INSUFFICIENT RICE
EXPORTS TO CHINA FALL SHORT OF COMMITMENTS

MYANMAR and China signed an MoU in March 2015 requiring Myanmar to officially export 100,000 tonnes of rice to China that year, but only 3,000 tonnes of rice were ultimately exported, according to Myanmar Rice Federation.

Myanmar began exporting rice to China in June 2015, but exports halted between 5 September and 15 October after Myanmar was hit by severe floods. Rice producers are directed to sell same portions of their yield for crops domestic consumption.

“We’ve only been able to export about 3,000 tonnes of rice [by the end of 2015]. We are currently planning to export an additional 5,000 tonnes,” said U Nay Lin Zin, the general secretary of the Myanmar Rice Federation.

The MoU between Myanmar and China does not impose a time limit, he added.

“‘We’ve only been able to export about 3,000 tonnes of rice [by the end of 2015]. We are currently planning to export an additional 5,000 tonnes.”

U Nay Lin Zin
General Secretary of the Myanmar Rice Federation

Current high prices of locally grown rice have led the Ministry of Commerce, the Myanmar Rice Federation and the Myanmar Rice Mill Entrepreneurs Association to discuss the prospect of paddy cultivations work in a field in Bago. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

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Paddy cultivations work in a field in Bago. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

No ‘too poh’ for you

Carlsberg Group to discontinue phrase coined by famous composer

CARLSBERG announced yesterday it will discontinue the use of ‘too poh’ in the branding material for Tuborg beer in Myanmar following an announcement from a grandson of the well-known Myanmar composer Myoma Nyein that he will sue the Carlsberg Group for using the Myanmar phrase.

“We are taking immediate steps to implement the necessary modifications and will endeavour to have this completed before Thingyan. We appreciate the public’s patience while this ongoing,” said Carlsberg Group in its statement released yesterday.

The family of the late composer held a press conference in Mandalay this week to make the announcement. Myoma Nyein coined the phrase ‘too poh’ to represent Myanmar’s traditional Thingyan Festival. The composer’s grandson U Myo Zaw Oo said his family will settle the issue in court.

The family refused to allow the company to use the phrase ‘too poh’ throughout four rounds of negotiations between the two sides before the company distributed the product to the market, he added.

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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw discusses national comprehensive development plan

The 13th regular session of the first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Upper House) entered its 26th day yesterday, with a question and answer session, an approval process for two reports and the submission of one report.

Deputy Minister for Construction U Soe Tint responded to a question about a government-funded highway in Kayah State posed by MP U Hnin Wai of Kayah State Constituency No. 12. The MP asked whether upgrading and maintenance works are being undertaken with the use of annual funding allocations.

The Union minister said the ministry plans to upgrade roads, build bridges, culverts and rock retaining walls and install guardrails along the Toungoo-Leiktho-Yado-Loiwa-Lashio-Maesenan-Maese-Nantaw road during the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

The ministry plans to upgrade allocations.

Next, reports by the Ministry of Education’s plan to coordinate the installation of ion minister added.

The ministry and the Kayah State government have already coordinated the installation of new toll gates in the state, said the Union minister.

Deputy Minister for Education Dr Zaw Min Aung also replied to a question about the Ministry of Education’s plan to reopen the Government Technical Institute (Insein), which was posed by U Nu of Yangon Region Constituency No 10.

In his reply, the deputy minister said short-term vocational training courses, including technical courses, are set to open in the main building of the institute.

The 120-year-old main building of the Insein GTI received a Blue Plaque from the Yangon Heritage Trust last December, acknowledging its status as a significant historic building.

Next, reports by the Mining, Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Committee and the Bill Committee on respective activities undertaken during the first Amyotha Hluttaw were submitted for approval.

MP U Htay Maung, a member of the Amyotha Hluttaw Education, Health and Women and Children Affairs Committee, presented the committee’s report to the hluttaw.—Myanmar News Agency

Amyotha Hluttaw Round-up

Pre-paid toll card system rolled out on Lashio-Muse highway

SMALL vehicles travelling along the Mandalay-Lashio-Muse highway will be able to pay road tolls using pre-paid cards by July 2016, according to the Oriental Highway Company Ltd, which is implementing the system.

U Tin Ko Ko, the company’s project manager, explained that the pre-paid card system was initially rolled out on 1 January of this year, with around 200 large vehicles currently using the system along the highway.

“We’ve got about 200 large vehicles currently using [the system] and have estimated that it will be made available for small vehicles by the end of July, as we’ve still got some preparations to take care of. [The pre-paid card system] will make it quick and easy to pay road tolls, mitigating any additional charges that might otherwise be incurred. [Drivers] will be able to check their remaining balance as they pass through the toll gates,” he said.

