PEACE DEAL SIGNED
President extends olive branch to those who haven’t signed

The government and eight ethnic armed groups on Thursday signed a nationwide ceasefire agreement, which was witnessed by representatives from the European Union, the United Nations and diplomats.

In the presence of President U Thein Sein, the agreement was signed by Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham, Vice President U Nyan Tun, Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann, Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of Karen National Union-KNU Saw Mutu Say Poe, Chief of Staff of the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army-DKBA Saw Lah Bwe, Chairman of Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army-Peace Council Saw Htay Maung, Chairman of Chin National Front-CNF U Pu Nang Lian Thang, Parton of Pa-O National Liberation Organization-PNLO U Khun Okka, Chairman of All Burma Students’ Democratic Front-ABSDF Yebaw Than Ge, Vice Chairman of Arakan Liberation Party U Khin Nwe Lay Naing Aung and Chairman of the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS/Shan State Army-South (SSA-S)) U Yawd Serk.

Before the signing, President U Thein Sein delivered a speech, which went as follows:

“I extend my warm greetings to leaders of ethnic armed organisations; national and international witnesses; diplomatic corps; representatives of government, parliament, and Tatmadaw [army]; leaders of political parties; representatives of civil society and special guests gathered here at this Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) signing ceremony.

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Development projects will prioritise areas under ceasefire

Of the 15 ethnic armed groups invited by the government to ink the truce pact, eight ethnic armed groups agreed to do so. During the ceremony, both sides expressed the view that the signing was a first step in the right direction for achieving lasting peace in Myanmar.

U Aung Min insisted that development projects will also be rolled in areas inhabited by groups who did not sign the ceasefire, provided permission to do so is given by the groups. “They will not be sidelined because we are brothers living in this country. But it is up to them to determine whether or not to allow development works.”

Top priorities include demining, providing food and shelter, creating jobs and providing assistance to those who wish to return home after having fled earlier conflicts, the union minister said.

He highlighted the importance of creating industrial zones featuring garment factories and agro-based industries to improve livelihoods, and to do so transparently. The government, ethnic groups and donors will work together to implement development projects in areas affected by conflict, he added.

“Following the tripartite group’s decision, donors will manage the aid themselves, without any interference from the government.”

The government will provide suggestions for possible projects, with the initial capital invested by the government.—GNLM
Peace deal signed

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Today is a historic and significant day for Myanmar. The road to future peace in Myanmar is now open, he added.

Since independence, Myanmar has faced numerous internal armed conflicts. Because of these conflicts, thousands of combatants from both sides lost their lives and hundreds of thousands of civilians living in conflict zones suffered under the ravages of war. Those affected are none other than our fellow ethnic nationals and citizens.

Since my government took office and initiated democratic reforms, we realised that the reforms would not succeed without peace. Therefore, we proposed ceasefire talks in August 2011. Over the next two years, the government concluded bilateral ceasefire agreements with 14 ethnic armed organisations. Agreements that led to significant de-escalation of armed conflicts in Kachin State were also signed.

However, sustainable and lasting peace in our country cannot be achieved by ceasefires alone. Political dialogue is required to address our deep-rooted issues. Furthermore, arrangements are needed to strengthen ceasefires during the period of political dialogue. We recognised that a peace process accepted by all major forces was required.

Therefore, there was a concerted effort to negotiate a broadly accepted Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). Although groups that were not recognised by the government took part in the negotiations, all sides participated in the effort to achieve a mutually acceptable outcome. Indeed, most of the provisions in the NCA are based on proposals made by the ethnic armed organisations in their negotiations with the government.

Because of the concerted endeavours, patience, good will, and sacrifice of representatives of the government, parliament, Tatmadaw and ethnic armed organisations, all parties reached agreement on the text of the NCA.

The government believes that it is more important to achieve an outcome that is accepted by all than the number of signatories. With the understanding that it is essential to leave a product of peace as a foundation for future generations, the government made the commitment to finalise the NCA.

Therefore, although some organisations are currently not ready to sign, the government decided to conclude the NCA with the vanguard group of organisations that were ready to proceed.

However we will continue with our efforts to bring the remaining organisations into the process. The door is open to them. Since the NCA is based on the terms that these organisations have negotiated and agreed to, the implementation of the NCA is in accordance with their intent. If requested by the remaining organisations, the government will coordinate and facilitate their participation in the various stages of the peace process.

The leaders of government and Ethnic Armed Groups who are signatories to the NCA should be proud of their accomplishments. However, history will judge the value of the NCA not by the number of signatories, but by how effectively the terms of the NCA are implemented.

Mutual trust will be built on the tangible progress of the implementation of the terms in the NCA. The participation of the remaining organisations also depends on how quickly the terms are realised.

The next steps in the peace process all look ahead. There is no turning back. Therefore, the NCA-based peace process will become the only path for achieving sustainable and lasting peace in the future new Myanmar. The NCA is a lasting heritage for future generations. For this reason, we included youths in our invitations to this ceremony, and we made our pledges in front of them.

According to government records for 2014-15, 10 percent of Myanmar’s population live in areas of direct conflict. Up to 40 percent of the population live in areas impacted by conflicts. As soon as the NCA is signed, and tasks under the terms of the agreement are implemented, 70 percent of those affected will begin to enjoy the fruits of peace within a short time.

To monitor de-escalation of fighting, the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (JMC) will be formed. Once fighting stops, people living in conflict areas will be able to live their lives in peace and security.

As conditions improve, the government will be able to increase development work. Priority will also be given to international assistance and investments that benefits the people in the region.

Additionally, the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) will be formed to facilitate political dialogue, as provided in the NCA.

We have in our hands a significant achievement. The Ethnic Armed Organisations have accepted the demands of the three main political parties and the union government, and have agreed to establish a union based on the principles of democracy and federalism. This agreement paves the way for a future that prevails of successfull governments in Myanmar have failed to secure. Our responsibility now is to implement the terms of the NCA to ensure our goals are realised. For all of us, the NCA is a legacy we leave for future generations.

From this day on, we share the responsibility of defining our future. We will together write history and share the historical burden of victory and defeat. The NCA we sign today represents the mutual trust between us, and a legacy for future generations. Furthermore, the agreement unequivocally shows our sincerity and good will. In conclusion, on behalf of the government and the people of Myanmar, I wish to acknowledge and thank all those involved in the drafting, negotiations and signing of the NCA. I urge all to endeavour from this date of signing of the NCA until we have accomplished all the tasks. Let us together make this day a historic occasion.

Chairsman of KNU Saw Mutu Say Poe also delivered a speech. He said: “The NCA is a new page in history and it is the product of brave and energetic negotiations. Moreover, the NCA was achieved due to unity and trust between the negotiators, a desire to compromise, collectively solve issues, and find answers to political issues through negotiations rather than force of arms. See page 3 >>
Peace Deal Signed

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More than just a ceasefire agreement, the NCA is the first step on the important road towards the establishment of a federal and democratic Union. I caution that we will face many challenges along the way.

We must all patiently and resolutely overcome these obstacles together.

Instead of only favouring one’s views, we must act in the spirit of mutual respect and national reconciliation to achieve positive outcomes for the peace process through an inclusive political dialogue.

Therefore, I call on all to banish the ills we have suffered as a result of armed conflict, and to unwaveringly lay the foundation for a democratic and federal Union.

Next, both sides signed the NCA witnessed by the president and other dignitaries.

Union Minister U Aung Min and Padosh Saw Kwe Htoo Win read out the excerpts from the agreement and they exchanged the NCA.

Following the signing ceremony, the government and armed ethnic groups held a meeting on the implementation of the NCA.

At the meeting, President U Thein Sein pledged the government would follow the points agreed in the NCA and held out the olive branch to those who have not yet signed the NCA.

The representatives from the government and eight armed ethnic groups held a press conference after the meeting.

Following the signing of NCA, Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI), Federal Democracy Alliance-FDA and Myanmar National Human Rights Commission issued their announcements, welcoming the NCA as a historic achievement of the country.

