event was sponsored by Mandalay Region Government and Japan Overseas Trade Association, the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The fair aimed to create a link between local businessmen and foreign investors and was attended by around 300 businesspeople. Forums were held to provide insights into Mandalay’s investment opportunities, particularly in hotels and tourism, garment and the transport industry. A total of 14 booths were on show at the fair.

Foreign businesspeople were also taken on a tour of major investment projects, such as the Mingalar Mandalay Project, Tada U Hotel Zone project and Myotha Industrial Zone. Mandalay is considered upper Myanmar’s economic hub and is a major hub for onward border trade to neighbouring countries.—Thiha Ko Ko

Mandalay Region Chief Justice meets UNDP delegation

A UNDP delegation met with Mandalay Region Chief Justice U Ye Aung Myint on Thursday to discuss holding workshops to boost the capacity of legal officers in drafting laws and analysing policies.

UNDP’s delegation comprised Ms Caitlin Reiger of UNDP’s Rule of Law/Access to Justice, Mr Miguel De Lemos, Access to Justice Officer and Daw Nwe Nwe Lwin, an official of Rule of Law, Democratic Governance Unit.—Thiha Ko Ko

Tug of war planned to break the drought

AFTER three years of drought, township authorities in Natogyi Township have decided to take matters into their own hands by holding a five-day tug of war event to bring on the rains. According to ancient Myanmar custom, staging a tug of war as monks recite religious verses can break a drought. The event will be held from 7-11 October in Mandalay Region’s Myaingyan District.—Htay Myint Maung

Naunglaybin hosts football tourney

NYAUNGLAYBIN Township authority hosted the Township Sports Development Committee Shield football tournament on Thursday, which is part of the township’s sports development programme. Twenty-nine teams from wards and villages in the township will take part in the tourney, which runs from 1 to 23 October. In the opening match Chaungyin’s team beat Pyay U Hotel Zone project and Minzana Myoma-4 ward 4-1. Deputy Minister for Sports U Zaw Win spoke of the need to boost participation in sports in Myanmar during the opening ceremony of the tournament.—Kyi Soe Lin

Transformers installed in Kyaku villages

AS part of the government’s poverty alleviation and rural development projects, two transformers were installed in both Kyaku East and West villages in the Nay Pyi Taw Council Area. During a ceremony held on Thursday, an engineer explained the safety features of the new facility.—District IPRD

Helicopter crash survivor to run in election

BRIGADIER General Than Maung (retired) has said he will run in the 2015 general elections representing Shan-ni and Northern Ethnic Solidarity Party in No.2 constituency in Bamauk Township, Sagaing Region. The brigadier was on board a helicopter that crashed into Than-lwin river on 19 February 2001. He and other 12 officers survived the crash but the other 16 passengers, including Lt-Gen Tin Oo, Major General Thiha Thura Sit Maung, the Commander of South East Command, and Minister Brigadier General Lung Maung died.—GNLM-001

A school in Ayaukku village in Takon township was renovated at a cost of about K15 million. PHOTO: TIN SOE LWIN

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A school in Ayaukku village in Tatkon township was renovated at a cost of about K15 million. PHOTO: TIN SOE LWIN

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Hopes for talks on new auto law

Association seeking three-year grace period for implementing the switch to left-hand drive cars

Ye Myint

SOME of the more contentious changes earmarked for the country’s auto market will be up for discussion with ministry personnel and industry bodies soon, said the president of the country’s auto association on Wednesday.

Following the enactment of the new automobile law on 7 September, concerns have arisen amongst vehicle users and auto dealers about how and when the mandatory use of left-hand drive cars will be implemented in Myanmar.

The provision is contained in a new draft automobile policy that was drawn up by the private sector and which is likely to be submitted to the government within the next week, said Dr Soe Tun, president of Myanmar Automobile Manufacturers and Dealers Association. The policy was drawn up by private sector representatives for manufacturing cars in Myanmar.

Although the policy proposes that left-hand drive cars in Myanmar should not become mandatory until the end of 2018, the new law stipulates that left-hand drive cars will become mandatory in Myanmar in early 2016. It is expected to be among the law’s associated rules and regulations, which must be released within 90 days of the enactment of the new legislation.

“We’d like to request the government to implement the switch to left-hand drive in accordance with the proposals contained in the policy,” he added.

“As far as I know, the details about making the switch in the rules and regulations of the new law are not set in stone,” he said.

The Road Transport Administration Department has said that it aims to eliminate the use of right-hand drive cars, because Myanmar’s right-hand side traffic lane system makes them very unsafe.

Dr Soe Tun said that auto dealers are anxious about what will happen to all the right-hand drive vehicles still in showrooms when the new law comes into force, and are united in hoping for an adequate grace period for the switch to be made.

According to the association’s president, other points expected to be discussed with ministries include new measures for vehicles importation and the registration of car dealers.

--- GNLM

Police honour GNLM reporter

GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR reporter U Nay Lin from Nyaunglaybin, Bago Region, won a prize for his contribution to the rule of law during an event commemorating Myanmar Police Day on Wednesday.

Town-siders and ward and village administrators were also given awards at the event. Awarded for their contributions to the community.

--- GNLM

Tatkon roads get upgrade

Engineers at work to upgrade a road in Tatkon. Photo: Tin Soe Lin

THE Tatkon Township Development Affairs Department is building culverts along a main road to ensure an impeded water flow. The project is a part of a wider initiative to upgrade the township’s roads. The project will benefit local residents, as well as more than 150 monks who live in a monastery near the road.

--- Tin Soe Lin

LOCAL STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND EUROPEAN UNION MEMBER STATE EMBASSIES ACCREDITED TO MYANMAR

THE Heads of Missions of the European Union accredited to Myanmar warmly welcome the ratification, on 28 September 2015, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Myanmar. The ratification of the Optional Protocol is an important step. The European Union encourages the Government to further improve the promotion and protection of human rights in the country.

The EU stands ready to offer support in implementing the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

Note: The European Union consists of 28 member states: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom.
India unveils climate target to cut carbon intensity

NEW DELHI — India has promised to make its economy more energy efficient and cut the carbon produced per unit of GDP growth by 33-35 percent by 2030 from 2005 levels, its contribution to help reach a goal to slow global warming at a UN climate summit in December.

The world’s third-largest emitter and a major economy is in the process of committing to submit plans ahead of the Paris summit did not, however, commit to any absolute cuts in carbon emissions.

India and the United States, the biggest polluters, have agreed to start reducing their emissions over the next 15 years, but India has long said its economy is too small and its people too poor to agree to absolute cuts in greenhouse gases now.

India, instead, said it aimed to cut carbon intensity — meaning its emissions will rise, but at a slower pace — and to grow the share of power generated from non-fossil fuel sources to 40 percent by 2050.

India, often acting as the voice of the developing world, plays an important role in global climate talks and some environmental groups welcomed its plan.

“India now has positioned itself as a global leader in clean energy, as it is poised to play an active and influential role in the international climate negotiations this December,” said Rhea Sah, president of New York-based Natural Resources Defence Council.

Close to 200 nations will meet at a UN climate summit to deal to slow man-made warming by keeping temperature rises below a ceiling of 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

India said it planned to develop 25 Solar Parks, supply 100,000 solar pumps to farmers and convert all 55,000 petrol stations across the country to solar.

