MYANMAR AT THE POLLS

UEC chairman makes final inspection of polling stations

Myanmar News Agency/
May Zu Zu

ELECTION Commission Chairman U Tin Aye yesterday went on final inspection tours of polling stations in several townships of Nay Pyi Taw, urging officials of the stations to make sure measures for the secret voting system were implemented.

During his tour the chairman told electoral officers that local and foreign observation groups will be allowed to monitor the voting process at polling stations alternatively in order not to disturb the secret voting system.

However, if an observation group requests officials stay inside a polling station to observe the voting system, it will be allowed to do that, and the other groups will observe the electoral process alternatively, he added.

The chairman called for safety measures — the fastening of security belts to the boxes and secure polling booths, urging the officers to make sure that the observation by local and foreign groups does not disturb or influence voters.

He stressed the need to compile lists of early voters and arrange chairs for observers and some paper for stamp testing. Photography from a safe distance is permitted.

The Asian Network for Free Elections Foundation, which is currently observing the electoral process, expressed its hope that there will be no more violence during the 2015 election cycle.

“We don’t interrupt the election cycle and we always respect the results. We hope to see peace and transparency in Myanmar during this time without any violence,” said the Ichal Supriadi Mission Director of ANFREL foundation at the MiCasa Hotel yesterday.

With both short-term and long-term observation teams, ANFREL will observe the country’s first ever open election in decades and will announce the first stage summary of Myanmar’s election two months after election day.

The foundation sent its 27 short-term observers to Myanmar on 3 November and they will work closely with the foundation’s long-term observers who have been working since 12 October.

The ANFREL Election Observation Mission (EMO) objective is to strengthen Myanmar’s democratic culture by monitoring the electoral process and reporting on possible election-related human rights violations.

According to ANFREL, advance voting is held only in Thailand and Myanmar.

On the Election day, the observers from the ANFREL will visit main polling stations in Yangon to observe the electoral processes. The long-term team will observe the election from October 9 to November 20, 2015, whereas the short-term team will observe from November 1 to 10.

Myanmar’s rice exports top 500,000 tonnes in 1st half of fiscal year amid flood recovery

Ye Myint

Despite ongoing agriculture recovery efforts following devastating flooding across the country, Myanmar exported more than 500,000 tonnes of rice in the first half of the current fiscal year, according to figures from the Myanmar Rice Federation.

From 1 April to 9 October this year, rice exports to 43 countries reached 507,624 tonnes and fetched US$185.843 million in revenue, said the federation based on Customs data and figures from the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs.

Among the 43 rice markets of Myanmar, China is the biggest rice customer. Exports to China accounted for 422,044 tonnes during the period, bringing in revenues of $155.676 million.

According to statistics, 413,591 tonnes of rice to China came from border trade, while 8,453.63 tonnes were shipments.

Sources said that rice exports and revenues were down 150,000 tonnes and $60 million from the same period last year.

Myanmar resumed its rice exports in mid-September after lifting a one-and-a-half month freeze aimed at maintaining price stability and local self-sufficiency in the wake of widespread floods.

Before the temporary export ban, the country had already exported around 400,000 tonnes of rice.

Despite an aim of exporting 2 million tons of rice in 2015, Myanmar appears set to see a decline in rice exports this fiscal year.

Dr Soe Tun, MRF vice-president, told The Global New Light of Myanmar earlier that the country cannot meet its rice export target for this year. He predicted that exports would be between 1 and 1.5 million metric tons in 2015.

According to the data, Myanmar exported 1.93 million metric tons last year.
Reclining Buddha image in Mohnyin to get roofing

Preparation being made for roofing the reclining Buddha image in Mohnyin Township. PHOTO: GNLM-001

Inmates of Meiktila prison cast advance votes

A TOTAL of 72 inmates of Meiktila Prison and persons who were currently under arrest at the police station cast advance votes for Sunday’s elections on Thursday. The township election commission arranged for the eligible voters to make their vote under the coordination of Meiktila Prison and No 1 Police Station. The voting process was explained to the inmates before they cast their advance ballots. They all voted independently and freely, according to a booth official. The 72 inmates were all from Meiktila Township of Mandalay Region. Another 42 inmates of Meiktila prison from other townships also cast their advance votes, said a prison official.—THEIN MYINT KYAW-MEIKTILA

ROOFING of a prayer hall has started at a 162-foot-long reclining jade Buddha image built on a hillock, east of Mohnyin, Kachin State.

The image was built in 2014 by monk U Kati who is staying at Kyaukthway Hill in Phakant Township. The eyes of the Buddha image are made of jade stones produced in Phakant Township. The foundation and structure of the Buddha image are made of black jade, said the abbot. A local resident remarked that the Reclining Buddha is more magnificent with its natural background of the local forest and mountains but that it must be protected from the elements.—GNLM-001

Mandalay CDC, Japan’s TEC International jointly provide water to Pyigyidagun

Official of MCDC signs consulting services contract with JICA for water supply work. PHOTO: THHA KO KO

Meiktila township election commission, officials hold meeting

THE Meiktila township election sub-committee and election officials held a meeting yesterday at the township government. The township government of the Mandalay General Administration Department to discuss the officials’ documentation of the ballots received by candidates at ward/village ballot booths. At the township election commission office on Sunday the election officials, who are civil service personnel, will document with telephone messages from 6 am onwards the situations of their assigned ward/village ballot booths. They were urged by commission chairman U Than Win to work diligently and earnestly.

The township commission members are to supervise their documentation, said commission secretary U Myo Min. Measures on security were also explained to the document officials by township administrator U Myo Hline. There will be 293 ballot booths with 5,387 booth officials in the township. A total of 15 candidates from five political parties and two independents will be contesting seats in the township which has about 270,480 eligible voters.—CHAN THAR-MEIKTILA

ADB delegation, Mandalay RCCI members meet

ADB delegation, Mandalay RCCI members meet

THE visiting Asia Development Bank delegation led by ADB Advisor Professor Dr Mary Callahan of Washington University met Vice Chairman U Kyaw Min and CEC members of the Mandalay Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry on 5 November in Chanayethazan township of Mandalay. The two parties discussed investment opportunities, foreign investment and the opening of business/economic training classes. MRCCI members spoke on their cooperation with Thai universities to run business/economic training classes. MRCCI members spoke on their cooperation with US and Dutch universities on programmes for bachelor degrees in economics.—THHA KO KO —MANDALAY

Rubbish collection truck donated to Sedoktara

THE Irrigation Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation donated a rubbish collection truck to Sedoktara Township of Magway Region on Friday.

The China-made 6-wheel SKAT truck was handed over to Township Development Committee Secretary U Thein Win by Irrigation Department’s staff officer U Aung Soe Min. The event was attended by local authorities, current Hluttaw representatives and town elders. The truck had been requested by the township Development Supporting Committee during the president’s visit to the town on 5 November.—MOI Web Portal

WITH the coordination of Japan’s International Cooperation Agency-JICA, the Mandalay City Development Committee and TEC International Co., Ltd., of Japan, a consulting services contract was signed on Friday. The contract will extend water supply works in the city township of Pyigyidagun. The signing was held at the MCDC meeting room and was attended by Mandalay Mayor U Aung Moun.

The contract was signed by MCDC Co-Secretary U Thet Naing Tun and TEC International’s Chief Consultant Mr. Akira Takeki. The mayor spoke words of appreciation. JICA has provided about 2.55 billion yen to extend water supply works in Pyigyidagun. Previously water was supplied to just 5 per cent of the township. The target, according to the contract, is to supply 30 per cent of the township’s population with municipal water infrastructure by October 2017.—THHA KO KO-MANDALAY
Elections will be free and fair, and truly reflect wishes of the people

My fellow citizens,

The November 8th general elections are an important historical step towards accelerating the reform process in Myanmar. I applaud political parties and candidates for respecting campaign laws, regulations and rules during the campaign period. I also praise the citizens of this country for peacefully showing their support for their candidates and parties.

I recognize the efforts of civil society organizations in ensuring that citizens are able to fully exercise their right to vote. In particular, I recognize youth and other civil society organizations for their hard work in carrying out voter education. The active participation of youths at every stage of the electoral process is an encouraging sign for the future of our country.

I trust that voters are now ready to cast their votes after careful consideration of the qualifications and capabilities of the candidates. To reach this stage, we have had to overcome many obstacles, and achieving the conditions for holding these elections was not an easy task. Therefore, I strongly urge every citizen to exercise their right to vote in elections that will shape the future of the nation, especially since this Sunday’s elections are so important to the reform process. The Union Election Commission (UEC) has announced that although there are some deficiencies in the voter lists, arrangements are being made to ensure all eligible voters are able to cast their ballots on election day. I urge voters to carefully follow the UEC’s voting instructions so that their ballots are valid.

My government is making every effort to ensure that each and every eligible voter including members of the Tatmadaw and civil service are able to cast their votes freely.

To make sure all political forces are able to freely participate and contest the elections, nearly ten thousand independent civil society and international observers and national and international media will be present during the elections.

As I mentioned in my monthly radio address, we faced challenges and difficulties to hold general elections given the prevailing conditions. However, I believe these elections will be free and fair, and truly reflect the wishes of the people. All political forces participating in the elections must also in good faith accept the results.

I understand there are some concerns regarding the acceptance of the election results. I stress again that my government and Tatmadaw will respect the results of the free and fair elections. New political arrangements will be jointly forged and implemented in accordance with the results.

In line with the Constitution, the newly elected members of parliament will vote to elect a president to lead the next government. I will accept the government chosen in keeping with the results of the elections and the Constitution, and trust all the leaders of political forces are committed to the same.