They all expressed hope that the remaining armed ethnic groups would sign the NCA as early as possible as part of efforts for building a union with a federal system.—MNA

U Myo Aye appointed as Ambassador to Serbia

THE President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed U Myo Aye, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Republic of Serbia.—Myanmar News Agency

U Tha Aung Nyun presents credentials to President of Nigeria

U Tha Aung Nyun, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, presented his Credentials to His Excellency General Muhammad Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on 6 October 2015, in Abuja.—Myanmar News Agency

Appointment of Ambassador agreed on

THE Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the appointment of Mr. Filimon Kau, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Fiji to the Republic of Korea, as concurrently accredited Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Fiji to the Republic of Myanmar.

Mr. Filimon Kau was born on 23 February 1963. He graduated from the University of South Pacific specialising in History and Politics. From 1986 to 2003, he served in various capacities at Government Ministries of the Republic of Fiji. From 2003 to 2007, he served as the Deputy Permanent Representative and Charge d’ Affaires a.i. respectively at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Fiji to the United Nations.

In 2011, he served as the Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources. Since 5th October 2012, he has been serving as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Fiji to the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Filimon Kau is married with four sons and one daughter.—Myanmar News Agency

News Media Council to be elected on 21 Oct

MEMBERS of the News Media Council will be elected on 21 October in Yangon’s Kamayut Township.

Myanmar Journalists Association, Myanmar Journalists Union, Myanmar Journalists Network and Burma News International put forward four candidates; Myanmar Press Council (Interim) two candidates and news media groups, five candidates.

Four will stand as independent candidates for two seats of the council.

News agencies put up one candidate in the elections.

Two will be selected from four candidates nominated by the Printing and Publishing association.

Five candidates representing the writers’ association will stand in the elections for two seats.

Three will stand as intellectual and intelligentsia in the elections.

Meanwhile, the president, Aung Myo Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw nominated a candidate each in the elections.—GNLM

Speaker meets Swiss ambassador

Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann shakes hands with Swiss Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Paul R. Seger. PHOTO: MNA

Myanmar and Japan signed a memorandum of understanding on mutual development of technical and vocational education in Nay Pyi Taw on Wednesday. Union Science and Technology Minister Dr Ko Ko Oo spoke at the event.

According to the agreement, Japan’s KAKE Education Institution will help the Department of Technical and Vocational Education build a technical high school with the aim of empowering Myanmar youths.

The union minister described Japan’s assistance as crucial to the development of Myanmar’s human resources.

The technical high school, which will be built in Yangon Region, is expected to produce skilled workers to attract greater foreign investment, as human resources are a constraint in Myanmar.—Myanmar News Agency

Japan to build tech school in Yangon

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Deepavali national holiday to fall on 10 Nov

THE Union Government announced yesterday that the Hindu festival of Deepavali, which is also known as Diwali, falls on 10 November and will be a national holiday in Myanmar.

Deepavali is a Hindu festival commemorating Lord Rama and his wife, Sita’s return to their homeland after a 14-year exile.—GNLM

Air force delivers ballots to remote areas

THE Union Election Commission has arranged for the Myanmar Air Force to transport ballots to remote areas in Shan and Kachin states.

Two aircrafts from the Myanmar Air Force Y-8 transported ballots and related materials to Kengtung airport, which were then brought to Mongkhat, Mongyang, Mongling, Mongkhant, Mongsant, Mongsont and Metman townships in Shan State yesterday.

An additional 3.3 tonnes of ballots and related materials were brought by the same aircraft to Patoa from Myitkyina for Nagmon, Khantlangphu and Machinbaw townships in Kachin State.—Myanmar News Agency
LocaL News 16 October 2015

LOW pressure in the northern Bay of Bengal created a small storm, which resulted heavy rains on 12 and 13 October in Mandalay, Pyin-Oo-Lwin and Mogok townships in Mandalay Region. The water levels of the Ayeyawady, Myitnge and Dokhtawady rivers also rose swiftly. Drains clogged by garbage exacerbated the flooding in Mandalay, with rainfall measuring 5.82 centimetres on 12 October and 5 centimetres on 13 October. The Mandalay City Development Committee is now attempting to completely clear out the city’s drainage system to prevent future flash floods.—Maung Pyi Thu

THITSA, Yazar Training and Development Centre and SIU International Bangkok are jointly conducting one-year Masters of Business Administration (MBA) and three-year Doctoral Programmes, with the third MBA batch launched on 18 October. The programmes have been running in Mandalay since August 2013 and at the MBA Batch-2 convocation, 15 students from Mandalay received MBA degrees in late September. Seven students from Mandalay were conferred MBA degree at Shinawatra International University, Bangkok at the convocation of MBA Batch-1 on 19 September last year. Ma Mya Phone Mo Oo won the Independent study paper and highest GPA award. Emeritus professors from SIU International Bangkok is serving as a lecturer.—Tin Maung

FOUR Buddha images from Inlay Phaungdaw Oo Pagoda were placed on a golden palanquin on 14 October and embarked on a visit that will take in 21 destinations in Inlay region, Nyaungshwe Township, southern Shan State. The Buddha images first travelled from the Yadana prayer hall in Namhu village to Kyaypawkhon village. Locals transported the palanquin using traditional long boats and pilgrims and the public are invited to pay homage to the Buddha images.—Nay Myo Thurein

Graduates from Mandalay have already received MBA degree from SIU International Bangkok. PHOTO: Tin Maung

TATKON Township, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, has 162,245 eligible voters as of 13 October, according to the township election commission. TATKON Township will have 136 ballot booths in its six wards and 176 villages during the general election of November 8. Nine candidates are running for office in the township, including eight from the Union Solidarity and Development Party, the National League for Democracy, the National Unity Party and one independent.—Tin Soe Lwin (IPRD)

Kokkine junction overpass to ease traffic congestion

THE Kokkine junction overpass is being constructed by Capital Construction to ease congestion in Bahan Township. The project is being overseen by Yangon Region Government and will comprise a reinforced concrete overpass that is 528 metres long that can withstand 75 tonne loads. Forty international and local engineers are supervising 250 labourers, who are working in shifts around the clock to complete the project.—Soe Win (SP)

Eligible voters tallied in Tatkon

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KAGOSHIMA — A nuclear reactor in southwestern Japan resumed operation Thursday, becoming the second unit to restart after the government tightened safety regulations following the 2011 triple reactor meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi complex.

Kyushu Electric Power Co. reactivated the No. 2 reactor at its Sendai complex in Kagoshima, about two months after the No. 1 unit at the two-reactor plant was brought back online under what Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s government calls “the world’s toughest” safety rules implemented after the Fukushima disaster.

The restart in August ended a nearly two-year hiatus in the country’s nuclear power generation, marking Japan’s return to nuclear energy production with Kyushu Electric and its peers looking to bring more plants back online.

“There is no change in the government’s policy of proceeding with the restart of reactors that are approved by the Nuclear Regulation Authority as meeting the world’s most stringent and newest regulations,” Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said at a regular press conference.

The government plans to have nuclear power account for 20 to 22 percent of the country’s total electricity supply in 2030, compared with roughly 30 percent before the Fukushima disaster, as it seeks to cut greenhouse gas emissions and lower imported fuel costs.

A nuclear reactor owned by Shikoku Electric Power Co. and two other units of Kansai Electric Power Co. received safety clearance from regulators earlier this year. But the government’s energy mix goal faced opposition with the majority of the public against the restart announced in July.

About 100 antinuclear protesters gathered in front of the Sendai plant in the city of Satsumasendai on Thursday, demanding the utility stop the reactivation.

“The public wants to do away with nuclear power. Our voice of protest has been ignored, but we will continue to call for abandoning nuclear power stations,” said Hisashi Ide, 45, who joined the rally from Ehime, western Japan, which hosts one of three reactors that have obtained regulatory permission to restart.

But some residents said they had no choice but to accept the reactor being reactivated as it would help the local economy.

“If an accident occurs, I’m worried it could endanger (the health of) children,” a man in his 40s said in Satsumasendai.