A small team of Singapore officials was briefing on the request to help India with the submission of the climate plan, said Lee Hsien Loong, the prime minister.

In a speech at the swearing-in ceremony, Lee said that his first objective in forming this cabinet is to provide the most effective leadership.

“We are entering a new phase in Singapore’s future,” he said. “We face more complex challenges and new issues that cut across multiple domains. Therefore, I have appointed Coordinating Ministers to oversee work in three major areas,” he said, adding that the new cabinet will focus on areas including national security, economic and social policies as well as infrastructure.

The other major goal in forming this cabinet, as Lee pointed out, is to prepare the next team to take over from the current leadership. “My responsibility… is not just to govern Singapore well today, but also to prepare the next team to take over from us. This will secure Singapore’s future beyond this generation, and take the country another step towards SG100,” — Xinhua

Strong storm injures people, disrupts transportation in Japan

TOKYO — A strong low-pressure storm with heavy winds and rains hit Japan from Thursday night to Friday, causing injuries, transportation disruptions, evacuations, blackouts and school closures mainly in the northernmost prefecture of Hokkaido.

A 64-year-old man was found with a head injury near a windmill power generator destroyed by strong winds in Hirao, a local police said, while a 72-year-old woman broke her right leg in Esashi when she fell from a ladder due to the wind. Several more injuries were reported in Hokkaido.

In Toyama Prefecture, central Japan, a 71-year-old woman broke her arm after strong winds caused her to fall. Hokkaido Railway Co halted some 310 train runs, while more than 30 flights to and from New Chitose Airport in Hokkaido were cancelled.

More than 100 people were evacuated from their homes in the prefecture, while about 450 schools closed.

Hokkaido Electric Power Co said blackouts affected about 15,000 houses in the prefecture.

Rishiri Airport in Hokkaido recorded a maximum wind speed of 157.32 kilometers per hour.

The Japan Meteorological Agency said strong winds and heavy rains may continue in Hokkaido and northeastern Japan until Saturday. — Kyodo News

Indonesia refuses help offered by Singapore to deal with haze: MEWR

SINGAPORE — Indonesian officials clarified that they had enough resources and did not need to call on assistance offered by Singapore to deal with haze at this time during the meeting with Singaporean counterparts, said Singapore’s Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources (MEWR) on Friday.

A small team of Singaporean officials, led by Permanent Secretary Choi Shing Kwok of MEWR, met with Indonesia’s Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Gen (Retd) Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan and Head of National Disaster Management Agency Willem Rampanglie at Jakarta on Thursday.

The meeting was convened at the invitation of the Indonesian side, said MEWR. Singaporean delegation was briefed on the measures being undertaken by the Indonesian government in Sumatra and Kalimantan to tackle land and forest fires that are causing haze in Singapore and the region.

Singapore reiterated and explained its offer of assistance to tackle the fires, including the provision of one Chinook helicopter to conduct water bombing and one C-130 aircraft for cloud-seeding operations. However, Indonesia clarified that it had enough resources of its own and did not need to call on assistance offered by Singapore at this time, said MEWR in a statement.

The meeting also discussed law enforcement actions by Indonesia against errant companies. Singapore explained how its Transboundary Haze Pollution Act allows it to take legal action against foreigners who cause transboundary haze in Singapore to supplement Indonesia’s actions while respecting Indonesia’s laws.

Singapore also reiterated and explained its request for Indonesia to share information that could help identify companies suspected of causing such fires.

MEWR said the request has being considered by the Indonesian side who will respond in due course. — Xinhua
Israel’s Netanyahu launches all-out assault on Iran deal at UN

UNITED NATIONS — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu used his annual United Nations address on Thursday to launch an all-out assault on the historic nuclear deal with Iran, warning that his country would never let the Islamic Republic join the atomic weapons club.

Speaking at the yearly gathering of world leaders at the UN General Assembly, Netanyahu reiterated Israeli criticism of a deal between Iran and major world powers aimed at curbing Tehran’s nuclear programme.

He said that, once international sanctions are lifted, “unleashed and unmuzzled,” Iran will go on the warpath.

“Israel, Netanyahu said, would never allow Iran “to break in, to sneak in, or to walk into the nuclear weapons club.” Israel, which exports and diplomats say has the only nuclear arsenal in the Middle East, has repeatedly warned it is prepared to use military force to prevent Iran from acquiring atomic weapons. Tehran desires wanting nuclear arms and insists its nuclear programme is peaceful.

US President Barack Obama administration has vigorously defended the July 14 nuclear agreement with Iran against criticisms from Republicans in Congress, who tried unsuccessfully to kill the deal, and Israel, describing it as the best way to avoid a new war in the Middle East.

Obama’s already strained relations with Netanyahu deteriorated further in the months before the July nuclear deal because of the Israeli leader’s forceful campaign against it.

During Netanyahu’s speech, Washington was represented by US Ambassador Samantha Power’s deputy, David Pressman, and US Ambassador to Israel Daniel Shapiro. Power and Secretary of State John Kerry are both in New York, but Power’s spokeswoman, Hagai Chermaly, said they had to join a video conference call with Obama that ended up coinciding with the Israeli speech.

Netanyahu pulled no punches. “We see a world celebrating this bad deal, rushing to embrace and do business with a regime openly committed to our destruction,” he said.

The Israeli leader held up a copy of the latest book by Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei that he said was a “400-page screed detailing his plan to destroy the state of Israel.”

Diplomatic sources have said that Israel and Iran’s regional rival, Saudi Arabia, have been discussing how to respond to the nuclear deal and their fear that the lifting of sanctions, expected in the coming months, will embolden Iran.

“Israel will continue to respond forcefully to any attacks against it from Syria.”

Benjamin Netanyahu

Israeli Prime Minister

“...to pursue a more aggressive foreign policy in the Middle East. Without naming countries, Netanyahu said Israel is facing a threat with Arab states about Iran.

“Israel is working closely with our Arab peace partners to address our common security challenges from Iran and also the security challenges from ISIL (Islamic State) and others,” he said. Most of Netanyahu’s 43-minute speech was focussed on the threat posed by Iran. But towards the end, he responded to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas’ UN speech on Wednesday, in which Abbas said recent Israeli security actions at the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem could ignite a religious war.

Netanyahu told the General Assembly that Abbas should stop “spreading lies about Israel’s alleged intentions on the Temple Mount,” and return to direct negotiations to secure peace between the Israelis and Palestinians.

“Temple Mount,” where Al-Aqsa is located, is the Israeli term for the location. It is one of the holiest sites in Islam and Judaism.

Abbas had accused Israel of undermining US attempts at brokering peace, though Netanyahu placed the blame on the Palestinians.

Netanyahu also accused the General Assembly and the UN system as a whole of engaging in incessant, unjustified “Israel-bashing.”

Twice during his speech — once at the beginning and again in the middle — he silently stared at the 193-nation General Assembly with an angry look on his face.

His second staredown with the General Assembly lasted for 45 seconds, coming after Netanyahu accused the assembly of maintaining “deadening silence” in the face of Iranian threats to destroy Israel.

The prime minister also made clear that Israel would continue to use military force to repel attacks from Syria and to prevent the Iranian-backed Lebanese militant group Hezboll, which is fighting in Syria alongside government forces, from acquiring key weapons.