To ensure stability during the interim period after the elections, my government and all political leaders will work together to resolve any issues. These political discussions will greatly assist interim period stability and facilitate a smooth transition to the new political arrangement.

We must all continue on this journey to fully achieving our goal of establishing a democratic and federal union. Many more elections will be held in the future, and political developments will be attained step by step. Gradual evolution is the key to achieving genuine and sustainable democracy.

As we make progress, it is only by successfully holding these November 8th general elections in a free and fair manner that we can ensure a stable transition to a new political arrangement that will advance reforms. Therefore, these elections are critical for our country’s future, and are also being closely watched by the entire world. I urge political leaders to make political choices with vision and compassion, and for citizens to freely cast their votes.

I wish you all good health.
**Observers from EU tour townships in Pakokku District**

THE Pakokku District Election Sub-commission held a meeting with observers from the European Union at its office on Thursday.

Ms Anne Bourlond of Belgium and Mr Caius Mihai Suvedi of Romania from the EU inquired about the casting of advance votes, the security of ballots and arrangements made for observers to visit townships in the district. Chairman of the district sub-commission U Shwe Kyawt and members explained their preparations for electoral process and arrangements for observers. At Pakokku Township Election Sub-commission office, Township Chairman U Hla Shwe and party explained to the observers the process of collecting votes from soldiers on base and in conflict zones, prison inmates, voters abroad and local voters.

The observers visited Yesagyo and Myaing townships on Friday. Ward and village election sub-commissions have allowed the casting of advance votes since 29 October.

—Ottara District IPRD

**Senior citizens submit advance votes in Myanaung**

WARD/village election sub-commissions visited the homes of senior citizens in Myanaung Township of delta Ayeyawady Region in order to collect their advance votes for the General Elections yesterday.

The sub-commissions’ visits was most convenient, said a relative of an elderly citizen. Sub-Commission members also visited the homes of sick citizens and took their advance votes.

Polling booth officials who will be on duty this election day were also able to cast their advance votes at ward/village election commission offices, according to a commission member.

—Win Bo-Myanaung IPRD

**Advance voting begins in Pobbathiri Tsp**

ELIGIBLE voters have cast their advance votes at the office of the Kyetaungkan village election sub-commission in Pobbathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area on 6 November.

The staff of five polling stations in the village-tract cast their advance votes before discharging their assignments under the supervision of the village-tract sub-commission chairman U Nyo Gyi and officials. Pregnant women, elders and patients who were in hospital began voting.

—Ottara District IPRD

**Voter identity slips issued in village of Pobbathiri Township**

VOTER identity slips were issued at the Kyetaungkan village election commission office in Pobbathiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw Council area on Friday in preparation for the elections, the slips guarantee citizens the right to vote.

Voters must confirm their slips which indicate name, national security card number and serial number with an official voters’ list. Before they cast their votes they must show the slip to ballot officials in addition to their national security card or other identification papers. After casting their votes, the voters must give back the slips to an official who will ink the slips, said village Sub-commission chairman U Nyo Gyi.

Kyetaungkan village tract, which has eight villages, has five polling stations. Voter identity slips were issued up until yesterday. The nationwide General Elections is on 8 November.

—Ottara District IPRD
Two wildlife-rangers killed in Cambodia during forest crime crackdown

PHNOM PENH — Two wildlife-rangers were shot dead yesterday in their four-man patrol cracked down on two forest crimes in northwestern Cambodian’s Preah Vihear province, according to a police report.

The incident took place at 1:00 am local time in a jungle in Chorn Ksan District when the team were patrolling and handling two forest crimes, confiscating 11 sawing machines and one homemade gun, said the Preah Vihear Provincial Police Commissariat’s report.

“A group of unidentified men had used an AK-47 rifle to fire many shots at the wildlife-ranger team, leaving two men dead, one injured and the other escaped unharmed,” the report said. — Xinhua

Leaders across Taiwan Strait meet for first time in 66 years

SINGAPORE — Xi Jinping and Ma Ying-jeou shook hands yesterday in Singapore, in the first meeting between leaders of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait since 1949, opening up a historic page in cross-Strait relations.

Both dressed in dark suits, the two leaders walked toward each other in a room crowded by hundreds of journalists at the Shangri-La Hotel at around 3 pm local time before extending their hands almost at the same time.

Xi wore a red tie and Ma a blue one. Unbeknownst to the media, the two leaders fired flashes of cameras, they smiled at each other and shook hands firmly for more than a minute.

“Today will be remembered in history,” Xi said in opening remarks before a closed-door meeting with Ma.

“No force can pull us apart, because we are brothers who are still connected by our flesh even if our bones are broken, and we are one family,” Xi told Ma.

Such a close bond has been testified by the 66-year history of the development of cross-Strait relations despite ordeals and long-term isolation from each other, he said.

The two leaders addressed each other “mister” in the meeting.

“We are sitting together today to prevent the historical tragedy from repeating itself, prevent the fruits from peaceful development of cross-Strait ties from being lost again, enable compatriots across the Strait to continue to create a peaceful life, and enable our next generations to share a bright future,” Xi said.

Xi said the two sides across the Strait should prove with concrete moves to the world that the Chinese from both sides have the capabilities and wisdom to solve their own problems.

During the closed-door meeting, Xi made a four-point proposal on cross-strait relations, Zhang Zhijun, the mainland’s Taiwan affairs chief, told a press conference. Xi called for adhering to the common political consensus of the two sides, referring to the 1992 Consensus reached between the two sides that endorses the one-China principle.

“The peaceful development of cross-Strait relations over the past seven years lies in adhering to the 1992 Consensus and opposing Taiwan independence,” Xi was quoted by Zhang as saying.

Xi called for consolidating and deepening the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations, stressing that “they are at the best period since 1949” and that the biggest threat is Taiwan independence force.

He also called for boosting well-being of people on the two sides, and promoting cultural and education cooperation.

In addition, Xi called on the two sides across the Strait to make joint efforts to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, according to Zhang.

Addressing the meeting in his opening remarks, Ma said the two sides should consolidate the consensus of the one-China principle and make contributions to the revival of the Chinese nation.

In one of his five-point proposals, Ma said “we should consolidate the 1992 Consensus, and maintain the peaceful status quo.”

Ma added that the two sides should cooperate and be committed to the revival of the Chinese nation, as the peoples of both sides across the Strait are all Chinese descendants. The two leaders are set to attend a dinner after the meeting. — Xinhua

Bangladesh says police can fire in self-defence if attacked

DHAKA — Bangladesh has given policemen permission to shoot in self-defence if fired upon, the home minister said on Friday, after a policeman was killed in an attack claimed by Islamic State militants.

Until now, policemen at checkpoints and guarding government sites could only fire on the orders of superior officers. In certain circumstances, they needed a magistrate’s permission.

On Wednesday, two men on a motorcycle stabbed a policeman at a checkpoint in Ashulia, about 20 km (13 miles) north of the capital, Dhaka, in an attack that was later claimed by Islamic State.

The men fled without the police firing a shot. That killing, attacks last weekend on bloggers critical of religious extremism as well as the killing of two foreigners have raised fears that the jihadist group is targeting its secular democracy.

“We have asked the police to counter any attacks on them. They can open fire immediately for their safety,” Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan told Reuters. The US-based SITE Intelligence Group said the Islamic State had claimed responsibility for the policeman’s killing. Khan rejected that and pointed instead at the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami.

“This is nothing but a plan to destabilise the country and create panic among the police,” he said.

Leaders from one at Jamaat-e-Islami, the largest Islamist party in Bangladesh, were available to comment.

A BNP spokesman, Asaduzzaman Ripon, said, “This is nothing but an attempt to repress us and keep us away from politics.”

Bangladesh’s government has put several Jamaat-e-Islami leaders on trial on charges of war crimes committed during the 1971 war of independence and believes some of its members are instigating attacks by militant groups.

Police said this week that a group called Ansarulullah Bangla Team was suspected of being behind Saturday’s attacks on bloggers in Dhaka. On Friday, police detained five activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir, the party’s student wing, a police official said. “All of them were detained with several jihadi books, (Molotov) cocktails and other explosives in the city while they were in a meeting in a building,” Kazi Monirul Islam, officer in charge at the Khilgaon police station, said.

He told reporters that the five men were suspected of carrying out attacks that killed two people and wounded dozens as Shi’ite Muslims gathered for a procession in the old part of Bangladesh’s capital on 24 October to mark the holy day of Ashura. — Reuters

Xi Jinping shakes hands with Ma Ying-jeou during their meeting at the Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore. PHOTO: XINHUA

“No force can pull us apart, because we are brothers who are still connected by our flesh even if our bones are broken, we are one family.”

Chinese President Xi Jinping

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Pakistan to reject repatriation of citizens accused of terrorism by EU

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan on Friday suspended its agreement with the European Union that obliged it to accept its nationals overstaying in the EU, claiming that EU countries were branding Pakistanis as terrorists to repatriate them.

“We will not allow any plane carrying deportees unless we verify their nationality status and get details of charges and evidence against them,” Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali told reporters in announcing the suspension of the readmission programme.

Islamabad and Brussels signed the agreement in 2010 under which the two sides accept the repatriation of their nationals illegally staying in their respective territories. The EU mission in Pakistan said it was unaware and took action by the development.

Pakistan Interior Minister Ali accused “two powerful European countries” of deporting Pakistanis nationals on baseless charges.