But he expressed his support for the resumption, saying, “We have seen more people walking around the city after the No. 1 unit started operating.” Kyushu Electric finished inserting a total of 157 fuel rod assemblies into the 2015 October 2015 516

Photo: Reuters

Japan restarts 2nd reactor under post-Fukushima rules

Director - Maung Maung Than maunmu#.2@gmail.com
Chief Editor - Than Myint Tun wallace.tar@gmail.com
Deputy Chief Editor Than Tun Aung thanmu#.ng@gmail.com
Chief Reporter - Aye Min Soe kasyemi#.0@gmail.com
Senior Consultant Editor Jessica Mudditt gess.mudditt@gmail.com
Consultant Editor Jacob Golden gord.newsv@gmail.com
Editors Ye Myint, uzyymi#.67@gmail.com, Kyaw Thura, khtura.spk@gmail.com, Myint Win Thiri journalist.sss@gmail.com
International news Ye Htut Tun myntchtri#.0@gmail.com
Tun Tun Naing tanny#.ng@gmail.com
Reporters Khang Thanda Lwin janin#.lw@gmail.com
Tun Aung Kyaw tun#.ngky#.13@gmail.com
Translators Ma Than Hue Khin Min Nyo kinhn#.gmail.com
Proof reader Nye Nyi Lay
Layout designers Tun Zaw, Thiri Ngwe.
Kyi shin Zaw, Zaw Aung, Ye Naing Soe, Nyi Zaw Moe, Hin Pwint, Kay Khin Win, Sandy Hu, Tun Zin
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Security personnel stands guard in front of an entrance gate of Kyushu Electric Power’s Sendai nuclear power station in Satsumasendai, Kagoshima prefecture, Japan. Photo: Reuters

Political dynasties to dominate Philippine polls in 2016

MANILA — Election season is under way in the Philippines and investors are in for a wild ride of power-politics dominated by entrenched family dynasties, whose machinations will leave little room for serious debate on badly needed reforms.

The wife, son, daughter and nephew of late dictator Ferdinand Marcos will all run in the May 2016 elections, joining a host of other privileged candidates from elite families seeking to keep their hold on power in local and national politics.

“The problem with elite politics is there is no programme or platform, it’s all power,” said Ramon Casiple, executive director of the advocacy group Institute for Political and Electoral Reforms.

The family of Vice President Jejomar Binay is another high-profile dynasty, having ruled Manila’s Makati financial district for nearly three decades. Binay’s daughter is ending her term as congresswoman and will run for mayor in 2016, hoping to replace her brother who is facing a graft case. Her businessman husband, a political novice, will run for her seat in Congress.

Binay, meanwhile, has his sights set on replacing President Benigno Aquino.

“A lot of these political dynasties feel they own the seats that they occupy and its theirs to bequeath, to whoever family members see fit,” anti-corruption group Transparency and Accountability Network executive director Vincent Lazatin said.

It is very disturbing.”

The leading candidate to replace Aquino, according to opinion polls, is neophyte Senator Grace Poe.

While she is not a member of a dynasty, her chances of success depend on connections such as Aquino’s businessman uncle, Eduardo Cojuangco, head of the Nationalist People’s Coalition.

Apart from Binay, Poe will also be up against Manuel “Mar” Roxas, grandson of the country’s first post-war leader and Aquino’s favourite.

Peter Wallace, head of business consultancy Wallace Business Forum, said issues that mattered to ordinary people — the South China Sea maritime dispute with China, jobs, social services — were being drowned out by the politics of personality.

“We have had enough of these domestic families and the politics, we are demanding change,” Wallace said, calling for concrete proposals on job creation and investment.

The next president should pursue policies that will open up the economy to more foreign investment, reduce business costs, cut red tape and modernise infrastructure, foreign business chamber said in a statement last week.—Reuters

“Japan beefs up Philippines’ quake, tsunami monitoring system

MANILA — Japan on Thursday formally handed over components of a comprehensive earthquake and tsunami monitoring system to the Philippines seismology agency as part of its grant assistance to the Southeast Asian nation for disaster risk management.

Japan last year donated a seismic intensity meter device, one of the system’s four major components, was held on the second anniversary of the last major earthquake in the Philippines.

Renato Solidum, head of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, said Japan’s grant includes 10 broadband strong motion seismometers, 36 strong motion seismometers, 19 sea-level monitoring stations, and 240 intensity meters, all to be installed across the country by 2016. “These are to beef up our existing equipment and initial activities,” he said.

Japanese Ambassador Kazuhide Ishikawa and Norra-ki Niwa, chief representative to the Philippines of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, led the handover cer- tomy.—Kyodo News
US airline security watch system suffers brief disruption

NEW YORK — A US Department of Homeland Security computer system that checks airline passengers against terrorism watch lists experienced a brief service disruption on Wednesday, federal officials said.

The problem lasted about 90 minutes and there have been no indications the technology disruption was malicious in nature, US Customs and Border Protection said in a statement.

During the outage, Customs and Border Protection officers processed international travelers using alternative procedures, the agency said.

Customs and Border Protection did not specify which US airports experienced disruptions, but NBC News reported delays in security screenings at New York City’s John F. Kennedy Airport.

Similar problems were reported in Boston, Dallas-Fort Worth, Charlotte, North Carolina, and Baltimore, it said.—Reuters

Russian envoy refutes Dutch MH17 crash report

KUALA LUMPUR — Russian Ambassador to Malaysia Valery N Yermolov refuted here on Thursday the investigation report of the Dutch Safety Board (DSB), which alleged that the crash of flight MH17 was caused by the detonation of a 9M314M-type warhead launched from eastern Ukraine using a Buk missile system.

Yermolov said according to Russian missile manufacturer Almaz-Antei, MH17 was shot down by a 9M38 surface-to-air missile from the territory controlled by the Ukrainian military.

He said the experiments by Almaz-Antei revealed that MH17 had been hit by an older version of the 9M38 missile, as it did not have pellets of specific form as the newer 9M38M1 missile had.

The envoy said Russia no longer possessed such missiles as they had been decommissioned since 2011 by the Russian military, while 520 missiles of this kind are possessed by Ukraine as far as they know.

He said they has invited many times the experts and members of the investigation team to come to Russia to get acquaintance of the results of investigation and information from the Russian side, but no one has come.—Xinhua

United Nations Secretary General’s message on World Food Day

This year’s observance of World Food Day follows the landmark adoption by world leaders of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including a set of 17 goals to guide our work towards a future of dignity and prosperity for all on a healthy planet.

How we choose to grow, process, distribute and consume the food we eat has a profound effect on people, planet, prosperity and peace. Delivering on the promise of the 2030 Agenda will not be possible without rapid progress towards ending hunger and undernutrition. In the same way, delivering on the commitment to end hunger forever, for all people, will not be possible without major gains across the new Agenda.

Sustainable Development Goal 2 summons us to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.” The world has achieved important progress; since 2000, the proportion of undernourished people has declined by nearly half. At the same time, in a world where nearly a third of all food produced is lost or wasted, and where we produce enough food to feed everyone, almost 800 million people still suffer from hunger. The path out of poverty is proving to be too slow for too many.

The theme for World Food Day 2015 — Social Protection and Agriculture: Breaking the Cycle of Rural Poverty — highlights the crucial role of cash transfers, insurance, pensions and other social protection programmes in enabling vulnerable people to better manage risks and build profitable livelihoods.

The Zero Hunger Challenge that I launched in 2012 underscores the need for national leadership in tandem with wide-ranging multi-stakeholder partnerships. Ending hunger is everyone’s responsibility. Farmers, scientists, international organizations, activists, businesses and consumers all have a role to play. Building inclusive, resilient and sustainable food systems also demands that we empower women farmers, provide opportunities for young people and invest in smallholder farmers.

Hunger is more than a lack of food — it is a terrible injustice. On World Food Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to work together to end to hunger in our lifetime. —UNICEF/Yangon

Western retail giants restrict travel to Bangladesh after attacks

DHAKA — Business executives from global clothing giants H&M Inditex and Gap have cancelled trips to Dhaka this month after the killings of two foreigners, industry sources said, causing anxiety for Bangladesh’s $25 billion (£16 billion) garment export sector.

Bangladeshi suppliers to the world’s top brands said they didn’t expect the disruptions to hurt their orders for the year-end Christmas season.

But the attacks, claimed by the Islamic State, increase the pressure on an industry which faces competition from other low-wage countries and is trying to repair its safety image after several fatal accidents.

The United States and Canada have asked their diplomats to restrict their movements, and Britain warned of more attacks after an Italian aid worker and a Japanese man were shot dead a few days apart. Australia cancelled a cricket tour.