“Israel will continue to respond forcefully to any attacks against it from Syria,” Netanyahu said, adding that it would also “prevent the transfer of strategic weapons to Hezbollah from and through Syrian territory.”

Ruben Estrella

Spain shoves up legal powers to prevent Catalan breakaway

MADRID — Spain’s parliament on Thursday approved measures giving the Constitutional Court powers to fine or suspend authorities that do not carry out its sentences, shoring up legal powers to deal with any bid for independence from Catalonia.

Scessionist parties in the wealthy region on Sunday secured an absolute majority in terms of seats in the local parliament in an election seen by some as a proxy vote on independence but won only 48 percent of the votes cast, less than the majority that would be needed in a referendum.

Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy has refused to allow the region, with its own language and culture, to hold a referendum on independence, saying it is against Spain’s constitution, and has blocked any attempts to change that decision in the courts.

The inconclusive result of Sunday’s election had lessened the chance of a split of the region from Spain, Rajoy said in a television interview on Thursday. The measure, easily passed on Thurs-

day given the absolute majority of Rajoy’s ruling People’s Party (PP), will come into effect before December’s general election and will allow the court to force the resignation of officials and civil servants, including politicians, if they do not comply with rulings.

Catalan parties on Thursday said it had been drawn up specifically to target the acting head of the Catalan regional government, Artur Mas.

“It’s personal — they want to wipe out Mas politically and personally,” Carles Campbell, a Junts Pel Si (Together For Yes) supporter displays pins after polls closed in a regional parliamentary election in Barcelona Spain on 27 September 2015. Photo: Reuters

Member of parliament for Mas’s pro-independence party CDC, told the lower house.

The PP said the law was designed to strengthen the court’s power over the courts. The centre-right party has said the measures are a very clear message to those who want to break away from Spain.

Rajoy said on Thursday he would back any decision from the Constitutional Court to sack the head of the Catalan government if he took steps towards independence that go against the constitution.

The courts have been key in Madrid’s fight to block any Catalan bid for independence.
Understanding NCA

Aung Naing Oo

The NCA (Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement) is a complex legal document containing 103 points across seven chapters. Being a complex legal document covering ceasefire, politics, humanitarian and civil protection, it may be difficult for grassroots or people in conflict zones to understand the meaning of the agreement. But it will affect the lives of millions of people directly or indirectly connected to the armed conflict. Adequate explanations, therefore, should be provided.

Following the successful conclusion of negotiations over the NCA on August 7, the government published the full text with the agreement from the ethnic armed organizations. It is also available online.

But no one knows how many people have actually read the historic text. Most importantly, do they understand it?

Recently it came to our attention that there are comprehension problems regarding the ceasefire text. We realized that even among those who have followed the peace process closely did not understand the NCA well.

There were complaints from some ethnic civil society groups that the ethnic armed organizations in their areas did not provide adequate explanations of the NCA. Equally the government must share the blame.

It dawned on us that the importance of the NCA was lost in translation. In addition, the NCA was considered to be the government property rather than a joint effort with ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs).

It was a wake-up call for us. Indeed, then we had many questions.

Have the people in the government read it? Have the ethnic leaders who have never been at the negotiation table read the NCA text and fully understood it and its implications?

What does the JMC (Joint Monitoring Committee) mean? What are the requirements of all signatories to the NCA regarding ceasefire monitoring and civilian protections? How will political dialogue be organized?

To answer some of these questions, we made a presentation to a selected group of politicians, academics, civil society leaders and high profile journalists in early September during our monthly community forum. Even here, we found out that there were shortcomings in understanding the NCA and its implications.

Based on these alarming revelations, we have organized press conferences, invited diplomats, political parties and civil society groups to explain the NCA. Ethnic groups have also been invited to inform the public of the NCA, its contents and meanings. The Myanmar Peace Center also published a booklet on NCA.

What we know is not enough. But it is worth mentioning here some of the key points in the NCA.

Firstly, the aims of the NCA are to strengthen existing ceasefires; to start political dialogue and to lay firm foundations for peace not only under the current administration but also future governments of Myanmar until peace is achieved.

Secondly, the NCA contains 55 provisions directly related to military issues. They deal with agreements that all signatories—be they the Myanmar Tatmadaw or EAOs—must abide by without fail. The NCA also contains 18-point civilian protections.

Most important of all, the NCA provides a roadmap and a joint political dialogue committee to negotiate the future of Myanmar.

Fourth, the NCA is not an end in itself; it is a means to put an end to armed conflict in Myanmar. The NCA is considered the door way to political negotiations. In fact, it is the real beginning of the peace talks.

Fifth, the EAO signatories to the NCA will no longer be subject to prosecution under the troublesome Unlawful Association Act otherwise known as penal code 171. The delisting will be completed before the signing of these, the main points are as follows.

The EAOs do not need to give up their weapons or territory. The majority of the provisions in the NCA originated with the EAOs but they were included in the document as the product of the joint drafting process. Negotiations were conducted among equals.

The amendments, including additions and subtractions to the 2008 constitution will be carried out based on the results of the political negotiations. The government guarantees a Union based on democratic and federalism principles and an inclusive political negotiation—both longstanding demands of the EAOs.

Most crucially, the NCA provides a roadmap and a joint political dialogue committee to negotiate the future of Myanmar.

Finally, the NCA along with the whole peace process is a joint effort. It is a shared process and collective ownership by all who negotiated the agreement over 20 months in good faith. To this end, it belongs to all citizens of Myanmar regardless of where they are from and where they reside.

The NCA is a historic document. It is a catalyst for changes that will ensure the end of the armed conflict and bring about durable peace. For this, we all have a duty to understand it.

“A virtuous government will ensure that every individual is equal before and under the law and that its people enjoy easy access to quality education. On the other hand, no matter how equal we are before the law, it is meaningless if the law is not equal to each of us. Under no circumstances can failed law guarantee the rule of law.

The roots of most conflicts and crimes lie in ignorance and prejudice. That is why education is regarded as one of the most powerful instruments for overcoming these two extremes, in addition to alleviating poverty. It is through education that we learn to distinguish right and wrong in complex circumstances, so what we all need is a certain level of education to acquire the ability to reason.

After all, the most we can hope for is the emergence of a new government that is accountable to its people and willing to respect the rule of law and revitalise the education system.”
It is easier promised than done

Tommy Pauk

NORMALLY, it is easier to promise about a task than to do it in real world. To make promise without burning desire is easier, but practical work is difficult. Sometimes, even though the persons who make promises have willingness and goodwill towards the needy, there might be unforeseen obstacles and difficulties in doing things or implementing the tasks. For example, some politicians made a promise for alleviation of poverty in the society. Under such circumstances, they cannot be blamed for the failure or unsuccessful plan or project. Some politicians promise to do something or to give something to somebody, but they fail to accomplish the task or break the promise deliberately. The failure or unsuccessful plan or project makes the public to look out as a kind of vow among human relations. However, some people never ever think about uneasy work or task before they make promise to others.