He did not name the two countries but added that Pakistan has no such complaint against the United Kingdom. Diplomats in Islamabad speculated that the two countries Ali mentioned may be among those affected by the recent influx of immigrants from the Middle East.

Ali cited the cases of two Pakistanis repatriated on terrorism allegations that were later proven false through investigations by Pakistani authorities. One of them was alleged to have been involved in an incident on a Pakistan Army public school in Peshawar in December last year, while the other had been named a suspect in the planning of an attack on a US consulate.

He said that when Pakistan sought information to substantiate charges against the two Pakistanis, the information was provided against them.

“Those who give lectures on fundamental rights to us should also respect fundamental rights of Pakistanis,” he said, accusing some of the European countries of having a bias that anybody with an Islamic name or any wooman wearing the veil was a terrorist.

—Kyodo News

India orders Greenpeace to shut down over fraud

NEW DELHI — India has cancelled Greenpeace International’s license to operate and gave the group 30 days to close down, citing financial fraud and falsification of data, the environment watchdog said on Friday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government has turned the spotlight on foreign charities since he took office last year, accusing some of trying to hamper projects on social and environmental grounds.

Last year, Modi’s government withdrew permission to Greenpeace to receive foreign funding, saying the money was used to block industrial projects.

Under the latest order issued by authorities in Tamil Nadu where Greenpeace is registered, the government said it had found that the organisation had violated the provisions of law by engaging in fraudulent dealings.

Greenpeace denied any wrongdoing and said the closure was a “clumsy tactic” to silence dissent.

“This is an extension of the deep intolerance for differing viewpoints that sections of this government seem to harbour,” Vinuta Gopal, the interim executive director of Greenpeace, said in a statement.

A government official confirmed that the closure order had been issued on Wednesday but did not elaborate.

Greenpeace India has campaigned against coal mines in forests, genetically modified crops, nuclear power and toxic waste management.

In recent months the federal government has toughened rules governing foreign charities and cancelled the registration of nearly 9,000 groups for failing to declare details of overseas donations.

—Reuters

Indonesian volcano Mount Barujari erupts

JAKARTA — Mount Barujari in West Nusa Tenggara of Indonesia erupted again yesterday with potential of collapse of its dome and flow of hot lava, officials said yesterday.

Powerful burst of hot ash volcanic material erupted by up to 1.5 km to the sky and spread from the south to the southwest of the crater, Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, spokesman of national disaster management agency, said.

“Over 100,000 maskers have been distributed to the people in anticipating the impact of the eruption,” Sutopo told Xinhua via phone.

Visitors are banned from entering the slope of the rumbling volcano by three km from the crater, as the alert status has been risen to the second highest, he added.

—Xinhua

India successfully tests fires supersonic cruise missile

NEW DELHI — India yesterday successfully tested its BrahMos supersonic cruise missile from a test range at Pokhran in the western state of Rajasthan yesterday, a top defence official said.

“BrahMos missile system, the most lethal and potent weapon system for precision strike available with Indian Army, has proved again its effectiveness in today’s successful launch,” Sudhir Mishra, chief of BrahMos Aerospace, told the media.

The missile has a strike range of 290 km and can travel at a speed of Mach 2.8.

The Indian Army has already inducted the missile in its arsenal.—Xinhua

British football legend David Beckham plays charity match in Nepal

KATHMANDU — David Beckham, who was dressed in a black t-shirt and cream colored shorts, warmed himself in West Nusa Tenggara of Indonesia erupted again yesterday with potential of collapse of its dome and flow of hot lava, officials said yesterday.

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—Xinhua

Pilot killed in paragliding accident in Nepal

KATHMANDU — A person was killed in a paragliding accident in Pokhara yesterday.

Twenty-four-year-old Sunil Bhattachari died while performing acrobatics at Fewa Lake, the major attraction of tourism destination in Pokhara.

Anil KC, a technical member at Nepal Air Sports Association, told Xinhua that Bhattachari was a solo pilot and very well trained. He was killed since last four years. We lost a very good pilot.”

Following the incident, the Armed Police Force had carried out a rescue operation. The pilot was taken to nearby Manipal hospital where he was pronounced dead.—Xinhua

The global trip has seven matches, seven countries, and seven continents as the number 7 is his lucky number on his England and Miami United shirts.

The crowd wildly cheered Beckham, who was dressed in black t-shirt and cream colored pants, as he chased the ball in the brick-carved floor.

Slava Biju, the vice president of local Taumadhi Youth Club, which managed the event, told Xinhua that they did not expect the big crowd that witnessed the match since they did not have any promotion. “We are happy that the event was a success,” Shiva said.—Xinhua

The match at Durbar Square was filmed by the BBC as part of its documentary, “David Beckham: For the Love of the Game.” The documentary, according to a local football official, is about the role that football plays in changing lives across the globe.

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After Iran feud, Obama and Netanyahu turn to Israel’s aid wish list

JERUSALEM — Rare agreement between two long-bickering leaders may actually be in the cards when Israel’s Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Barack Obama meet on Monday for the first time since the signing of the Iran nuclear deal.

Their White House talks will be an important step towards a new US approach to the region that could burnish the right-wing prime minister’s security credentials, now challenged by a wave of Palestinian stabbing and shooting attacks.

The meeting, the first between the two leaders in 13 months, could also underpin Obama’s assurances that he has Israel’s back and help deflect accusations from Republican presidential hopefuls that he and any Democrat successor are less pro-Israel.

But Israeli-Palestinian peace, a goal that has eluded all but the tiniest of steps in recent years, will likely take a back seat to a reaffirmation of strategic ties — though aide say he will still press the Israeli leader for steps to help keep alive the possibility of a two-state solution for any future negotiations.

The president has made clear that he’s not going to get a two-state settlement during the time of his administration,” a senior US official said in the run-up to the meeting. “He has already said publicly that he doesn’t think so.”

For Netanyahu, who infuriated the Obama administration by speaking against an emerging agreement with Iran in Congress in March at the invitation of the Republicans, it is now time, in his words, to move past the “dis-agreement in the family”.

“Now we have to strengthen Israel. And I think that’s the best guarantor of peace,” he said last month. Asked how Iran will factor into the Obama-Netanyahu talks, the senior US official said: “The debate on Iran has sidelined us.”

Seeking a boost in US defence aid, Israel argues that sanctions relief agreed by world powers under the July deal that curbs Iran’s nuclear programme will allow Tehran to invest more heavily in its missile development, while redoubling funding for Hezbollah and Hamas guerrillas allies on its borders.

Israel now receives $3.1 billion from the United States annually and wants $5 billion per year for 10 years, for a total of $50 billion, Congressional officials have told Reuters.

Israel government spokesmen declined to provide details on the defence aid talks, but one US official predicted the sides would settle for an annual sum of $4 billion to $5 billion. US officials said no agreement on a new aid agreement would be signed during Netanyahu’s visit but that he and Obama would “sort of give their blessing” to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) negotiations.

Under the MOU, Israel may seek to expand its order of 50 F-35 fighter jets, deliveries of which are due to begin next year. It will be the first country in the Middle East to have the aircraft. Israel could also revisit its plans to buy V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor planes built by Boeing Co (BA.N) and Textron Inc’s (TXT.N) Bell Helicopter unit.

US officials acknowledge that some irritants in relations with Israel are likely to remain, especially if the current right-wing makeup of Netanyahu’s cabinet is unchanged and some ministers continue casting doubt on the two-state solution.—Reuters

Finnish government avoids break-up, reaches reform deal

HELSINKI — Finland’s centre-right government yesterday struck a deal over cutting costs in the recession-hit country’s healthcare system, avoiding the coalition’s break-up but raising questions over its future ability to pass painful reforms.

Prime Minister Juha Sipila, a former telecoms executive, had in a surprise statement on Thursday broken up his government after only five months in power, in case it could not reach agreement on the reform by Friday.

The row is the latest manifestation of the difficulties to cut spending and push through major reforms in euro zone states.

It also highlights the challenges in the Nordic country that has been hit by string of problems, such as the decline of Nokia’s phone business and recession in neighbouring Russia, and which is seen growing slower in 2015 and 2016 than any other EU country, excluding Greece.

Sipila warned on the campaign trail that Finland could be the next Greece. Now as prime minister, he has struggled to step up reforms in a squabbling three-party coalition representing conservative rural voters, urban technocrats and anti-immigrant populists.

“This episode weakens confidence for the government’s decision-making ability. The impression is that the government have had major tensions,” said Pasi Kuoppamaki, economist at Danske Bank.

Overhauling healthcare, billed as Finland’s most important reform of the decade, is a long-standing problem for politicians.

The reform is due to curb future costs by 3 billion euros amid ageing population, making it a major part of the government’s plan to save 10 billion euros ($7.13 billion) to balance public finances in the long term.

For Sipila’s Centre Party, which has agrarian roots, the reform is a top agenda for making it tend to the people that the country should have more say on services.

Co-ruling National Coalition party, led by financial minister Alexander Stubb, in turn supported an “internal de-regulation” deal in a bid to lower prices and make services more attractive, especially for the people in the countryside who should have more say on services.

The government said in its early hour statement that as a compromise, it had agreed to divide the country into 18 autonomous regions and 15 healthcare regions, along with a legislation that allows citizen to choose over between public and private service providers. The government said it would present the deal in more detail on Monday.

By threatening to break up the United States annually and wants $5 billion per year for 10 years, for a total of $50 billion, Congressional officials have told Reuters.

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Iran, Europe resolve to boost ties after nuclear deal

TEHRAN — Iran and the EU vowed yesterday to enhance cooperation over mutual and international issues during the first visit by a European parliament president to the country.