Bangladesh’s government, however, rejected the claim by the Islamic State and blamed the growing violence in the country on its domestic political opponents trying to show the world it is weak.

Inditex and Gap are the latest firms to cancel trips to Bangladesh following the killings of two Japanese tourists, two Canadians and a Filipino last month. The government is seeking help from foreign embassies and the United Nations to protect workers and cut the risk of further attacks.

“Many foreign buyers cancelled their visits during this peak time when they are supposed to place more orders,” said Siddiqui Rahman, chief of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association. Shahidullah Azim, a garment exporter who supplies to Sears, Loblaws and Perry Ellis among others said one of his buyers asked him to come to Dubai instead, along with the clothing samples.

Other foreign business executives asked for video conferences with their Bangladeshi counterparts, saying they couldn’t travel to Dhaka because of the warnings issued by their governments.

“We are monitoring the situation in Bangladesh closely and we are taking the appropriate security measures. We are also in close dialogue with other brands regarding the situation,” H&M spokesman Anna Eriksson said.

Marks & Spencer said the firm had suspended travel to Bangladesh for seven days a few weeks ago. Travel has since resumed, a spokeswoman said, and added there was no impact on business orders. Gap declined to comment on a change in its travel plans. Tesco said it had not stopped business travel to Bangladesh, but had asked its employees to be vigilant and consider their movements carefully.

Bangladesh has deployed paramilitary soldiers on nighttime patrols in the diplomatic quarter of Dhaka and issued a nationwide ban on people riding pillion after the two attacks were carried out by masked men riding bikes.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, who has dismissed claims that the Islamic State was operating in the Muslim majority country of 160 million, said on Wednesday that police were close to a breakthrough on the killings.—Reuters
Ecuador seeks legal accord with Sweden over Assange case

QUITO — Ecuador continues to seek a legal agreement with Sweden to break a three-year impasse in the asylum case of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, an official said Wednesday.

“We have been talking with Sweden and hope to soon have an international penal assistance agreement,” Ecuadoran Foreign Minister Ricardo Patino said in a televised interview.

Assange is wanted by Swedish authorities in relation to sexual assault allegations, which he denies.

Until recently, Swedish prosecutors have been insisting Assange travel to Sweden for questioning, noting that he would be arrested the minute he stepped outside the Ecuadoran Embassy in London, where he has been holed up since the South American country offered him political asylum in 2012.

Assange was never able to make full use of Ecuador’s asylum offer, as British authorities not only refused to grant him safe passage out of the country, but set up a 24-hour watch outside the embassy to prevent him from leaving.

“What Britain should have done is to give us the safe passage so Julian Assange could enjoy the asylum we granted him, in keeping with international ties of mutual respect,” Patino said.

British authorities have said they have not changed their stance regarding Assange, despite the withdrawal of police presence on Monday. The 44-year-old whistleblower fears Swedish authorities will turn him in to the United States, where he is wanted for espionage and other crimes against the state.

The US case against him was launched in February after the government declassified “Collateral Murder,” a video footage of a US military analogue in parallel with a readmission guided ballistic missile on Sunday in defiance of a United Nations ban, signaling an apparent advance in Iranian attempts to improve the accuracy of its missile arsenal.

“The 11 October launch constitutes a clear violation of this resolution (1929),” the French Foreign Ministry said on Thursday.

Iran tested a new precision-guided ballistic missile on Sunday and with no access to health and education,” Ecuadoran Foreign Ministry spokesman said in a daily briefing. —Reuters

Pensions protesters block Greek ministry ahead of vote in parliament

ATHENS — About 200 protesters blocked the entrance to the Labour Ministry in Athens on Thursday to protest against pension cuts in a reform bill Greece has put before parliament to pass in November.

The bill will go to parliament on Friday to coincide with international lenders’ talks in next few days what de facto bailout and reforms in a reform bill Greece has put before parliament to pass in November.

The bill gradually raises the retirement age to 67 years by 2022 and cuts pensions by 10 percent for people below that age who have retired but have yet to reach 67.

Greece has promised to present a comprehensive pension reform plan by December, while a panel on the pension system’s viability is due to issue its report on Thursday, taking into account demographics and the deterioration in employment during years of crisis.

The left-wing government of Alexis Tsipras on Wednesday suspended plans to increase tax on rental incomes after a public outcry, saying it was still negotiating with international lenders on reforms ahead of the vote.

The government said on Thursday it had no other choice but to approve the bill to get its cash-starved economy back on its feet.

“We have to vote the prior actions … to conclude banks’ re-capitalisation now, to lift capital controls and to kick-start the economy,” Education Minister Nikos Filis told ANT1 television. —Reuters

France says Iran missile test sends ‘worrying message’

PARIS — Iran’s test of a ballistic missile earlier this week is a clear violation of a UN Security Council resolution and sends “a worrying message”, the French Foreign Ministry said on Thursday.

Iran tested a new precision-guided ballistic missile on Sunday in defiance of a United Nations ban, signaling an apparent advance in Iranian attempts to improve the accuracy of its missile arsenal.

“The 11 October launch constitutes a clear violation of this resolution (1929),” the French foreign ministry spokesman said in a daily briefing. —Reuters

Ten more people detained in Ankara bombing probe

ANKARA — Ten more people have been detained in connection with messages they wrote on Twitter about the suicide bombings which killed 10 people in Ankara, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said on Thursday, bringing the number held to 12.

Davutoglu told Reuters on Wednesday some of the suspects in Saturday’s attack, the worst of its kind in Turkey, had spent months in Syria and could be linked to Islamic State or to Kurdish militants.

Croatian border

BUDAPEST — Hungary’s border on its border with Croatia is finished and the army and police are capable of sealing off the border once a decision to do so is made, a top government official said on Thursday.

Hungary has seen more than 378,000 migrants pass through its territory so far this year, Janos Lazar, Prime Minister Viktor Orban’s chief of staff, told journalists. He said by the end of the year the number of migrants reaching Hungary’s borders could reach 600,000 to 700,000.

Turkey offers EU complete visa liberalisation in 2016

ANKARA — Turkey offered the European Union to seal a visa liberalisation agreement by the first half of 2016 instead of the originally planned 2017, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said on Thursday, bringing the number held to 12.

Davutoglu told Reuters on Wednesday some of the suspects in Saturday’s attack, the worst of its kind in Turkey, had spent months in Syria and could be linked to Islamic State or to Kurdish militants.

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There were no technical obstacles to sealing the border with Croatia and it depends on the Brussels meetings and talks in next few days what decision Hungary will make, Lazar said.

Hungary has already built a fence along its border with Serbia despite criticism from international partners. —Reuters
OPINION
Sailing smoothly through the winds of change
Kyaw Thura

The culmination of nearly two years of peace talks between the government and ethnic armed organisations has finally led to the signing of a nationwide ceasefire accord. It is hoped the deal will lead to genuine peace and bring an end to over six decades of internal armed conflict that began shortly after Myanmar gained independence from the British in 1948.

Leaders of both sides, including the president and the commander-in-chief, gathered at the signing ceremony in the capital city of Nay Pyi Taw on the historic day of October 15. Both sides had to make difficult compromises throughout the lengthy negotiations to make the peace deal possible.

This success story provides evidence that the age of ‘agree to disagree’ has been born in Myanmar. Leaving their differences behind, the government, the army and ethnic groups have resolved to cooperate and compromise rather than going to head-to-head in a confrontational manner.

The ceasefire deal is a crucial step that will allow the peace process to move forward to political dialogue, through which complex issues such as resource sharing and self-administration could be solved.

We have come a long way, but there is still a long way to go. It is imperative for both sides to prevent peace talks from ever collapsing. The ceasefire should be viewed as an excellent opportunity for every armed organisation and political party to put the interests of the people first so that we may sail smoothly through the winds of change.