In political arena, most of the politicians as well as power men or dynasties promise their electorate of the constituencies easily for fulfilling the needs and wants of them. The politicians promise their supporters concerned recklessly and superficially. They use lip service and take advantage of the respective eligible voters dishonestly. In other words, the promise comes from their vocal cord, but not from their heart indeed. The promise easily to the people while canvassing for votes. The following promises are made due to public desirers; the promise of stabilizing the prices of commodities, upgrading the standard of living, communication for country, removal of yes-men and selfish acts and behaviors should not be prevalent in any form of political system in any society in the world. They do not respect and regard these promises by themselves. What a shame!

Above-stated promises are to be implemented in possible way. Due to some circumstances, it is possibly to improve that stuff are not done even when they are in power. Basically, peoples’ desires to establish modern, advance and prosperous nation among the nations around the world. That is why people are so eager to know how the leader or powerful politicians are going to implement the promises made by them to do before they are elected democratically. If the country is rich in natural resources, mineral resources, energy resources and human resources, the government can make easy and efficient leadership should be available for implementing sustainable socio-economic development of the country. However, good leaders around the world keep their promises and can do things in conformity with the public desires properly. They never promise easily if the public demand or desire is impossible to do practically.

When we see the issue from the legal perspective, a promise is a contract between a promisor and a promisee. (N.B law term) If the promisor breaches the certain contract, the promise must be compensated for the loss or his or her expectation or tangible objects. These days, some people even do not care not only promises but also oath because they could stay away from justice or they are above the law. Nevertheless, once they break their promises, they lose trust and respect of the ordinary people forever. Viewing from the moral perspective, they have no dignity and honesty. The values of human decency and integrity are ignored by those selfish and dishonest people in a certain society. Myanmar maxim says: ‘All the kings must maintain fidelity or commitment to the country and the countrymen are also obliged to keep their promises.’ During the successive Myanmar dynasties, the kings and the countrymen had practiced in accord with the maxim. Therefore, there had been mutual trust between kings and the entire countrymen in those days in Myanmar.

In business and commerce, business men must not fail to keep their promises while dealing with each other for doing business. A successful business man has won trust among the other businessmen, and the business men can not fail because of his promise. It is undeniable that keeping promise and doing the right things always make a person successful in life in any society. In business dealing, promise is vitally important because business is a kind of contract between the two different businessmen. The content of the contract must have value of goods, timeframe, conditions and purchasing date or buying dates. All that stuff must be completed or done perfectly. Sometimes, the buyers have agreed to all particulars on the contract or they have made a written agreement format formally. If one party fails to keep promise, the other party will not make any demand for the loss in business legally.

Promise is synonymous with vow or commitment in social life in human society indeed. A person who makes promise is responsible and accountable for his or her promise to those in need. He or she ought to implement the tasks or materialize the projects consistently. Even our world communities are obliged to do or act in accord with the international treaty or pact or agreement, which is a kind of promise to deal each other harmoniously. Before we promise something, we should make sure if it is possible to do or act. Political promise, social promise and business promise can be made, but the people should think of its possible to do it or act so as not to encounter bad and awful consequences in human society!!!

Unique Practices and Common Issues

San Shwe Aung

We are different form one another. Scientists have mentioned that generally each and every person in the world has different DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid), which is a molecule that carries most of the genetic instructions used in the development, functioning and reproduction of all known living organisms... But one in a million people might have the same DNA according to the research. Individuals are not only unique physically but also have different views, behavior, thought and belief. Even among brothers and sisters it is quite usual that the appearances, preferences and views are different. If we look at the world, countries are unique. Many countries are different in geography. One country may have high lands with snow mountains, permanently heavy while others have tropical weather with huge flat arable land with rivers flowing in many parts of the country like that of ours. Countries are distinguished with the culture of nationalities residing here. Some countries have only few or single nationality while others, such as ours, have several dozens and even hundreds of ethnic nationalities who speak different languages, have different traditions and culture. Food traditionally taken by the people in different parts of the world is a very interesting matter. Even in one continent although we eat rice, for instance in Asia the dishes and ways to cook meat and vegetable are quite different. In most part of Africa maize and banana are eaten as staple food with meat and vegetable. Very clear example is that although we eat rice in both countries, Thai and Myanmar curry and dishes are quite different in taste and flavor, for many countries motor vehicles are driven carefully not to make any accidents however small it may be, like just touching one rear bumper with other’s front bumper, including in Yangon. But in many cities of India the traffic is so terrible that once all vehicles come to a standstill, cars bumpers would touch one another so that nothing, even a pedestrian cannot pass to the other side of the road, not to mention a bicycle, motorbike or trishaw! In Myanmar, a new comer or the foreign tourists wonder why 95% of all vehicles steering wheels are on the road’s right side (wrong side) while the traffic moves on the right side of the road! Yet the car accidents are relatively low in Myanmar compared to other countries.

Our school children, both boys and girls, from the middle class level wear green color Longyi or sarong when they attend the schools, which is an unique and national pride of course. Majority of Myanmar people still wear traditional costume. Nevertheless, there are other unique practices which are shameful and unacceptable to local common people of each nation and foreign visitors in our country. Many people are now addicted to chewing betel and spitting the red betel sliver on to the road, platform and any where they please without taking into account to the cleanliness and well swept surrounding in the public roads. Many people have experience of his or her car littered with betel spitting on the bonnet or on the roof of the cars while parking on the road side. Bus drivers, conductors, some commuters, many pedestrians who are addicted to the betel chewing will spit hundreds of time a day to whatsoever surface he goes by. It is a big national shame and authorities have to educate to the public through public media about the bad health impact as well as giving warning not to spit in public. The violators should be fined heavily in accord with the law. Nevertheless, once they continue to do so, they can not expect the leniency. The practice of betel chewing and spitting in public is a common problem in the curriculums of the primary, middle and high school classes so that our future generation would avoid this unique practice.

Smoking in the public areas is a common problem faced by many countries in the world not like spitting betel sliver, which I think is quite unique to Myanmar and perhaps another couple of countries. Smoking is banned by law in the public areas in many countries. Enforcement of the smoking ban is quite strong in Singapore for example. One violator can be easily caught through CCTV and accordingly fined. Littering carelessly is another common problem particularly in the cities where the population is very dense. Although nowadays YCDC has deployed sufficient numbers of big garbage bins in almost all parts of Yangon city, some people still dump their household waste on the platform, on the road and throw into the water drain with no proper covers. They normally throw their waste during the night time to avoid being seen by others. These people have very low moral standard and are not cooperating with agencies who are trying to keep the city as clean and hygienic as possible. Yangon city is a growing and expansion population year after year. To keep the city clean which every sensible citizen aspires, all must participate and contribute to the international standards by not littering in the public places, platforms, drainages and parks. And one day we can be proud of our clean garden city of Asia.
UNited Nations — The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) told the UN General Assembly’s general debate on Thursday that Pyongyang seeks a peace treaty with the United States to end the 1950-1953 Korean War and “address the abnormal relations between the DPRK and the UN.”

“If the United States makes policy change with courage, a dramatic improvement will be affected in the security environment on the Korean Peninsula and will eventually lead to addressing security concerns of the United States,” said DPRK Foreign Minister Ri Su Yong, in an apparent reference to Pyongyang’s nuclear threat.

“This is the best option we can afford.”

“The DPRK is strongly convinced that the urgent replacement of the armistice agreement with a peace treaty is a way to ensure peace and security on the Korean peninsula and address the abnormal relations between the DPRK and the UN,” he said.