In order to use the pre-paid cards, one must submit an application with their vehicle’s registration and the name of the primary driver. A minimum balance of K50,000 must be initially added to each new card.

The Oriental Highway Company Ltd has announced that the pre-paid cards will not be transferrable between different vehicles.

The Mandalay-Lashio-Muse highway has a total of 14 toll gates. Pre-paid cards can be topped up along the way at the toll gates at Kyauk, Kyaw (Mandalay), Kyaukme, Shaung Lan (Lashio) and 105 Mile (Muse).—Myitmakha News Agency

Five missing schoolgirls returned to parents

FIVE schoolgirls aged 15 and 16 were returned to their parents on 17 January, according to police women in Hlaingthaya Township, Yangon Region. They had previously run away from their homes leaving no explanation, fuelling speculation that they had been abducted.

The high school students were reported to have left Hpa-an, Kayin State, on 16 January and to have arrived in Yangon in the late evening, with the local police saying the girls spent the night at the house of bus conductor Myo Myint Zaw, with whom they became friends on the way.

Following a tip-off about their arrival in Hlaingthaya, local police found the five schoolgirls in the township and returned them to their respective parents.—Police Information Centre

The Myanmar Rice Federation's 2010-2030 Plan on record.—

U Htan Lein of Mindat constituency, Union government.

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President discusses disaster reduction with Four Paws Int’l CEO

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein met Mr Helmut Dungler, CEO and President of Four Paws International at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Four Paws International is an Austria-based animal welfare charity foundation. Their discussions focused on disaster reduction, rehabilitation, establishment of sanctuaries and the protection of biodiversity and wildlife.

Mr Tateshi Higuchi shakes hands with an official from a project. Photo: SUPPLIED

A Round table discussion on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction held

A ROUND table discussion on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, took place at the Park royal Hotel in Yangon Tuesday.

During the discussion, Brig-Gen Ko Ko Lwin of Commander-in-Chief (Army) Office, Director-General U Htin Lin of International Organisation and Economic Department and officials from the United Nations addressed the meeting and held discussions with those present.

Also present at the meeting set to last for two days were senior officials from the United Nations and the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, the ministries concerned and Commander-in-Chief (Army) Office. —Myanmar News Agency

MYANMAR, ADB partner to strengthen Auditor General’s Office

THE Office of the Union Auditor General has partnered with the Asian Development Bank in coordinating a workshop on regional capacity development and technical assistance (R-CDTA) titled “Enhancing Roles of Supreme Audit Institutions in Selected Countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations”.

The workshop began in Nay Pyi Taw on 19 January and will continue until 22 January. Officials from the Office of the Union Auditor General and various ministries and agencies and representatives from the World Bank and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) are attending the workshop.

The technical assistance aims to strengthen the capacity of the Office of the Auditor General, bringing it into greater compliance with international standards of Supreme Audit Institutions and better-quality public finance audits, in support of its mandate under the Union Auditor General Law of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. These efforts are expected to improve public sector accountability, transparency and good governance in relation to the use of both public and development partner funds.

The technical assistance was approved by the Asian Development Bank in December 2014 with funding from the Government of Japan’s Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction. The supreme audit institutions of the Philippines, Viet Nam and Lao PDR are also included in the R-CDTA programme. —GNLM

JAPAN funds construction of four Myanmar schools

THE Japanese government has granted US$413,634 in cash assistance to four school construction projects in Myanmar.

Mr Tateshi Higuchi, Japan’s ambassador to Myanmar, signed the four grant contracts on 18 January. Under the contracts, Japan’s Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GJP) Scheme will provide funding to the construction of No. 13 Basic Education Middle School in Kalay Township; Tar Ngote Village Basic Education Primary School in Hinthada Township; Han Thar Wadi Taik Thit Monastic Post-Primary School in Thabyuzayat Township; and Sin Inn Village Basic Education Middle School in Bila Township. —GNLM

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FOREIGN minister meets CEO of Four Paws International

U Wunna Maung Lwin, the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs, received Mr Helmut Dungler, CEO and President of Four Paws International at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw at 9:30am yesterday. Four Paws International is a non-profit animal welfare charity foundation based in Austria. During the meeting, the two discussed rehabilitation works in the flood-affected areas in Myanmar, the establishment of rescue units and mobile clinics for animals and the establishment of an international-grade elephant hospital, rehabilitation centre and sanctuary in Myanmar. —MNA

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One man seriously injured by gun shot at Myawaddy

ONE man was seriously injured by a gun shot at ward 4, Bayintnaung - Nawady road in Myawaddy on 19 January.