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

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish “Letter to the Editor” contributions in 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.
Sacred Dei-Sun-Pa Pagoda-hill (Part I)

Maha Saddhamma Jotika dhaja Sithu Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

In the vicinities of the sprawling metropolitan commercial city of Yangon, stand many green creations of nature in the forms of woodlands, forested hill ranges, aquatic bodies of lakes and wetlands where Yangonites, under the stress and strain of daily urban life can escape to, at least for a day, to recuperate the health of their body and mind. One of such inlets in the vicinity is the sacred Dei-Sun-Pa Pagoda-hill not far from the capital Hamsavadi. The compound is located in Wint San Township, about 3 miles to the west of Win-bei In Village, is a well-known commercial city of Yangon with a vast natural depression into which all streams from the west flowed thus turning it into a big natural aquatic body, the lake. There are many species of wetary plants and reeds and grasses around this lake that is a kind of waddy that thrives profusely, the grain of which is very much in demand by the cattle fed. Legendarily this waddy wild paddy came to be called nat sapa [စိန့်ပက်] paddy given by benevolent nat-spirits. Winged birds, wild water ducks and geese, Muscovy ducks, whistling teal or tree ducks, [dendrocygna javanica] met nyo [Indian purple moor hen], Hantha [Hamsmyawng duck]. Most of these creatures belong to the duck family. Therefore the lake came to be called Win-bei In.

One Myanmar chronicler - writer of early British colonial day Hnawbi Saya Thein Gyi gave a background history of this lake in his writings, says that an goddess of the river took care of Ah-tha-kone-mah. His mother also sent a hunter to look after her son. Young Ah-tha-kone-mah grew up among wild buffaloes. He could walk on their horns easily. After ten years of his succession to the throne, King Wee-ma-lah was challeged by invaders “Kul-lah” [ku’len] or foreigners who came with seven ships. They were tall and strong men. They claimed the island where they had previ- ously settled otherwise they would fight for it. Wee-ma- lah was asked to a single combat with their leader. Wee-ma-lah agreed to send a man to fight the combat with in a week. When Queen Ka- pee-hlaaw knew about it she told Wee-ma-lah about her son Ah-tha-kone-mah who had grown up into a strong man walking on the horns of wild buffaloes. Wee-ma-lah sent his messengers to call him.

On arrival of Ah-tha-kone-mah at Han-tha-va- der, which happened to be on the day fixed for the combat, his spear on the neck and thus proceeded to the battlefield. The Kallah leader was armed with a large spear, the handle of which was seven cubits in length and the spear-head of the length of a plantain-tee leaf. Ah-tha-kone-mah was also armed with a spear of the same size. On meeting, they agreed to send a prince from each side to look at where to strike. Ah-tha-kone-mah at last had resort to a stratagem, and asked the Kallah leader why he had brought a large num- ber of followers with him. The Kallah leader replied “I have not done so! Ah-tha-kone-mah, you are a small boy, you should look and say who those were behind him. On his turning to do so, Ah-tha-kone-mah struck him a heavy blow with his spear on the neck and thus defeated them.

In consequence of Prince Ah-tha-kone-mah’s conquering the Kallah the above stratagem, Han-tha-va-der was afterwards called “Done-pai-goo [နောင်] Done” in Mon tongue meaning “town”, “pa” stratagem and “goo” conquest or in possession. It is now commonly called “Pai-goo” [Peik]. King Wee-ma-lah rejoiced 17 years. Prince Ah-tha-kone-mah was his patron. He was the protector and promoter of Buddha Sasana. He was the first king who built and promoted a city named Dei-pai-goo. During that reign he built a palace and promoted and Han was constructed. Today, this zedi is the well-known “Shwe Maw Hla Zedi” of Peik.

King Wee-ma-lah gave his hair relics to the Buddha Sasana year of 138, the 5th descend- ant of the dynasty of King Tha-heap Konema, Prince Inwa. Later, Buddha Inwa was found a city named Dam- yawaddy on the summit of a high mountain projecting out to the sea. Today that old city is known as Motama [Mar- aban].

The 14th descendant of this dynasty was King Bein-ganga. During his reign, in the Buddha Sasana
Iraqi forces and militia seize most of Baiji refinery

TIKRIT — Iraqi forces and Shi’ite militia fighters recaptured most of the country’s largest oil refinery from Islamic State militants on Thursday, security officials said.

The refinery is a focal point in efforts to contain Islamic State and has changed hands several times since the Sunni Islamist militants swept through northern Iraq last year. Islamic State controls one-third of the territory of the country.

The Iraqi army and volunteer militia fighters, who are mostly Shi’ite Muslims, launched an assault on Wednesday to retake Baiji.

A spokesman for Iraq’s counterterrorism forces told Reuters that government forces and militias were in control of the vast energy complex and eliminating pockets of resistance.

“Counterterrorism forces with volunteers are holding a tight grip over all the gates of the refinery and its facilities,” Sabah al-Numani said.

Iraqi federal police forces also seized most parts of the town of Baiji, Baiji’s mayor Mohammed Mahmoud told Reuters.

“I can confirm to you that our forces won the battle of the refinery and for Baiji town. We managed to control almost all parts of the town and now we are surrounding some Daesh snipers entrenched in some buildings,” he said.

Daesh is a derogatory Arabic acronym for Islamic State, which is also known as ISIS or ISIL.

Islamic State insurgents suffered a major defeat in April when Iraqi troops and Shi’ite paramilitaries routed them from the city of Tikrit.

The insurgents struck back with gains in Baiji and the western province of Anbar, the other major battleground in the campaign against Islamic State.

Yemen Houthis say missile fired in retaliation for Saudi ‘war crimes’

DUBAI — Yemen’s Houthi forces fired a ballistic missile on Thursday in retaliation for attacks by a Saudi-led coalition, a source in the Iranian-allied group said, and a Houthi-linked television station said a Scud missile had been fired at a Saudi air base.

Al-Masirah television reported that a Scud, a powerful Cold War-era weapon, had been fired at a military base near the city of Khamees Mushait in the kingdom’s southwest.

The area is home to the King Khalid air base, the largest air force base in southern Saudi Arabia, the world’s top oil exporter, but there are no oil facilities in the vicinity.

The television station said the target was hit. It was not immediately possible to independently verify that report.

Residents in Yemen’s capital reported hearing a roar as what they said was a Scud was launched from near the city.

“The army and people’s committees at dawn today fired a ballistic missile in response to the continuation of the Saudi aggression in the commission of war crimes against the Yemeni people,” the source said.

Saudi Arabia led an Arab military intervention against the Houthis beginning on 26 March to restore the Yemeni government ousted by the group and fend off what it sees as the creeping influence of the Shi’ite Muslim group’s main ally, Iran.

The Houthis say their rise to power is a revolution against corrupt officials beholden to Saudi Arabia and the West.

The Scud had been launched at Saudi Arabia by Yemeni forces several times during the nearly seven-month-old war, but has been shot down by American-provided Patriot missiles at least twice. — Reuters

Iran lawmaker says Tehran provides Syria, Iraq with weapons, military experts

DAMASCUS — The visiting head of the Iranian parliament’s national security and foreign policy committee, Alaeeddin Boroujerdi, said here on Thursday that Tehran only provides weapons and military experts to Syria and Iraq.

“Regarding our support to Iraq and Syria, such support comes upon the request of those countries, and according to our anti-terror strategy in Iran, we provide weapons and military experts to both countries,” Boroujerdi told a press conference in Damascus.

On the issue of sending Iranian troops to Syria, the Iranian official said his country would consider sending troops to Syria if the Syrian government requested that.

“Any further request would be studied and discussed in Iran,” he said.

He added that all countries that support the anti-terror coalition led by Russia, which includes Iran, Syria and Iraq, can join the efforts to battle terrorism.

In an apparent jab at a US-led coalition against the Islamic State (IS), which has been striking the terror group’s positions in Syria for over a year with little tangible results, Boroujerdi said countries that want to ostensibly fight terrorism with no real will must join the American coalition.

The true will to counter terrorism exists in Syria and Iraq, and the new coalition has results on the ground, he said.

Iran has emerged as a staunch regional ally of Syria in the country’s long-lasting conflict. — Xinhua

Syrian army and Russian jets target rebel towns north of Homs

BEIRUT — Syrian troops and their allies, backed by Russian jets, attacked rebel-held towns north of the city of Homs on Thursday, targeting a long-held and strategic enclave of opposition to President Bashar al-Assad.

The offensive that began before dawn expands on over a week of ground attacks launched with Russian air support in areas of western Syria that are crucial to Assad’s survival and held by rebel groups other than Islamic State. Syrian state television, quoting a military source, said the army had begun a military operation in the area after heavy air strikes and artillery barrages early on Thursday.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based group which monitors Syria’s four-year-old civil war, said five civilians and six insurgents had been killed in Homs’s Tall Alasr neighborhood and by rebel shelling and bombardment of villages in Homs city.