The visit of Martin Schulz, president of the European parliament, has prepared a proper ground for enhancement of ties after the July nuclear deal between Iran and the world powers, said Ali Larijani, Iran’s parliament speaker, at a joint press conference.

Schulz arrived in Iran’s capital Tehran on Saturday for talks to step up dialogue between Iran and the EU. “We had constructive talks today with regional issues, including terrorism and the existing crises,” Larijani said.

Other issues in the region also require further conversation between Iran and Europe, and “We think Europe can play a positive role in this regard,” he said. The Iranian speaker hopes the current visit by the European parliament president to Tehran will have “appropriate achievements” for both sides.

Schulz believes “Iran and Europe are at the crucial juncture as for their relations,” after he had good and helpful talks with the Iranian speaker on Saturday. The nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1 group, which is consisted of the permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany, is at its implementation stage.

It will, hopefully, lead to the opening of a new chapter in the economic and political ties between Iran and Europe, Schulz said.

On 18 October, Iran and the world powers announced to start implementing the deal reached in Vienna, Austria, on 14 July over Tehran’s controversial nuclear program. The West has so far taken a pragmatic approach and launched the process of lifting sanctions imposed on Iran, as Tehran responded positively, anticipating the lifting of some sanctions this year.

Iran expressed its readiness to expand its ties with European countries within this new zeitgeist.—Xinhua

US can still close Guantanamo before Obama leaves: White House

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration still has time to close the Guantanamo Bay military prison before the president leaves office, the White House said on Friday, adding that it is continuing to work on transferring detainees from the center.

The United States is working to reach agreement with countries around the globe to transfer 53 eligible Guantanamo prisoners from the facility in Cuba, White House spokesman Josh Earnest said, adding that some transfers would take place by the end of the year.

“Absolutely it’s still possible. It’s still something that we are working very hard to accomplish,” Earnest said.

A senior US official told Reuters “there is a very real possibility” that the number of inmates at Guantanamo, now at 112, could be reduced to less than a hundred by the end of the year.

“We are amending for this,” the official said, but added that there was no guarantee of hitting that milestone by 31 December.—Reuters

No photography signs are posted on the fence surrounding Camp Delta at the US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay. PHOTO: REUTERS
The secret to change

Kyaw Thura

TODAY we are going to the polls to elect our representatives and invest in them the responsibility to form the administrative body that will manage the country’s resources for national growth. It is therefore safe to conclude that voting in an election is a way of expressing to each other and to ourselves that we are dutiful citizens. In other words, we are exercising our constitutional right to choose a government that will respect those rights and live up to expectations of the people.

What matters most in a democracy is a healthy system of checks and balances in the executive, legislative and judiciary branches. This highlights that public voices are crucial to the success of democracy. Despite this, most people at the grassroots level are so reluctant to take an interest in politics as a direct consequence of having experienced painful days, hardships and disappointments.

It is encouraging to witness more and more people, young and old alike, become more politically involved and more enthusiastic. However, there is no such thing as getting something for nothing.

In addition, we should all be aware of the fact that fear won’t get us anywhere. In a broader sense we must sustain our political engagement and our enthusiasm for the simple fact that losing our passion and allowing our interest to wane leaves us vulnerable. We can’t allow ourselves to be fooled twice.

It is imperative that we keep a watchful eye on unscrupulous representatives and make sure that we don’t send them to parliament again. After all, the secret to change is to build things anew.

Write for us

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

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

The world’s First Jade Pagoda in Myanmar

SINCE the earliest date of Buddha Sasana, many Buddha monuments, although sizes and designs were built, have been built and are being built across the world. A variety of natural materials and man-made materials are used in their constructions, such as stone, sand, copper, bronze, brass, iron, alloy, silver, gold, even steel, terra cotta brick, stone brick, glass, cement concrete, and lacquer. Hardly any precious or semi-precious stones were used in their constructions, such as jade, alabaster, silver, gold, even steel, sand, copper, bronze, brass, iron, alloy, silver, gold, even steel, terra cotta brick, stone brick, glass, cement concrete, and lacquer.

In Myanmar, a big pagoda named “Werawsana”, entirely built of one of Myanmar’s semi-precious stones, jade appeared in the present decade. It stands majestically on a hillock at Hsin Ywa, Myinhmu village tract in Amarapura Township, Mandalay Region, Upper Myanmar. It is easily visible and accessible on the good motor roads, to and fro Mandalay International Airport.

A year ago, the writer was invited by the Department of History, Mandalay University to give a series of lecture on Myanmar cultural history for Ph.D. Preliminary students. On arrival at Mandalay International Airport, students and staff of History Department who came to welcome the writer informed him of the said Jade Pagoda which was near completion and they suggested that the writer should visit it as it was just on the way to Mandalay. We visited it and the young guides well versed in both English and Myanmar explained to us in detail about this world’s first Jade Pagoda. Besides, we presented each copy of the booklet on its history.

Two days later, the donor of this Jade Pagoda, U Soe Naing sent a young man with a car to the writer to invite the writer to his house from the breakfast of Mandalay Nangyi Moni (Noodle) which two had a parcel of nearly two and a half hours, over a sumptuous breakfast of delicious Nangyi Moni plus a variety of Akyaw Sone (Fries). Like the writer, U Soe Naing is an anyathya (Upper Myanmar man) but much younger than the writer. He could be about his eldest son’s age. He said he had read some of the writer’s books and articles. At the writer’s request, he briefed on his early life and how he prospered through hand work, with honesty, perseverance, observance of five moral precepts (Pancha Sila of the good Buddhists) and loving kindness and constant dana (giving). His early life was quite tough. As a young lad he was employed as a daily wage earner in Jade mines in Kachin State. Haule from the countryside in Pakku Township which is in dry zone area, he had to withstand the cooler climate of Jade mine areas in addition to malaria. He not only survived but also began to rise from a mere wage-earner jade-digger to jade trader and jade mine owner. He became quite a wealthy man known locally as “Kyayk-sein Thu Htay Gyi” (a rich man of jade trade) he was aware of the importance of everything and every living creature as taught by Lord Buddha. From zero to billions he rose to become a young man of a great substance with a happy family, beautiful domestic wife, children with good education, kids and kins, the entire village of his birth place and his workers he looks after well. He could well afford to live a luxurious life of a wealthy elite either at home or abroad. But he is always inspired to make an unusual dana (giving).

For him nothing could be better and nobler than the dana of jade stones which had made him a wealthy man. So he decided to build a jade pagoda, the first of its kind in Myanmar history, or even in the world. All his family members, kiths and kins agreed. Therefore he began collecting jade stones of his choice for over 25 years. He selected jade stones of A, B, C and D quality grade of international jade market. They weigh a total of over one thousand tons!

Though the writer was carried away with him on his armchair travelogue of his success story, U Soe Naing was also partaking with bonapetite, the Mandalay Monti he had so kind enough to feed the writer, a Mandalayian that morning. Only an early middle age, an active, forward looking, honest and pious jade merchant of a great substance U Soe Naing has made his history. The writer harboured the wish to compile his biography. On return from Mandalay to Yangon the writer met him on the plane. He said he would send said he would send the writer an invitation to attend the hti hoisting (umbrella or crown putting on top of the Pagoda) ceremony in February of that year. But the writer was abroad so he missed his invitation. The following is an account of the world’s First Jade Pagoda, as recorded in the booklet we received.

The title-name of the Jade Pagoda

Shwe Thawun Monk Sayadaw Bhadanta Saddiya, Agga Maha Pandita, Agga Maha Saddhamma Jatika dhaja chose the title-name “Werawsana” for this Pagoda. It was built for all peoples of Myanmar and all peoples of the world who worshipped it and paid homage to it. They may receive all blessings, all Mindigalas and enjoy peace. Therefore the title-name means given of peace, progress, prosperity, good fortune, glory, fame, wealth and immortality from all dangers, and wish-fulfilling.

The Site of the Jade Pagoda

Mandalay Region, Upper Myanmar, Amarapura Township, Hsin Ywa, Myinhmu village Tract Site No.628 to the west of 36 mile pillar on the Yangon- Mandalay High way about 600 feet to the west, about 1,000 feet to the south of Sagaing. Myitnge motor road 4/7 mile pillar, a precinct on a hill-top, measuring 133 feet 6inches long and 133 feet 6 inches wide-a perfect square. The craftsman and the expenditure

The donor of the site, as well as the manager of gathering and covering of jade and sculpture is U Soe Naing (Aye Aye Khang, Gems Company)

The total cost of construction up-to-date is over 40,000 lakhs and the value of jade stones used is at least over 100,000 lakhs.

The committees formed by the state government


The aims and purpose of the construction of the Jade Pagoda “Werawsana”

The world conference of all religions recognized that Buddhism is a religion based upon strong evidences and high moral concepts. It is based on “loving kindness” (metta). The mission-aries who propagate are humans as such they will one day pass away. For example, from the earliest Aryan Buddhist mission-aries down to Emperor Asoka of India, of Chandra Gupta Mauri, dynastic Empire, most countries in Europe and Asia were Buddhist countries where Aryan Buddhist missionaries propagated the teachings of Lord Gautama Buddha. When these Aryan Buddhist missionaries passed away the successor Govern-ments no longer supported Buddhist missionaries. So Buddhism gradually declined in such countries.

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The world’s First Jade Pagoda in Myanmar

“Therefore this Jade Pagoda is built to stand as a witness to show that Myanmar is the home of Jadite Jade”.