The “abnormal relations” he referred to has to do with the US forces in South Korea technically part of a UN Command. The 1950-1953 Korean War was fought not by a peace treaty but a cease-fire and Washington has long insisted the only way it will negotiate with Pyongyang is through the Six Party Talks, involving representatives from China, DPRK, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States.

“Late last August the situation on the Korean Peninsula once again headed to the brink of war,” Ri said, referring to tensions heightened during annual joint military exercises held by South Korean and US militaries.

“What measures can the UN take when it is a UN commander who commands the large-scale exercises that create a vicious cycle of heightened tensions,” Ri asked, adding that lodging complaints with the world body is no avail because the United States as a permanent member of the Security Council holds veto power.

Syria and Ukraine: two fronts in Russian war for influence

BRUSSELS — Russia’s air strikes in Syria are in part designed to extract concessions from the West over Ukraine by making Moscow a player in any attempts by world powers to hammer out a post-conflict settlement in Damascus, some Western officials say.

While the Syrian capita

l lies 1,800 miles (3,000 km) south of Kiev, for Russian President Vladimir Putin they are two fronts in the same war that is aimed at blocking Ukraine’s European integration, some EU, US and NATO officials say.

Publicly no officials

will make such a link, saying it is too speculative and French diplomats hosting a high-level meeting with Putin in Paris on Friday are reluctant to draw any conclusions.

But privately, a number of senior officials and diplomats have told Reuters they believe the Russian leader’s aim is to use his intervention in Syria partly to pressure the West to tacitly accept Russia’s 2014 annexation of Crimea and gradually lift the sanctions imposed by the West in retaliation.

The Kremlin says Russian air strikes are targeting “well-known” terrorist organisation inside Syria.

Strategically, Putin’s air strikes are securing his interests, protecting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Russia’s Syrian port in Tartous, which complements Russia’s access to the Black Sea that it now controls after taking the Crimea peninsula. Western officials also see other motives, including that Moscow may also say that its military involvement in Syria’s civil war, its first intervention in the Middle East in decades, could also be used to help stem the record numbers of refugees flowing to Europe.

Most see a way for Putin to make himself “an indispensable interlocutor for the West”, as one EU official put it, while recognising he is defending a long-time ally, the Assad dynasty.

“It’s the same game,” said another official closely involved with Ukraine policy.

“Putin’s involvement in Syria is a way to seek concessions, to get the West to avoid talking about Crimea, drop sanctions and accept a frozen conflict in eastern Ukraine,” — Reuters

Gunman kills nine at Oregon college, dies in shootout with police

ROSEBURG — A gunman stalked onto an Oregon college campus on Thursday and opened fire, killing nine people and wounding seven before police shot him to death, authorities said, in yet another burst of US gun violence that ranked as the deadliest this year.

The suspect, who witnesses said fired dozens of shots in a classroom full of screaming students, was slain in an exchange of gunfire with two police officers in Snyder Hall at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, ending the morning rampage.

The gunman was not publicly identified by local authorities. A law enforcement source named him as Chris Harper-Mercer. Other media said he was 26.

In a photo posted on a MySpace profile believed to be his, a young man with a shaved head and dark-rimmed glasses is seen staring into the camera while holding a rifle.

CNN reported the suspect was armed with three handguns, a “long gun” and body armor. According to survivors, the gunman at one point ordered covering students to stand up and state their religion before shooting them one by one.

Stacy Boylan, the father of an 18-year-old student who was wounded but survived by playing dead, told CNN his daughter recounted her professor being shot point blank as the assailant stormed into the classroom.

“He was able to stand there and start asking people one by one what their religion was,” Boylan said,relating the ordeal as described by his daughter.

“Are you a Christian?” he would ask them. “If you’re a Christian, stand up. Good. Because you’re a Christian, you’re going to see God in just about one second.” He shot and killed them. And he kept going down the line doing this to people.

Another student, Kortney Moore, 18, who was present in the writing class when the gunman entered and survived unhurt, gave a similar account to the local News Review newspaper.

Authorities offered no explanation for the gunman’s actions.

“The law enforcement investigation into the shooter and into his motivations is ongoing,” Douglas County Sheriff John Hanlin said at an afternoon news conference. He also said three of the wounded victims were hospitalized in critical condition.

Hanlin refused to name the gunman. “I will not give him the credit he probably sought via his horrific and cowardly act,” he told reporters.

The massacre in Roseburg, a former timber town on the western edge of the Cascades some 260 miles (420 km) south of Portland, was the latest in a flurry of lethal US mass shootings in recent years.

Thursday’s was the deadliest this year, surpassing the nine killed in a gun battle between motorcycle gangs in Waco, Texas, in May, and the nine who died in the rampage of a gunman at a black church in Charleston, South Carolina in June.

Not counting Thursday’s incident, 293 mass shootings have been reported this year, according to the Mass Shooting Tracker website, a crowd-sourced database kept by anti-gun activists that logs events in which four or more people are shot.

The violence has fueled demands for more gun control in the United States, where ownership of firearms is protected by the Second Amendment of the US Constitution, and better care for the mentally ill.

President Barack Obama, speaking just hours after the rampage, said the mass killings should move Americans to demand greater gun controls from elected officials.

“Somehow this has become routine,” a visibly angry Obama said. “The reporting is routine. My response here, at this podium, ends up being routine. ... We... We’ve become numb to this.” — Reuters

First responders transport an injured person following a shooting incident at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Oregon on 1 October 2015.

Photo: Reuters
Iran troops to join Syria war, Russia bombs group trained by CIA

BEIT FURIK — Israel deployed hundreds of troops on Friday in a hunt for suspected Palestinian gunmen after an Israeli couple were killed in front of their children in the occupied West Bank.

Eitam and Naama Henkin, both in their 30s, were gunned down while driving on Thursday night near the settlements of Iramar and Elon More, in the north of the Palestinian territory.

Their four children, aged between four months and nine years, were found unharmed in the back of the car.

Israeli army spokesman Arye Shalicar said security forces were conducting an “intensive search” on the ground combined with intelligence efforts. The Henkins were residents of the central West Bank settlement Neria, northwest of Ramallah. They were to be buried in Jerusalem’s Har Hamenuhot cemetery at 0800 GMT on Friday.

In the Palestinian village of Beitillu, a short distance from Neria, assailants torched a car and spray-painted “Revenge Henkin” on a nearby wall, the army said on Friday, noting that nobody was hurt. Apprehensive of rising tensions among settlers and Palestinians, the army said it would be deploying “four battalions in preparation for a possible chase activity that is part of the Free Syrian Army, told Reuters one of the targets was his group’s base in Idlib province, struck by about 20 missiles in two separate raids. His fighters had been trained by the CIA in Qatar and Saudi Arabia, part of a programme Washington says is aimed at supporting groups that oppose both Islamic State and Assad.

“Russia is challenging everyone and saying there is no alternative to Bashar,” Haj Ali said. He said the Russian jets had been identified by members of his group who once served as Syrian air force pilots.

The group is one of at least three foreign-backed FSA rebel factions to say they had been hit by the Russians in the last two days.

At the United Nations, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told a news conference Moscow was targeting Islamic State. He did not specifically deny that Russian planes had attacked Free Syrian Army facilities but said Russia did not view it as a terrorist group and viewed it as part of a political solution in Syria.