A few miles further north, there were heavy air strikes around the town of Talbiseh and other villages in the area, the Observatory said, as well as fierce clashes on the southern edges of the town and nearby villages.

The Syrian army, supported by foreign allies including Iran, has launched several ground offensives to retake insurgent-held territory since Russian jets started air strikes against rebel targets — mainly in western Syria — two weeks ago. The army operations include a campaign to recapture rebel-held land in Hama, Idlib and Latakia provinces in the northwest. Regional officials have also said the army, backed by Iranian reinforcements, is preparing for a ground operation around Aleppo city, close to the Turkish border.

Recapturing the area north of Homs would help reassert Assad’s control over the main population centers of western Syria and secure territory linking Damascus to the coastal heartland of his minority Alawite sect.

The military source quoted by state television said the army and its allies had taken control of the villages of Khalidiya and Dar Kabira, between Homs and Teir Malla. The Observatory said the army had advanced in Khalidiya, but there was still heavy fighting there.

“There are very heavy air strikes in Homs on the frontlines. There are civilian casualties. The aim is to apply military pressure, and the regime’s intention is to storm the area,” said the leader of one rebel group operating in the area. He said the number killed was not confirmed but gave the names of five documented dead including a girl and two women. — Reuters

Video footage seen by Reuters showed Hadi al-Amri, the leader of the Badr Brigade militia and a leading Shi’ite politician, inside Baiji refinery unfurling a map and briefing a group of Shi’ite fighters on military operations. — Reuters

Smoke rises from an oil refinery in Baiji on 14 October 2015. Photo: Reuters
‘Cute furball’ is best-preserved mammal from dinosaur age

WASHINGTON — Scurrying under the feet of dinosaurs in swampy terrain in Spain around 125 million years ago was a furry chipmunk-sized critter with tiny hedgehog-like spines, horned body armor and an unpleasant fungal hair infection.

This intrepid little guy now is providing the best look ever at the mammals that thrived during the Mesozoic Era, the age of dinosaurs.

Scientists on Wednesday announced the discovery near the Spanish town of Cuenca of the stunningly well-preserved fossil of a Cretaceous Period mammal named Spinolestes xenarthrosus.

The fossil of a 125-million-year-old Cretaceous Period mammal Spinolestes xenarthrosus is pictured near Cuenca, Spain on 14 October 2015. Photo: Reuters

It includes a complete skeleton, fur preserved at the cellular level, hedgehog-like spines, plate-like structures of keratin known as dermal scutes, a rounded external ear, skin pores and even soft tissues of the liver and lung.

“‘Yes, indeed, it is the best-preserved mammal fossil from the Mesozoic,’” University of Bonn paleontologist Thomas Martin-Torres said. “‘The discovery of Spinolestes is extremely exciting for us because it provides information on structures that we believed would never be accessible.’

University of Chicago paleontologist Zhe-Xi Luo said this “cute furball” provides unprecedented insight into early mammals.

Spinolestes, about 9-1/2 inches (24 cm) long including its tail and weighing 1.8-2.5 ounces (50–70 grams), was a ground-dweller capable of occasional digging. It ate insects and worms and lived a lifestyle similar to a hedgehog in a lush wetland shared with dinosaurs, birds, the flying reptiles called pterosaurs and crocodilians.

“Its hair, spines and the horn-like structures, similar to those of armadillos, were preserved in exquisite detail down to the microscopic scales forming the hair shafts, hair bulbs in the skin and filaments making up the spines.

“This extinct mammal combines all types of hairs and hair-related structures of modern mammals: long guard hairs, velvet underfur, spines and scutes,” Luo added. The fossil is 65 million years older than the next-oldest record of microscopic structures of hair in mammal fossils.

Abnormally truncated hairs indicated Spinolestes had a fungal infection, dermatophytosis, common in mammals today.

Spinolestes, meaning “spiny robber,” resembled an African rodent called a spiny mouse although it was not closely related to any living mammalian group.

It was a member of a primitive mammalian group called eutheriodonts that arose 170 million years ago and went extinct 66 million years ago along with the dinosaurs after an asteroid impact.

The research was published in the journal Nature.— Reuters

Iowa teacher takes his ‘McDonald’s diet’ to schools, irking critics

LOS ANGELES — Former Iowa science teacher John Cisna, who says he lost 60 pounds on a six-month regimen of McDonald’s fast food, has sparked outrage among public health advocates for taking his story to US schools on the fast-food chain’s dinner menu.

The criticism comes as Steve Easterbrook, McDonald’s Corp’s chief executive, fights to remake the 60-year-old chain into what he calls a “modern, progressive burger company.”

Part of that challenge is winning over youngsters who have seen documentaries such as “Super Size Me” and “Fast Food Nation,” and as a result view McDonald’s food as a contributor to obesity, diabetes and other serious diseases.

Cisna has tried to counter that impression, first with a book last year called “My McDonald’s Diet: How I Lost 37 pounds in 90 days and became a viral media sensation,” detailing an experiment he said was created with his students.

The goal was to stay within strict calorie limits while eating items from the hamburger chain’s menu.

McDonald’s hired Cisna as a “brand ambassador” earlier this year and provides him a stipend for travel and other serious diseases.

John’s story is not a weight loss plan, and we do not recommend that anyone eat every meal at one restaurant every day for an extended period,” said McComb. “While the critical moment to educate and inform students is up to them, we support John’s desire as a teacher to provide students with facts to make informed choices.”

Cisna was not available for comment. Critics say the program is a new attempt by McDonald’s to hook youngsters on unhealthy food. For example, Cisna says in the video that careful planning allowed him to eat french fries nearly every day.

“John’s story is not a weight loss plan, and we do not recommend that anyone eat every meal at one restaurant every day for an extended period.” Lisa McComb

McDonald’s spokeswoman

Teeth from Chinese cave recast history of early human migration

WASHINGTON — A trove of 47 fossil human teeth from a cave in southern China is rewriting the history of the early migration of our species out of Africa, indicating Homo sapiens trekked into Asia far much earlier than into Europe perhaps because of the evolution of modern humans.

Our species first appeared in East Africa about 200,000 years ago, spread to other parts of the world, but the timing and location of these migrations has been unclear.

University College London paleoanthropologist María Martinón-Torres said our species made it to southern China tens of thousands of years before colonizing Europe perhaps because of the entrenched presence of our hardy cousins, the Neanderthals, in Europe and the harsh, cold European climate.

“This finding suggests that Homo sapiens is present in Asia much earlier than the classic, recent ‘Out of Africa’ hypothesis was suggesting: 50,000 years ago,” Martinón-Torres said.

Liu said the teeth are about twice as old as the earliest evidence for modern humans in Europe.

“We hope our Daoxian human fossil discovery will make people understand that East Asia is one of the key areas for the study of the origin and evolution of modern humans,” Liu said.

Martinón-Torres said some migrations out of Africa have been labeled “failed dispersals.” Fossils from Israeli caves indicate modern humans about 90,000 years ago have not reached Europe, but “never managed to enter.”

It may have been hard to take over, Martinón-Torres said. Neanderthals had occupied for hundreds of thousands of years, Martinón-Torres said.

“In addition, it is logical to think that dispersals toward the east were likely environmentally easier than moving toward the north, given the cold winters of Europe,” Martinón-Torres said.—Reuters
What will winter bring for Europe’s refugee crisis?

Presevo/Oxford — Rough seas and colder weather usually signal a sharp drop in the numbers of migrants and refugees attempting to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe. But after a summer of unprecedented refugee arrivals, this winter is likely to be different.

Autumn has already made sea crossings more dangerous, but there is no sign of a downward trend in arrivals. In fact, the number of people making the short sea journey between Turkey and Greece has actually increased to 7,000 a day from around 4,500 a day at the end of September, according to the International Organisation for Migration.

Arrivals to Italy via the much longer sea route from Libya are expected to drop over the winter, said IOM spokeswoman Florence Kim, but “no drop is expected” in arrivals to Greece, the route now used by the vast majority of Syrian refugees.