According to the investigation, a Probox car approached to a Caldina car driven by Ko Oo (a) Win Naing Oo with his wife and daughter on board and a man seated in the Probox shot Ko Oo and drove away.

Ko Oo was seriously injured while his wife got minor injuries. The police are still investigating the case.—(District IPRD)

Narcotics & chemicals used in refining opium seized

A local anti-drug squad in Loilem seized 150 litres of Hydrochloric acid, 1,400 litres of Sulfuric acid, 3,600 kilos of white solid materials, 500 kilos of charcoal powder and two mobile phones in a car heading from Taunggyi on Sunday.

Charges have been filed against Ko Oo (a) Win Naing Oo with 0.12 kilos of raw opium, 258 pills of stimulants and 3.41 million Ks.

Likewise, local police has seized 258 pills of stimulants and 0.12 kilos of raw opium, a mobile phone and K 3.41 million from a motorbike driven by Ko Oo at Kengtung-Taunggyi road. The police have taken action against them under the anti-Narcotic law.—MPF

Crime News

World Buddhist Peace Conference aims to help make world more peaceful

The World Buddhist Peace Conference will take place on a grand scale at Sitagu International Buddhist Academy in Sagaing Region from 22 to 24 January, focusing on making the world more peaceful, according to the academy.

Tibet Monks will bring relics of Buddha from Himalaya mountain ranges to the conference.

At the conference, participants will discuss peace from the point of the Lord Buddha. Around 700 religious scholars from different faiths and observers will gather at the religious conference which is scheduled to be held from 22 to 25 January, inviting 200 experts from 52 countries plus 500 local scholars.

Altogether 200 delegates from the U.S, England, Russia, Iran, other Asian Buddhist countries already arrived the host country to attend the conference.

Under the supervision of Sitagu Sayadaw, Sitagu Management Team has made necessary arrangements to accommodate the international delegates in Mandalay and Sagaing regions.

The Sitagu International Buddhist Academy has been established since 1994 to provide, teach and train missionary monks.—Khin Yadana

Sitagu International Buddhist Academy in Sagaing. PHOTO: KYA YADANA

Natural hot spring in Hsipaw crowded with visitors

A NATURAL hot spring situated in Kyankhin Village in Hsipaw Township in northern Shan State has received flock of visitors during these days because of cool weather in the state, locals say.

The hot spring is in Kyankhin Village that is 5 minutes far from Mandalay-Lashio Pyiduangsu Road. Organiser normally stores the hot water from the spring to 30 foot long, 15 foot wide and 4 foot deep concrete tank. And then people who want to take a hot spring bath can swim at two concrete tanks within the area. Hot spring bathing assists them with cardiovascular disease and nervous system imbalances.

An average of 200 people visit the Kyankhin hot spring each day. Organisers collect K200 per visitor to raise funds for preservation of the natural hot spring.—Sai

A 6-wheel vehicle with over 40 people on board turned over when the driver lost control on the Pale -Gangaw road on Tuesday. The accident killed three people and injured 17 others.

The driver while trying to avoid falling into a ravine crashed into the tree. If the car plunges down, there would be a lot of causalities. We are very lucky, said a member of theatrical troupe.

Theatrical associations from Monywa and Pale also plunged down, there would be a lot of causalities. We are very lucky, said a member of theatrical troupe.

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A kitchen fire killed two people and damaged three cars in Bhamaw. The fire killed U Lang Poung and his son, U Taung Swan Khine. The fire also destroyed a PRADO and two trailer vehicles. The fire was put out by the firemen with the assistance of neighbors.—(District IPRD)

Police found gold from stone bags in Bhamaw

POLICE seized ownerless 50 stone bags containing gold near Shwe Mhaw Police station, Sone Taw Village, Bhamaw township on 15 January.

Acting on a tip-off, police discovered ownerless stone bags including the gold, digging tools and implements, and five motorbikes. The police brought them all to the Bamaw police station. The police are still investigating the case.—U Ye (Ka Thar)

A local anti-drug squad in Loilem seized 150 litres of Hydrochloric acid, 1,400 litres of Sulfuric acid, 3,600 kilos of white solid materials, 500 kilos of charcoal powder and two mobile phones in a car heading from Taunggyi on Sunday.