In addition, the entrance caves are adorned with Myanmar decorative motifs—Ta’ku, U Kin, etc, all quality jade stones sculpted by Myanmar craftsmen. There are also the scenes of the Buddha’s birth, his Enlightenment, his first sermon [Dhammacakya] and his Demise [Maha parinibbana] depicted in jade stones on the upper penals of the terraces. On the middle and lower penals are sculptures in jade of scenes, depicting the ten Pan-ultimate lives of the Buddha, fulfilling ten perfections [Paramittas] and also scenes depicting the 8 victories of the Buddha over his eight opponents [Aunggym Shitpa].

The technology of the construction
To make the Jade Pagoda last as long as our planet Earth exists, the jade pagoda was constructed so that it can withstand an earthquake of 6.99 Richter scale. To enable it to meet heavy storms the bored pile technology was used. On the steel frame, iron nets and cement concretes were added.

No terra cotta bricks were used. Only jade bricks, fashioned out of the jade stones the donor himself carefully and painstakingly collected for over 25 years were used. The quality jade stones of A, B, C, D grades of international jade market, totaling over one thousand tons of weight were used to build this Pagoda 850 tons of quality jade stones are enshrined in the body of the Pagoda. The decorative diamond bud on the canopy is made of quality jade.

The garden around the Jade Pagoda
For peaceful rest and relaxation of the visitors and pilgrims to the Jade Pagoda, a landscape garden is created around the jade pagoda. Flowering and fruiting trees, in the park around the jade pagoda are Myanmar native as well as some exotic. The donor selected Myanmar native trees, creepers and plants such as Neem, Padauk, Gantgaw, Ingyin, Ngu, Pauk, Yuzana, Seinban etc. Flowering and fruiting trees, creepers and plants such as Neem, Padauk, Gantgaw, Ingyin, Ngu, Pauk, Yuzana, Seinban etc produce healthy fragrance, pretty hues and medicinal and culinary buds, leaves and blooms, attracting winged creatures—bees, warps, butterflies, birds as well as squirrels and some reptiles.

Not very far from the Jade Pagoda will appear Monzailenda Lake with a seated Buddha statue built for the shrine of Saint Ashin Siwali and Saint Ashin Upaguta kyats 325 lakhs, for shrines of Saint Ashin Siwali 75 lakhs, for Toilets and water supply kyats 1,750 lakhs.

There are three-storey hotels, and shop-houses, some completed, some still under construction, not very far from the Jade Pagoda precinct kyats 600 lakhs, for the shire of Saint Shin Upaguta kyats 325 lakhs, for shrines of Saint Ashin Siwali 75 lakhs, for Toilets and water supply kyats 1,750 lakhs.

The Five Properties of Jade
(a) Generosity (2) Courage (3) Sense and spirit of equality and justice (4) Humbleness and (5) Wisdom intelligence and learnedness.

Jade Dhamma Sala and other uppertaining religious movements
To the south of the Jade Pagoda on a site of 80 feet long, 60 feet wide, a big Jade Dhamma Sala is being built. It has a spacious ground floor. Estimated cost for Park-garden kyats 500 Lakhs, for landfill kyats 6,534 Lakhs, for making car parking kyats 1,340 Lakhs, for electrification of indoors kyats 5,500 Lakhs, for electrification of outdoor 952 lakhs, for construction of Jade Dhamma Sala kyats 3,360 lakhs, for four archways kyats 1,000 lakhs, for prayer post [Tagun Taing] kyats 200 lakhs, for walls around the entire precinct kyats 600 lakhs, for the shrine of Saint Shin Upaguta kyats 325 lakhs, for shrines of Saint Ashin Siwali 75 lakhs, and Toilets and water supply kyats 1,750 lakhs.

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A big showroom and jade auction centre are also in the process of being constructed.

The whole area is being urbanized. In no time Hsin Ywa, Myinhmu village that would become a cute Jade Town of international renown.

Main buildings under construction at computer, technological universities

Union Minister for Science and Technology Dr. Ko Ko Oo inspected the construction of buildings at the Monywa University of Computer Studies and Sagaing Technological University in Sagaing Region yesterday. Principals and officials of the construction companies briefed the union minister on the construction of the main buildings and housing for faculty members of the universities.

A four-storey main building is under construction at the Monywa University of Computer Studies, it is expected to be completed in December 2016. Sagaing Technological University is constructing a three-storey main building."
Russia suspends Egypt flights, US boosts security as intelligence points to bomb

MOSCOW — Moscow suspended passenger flights to Egypt, and the United States imposed new air travel security requirements in the wake of the crash of a Russian jet in Egypt, as Western officials pointed on Friday to the conclusion it was brought down by a bomb.

A group affiliated with Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the crash of an Airbus A321 operated by a Russian carrier on Saturday that was bringing holidaymakers home from a resort on Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula.

All 224 people on board were killed in what the militants described as revenge for Russian air strikes in Syria that began more than a month ago.

While no official investigation has confirmed that claim of responsibility, countries have been cancelling flights and announcing new precautions, leaving tens of thousands of European and Russian tourists stranded at Red Sea resorts.

The US Department of Homeland Security announced new security measures on Friday, including tighter screening of items before flights to the United States from some foreign airports in the region.

US President Barack Obama and Prime Minister David Cameron have already said the crash might have been caused by a bomb.

Moscow initially rebuked Western countries for drawing such conclusions too quickly. But President Vladimir Putin’s decision to suspend Russian flights suggests the Kremlin is no longer trying to avert attention from that theory.

The American TV network NBC cited unidentified US officials on Friday as saying communications between Islamic State leaders in Raqqa, Syria, and people in the Sinai Peninsula included boasts about the downing of a Russian passenger jet over the area.

“They were clearly celebrating,” NBC Nightly News quoted a US official as saying. The “chatter” included a boast of how the plane was brought down.

Separately, a new video released by Islamic State purports to show Islamic State leaders in Aleppo congratulating their counterparts in Sinai after the crash, CNN reported.

French TV station France 2 said on its website that the sound of an explosion could be heard on the black boxes recovered from the plane, according to an investigator who had access to them. The investigator ruled out engine failure, said.

But Moscow, which launched air strikes against Islamist fighters including Islamic State in Syria more than a month ago, has said it is premature to reach conclusions that the flight was attacked.

Egypt, which depends on tourism as a crucial source of revenue, has said there was no evidence that a bomb was to blame.—Reuters

Gulf states, BRICs should do more for Syrian refugees

WASHINGTON — Wealthy Gulf Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar as well as the so-called BRICs’ emerging market nations should do more to help Syrian refugees, a senior US official said on Friday.

“I would like to see more aid come from the Gulf states that are in the Middle East area and are relatively wealthy compared to Jordan and Lebanon,” Assistant Secretary of State Anne Richard told C-SPAN’s “Newsmakers” programme.

“We would also like to see more aid come from the so-called BRICs — Brazil, Russia, India, China and, to a lesser extent South Africa,” she added. “These are the wealthy states that care about the region that could and should be doing more on the humanitarian side.”

About 250,000 people have died and some four million driven from their homes in Syria since the civil war began — just not as refugees.

The source Saudi Arabia had given those who wished to stay residency, including such benefits as free health care, and had provided humanitarian aid to countries hosting Syrian refugees and via international relief organisations.—Reuters
UK economic growth edges up in three months to October

LONDON — Britain’s economy picked up a bit of speed in the three months to October, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, a think tank, said on Friday. Economic output probably grew by 0.6 percent in the period, up from the 0.5 percent estimated for the Office for National Statistics for the three months ending in September.

“This implies that reasonable economic growth has continued into the fourth quarter of 2015,” the think tank said.

The Bank of England said on Thursday it expected British economic growth would come in at 0.6 percent in the fourth quarter although it was keeping watch on the risks to the economy from a global economic slowdown.—Reuters

YouTube to support virtual reality video on its app

SAN FRANCISCO — YouTube announced two new features Thursday for its Android app that expand the video site’s use of virtual reality, giving the new technology its biggest platform yet.

The app now supports VR video — a format that gives viewers what the company says are more realistic 360-degree perspectives of films.

To view it, a user would call up a virtual reality video on the YouTube app, click a button on the video for VR mode, and place the phone in Alphabet Inc’s “Cardboard” device, a handheld gadget made from the standard box material that creates a VR viewing experience.

Makers of virtual reality content can upload VR videos compatible with the Cardboard viewer directly to YouTube. YouTube said there are about a dozen VR videos, including one stemming from the “Hunger Games” movies.

YouTube also announced that viewers can see its vast library of videos with a more limited virtual reality experience, also using Cardboard. YouTube said that the videos will resemble what a viewer would see on an IMAX theater screen. Neil Schneider, executive director of VR trade organisation Immersive Technology Alliance, noted that YouTube introduced 3D video in 2009 and was also an early adopter of high-definition video.

“It’s not surprising they would take the angle of adding virtual reality,” he said.

Schneider said the public can expect to see an explosion of high quality content, but said amateur content might be more difficult to come by because the gear to create VR content is particularly expensive.

But Jay Iorio, a member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers who is experimenting with creating films for Cardboard and Facebook’s Oculus Rift virtual reality headset, said he would not be surprised to see VR recording capabilities on smartphones.

“The equipment I have right now, people will probably have on their phones in a couple years,” he said. Oculus Rift is scheduled for release next near and is expected to cost between $300 to $350. Cardboard costs between $5 and $50.