“Winter is going to hit camps in Lebanon or Turkey where the living conditions are already hard. This is going to push people to leave,” Kim told IRIN. Recent Russian airstrikes in Syria are also likely to trigger a renewed exodus of refugees, she said. Last week, European Council President Donald Tusk cited estimates from Turkish officials that Russia’s involvement in the conflict could displace an additional three million Syrians from Aleppo and surrounding areas. IOM described his comments as “speculative”, but Brussels is nevertheless negotiating an asylum plan with Turkey aimed at boosting aid to Syrian refugees there, and discouraging them from moving on to Europe.

In a statement for Migration. UNHCR, declined to comment on the likely impact of Russian airstrikes on the refugee crisis but said it was planning for up to 700,000 asylum seekers reaching Europe in 2015. Nearly 600,000 people have already arrived by sea this year, 53 percent from refugee-producing countries, according to UNHCR figures.

“While it is difficult to estimate at this point, it is possible that there could be even greater numbers of arrivals in 2016,” said William Spindler, a spokesman with UNHCR in Geneva.

Refugees and migrants still travelling the route from Turkey to Greece are gradually being hit by the vast number of summer arrivals. “People staying in tents (in Austria and Germany) are gradually moving into buildings and shelters that can be heated, but this may take some time,” said Spindler of UNHCR.

An IOM official at Miratovac on the Serbia-Macedonia border, who did not want to be named, predicted that many migrants and refugees will remain in Serbia and Turkey for the winter before moving north come the spring. —IRIN

Many of the hastily established reception camps and transit centres along the Balkan route still consist of little more than tents, while large numbers of migrants in Serbia, Croatia, and Hungary are still sleeping in the open with no protection from the elements. The Serbian government has just 800 places in permanent structures more suitable for winter conditions. It is preparing more, but refugees have tended to avoid such centres as they are not on the main routes and they want to reach destinations in northern Europe as quickly as possible.

In Austria and Germany, many people are still staying in tents. The capacity of the more durable accommodation options in these countries has been overwhelmed by the vast number of summer arrivals.

During the dark winter days of December and January, temperatures will sink further, averaging between minus three and minus five degrees Celsius, with Arctic winds and snow can send temperatures plummeting to minus 20.

Melita Sunjic, UNHCR’s deputy representative in Serbia, said projections always include worst-case scenarios and that the agency is planning for increasing numbers of beneficiaries transiting through the region during the winter. “For months we have been preparing blankets and plastic sheets (for makeshift shelters) in Serbia as well as raincoats, ready to be distributed when and where needed,” she told IRIN. “Now it is warmer clothes for adults and children of all ages that are most needed.” Three local NGOs in Macedonia — LEGIS, NIN, and Help the Refugees — are also stocking blankets and distributing waterproofs, clothes and shoes.

“Preventing further loss of life is an absolute priority,” said Linda Low, a spokesperson for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which is preparing for winter with contingency stocks of warm blankets.

MINISTRY OF RAIL TRANSPORTATION
MYANMA RAILWAYS
INVITATION TO OPEN TENDER

Sr No Tender No Description Remarks
1. 1-5(T2/MRE) Spare Parts for Track Maintenance 2015-2016 Machine (1 Lot) 39 Items
Closing Date & Time 29.10.2015 (Thursday) (12:30) Hrs
2. Tender documents are available at our office starting from 16.10.2015 during office hours and for further detail please contact: Deputy General Manager Supply Department, Myanmar Railways, Corner of Thienbyu Street and Merchant Street, Botataung, Yangon. Phone: 95-1-291985, 291994

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY
MYANMA TIMBER ENTERPRISE
EXPORT MARKETING & MILLING DEPARTMENT
INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER

Sr No Tender No Description Remarks
1. MYANMA TIMBER ENTERPRISE WILL SELL TEAK & HARDWOOD ROUND LOGS AND SAWN TIMBERS BY OPEN TENDERS IN US DOLLARS, PARTICULARS OF THE OPEN TENDER SALES ARE AS FOLLOWS
(a) DATE & TIME
- (23-10-2015) (12:00 Noon)
- (26-10-2015) (13:00) PM
(b) COMMODITIES & VOLUME
- TEAK LOGS
- TEAK CONVERSION
- HARDWOOD LOGS
- HARDWOOD HANDSAW CONVERSION
- PADAUK
- PADAUK/TAMALAN
- PYINMAUDWIN WIN THITTAYI IN/KANYIN/SAGAWE
- PADAUK/ TAMALAN
- ABOUT (1450) TONS
- (240) TONS
- (136) TONS
- (316) TONS
- (1145) TONS
- (214) TONS
- (723) TONS
- (4785) TONS
- (723) TONS
- (4785) TONS
- (316) TONS
- (1145) TONS
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- (4785) TONS

(min) PLACE
1. (a) Tenders will be issued in accordance with the East Timor Tender Method.
2. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT MYANMA TIMBER ENTERPRISE HEAD OFFICE AND ALSO VISIT MYANMA TIMBER ENTERPRISE WEB-SITE
(www.myanmatimber.com.mm).

Contacts: Office Ph: 01528771.
E-mail: Marketing 1 pyj@gmail.com

OPEN TENDER COMMITTEE
MYANMA TIMBER ENTERPRISE

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF ENERGY
MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE
( INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER )

Sr No Tender No Description
1. IFB-053(15-16) Emulsion Treating Chemicals
2. IFB-054(15-16) High Pressure Hose & Accessories
3. DMP/L-008(15-16) Hydraulic Pressure Pipes & Water Pressure Pipes
4. DMP/L-099(15-16) Koomey Fluid

Remark
- US$ (Demulsifier) (5,000 Lt)
- US$ (4 Items) (5,000 Lt)
- Ks (4 Items) (5,000 Lt)
- Ks (4 Items) (5,000 Lt)
- Ks (4 Items) (5,000 Lt)

Tender Closing Date & Time 11-11-2015, 16:30 Hr
Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 14th October, 2015 at the Finance Department, Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise
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CONGRATULATIONS

On The Signing of
The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement

The Kanbawza (KBZ) Group of Companies would like to share its extraordinary pride for the people of Myanmar for the successful signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) between the Union Peace-making Working Committee (UPWC) and the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) on 15th October, 2015.
Harrowing kidnap tale tackled in award-winning ‘Room’

LOS ANGELES — “Room”, a drama about a mother and son held captive for years, hits US cinemas this week after scooping the top prize at the Toronto International Film Festival.

The movie, adapted from a Man Booker Prize-nominated novel by Emma Donoghue, took the People’s Choice Award at this year’s festival, whose past winners, including “The King’s Speech” and “12 Years a Slave” have gone on to enjoy Oscar success.

It tells the story of Jack (Jacob Tremblay) who has only ever known the small space he and his mother (Brie Larson) have been held in. As the story progresses with their escape, the effect of the room over their lives becomes more apparent.

“It has a universality to it ... this family is really trying to find its way back together and there’s just the wonder of the little boy being in the world for the first time,” co-star Joan Allen said at the Los Angeles premiere on Tuesday.

“It’s a very hopeful film because characters are trying to come to terms with something that is extremely difficult and painful and they’re really pre-vailing.”

The book and movie have echoes of the real-life case of Elisabeth Fritzl, who was held captive in a concealed part of her father’s home in Austria for years.

“I had to stay out of the sun to get rather pale,” Larson said of preparing for the role.

“I went on a restrictive diet ... and worked with a trauma specialist to talk about how the brain would organize itself around the sexual abuse and being trapped in a room that long but it didn’t stick to me.”

“Room” goes on release in New York and Los Angeles on 16 October. It comes to European cinemas in early 2016.—Reuters

Meryl Streep to head 2016 Berlin film festival jury

BERLIN — Meryl Streep, who during nearly 40 years in the movies has never served on a film festival jury, will be jury president for the 66th Berlin International Film Festival opening in February, the festival said on Wednesday.

“It is a thrill to return to the festival under any circumstances, but it is with great relish and anticipation I look forward to jury duty,” Streep said in a statement issued by the festival, also known as the Berlinale, where she has been a guest on several occasions and won an award in 2003.

“The responsibility is somewhat daunting, as I have never been president of anything before, and I hope I can come up to the precedent set by the distinguished juries of preceding years. Grateful for the honour,” she said.