The aim is to help the Syrian armed forces “in their weak spots”, said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

Peskov, a spokesman for Russian US Secretary of Defence John McCain, said — “Russia is challenging everyone and saying there is no alternative to Bashar,” Haj Ali said. He said the Russian jets had been identified by members of his group who once served as Syrian air force pilots.

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Afghan refugees languish in Athens far from ‘promised land’

ATHENS — Afghan refugee Khodadad spends his days huddled with his family in an Athens square with little food, no money and dwindling hopes of ever reaching their desired destination: Germany.

They are among thousands of Afghans languishing in the Greek capital without means to pay for barely any cash after being fermented to the mainland from the Aegean islands on which they land every day from Turkey.

In the cruel, unofficial pecking order among hundreds of thousands of migrants who have flooded into Europe this year, Afghans are beneath the underdogs.

Unlike richer and better educated Syrians, they have travelled farther and can’t afford the ride to the Balkans to the “promised land” of northern Europe.

“We have no money. We eat,” Khodadad shrugs, holding his seven-month-old baby.

Victoria Square, in a poor, run-down part of Athens, has been transformed into a makeshift camp in recent weeks with thousands of mainly Afghans sleeping rough in the open as the occasional downpour brings a bit of relief to the makeshift encampment.

Women in bright-coloured head-scarves breastfeed their babies while young children turn to a tiny rocking horse. Others play cards on worn-out mattresses laid among rubbish beneath a German-made statue of Theseus, a mythical king of Athens. Most have nothing to do but wait. Afghans spend longer than Syrians in each country on the migration trail to earn or collect enough money to travel north. It takes longer to process their asylum applications because authorities give priority to Syrians, designated as refugees since they are fleeing a civil war.

“It is difficult, time doesn’t pass. We are hungry. We eat only bread,” said Khodadad, who de-clined to give his last name because he fears for the safety of relatives at home. He said he paid 2,500 euros ($3,200) to a shady middle-man for his family’s 20-day journey from the northern city of Kunduz to Greece via Iran and Turkey in search of a better life in Europe after his sister was killed by the Taliban. His wife, baby and two more children aged 6 and 7 travelled with him.

“There is war in Afghanistan. Many people died. We were scared to sleep at night.”

Khodadad

Afghan refugee

A survey by private monitoring group Vietnam.Pacific Observatory this year found that 34 percent of those interviewed said extortion was “very present” where they lived, compared with 25 percent in 2013, the last time the poll was conducted.

“We live in a state of fear. Sometimes we call the police, but they don’t even come,” said Alberto Quintero, who owns a paint store in San Cristobal city near the Colombian border. He said he is threatened sporadically by gangs and forced to make payoffs, the last one 30,000 bolívares — more than four times the monthly minimum wage.

Extortion in Venezuela was for years concentrat-ed mostly in that volatile western border region. But it is increasingly common in the capital too, adding to economic pressures forcing stores out of business, says the Caracas Chamber of Commerce.

“The alternative but illegitimate social order has been established in Cara-cas,” said the chamber’s executive director, Victor Maldonado. Twenty percent of the its members shut businesses last year due to recession and crime, including extortion.

Venezuela suffers one of the world’s highest rates of violent crime, which critics of President Nicolas Maduro attribute to ineptitude and rampant corruption among police, state prosecutors and judges.

Maduro blames security problems on right-wing Colombian paramilitary groups whom he says are in league with his political adversaries. One ruling Socialist Party official described extortion as a para-military practice.

The interior ministry declared it will give further information on the practice when consulted by Reuters. Business owners say the government frequently has to pay a call from an anonymous phone that calls them to discuss their troubles.

Citing figures presented at a tuna conference last year in Indonesia, Greenpeace said the Philippines contributed 6.88 percent of the canned tuna exports across the world in 2013, which reached more than $8.1 billion.

“That is overfishing. It is necessary that we rank our tuna canneries because they have an important role to play in reversing the decline of our tuna stocks,” Cinches said, noting that it is the first time an Asian country conducted the survey. He said Greenpeace is recommending that tuna canneries be on a watch list unless it can be traced to the vessel and point of capture; properly label their products with the species name, catch and habitat information on the label; and be transparent to third party auditors, among others.

The group presented, as an example, a photo of a canned tuna product from New Zealand that indicated the fishing area and catch method.

Ciches said that aside from general consumers, the canneries themselves will benefit from these guidelines as they are aimed at addressing the problem of rampant illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the country.—Kyodo News
China cuts off illegal government involvement with tax agents

BEIJING — A total of 533 officials from taxation departments across China have been punished for illegal connections with tax agents since January, said the top anti-graft agency here Friday.

The move was part of a national operation to sever government involvement with non-governmental intermediate agencies, said the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in a press release on its website.

The campaign is aimed to stop government officials from using these agencies for their own gains and ensure the government’s impartial stance.

A total of 58 local taxation departments were found to have leased offices to tax agents or even provided offices for them for free. They were ordered to stop doing so, the press release said.

Discipline inspection agencies also exposed ten taxation departments that allowed tax agents to use their canteens as well as the other ten that have inappropriate financial transactions with tax firms.

Two tax firms from two provinces were disqualified during the operation. Taxation departments across the country have launched large-scale internal inspections since the beginning of this year while a number of new protocols were issued.

The State Administration of Taxation (SAT) dispatched 14 inspection teams to check up the development of the operation in 38 local taxation departments.

The CCDI office also interviewed leading officials of SAT and ten provincial taxation departments to supervise and push forwards the operation.—Xinhua

New Zealand aims to raise global standards for ocean management

WELLINGTON — New Zealand is to share its experience of ocean management and conservation at the international Our Oceans Conference in Valparaiso, Chile, next week, Environment Minister Nick Smith said Friday. “Oceans make up 72 percent of the world, but only 2 percent is protected areas. The population of marine life like fish and seabirds have halved over the past 40 years,” said Smith, who is leading a delegation of officials and experts to the event. “The biggest problems are in the high seas beyond individual countries’ jurisdictions, making up about 70 percent of the oceans, where we need strengthened institutions and rules to ensure the sustainability of fishing stocks and improved protection of marine life.”

New Zealand’s ambition was to be a leader in ocean management, and its fisheries quota system had provided it with more certified sustainable fishing stocks than any other country, while environmental regulations ensured a “robust” process of checks on mining and other activities.

Last month the government announced the establishment of the Kermande Ocean Sanctuary, centered around a group of tiny islands about 1,000 kilometres northeast of the North Island and covering 620,000 square km, which was a “benchmark in ocean protection.” “The next challenge will be the update of our marine protection legislation,” said Smith.

“New Zealand successfully sponsored a United Nations resolution in June calling for new marine protection measures in the high seas,” he said. “Countries like New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia have made significant contributions with new sanctuaries at the Kermadecs, Pitcairn Island, the northeast United States islands and the Coral Sea. This is an opportunity to share experiences and to advance improved ocean sustainability and protection measures.”—Xinhua

WEATHER REPORT

BAY INFERENCER: Monsoon is weak in the Andaman Sea and South Bay and weather is partly cloudy elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 3rd October, 2015: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Taninthayi Region, fairly widespread in Yangon Region, Chin, Rakhine and Mon States, scattered in Nay Pyi Taw, Upper Sajang, Mandalay, Magway, Bago and Ayeyarwady Regions, Shan and Kayin States and isolated in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (80%).