“The YouTube app with the updated Cardboard technology is currently only available for Android phones but an iOS version is set to be released “soon,” according to YouTube.—Reuters

Toshiba logs operating loss of 90.49 bln yen for 1st half of FY 2015

TOKYO — Toshiba Corp, reported on Saturday a group operating loss of 90.49 billion yen ($734 million) for the first half of fiscal 2015, as its home appliance and other mainstay businesses struggled amid an accounting scandal.

It is the first time in six years that Toshiba has marked an operating loss for the April to September period. Toshiba’s consolidated net profit stood at 37.29 billion yen, down 29.1 percent from a year before, on sales of 2.97 trillion yen, down 4.5 percent. For the year through March, Toshiba did not announce earnings forecasts. The earnings results give fresh evidence that the Japanese conglomerate faces a tough road ahead in returning to profitability after years of systematic padding of profits delayed by a tough restructuring effort

Toshiba said it has decided to sue its former management — three former presidents and two chief financial officers — over the improper accounting practices spanning roughly seven years, and seek a total of 300 million yen in damages. The lifestyle division, a unit in charge of personal computers and televisions, saw an operating loss of 42.5 billion yen, while the electricity and infrastructure business that deals with nuclear power recorded 6.3 billion yen in operating loss.

The semiconductor business, however, turned an operating profit of 38.8 billion yen.—Kyodo News

Videogame maker Activision launches film studio

LOS ANGELES — Activision Blizzard Inc has launched a film and TV studio to create original content based on its popular videogame franchises such as “Call of Duty” and “Heathstone” in its latest push to expand beyond console-based games.

Activision Blizzard Studios’ first production will be “Skylanders Academy,” an animated TV series based on the company’s toys-to-life videogame “Skylanders,” the company said in a statement.

A “near-term” project for the videogame maker’s film and TV studio will be to develop a movie franchise based on the hugely successful military first-person shooter “Call of Duty.”

The company said it would also consider adapting the franchise for TV.

“Warcraft,” Activision’s other well-known game franchise, is already being made into a film through a partnership between its Blizzard Entertainment unit and Legendary Pictures, and is slated for a 2016 release. Activision said last month it would start an e-sports division to tap into the fast-growing competitive gaming market, where gamers play against each other for prize money.

Earlier this week, Activision agreed to buy “Candy Crush” creator King Digital Entertainment Plc for $5.9 billion to sharpen its focus on mobile games.

Activision’s highly anticipated “Call of Duty: Black Ops III” game went on sale earlier on Friday.—Reuters

Nissan joins automakers dropping Takata air bag inflators

TOKYO — Nissan Motor Co (7201.T) said yesterday it will not use air bag inflators made by Japanese auto parts supplier Takata Corp (3722.T) in its cars.

Nissan joins most major automakers, including Toyota Motor (7203.T) and Honda Motor Co (7267.T), that decided to stop using Takata’s inflators that have led to extensive recalls around the world.

“We have decided to no longer use (Takata’s) inflators containing ammonium nitrate in airbags for future models,” Nisssan said in a statement.

“We will continue to put our customers’ safety first and work to replace the inflators in vehicles under recall as quickly as possible,” it said.

US auto safety regulators have said Takata’s inflators containing ammonium nitrate may cause air bags to explode with excessive force, spraying shrapnel in the vehicle.

More than 30 million cars have been recalled worldwide since 2008 over the Takata air bag inflators. Defective inflators have been linked to eight deaths and more than 100 injuries.

Nissan said on Monday it would carry out a repeat inspection of vehicles in Japan which had initially been cleared of airbag defects after a passenger was injured when her Takata airbag deployed during a collision last week.—Reuters
25 minutes to escape: Brazilian village destroyed in dam deluge

BERLIN — A new biography of Hitler by a prominent German historian is likely to stir controversy with its argument that the Nazi leader’s political acumen has been underestimated and that the belief in his hypnotic grip over Germans is inflated.

Peter Longerich’s “Hitler”, to be published on Monday, is a 1,295-page tome that includes material from the diaries of Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels and early Hitler speeches.

“All, you have a picture of a dictator who controlled much more, who was more closely involved in individual decisions than previously thought. I wanted to put Hitler as a person back in the centre,” Longerich told Reuters in an interview.

Recent works on the Third Reich have placed more emphasis on the social and political climate that led to the rise of Nazism after defeat in World War One and crippling reparations demands.

Soon after World War Two, Germans clung to the belief that they had been held hostage by a criminal gang led by the charismatic Hitler, bent on conquering Europe and exterminating Jews.

Longerich, a professor at London University, argues that while all Hitler’s policies and the results were catastrophic, he acted smartly in specific situations.

“The question why he managed to get so far needs to be addressed: Obviously he had the ability to exploit individual situations in his own interest and for his own aims,” he said.

Even his racial policies, which culminated in the murder of at least 6 million Jews in the Holocaust, were in large part down to political opportunism, says Longerich, who does not think Hitler was radically anti-Semitic at an early age.

“Around 1919-1920 he realised he could be successful in politics by embracing and inciting anti-Semitism,” he said, adding it became a central element only in the 1930s.

Hitler’s skill in taking power is even more striking given that the Austrian-born art student was a ‘nobody’ with no ideology until he was about 30.

Only then, refusing to accept Germany’s defeat, was he drawn to the early Nazi party.

Longerich also seeks to debunk the theory that Hitler had an irresistible charisma that captivated Germans, arguing it was largely artificially constructed by the Nazi propaganda machine which pumped out pictures of entranced fans at rallies.—Reuters

EU urges Kosovo opposition to end parliament disruption

PRISTINA — The EU enlargement commissioner urged Kosovo’s lawmakers to allow parliament to function following protests in which opposition politicians have released tear gas in the chamber to demand the cancellation of an EU-brokered agreement with Serbia.

The opposition is angry about a deal to grant ethnic Serb areas of Kosovo greater local powers and the possibility of funding from Belgrade.

A bloc of opposition parties says it will disrupt the work of parliament until the deal — and another demarcating Kosovo’s border with Montenegro — are rescinded. Even as Commissioner Johannes Hahn was speaking to parliament, opposition lawmakers held banners reading “Unjust agreements shall not pass” and “Is ethnic segregation an EU value?”.

No teargas was released during the protest.

Hahn said the blockade of the parliament could have an impact on the country’s path towards closer ties with the European Union.

“If there are no decisions, as the parliament is not able to take decisions, this might have an impact not only in the situation in Kosovo itself but also in other issues that are related to the EU because in some areas we need decisions by the parliament,” Hahn told reporters after meeting Kosovo Prime Minister Isa Mustafa.

Last month Kosovo signed a trade and political pact with the European Union known as stabilisation and association agreement which is a required step for every country that wants to join the EU.

The EU is the biggest financial supporter of the poor Balkan country. Hahn said the bloc would donate another 650 million euros until 2020.

Kosovo broke away from Serbia in 1999 when NATO bombed for 11 weeks to halt the killing and expulsion of ethnic Albanian civilians by Serbian forces trying to crush a two-year guerrilla insurgency.

After almost a decade as a ward of the United Nations, the majority-Albanian territory declared independence in 2008 and has been recognised by more than 100 countries, including Western powers, but not Serbia or its big-power ally Russia. —Reuters

BENTO RODRIGUES — From the first warnings about a deal to grant Kosovo’s ethnic Serb areas of Kosovo’s border with Montenegro — and anoth
Hokkaido town eager to find details of stone figure found inside tree

HAKODATE — A town in Hokkaido is getting impatient to learn the identity of an enigmatic stone figure found hidden inside a tree before the 40th anniversary of the discovery next year.

The palm-size figure was found on 1 August, 1976, when Hideo Okano cut down a 10-metre-high yew tree in his backyard in the town of Imakane for a friend who wanted to make a table. About 1.3 metres tall, the figure was found inside the trunk, which had hollowed out as the old tree decayed.

It appeared to have been carved with a sharp cutting tool out of locally occurring stone and only semi-completed. A cross was carved underneath the base, leading some to think it belonged to a clandestine Christian at a time when the faith was outlawed in Japan.

A survey of the area was undertaken after the find but no similar objects were unearthed, and its identity and origin remain a mystery even now.

Okano died in 1992 and the figure was donated to the town office. According to his son Nobuo, 67, Okano had checked the tree after it was felled to see if there were any holes large enough to put the stone figure in but had not found any. The stump of the tree where the figure was found is now inaccessible in thick woods. Experts are divided about the figure.

The figure was apparently brought by Christians who escaped religious persecution by the Metsume domain in Hokkaido during the Edo period (1603-1868) and worked at gold mines in Imakane while hiding their faith, some say.

Existing records show that the domain executed more than 100 Christians in 1639, although there are no records of the presence of clandestine Christians in Imakane.

According to other experts, the figure is believed to have been brought by people involved in mining and gold during the development of Hokkaido, the northernmost of Japan’s main islands, in the Meiji era (1868-1912).

Before Okano’s death, the figure was enshrined as a “stone Buddha of the yew tree” at a hall set up in Okano’s home, funded by voluntary contributions.

The town office no longer displays the figure, and keeps it in its warehouse.

“We would like to display the figure as town residents want to pass it down to future generations,” Masayuki Miyamoto, a 42-year-old curator on the town’s education board, said. “But we cannot designate it as a cultural heritage of the town because we cannot accurately evaluate it. We badly want new researchers to examine it in detail.” — Kyodo News

Germany, France see progress in Ukraine peace talks

BERLIN — Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian separatists have agreed to complete a withdrawal of heavy weaponry from their front lines in eastern Ukraine, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said on Friday after a round of peace talks in Berlin.

More than 8,000 people have been killed in fighting between Kiev’s forces and the separatists in Ukraine’s eastern provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk since April 2014.