Streep shared the Silver Bear award jointly in 2003 with Julianne Moore and Nicole Kidman for their performances in “The Hours”. In 2012, the Berlinale gave her a lifetime achievement award and screened a selection of her films.

“Myself Streep is one of the most creative and multifaceted film artists. To mark our enthusiasm for her extraordinary talent, we awarded her the Honourary Golden Bear in 2012 for her lifetime achievement,” Berlinale Director Dieter Kosslick said.

“I am very happy that she is returning to Berlin and with her artistic experience will take on the chairmanship of the International Jury.”

The Berlinale, one of Europe’s main showcases for film, opens on 11 February.—Reuters

WEATHER REPORT

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 16th October, 2015: Weather will be partly cloudy in Lower Sagaing Region and Kayah State, rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Taninthayi Region and Chin State and isolated in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (80%).

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Slight decrease of rain in the whole country.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 16th October, 2015: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 16th October, 2015: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).
Rice off the menu: Asia’s hunger for bread and pastries boosts wheat demand

An employee serves sandwiches during lunchtime at a bakery in central Seoul, South Korea, on 13 October 2015. Photo: Reuters

SEUL — Asia is losing some of its appetite for rice in favour of wheat, a trend that is nowhere more pronounced than South Korea where bread and pastries have become a new staple.

From working mothers, who find toast more convenient to prepare for breakfast, to city dwellers flocking to new eateries for baguettes, South Koreans are at the forefront of an Asia-wide trend that has seen wheat demand climb at nearly twice the rate of rice consumption since 2008.

And while Asia is largely self-sufficient in rice, demand for bread and noodles from Mumbai to Manila has made Asia the largest and fastest growing market for wheat imports, shipping in more than 40 million tonnes annually for the past five years or 25 percent of world imports.

“I eat bread with coffee almost every morning,” said Lee Seung-Hee, a 47-year-old working mother of two, who often gives her children bread as a snack between meals.

“My husband likes to have rice meals, so I try to cook rice for him. But when I’m too busy, I just give him bread.”

South Koreans spent an estimated 6.36 trillion won ($5.37 billion) last year on bread, sandwiches, bagels and pastries, according to SPC Group, owner of the Paris Croissant and Paris Baguette chains, which has even opened two stores in the French capital Paris as part of global expansion.

Meanwhile, South Korea’s rice consumption hit a record low of 65.1 kg per person last year, while flour consumption was the highest since 2006 at 33.6 kg, according to industry and official data.

“Housewives are increasingly having bread and coffee for brunch late morning instead of rice and kimchi,” said Kang Byang-Oh, a business professor at Chung-Ang University, referring to the spicy local side dish.

SPC Group, which runs Asia’s biggest bread making plant and has about 5,000 bakeries in South Korea, said the local bread market has grown at an average of 15 percent per year since 2005.

“You can find this trend across Asia, as Asian countries become westernized...Food products from wheat flour are quick, convenient,” said Koh Hee-Jong, an agriculture and life science professor at Seoul National University. Rising wheat consumption has been focused on large cities where an emerging middle class is exposed to a proliferation of convenience foods from pizzas to sandwiches. In Indonesia, noodle consumption has helped increase wheat demand in the world’s second-biggest importer by more than 60 percent since 2005 to nearly 8 million tonnes annually.

Even in India, the world’s second-largest wheat grower, consumption is projected to surpass output by more than 5 million tonnes this year, sparking the largest imports in eight years.

Indian wheat demand is especially strong in the Northern Plains where it is grown, but is rising in the south where naan bread and chapattis vie with traditional rice consumption. Bangladesh is expected to import around 3 million tonnes of wheat a year to help meet the largest imports in eight years.

Indonesian wheat demand is especially strong in the Northern Plains where it is grown, but is rising in the south where naan bread and chapattis vie with traditional rice consumption. Bangladesh is expected to import around 3 million tonnes of wheat a year to help meet the largest imports in eight years.

“We used to take rice three times a day. Now we are taking rice only once a day,” said Huhmayra Ahmed, a bank employee and mother of two children in Dhaka.—Reuters

New quest for quiet on New York taxis, buses and trains

NEW YORK — A pair of initiatives designed to bring more peace and quiet to taxis, buses and trains moving in and about New York City have been set in motion, promising to boost the supply of scarce commodities in the metropolitan area — silence.

New Jersey Transit, which operates commuter bus and train service to and from New York City, kicked off a campaign on Wednesday to stop loud phone conversations on its system by distributing postcards featuring a caricature of a woman gabbing loudly on her cellphone.

“Keep it down, because it is just not that interesting,” the caption reads.

The agency also posted the message on Facebook, Twitter and other social media urging riders to stay out of the “Rude Zone,” reminding them that “we’re all in this together.”

Meanwhile, New York City’s Taxi and Limousine Commission is considering a pilot programme that could eliminate Taxi TV, a service that brings movie reviews, Broadway show ads and the like to yellow-cab riders.

Complaints about the screens, which double as credit card payment systems in the city’s fleet of 13,500 yellow taxis, were among the factors that prompted the proposed change, said Allan Fromberg, the TLC’s deputy commissioner for public affairs.

“There have been some complaints that the mute button or the off button were not functioning,” Fromberg said.

NJ Transit has begun running designated quiet cars on most trains lines all day long, after offering the popular feature only during rush hour in the past.

“Customers value their quiet time,” NJ Transit spokesman Jim Smith said, noting the new courtesy campaign was sparked by noise complaints and other grievances.

“It’s the chance to decompress after work, or get ready for the day by having a peaceful moment before the hectic day starts,” Smith said.

Many NJ Transit customers told social media to cheer the campaign, though not everyone was happy that it came on the heels of a fare hike that went into effect this month.

“#Rudezone, #6N7T,” @NJTRANST spelt out and $ on these rudezone cards. I’m (internally) screaming in the quiet car,” tweeted @annemarieconte.—Reuters

New Zealand funding to help draw tourists to Niue

WELLINGTON — The New Zealand government is stepping up its funding to help develop tourism in the tiny Pacific island nation of Niue, Foreign Minister Murray McCully said Thursday.

The investment of 7.5 million NZ dollars ($5.12 million US dollars) in the expansion of the island’s Matavai Resort would build on New Zealand’s total funding of 18 million NZ dollars ($12.29 million US dollars) in Niue’s tourism sector since 2009, said McCully.

“Tourism is the largest contributor to economic growth in Niue and the key to putting Niue on a path towards self-sufficiency,” McCully said in a statement.

The funding would see the development of a further 20 rooms at the Matavai and conference facilities.

“Since New Zealand began supporting tourism in Niue six years ago, tourism numbers have more than doubled and visitor expenditure is up by approximately 90 percent,” said McCully.—Xinhua
Weightlifters to take part in boot camp

Ko Moe

A TOTAL of 24 Myanmar weightlifters have been selected to take part in training at Gold Camp in Nay Pyi Taw as part of preparations for the 29th SEA Games’ weightlifting championships.

“It is scheduled to start training for the athletes around 15 November this year,” said an official from Myanmar Weightlifting Federation yesterday.

The Ministry of Sports will provide various forms of assistance to athletes.

Myanmar marks International White Cane Day

Participants take part in a competition to mark International White Cane Day. PHOTO: TRI SOE (MYANMA ALIN)

Prince Ali formally submits candidature for FIFA presidency

Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein of Jordan. PHOTO: REUTERS

ZURICH — Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein of Jordan formally submitted his candidature to be FIFA president on Thursday, pledging to restore the reputation of world football’s scandal-ridden governing body.

The election to replace departing leader Sepp Blatter is currently scheduled for 26 February but FIFA is discussing delaying it with its executive committee holding a crisis meeting on Sunday at its headquarters in Zurich.

Blatter and UEFA boss Michel Platini, who also hopes to take the top job, were suspended by FIFA’s Ethics Committee last week.

FIFA is engulfed by corruption claims and facing criminal investigations in Switzerland and the United States.

“This time of crisis at FIFA is an opportunity for positive change,” Prince Ali said in a statement. “Many good ideas have emerged in the current discussion over FIFA’s future.”

Murray makes quarterfinals at ATP Shanghai Masters

Le Saux lambastes Mourinho over Carneiro treatment