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Rain or thundershowers in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (80%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3rd October, 2015: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3rd October, 2015: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR WEEKEND: Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in Yangon Region and scattered in Mandalay Region.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV ANAN BHUM VOY NO (142N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ANAN BHUM VOY NO (142N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 3.10.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.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.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11.30 am and 12 noon to 4 pm until the 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 MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: MS COSCON CONTAINER LINES Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV BANGSAOTONG VOY NO (174)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV BANGSAOTONG VOY NO (174) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 4.10.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of S.P.W (1) where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11.20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm until the 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 MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: MS WONGSAMUT OCEAN SHIPPING CO LTD. Phone No: 2301186

More people drown in Switzerland due to heat waves

GENEVA — 48 people, 21 more than for the whole of 2014, have drowned in Switzerland since the beginning of the year, the Swiss Rescue Society (SRS) indicated on Thursday. Among those who lost their lives 38 were men, while 4 women and 6 children account for the remaining fatalities. According to figures, 44 people lost their lives in lakes and rivers, 2 died as result of diving accidents and 2 in diverse circumstances. Protracted high temperatures recorded in Switzerland this summer meant that a greater number of people visited the confederation’s many aquatic sources including lakes, rivers and swimming pools.

According to the Federal Office of Meteorology and Climatology (MeteoSwiss), August 2015 was one of the hottest recorded since statistics were first compiled 152 years ago.—Xinhua

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Pharrell Williams launches book donation campaign

LOS ANGELES — Grammy winning singer Pharrell Williams has unveiled plans to donate up to 50,000 books to encourage young children to read.

The hip-hop star, 42, teamed up with officials at non-profit group FirstBook to provide reading materials to disadvantaged kids, reported Billboard magazine. The campaign is designed to coincide with the upcoming release of Williams’ new picture book Happy!, which is based on his “Despicable Me 2” theme song of the same name.

Publishers at Penguin Young Readers are also urging fans to spread the word on social media by sharing why reading makes them happy using the hashtag “ReadHappy”, with each post generating a book donation to children in need. “Every child on this planet deserves to experience the joy of reading,” said Williams, a father of one.

Happy! the book, which features illustrations of youngsters celebrating what it means to be happy, hits retailers next week. Announcing the print news earlier this year, an excited Williams gushed, “I’m so proud of my collaboration with Penguin and to be able to share my book Happy! with all the young readers out there. “I love what I do and am grateful to all the people who felt that ‘Happy’ resonated with them. My hope is that this book inspires a child’s imagination and creativity and that it teaches the importance of being happy and true to yourself.” —PTI

Titanic’s last lunch menu sells for $88,000 at auction

NEW YORK — A menu for the last luncheon served to the first-class passengers aboard the ill-fated Titanic has sold for $88,000 at an online auction.

The menu, which was saved by a first-class passenger, was sold on Wednesday to a private collector, Auctioneers Lion Heart Autographs said. The price was in line with pre-sale estimates.

Stamped with a date of 14 April 1912 and the White Star Line logo, the menu included grilled mutton chops and custard pudding; corned beef; mashed, fried and baked jacket potatoes; a buffet of fish, ham and beef; an apple meringue pastry; and a selection of eight cheeses.

Lion Heart Autographs said the menu was saved by Abraham Lincoln Salomon, one of the passengers who escaped on the so-called “money boat” lifeboat that was filled with wealthy people. It is thought to be one of only three or four menus from the ship’s last lunch that still exist.

The menu was offered for sale by an unidentified person who was given some Titanic items by a descendant of one of the lifeboat survivors.

The luxury ocean liner foundered in the Atlantic Ocean on 15 April 1912 after striking an iceberg during its maiden voyage from Southampton, England, to New York. Some 1,500 people lost their lives. — Reuters

Schwarzenegger takes ‘Golden Icon’ award at Zurich Film Festival

ZURICH — Action star Arnold Schwarzenegger has been honoured with the Zurich Film Festival’s top “Golden Icon” award for his four decades of work both in film and politics.

The award celebrates an actor’s or actress’ lifetime achievements. Previous recipients include Diane Keaton and Morgan Freeman.

Schwarzenegger, who first came to fame as a bodybuilder who won the Mr Universe title at age 20, returned to making movies after two terms as California Governor from 2003 to 2011.

Few however have enjoyed the success of “The Terminator” or “Conan the Barbarian” in which he starred in the 1980s and 90s.

“I’m happy to be back into acting and I’m also very happy that I did my public service ... so I will be doing many more movies,” he said at the festival on Wednesday night.

The Austrian-American Schwarzenegger, 68, also presented his new movie “Maggie” at the festival, in which he plays a farmer struggling to look after his dying daughter.

Last month television network NBC said Schwarzenegger would replace US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump as the host of reality show “The Celebrity Apprentice”. —Reuters

Little Mix want to take ‘Get Weird’ tour worldwide

LONDON — British pop group Little Mix will kick off their UK arena “Get Weird” tour in March and the all-girl band say they want to take it worldwide.

With two albums, a perfume and the kudos of being the first group to win Britain’s television talent show “The X Factor” to their name, Little Mix say a world tour is next. They are set to release their third album “Get Weird” next month.

“We have so many fans around the world and we just want to show them us,” band member Leigh-Anne Pinnock said on the sidelines of the Apple Music Festival where the band performed last week.

“We just want to get there and show them what we can do.” Also on the agenda is a film — just like the Spice Girls did with their movie “Spice World”. “It is honestly the dream to be able to have our own movie, maybe act in it, similar to ... what the Spice Girls did,” Pinnock added. — Reuters
An oriental white stork looks for food in a paddy field in Toyooka, Hyogo Prefecture, western Japan. Photo: Kyodo News

TOYOOKA — Reviving Japan’s once-extinct stork population is not just a story of nature preservation in the city of Toyooka, Hyogo Prefecture. It’s also the tale of a provincial region reinventing itself to avoid becoming a withered community in an aging and urban area in an aging and provincial region reinventing itself to avoid becoming the human community facing itself to avoid becoming a withered community in an aging and urban area in an aging and provincial region reinventing itself to avoid becoming the human community facing itself to avoid becoming a withered community in an aging and urban area in an aging and provincial region reinventing itself to avoid becoming the human community facing itself to avoid becoming a withered community in an aging and urban area in an aging and provincial region reinventing itself to avoid becoming the human community facing itself to avoid becoming a withered community in an aging and urban area in an aging and provincial region reinventing itself to avoid becoming the human community facing itself to avoid becoming a withered community in an aging and urban area in an aging and provincial region reinventing itself to avoid becoming the human community facing itself to avoid becoming a withered community in an aging and urban area in an aging and provincial region reinventing itself to avoid becoming the human community facing itself to avoid becoming a withered community in an aging and urban area in an aging and provincial region reinventing itself to avoid becoming the human community facing itself to avoid becoming a withered community in an aging and urban area in an aging and provincial region reinventing itself to avoid becoming the human community facing itself to avoid becoming a withered community in an aging and urban area in an aging and provincial region reinventing itself to avoid becoming the human community facing itself to avoid becoming a withered community in an aging and urban area in an aging and provincial region reinventing itself to avoid becoming the human community facing itself to avoid becoming a withered community in a

Facing the Sea of Japan and covered mostly by forests, Toyooka is known as the Hyogo Park of the Oriental White Stork, where young storks are grown in captivity, and the Toyooka Municipal Museum for Oriental White Stork. Around 300,000 tourists visit the preservation area each year, according to a museum official. Toyooka is the place where the last known wild bird of the oriental white stork species in Japan died in 1971, excluding those captured and kept for an artificial rearing project which ended in failure. However in 1985 young birds were imported from Russia, and the stork population in Toyooka has now recovered to around 170 birds, including around 80 in the wild and 90 being kept in captivity in preparation for release into the wild, the city says. To make Toyooka an oasis for storks, organic farming has been promoted so that the farmland remains rich in small creatures that become prey for the bird. Crops grown through this stork-friendly farming have been named “stork rice,” and the stork brand fetches a premium over ordinary rice.