The violence has declined since the signing of a fresh ceasefire agreement in Minsk eight months ago, especially in recent weeks, though Western diplomats say the sides are far from implementing all 11 points of the peace plan.

“We’ve agreed ... to tackle the pullback of heavy weaponry now,” Steinmeier said after talks with his Russian, French and Ukrainian counterparts. The separatists did not send a representative to the Berlin talks.

Steinmeier said it was encouraging that the ceasefire had now held without incidents for seven weeks, the longest period of calm since the signing of the peace deal.

The German minister, who with his French counterpart has been helping to mediate in the Ukraine conflict, said the two sides needed also to tackle the issue of who can run for office in planned local elections and who should monitor the voting.

In a statement from Paris, the French foreign ministry said there had been progress on several issues in the Berlin talks, including in security in eastern Ukraine, political aspects of the Minsk accords and on the economic and humanitarian situation. — Reuters

Humanitarian situation in Yemen could worsen as it braces for another cyclone

UNITED NATIONS — The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) on Friday warned that a secondary cyclone storm called Megh has developed in the Arabian Sea and is expected to make landfall on Yemen this Sunday. UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters here.

“The WMO says that the storm is not as severe as cyclone Chapala, but heavy rainfall could further worsen the already complex humanitarian situation in that country,” Dujarric said at a daily news briefing here.

Cyclone Chapala, the rare tropical storm that slammed into Yemen’s southern coast Tuesday, dumped perhaps a year’s worth of rain in some areas.

Cyclone Chapala made landfall in Yemen while fighting between the government and rebel Houthi forces in the country continues. Since March 2015, the crisis has been an all-out conflict, with a military operation launched by a coalition led by Saudi Arabia.

“The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) says that cyclone Chapala has displaced about 44,000 people, killed eight people, and caused widespread flooding and damage to property and crops in southeast Yemen,” Dujarric said. The UN agency said that the coastal road from Aden to Mukalla, the principal supply route for humanitarian relief to people in need in Yemen, has been damaged, hampering further delivery of humanitarian relief items by road. The response is also hindered by insecurity in much of the impacted area, the spokesman said.

Seven airplanes from Oman and two from the United Arab Emirates have landed in Socotra, with 75 metric tonnes of relief supplies including food and household items, he said.

“ ‘Aid agencies are organising the transport of relief supplies by sea, air and overland to the cyclone-impacted area. And organisations are delivering water, household items and shelter material,” Dujarric said.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), for its part, has provided tents and emergency relief items to the displaced. UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies are further scaling up their preparedness and response measures to the second storm expected for this weekend.

UNHCR had moved 1,000 tents and 3,000 non-food items kits into a number of governorates to support people in affected areas.

Throughout the prepreations and response, UNHCR said it has been coordinating with authorities, other UN agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations, and through the sub-national Protection and Shelter Clusters in Aden.

Meanwhile, in advance of the cyclone, the Yemeni island of Socotra situated 350 kilometres from the mainland in the Arabian Sea, also experienced widespread destruction and displacement, with many taking shelter in caves, schools, or in the homes of relatives. At least 170 houses on the island were fully damaged and a further 610 partially damaged.

UNHCR in Yemen reportedly has been in contact with colleagues in Somaliland and Puntland to dissuade refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants — primarily from Ethiopia and Somalia — from taking boats to Yemen due to the dangerous conditions at sea as a result of Chapala.

“There have been no reported new arrivals since 1 November,” a UNHCR spokesman noted. “Thus far in 2015 UNHCR has counted nearly 70,000 new arrivals along the Red and Arabian Sea coasts. Over 11,000 arrived in October along the Arabian Sea coast and received reception and medical services from UNHCR’s Mayfa’a reception centre in Shabwah, which so far weathered well through the storm with only minor damage to the premises.”

UNHCR has also been informed that a new tropical storm is on its way and may develop in a second cyclone, to reach Socotra Sunday.

Along with other humanitarian agencies, it announced further scaling up of preparedness and response measures.

Also, UNHCR staff in Somalia have once again issued warnings to would-be crossings through partner and community networks.

Over the last several months arrivals had shifted primarily to the Arabian Sea coast to avoid intense conflict areas centred in Taiz governorate situated on the Red Sea coast of Yemen.

According to the UN, Yemen has 21.1 million persons in need of some form of humanitarian assistance, including access to food, health care and safe drinking water, and over 2.3 million internally displaced persons stemming from the escalation of the conflict since late March of this year.—Xinhua

Nobuo Okano points to the place where his late father Hideo discovered a stone sculpture inside a hollow Japanese yew in 1976, in Imakane town in Japan’s northernmost prefecture of Hokkaido. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

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Brangelina’s ‘By the Sea’ deemed a big yawn by movie critics

NEW YORK — Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt teamed up for the first time on screen in 10 years for “By The Sea” but Hollywood’s leading power couple on Friday got scathing early reviews for the movie, which some deemed a laborious vanity project.

“By the Sea” was written and directed by Jolie Pitt and inspired by the grief she experienced over the death in 2007 of her mother.

It focuses on the stale marriage of former dancer Vanessa (played by Jolie Pitt) and her husband, blocked writer Roland (played by Pitt).

The Hollywood Reporter’s Todd McCarthy called it “the kind of vanity project you don’t see much of anymore.” He wrote that it was a languid attempt at European arthouse cinema that “will prove once again that even the biggest names in the world won’t draw an audience to something that, in and of itself, has no reason for being.”

The more than two-hour-long film, which opens in US movie theaters on 13 November, reunites the two actors as a screen couple for the first time since the flirty 2005 action comedy “Mr.& Mrs. Smith”, which brought them together in real life.

“By the Sea” — Jolie Pitt’s third directorial feature — could hardly be more different.

Alonso Duralde of TheWrap.com bemoaned the movie’s “dreary scenes from a dull marriage,” adding that it was hard “watching these two talented actors play blanks who have no chemistry with each other.”

Critics praised the cinematography as exquisite but said the stunning visuals failed to make up for a weak script and a plot where nothing much happens.

Scott Mendelson at Forbes.com admired the film more than he enjoyed it and said it may appeal to fans of talky, beautiful to look at foreign movies. “For anyone else, it will probably come off like a feature-length perfume commercial punctuated by outbursts of emotion and light kink.”

Fred Topel of the NerdReport.com was kinder than most of the early reviewers on Friday. “Any time you get to see a filmmaker’s soul on display, that doesn’t intrigue you enough for two hours, you’re missing out,” he wrote.

But Variety’s Justin Chang called the movie “an unabashed vanity project” that is “meandering and overlong in ways that will test the patience of even die-hard Brangelina fans.”

—Reuters

Launching album, Seal says honest songs of heartbreak ‘cathartic’

LOS ANGELES — Singer Seal reunites with his wife Heidi Klum after seven years of marriage.

Seven years of marriage. Their separate ways in 2012 after he and German-born Klum went on to get loads of presents and I think it’s just amazing,” Smith said.

“Hello,” Britain’s fastest-selling record of 2015, keeping Justin Bieber’s “Sorry” down in second spot.

Sam Smith’s James Bond theme “Writing’s On The Wall” climbed back up one place to Number 3. —Reuters

Sam Smith debuts cover of Winehouse’s ‘Love Is a Losing Game’

LOS ANGELES — Singer Sam Smith has released the cover of Amy Winehouse’s popular song “Love Is A Losing Game”, which will be featured in the re-issue of his “In the Lonely Hour”.

23-year-old “La La La” hitmaker debuted his version of the masterpiece on BBC Radio 1 programme, reported Aceshowbiz. The version is comparatively slower and haunting than the original track crooned by the soul singer.

“Sometimes people forget my age. I was 11 years old when (Winehouse’s debut album) ‘Frank’ came out. And that album has really shaped me as an artist and my views on music and my relationship with music lyrically. Her rawness on such beautiful chords, on such expensive chords... It’s just amazing,” Smith said.

The “In the Lonely Hour” re-issue is titled “In the Lonely Hour: Drowning Shadows Edition” — PTI

Elvis Presley tops UK album chart again, 40 years on

LONDON — “If I Can Dream,” a collection of Elvis classics featuring orchestral reworkings by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

This means Elvis now has more Number 1 albums in the UK than any other male solo artist, and puts him level with Madonna in second place for the most chart-topping LPs, behind the Beatles, who have 15, the Official Charts Company said on Friday.

Elvis claimed top spot with 79,000 chart sales, it added, giving him the second-fastest selling album of the year behind Noel Gallagher’s High Flying Birds’ “Chasing Yesterday.”

Rod Stewart landed his 34th Top 10 album with “Another Country,” new at Number 2, while Elbow frontman Guy Garvey was third with his first solo release “Courting The Squire.”

In the singles charts, Adele was top for a second week with

“Sometimes people forget my age. I was 11 years old when (Winehouse’s debut album) ‘Frank’ came out. And that album has really shaped me as an artist and my views on music and my relationship with music lyrically. Her rawness on such beautiful chords, on such expensive chords... It’s just amazing,” Smith said.

The “In the Lonely Hour” re-issue is titled “In the Lonely Hour: Drowning Shadows Edition” — PTI

British singer Seal performs during the Rock in Rio music festival in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 20 September 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Kate Winslet Unveils Christmas Window Displays for Store in Paris

BEDING — British actress Kate Winslet was in Paris on Friday to unveil Christmas window displays at one of Paris’ famous department stores.

The Oscar winner showed up before curtains were opened on fairy-tale scenes of dancing and flying puppets.

It has been a long tradition — and a competition — for Paris’ department stores to offer the best mechanical devices to attract shoppers and give out a bit of magic. And clearly, it works.

“I make me think of Christmas and it’s beautiful, it makes me want to get loads of presents and I think it is really well made, it’s for everybody and... it’s magical.”

“It’s been reported that one of the stores has used eight kilometres of fairy lights, nearly 200 thousand LED bulbs and 8 thousand flowers to decorate the windows and the building.”— Xinhua

Sam Smith’s James Bond theme “Writing’s On The Wall” climbed back up one place to Number 3. —Reuters

An Elvis Presley fan shows his T-shirt at the four-day Collingwood Elvis Festival in Collingwood, Ontario. PHOTO: REUTERS

“Hello,” Britain’s fastest-selling record of 2015, keeping Justin Bieber’s “Sorry” down in second spot.

Sam Smith’s James Bond theme “Writing’s On The Wall” climbed back up one place to Number 3. —Reuters
ZURICH — The canton of Zug, with 120,000 residents, now requires that foreigners from countries including Russia, South Africa and the United States learn German if they want to obtain permanent residency.

Some well-heeled foreign residents have balked at this demand, however, leaving Zug worried that they make take their money elsewhere, just as local financial officials expect a 2016 budget deficit of 26.3 million Swiss francs ($26.4 million).

“The canton of Zug is small, and it impacts us when people with significant income and wealth move away,” Beat Viller, an elected member of Zug’s government, told Reuters. “And Zug is currently grappling with austerity measures.”

Under a plan backed by the local Swiss People’s Party and FDP factions, those seeking permanent residency would be allowed to skip German lessons if they earn 1 million francs annually and have taxable assets of 20 million francs.

The less-wealthy would still be put through their paces in the German classroom. Those in favor of the plan face hurdles, however.

The two factions backing the plan hold just less than half of the 80 seats in the local parliament, so they would need to peel off a few votes from other parties to push it through.

The opposition Greens have vowed to block the move or try to get it overturned if passed. Others also say that treating the wealthy preferentially may be out of line with Swiss law.

“Making exceptions for wealthy residents hardly seems to conform to constitutional principles,” said Alberto Achermann, a professor of migration law at the University of Berne.

Switzerland’s decentralised system of government allows individual cantons to decide how to ensure foreigners seeking permanent residency are integrated into the culture.

While some have few formal requirements, Zug requires foreign residents to attend language classes. If the proposal to offer an exception to the wealthy is voted down, the Zug parliament could alternatively scrap its language-learning requirement altogether. But proponents of the latest move want to keep the German language mandate in general, even as they let a small slice of the wealth bypass this obligation.

Viller suggested only about 2 foreigners annually would take advantage of the exception.

“For these people, it would be easy for them to simply pick up and settle in another canton without a German requirement,” he said. Zug has pursued a low-tax strategy as it seeks to lure companies and wealthy individuals. Single people with no children who earn 1 million francs face a tax rate of only about 23 percent.

As a result, ex-pats have arrived in droves, with foreigners accounting for 26 percent of Zug’s population last year, up from just 15.6 percent in 1990.

Among foreigners who call Zug home are deep-sea oil explorer Transocean, ex-White House chief of staff Bill Daley’s hedge fund Argentiere Capital, South African-born Ivan Glasenberg’s Glencore and Russian oligarch Viktor Vekselberg.

On Thursday, a Zug government spokesman said lawmakers may debate the German-language exemption within weeks. Should it become law, however, Zug’s Green party has pledged to launch a voter referendum to overturn it.

“Everybody should have the same rights regardless of how fat their wallets are,” party secretary Marco Knobel told Reuters. —Reuters
Djokovic claims 20th straight win to reach semis

PARIS — Novak Djokovic beat Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic in their men’s singles quarter-final tennis match at the Paris Masters tennis tournament at the Bercy sports hall in Paris, France, on 6 November 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Both players conceded only one break point as all games went to serve and the world number one prevailed on his second match point to set up a mouthwatering semi-final meeting with fourth seed Stan Wawrinka after the Swiss downsed 14-times grand slam champion Rafa Nadal 7-6 (8), 7-6 (7). A day after his serve was less than perfect against Gilles Simon, Djokovic was extremely accurate with his delivery and played better on the key points to see off Czech Berdych, the 2005 champion.

The Serb, looking to become the first man to win six Masters titles in a season, now has a 20-2 win-loss record against Berdych who has been beaten in all their 16 matches on a hard court. It was Djokovic’s 650th career win, the first he clinched without breaking serve.

“It was a really tough match, a real battle that went to the last point. I’m just glad I managed to stay calm in the important moments and pull it through,” said Djokovic.

Wawrinka also had to battle hard to knock out Nadal, ending a tense encounter with a superb forehand pass after saving two set points in the second set.

Wawrinka has now beaten Nadal is three of their last four meetings after losing their first 12 matches.

Earlier, Andy Murray reached the last four for the first time when he saw off local favourite Richard Gasquet 7-6 (7), 3-6, 6-3.

The world number three allowed the French 10th seed to come back into the contest when he was let down by his first serve in the second set but regained his momentum.

Murray next plays Spain’s David Ferrer who downed big-serving John Isner 6-3, 6-7 (6), 6-2, with the American finishing the match exhausted.

Briton Murray got off to a strong start, breaking in the second game on his way to a 3-0 lead.

Gasquet, however, remained aggressive, took his chances and was rewarded with a break of serve in the seventh game as his opponent grew cautious.

The Frenchman, backed by a partisan Bercy crowd, went 5-3 up in the tiebreak and at 6-5 Murray saved a set point with a superb sliced passing shot before going on to clinch the opener.

Murray was forced on to the back foot in the second set and managed only six winners, compared to 20 in the opener, as Gasquet levelled.

The Olympic and twice grand slam champion struggled on serve and allowed his opponent to break for 2-1 in the deciding fifth set and managed only six winners, compared to 20 in the opener, as Gasquet levelled.

The final match of the Futsal tournament, organised by the Paluang Self-Administered Zone Leading Body, was held at the Defence Services Tea Factory in Namhsan Township, Shan State, on Wednesday.

The Namwaw youth team secured the championship trophy with a 2-1 win over the Phayagyi youth team. Chairman of the leading body U Maung Kyaw, the youth team. Chairman of the leading body U Maung Kyaw, the

FA details Mourinho’s foul-mouthed rant at West Ham

LONDON — Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho was banished to the stands at West Ham United last month for refusing to leave the referee’s dressing room at half-time and using abusive language towards the officials, the FA said.

The outspoken Portuguese had already been handed a one-match stadium suspension, meaning he will miss Saturday’s Premier League game at Stoke City, and a fine of 40,000 pounds ($60,188) for his behaviour at Upton Park.

In a statement on Friday, the FA said Mourinho “refused to leave the match officials’ dressing room when requested and/or used abusive and/or insulting language towards the match officials”.

Mourinho was unhappy at half-time after Chelsea midfielder Nemanja Matic had been sent off, Cesc Fabregas had an effort ruled out for offside and Kurt Zouma’s header went within millimetres of going over the line.

The match report of referee Jon Moss was also made public by the FA on Friday.

“When myself and my colleagues left the field at half-time, as we entered the tunnel area to get to our dressing room, Mr Mourinho was waiting for us clearly agitated and began aggressively asking about first-half decisions,” Moss wrote.

Mr Mourinho asked me about a tackle, an offside and a goalline clearance. I gave him brief answers to his questions, the room,” added Moss.

“At this point Mr Mourinho became very aggressive and animated. He shouted that you are (expletive deleted) referees are weak... (Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger) is right about you...you are (expletive deleted) weak”, Moss said.

“I advised Mr Mourinho not to take his position in the technical area for the second half due to his actions,” said Moss.

Wenger had called referee Mike Dean “naive” and “weak” after Arsenal’s 2-0 defeat at Chelsea in September.

Chelsea were beaten 2-1 at West Ham, one of six league defeats the champions have suffered in a miserable start to the season that has left them sixth from bottom.— Reuters

Castro strikes back for four-shot lead at rain-hit PGA event

NEW YORK — Roberto Castro was stung by a bee at the fifth hole but an eagle three holes later eased his pain as he vaulted to a four-shot lead on Friday at the weather-hit Sanderson Farms Championship in Mississippi.

Castro holed out his second shot from 122 yards at the par-four eighth on his way to a five-under-par 67 at the soggy Country Club of Jackson, where players were allowed preferred lies. At 15-under 129, he had a four-stroke lead when play was halted in the late afternoon due to lightning, with 45 players yet to start the second round.

Earlier, heavy rain and standing water caused play to be suspended for nearly five hours in the morning on a rain-soaked course that last week absorbed nine inches of rain. Among the fortunate early starters able to complete the second round was overnight leader Castro, who had fired a career best and tournament record 62 for a two-shot lead.

Castro started slowly following his spree of 10 birdies on Thursday but came alive after the bee sting, sticking a perfect approach shot into the eighth green that spun back into the hole for an eagle that stretched his lead. “I think it was a yellow jacket, one of my own kind,” joked Castro, who attended Georgia Tech, nicknamed the Yellow Jackets.

“It just kind of got up under my shirt and it got me. It still stings. A couple of holes later I had a great wedge number, it came out perfect and just went in,” he told Golf Channel.

Next behind Castro in the clubhouse at 11-under was American Bryce Molder, who followed his opening 64 with a 69. Also on 11-under were Venezuelan Bohnattan Vegas, who was five-under for the day through 16 holes, and American D.J. Trahan, six-under through 16.— Reuters