“The rice is delicious and the harvest is rich,” said Akihisa Sezaki, a municipal official. “We are hoping to spread this farming method across the country.” Toyooka is also tapping its cultural heritage as it seeks to become a vibrant region.

Dramatic Arts centre and the Hyogo Park for Oriental White Stork. Around 300,000 tourists visit the preservation area each year, according to a museum official. Toyooka is the place where the last known wild bird of the oriental white stork species in Japan died in 1971, excluding those captured and kept for an artificial rearing project which ended in failure. However in 1985 young birds were imported from Russia, and the stork population in Toyooka has now recovered to around 170 birds, including around 80 in the wild and 90 being kept in captivity in preparation for release into the wild, the city says. To make Toyooka an oasis for storks, organic farming has been promoted so that the farmland remains rich in small creatures that become prey for the bird. Crops grown through this stork-friendly farming have been named “stork rice,” and the stork brand fetches a premium over ordinary rice.

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Early in the 20th century, the Eirakukan theater near the former Isumi-jo castle thrived as “kabuki” shows were sometimes held as functions of non-leather bags in Japan. An old shopping area has been renovated as “bag street,” featuring around a dozen bag shops. Previously, Toyooka’s bag manufacturers mostly made bags for US and European brands. How ever, emphasizing their hometown roots, they are now working together to push the Toyooka brand of bags.

British children’s writer and illustrator Judith Kerr chats as she sits by her desk at her home in west London, Britain on 30 September 2015. Photo: Reuters

British children’s writer and illustrator Judith Kerr chats as she sits by her desk at her home in west London, Britain on 30 September 2015. Photo: Reuters

LONDON — At 92 years of age and with over nine million books sold, British children’s writer and illustrator Judith Kerr could be enjoying a restful retirement, but no.

The author of bestselling picture book “The Tiger Who Came to Tea” and of “When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit,” an account of her childhood as a Jewish refugee fleeing Nazi Germany, Kerr has just published her new book and is keen to find her next project.

“I’m miserable now because I haven’t thought of the next one yet,” she joked at her home in Barnes, a leafy corner of south west London, where she has lived and worked since 1962.

“Being a one woman whose snap decision to save a motherless seal pup turns his life upside down, it was inspired by a true episode from the youth of her father, Alfred Kerr, a famous writer and drama critic in Germany before World War Two.

“Only my father would have thought he could do this mad thing,” said Kerr, chuckling at the thought of him struggling to keep a seal on his Berlin balcony. The story did not end well for the real seal, although the novel has a happy conclusion. However, the book has been translated into many languages and taught to school children as an introduction to a dark chapter of history. It won the prestigious Youth Literature Prize in Germany, and in 1993 a school was named after Kerr in her native Berlin.

Kerr said that as she had got older she had thought more often about the Jewish children from her generation who perished in the Holocaust, and of the lives they might have lived. “If you’ve got a life that so many people didn’t have, you can’t waste it,” she said. —Reuters

Long after Hitler and Tiger, Judith Kerr still has yarns to spin
Defence service team wins Karatedo Cup

The winners of the 6th 2015 Japan Karatedo Cup pose for photo together with Japanese ambassador Mr Tateshi Higuchi. PHOTO: Ko Moe

BANGKOK — Tennis titans Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic met with Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-o-chha on Friday and visited the site of a deadly Bangkok bomb blast.

World number one Djokovic’s match for the first time in Thailand was held in conjunction with the 6th Japan Karatedo Cup, held at the Erawan Shrine. The match attracted a large crowd.

The pair visited the Erawan Shrine, the scene of the explosion, and placed flower garlands at the site amid pouring rain.

Earlier, Nadal and Djokovic, wearing pale blue and yellow traditional Thai silk jackets, gave tennis racquets to Prayuth and chatted to the premier through an interpreter. Prayuth asked the two to help promote Thai tourism.

“We are very pleased to have world-class tennis players in Thailand,” said Prayuth. “We hope you will help boost confidence.”

Djokovic last visited Thailand in 2008 when he lost the final of the Thailand Open to Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, while Nadal visited Bangkok in 2010 for the same tournament and lost in the semi-finals. The two will face each other in Bangkok’s Hua Mark Indoor Stadium at 1300 GMT on Friday.—Reuters

Top scorer Vardy playing with broken wrist

LONDON — Leicester City’s England striker Jamie Vardy has been playing with two broken bones in his wrist since 13 September, but that has not prevented him from becoming the Premier League’s top scorer.

Leicester manager Claudio Ranieri revealed the extent of the injury on Thursday after the striker was named in England’s squad for their remaining Euro 2016 qualifiers against Estonia and Lithuania.

The injury seems not to have hampered Vardy, who netted his fifth and sixth goals of the season in last weekend’s 5-2 home defeat by Arsenal to go top of the table. The two will face each other at Bangkok’s Hua Mark Indoor Stadium at 1300 GMT on Friday.—Reuters

No guarantees for Rooney, says England boss Hodgson

ENGLAND coach Roy Hodgson can give Wayne Rooney “no guarantees” that he will always pick him for the national team and said the current crop of forwards he has to choose from is the best he has seen during his tenure.

Manchester United forward Rooney will be awarded a golden boot by Sir Bobby Charlton before England’s Euro 2016 qualifier against Estonia on 9 October after overtaking him as the country’s leading scorer.

Rooney became the first England player to reach the 50-goal mark when he scored against Switzerland on 8 September but his club form has come under increasing scrutiny.

He went 11 Premier League games without a goal before ending the drought with his first league goal of the season in United’s 3-0 win over Sunderland last weekend.

Asked if the 29-year-old could lose his place in the England team if his form did not recover, Hodgson said: “That day hasn’t arrived and, with any luck, it won’t arrive ... but there are no guarantees.

“Rooney is a special player and we should do all we can to get him playing and scoring.”

LIVERPOOL striker Danny Ings has also been called up for the qualifiers against Estonia and Lithuania (12 October) along with Rooney, Harry Kane, Theo Walcott and Jamie Vardy.

However, Villa manager Tim Sherwood refused to let Grealish go with the 20-year-old still waiting for FIFA to ratify the nationality decision.

“The idea was to show him St George’s Park and ... induct him into England ... but Tim made it clear that wasn’t a good idea as far as he was concerned and he needed the boy to do some more training because he missed pre-season.”—Reuters