Charges have been filed against Ko Oo (a) Win Naing Oo with 0.12 kilos of raw opium, 258 pills of stimulants and 3.41 million Ks. Altogether 200 delegates from 52 countries plus 500 local scholars already arrived the host country to attend the conference. Under the supervision of Sitagu Sayadaw, Sitagu Management Team has made necessary arrangements to accommodate the international delegates in Mandalay and Sagaing regions. The Sitagu International Buddhist Academy has been established since 1994 to provide, teach and train missionary monks.—Khin Yadana

Sitagu International Buddhist Academy in Sagaing. PHOTO: KYA YADANA

Natural hot spring in Hsipaw. PHOTO: SAI

A six-wheel vehicle with over 40 people on board turned over when the driver lost control on the Pale -Gangaw road on Tuesday. The accident killed three people and injured 17 others.

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US expects China to play ‘special role’ in punishing North Korea

SEOUL — US Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday called for China to play “a special role” in strengthening sanctions against North Korea to punish it for its latest nuclear test in violation of UN Security Council resolutions. “We believe China has a special role given the special relationship it has with North Korea,” Blinken told reporters after meetings with South Korea’s foreign and defence ministers, as well as senior officials. “China shares our commitment and our conviction that North Korea must denuclearise,” he said, adding that China has “more leverage and more influence” over North Korea than any other country in the world.

Blinken, who arrived in Seoul on Tuesday, is due in Beijing later Wednesday for a series of talks on slamming tougher punitive measures on North Korea over its fourth nuclear test on 6 January, which drew a storm of condemnation from the international community.

Vice Foreign Minister Lim Sung Nam, who also held talks with Blinken, told reporters that they agreed on the need to step up diplomatic efforts to adopt a “strong and comprehensive resolution at the United Nations.” “We reconfirmed our joint goal that North Korea should be made to pay a corresponding price for its misdeed,” Lim said, standing alongside with Blinken.

The senior State Department official is visiting South Korea and China as part of a four-nation swing through Asia that has already taken him to Japan and Myanmar.

—Kyodo News

New Zealand to fly two flags in run-up to referendum

WELLINGTON — Visitors to New Zealand over the next two months will be forgiven for not recognising the national flag as the country flies two flags over official buildings and other sites. The government announced yesterday that the proposed alternative to the official flag will fly over 250 sites, including the iconic Auckland Harbour Bridge — alongside the current flag until the end of a referendum to choose the preferred flag in March.

The alternative flag, featuring a white stylized silver fern and the Southern Cross star formation against a blue and black background, was selected from five possible alternatives in a referendum in November last year. “Having the two flags flying side-by-side in each of these locations will allow the public to see that the government will help people compare the designs before making a decision in the final flag referendum, which runs from 3 March to 24 March,” Deputy Prime Minister Bill English said in a statement. However, campaigners for retaining the current flag accused the government and Prime Minister John Key, who early on expressed a preference for a change to a flag featuring a silver fern, of promot ing the alternative. “They have no statutory right to do it — this is just a blatant attempt by the Prime Minister to put his fern flag on the same level as our national flag,” leader of the opposition New Zealand First party Winston Peters said in a statement.

“What a ludicrous situation it will be having two flags flying.”

In the March poll, the alternative design will go head to head with the current flag, which features the British Union Jack in the top left corner. The winner will become or remain the official New Zealand flag.

The process has been marred by controversy and rancor among the political parties since it was initiated by Key after last year’s general election. Critics of the present flag, including Key, say it is too similar to the Australian flag and that it is a hangover from the country’s colonial past.

—Xinhua

India start-ups at risk as investors close taps, Modi fund falls short

MUMBAI — After pumping billions of dollars into Indian Internet start-ups in the last 24 months, global investors are cutting that flood back to a trickle as dreams of huge online sales are clouded by soaring valuations and still-distant profits.

Even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi lines up a four-year, $1.5 billion government fund to help startups create jobs, entrepreneurs fear that may prove a drop in the ocean. Venture capitalists have already tightened purse strings as ripples from China’s economic slowdown have rippled through emerging markets. “We reconfirmed our joint goal that North Korea should be made to pay a corresponding price for its misdeed,” Lim said, standing alongside with Blinken.

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Militants kill at least 19 as they storm Pakistan university

CHARSADDA (Pakistan) — Armed militants stormed a university in volatile northwestern Pakistan yesterday, killing at least 19 people and wounding dozens a little more than a year after the massacre of 134 students at a school in the area, officials said.

A senior Pakistani Taliban commander claimed responsibility for the assault in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province but an official spokesperson later denied involvement, calling the attack “un-Islamic”.

The violence nevertheless shows that militants retain the ability to launch attacks, despite a country-wide anti-terrorism crackdown and a military campaign against their strongholds along the lawless border with Afghanistan.

A security official said the death toll could rise to as high as 40 at Bacha Khan University in the city of Charsadda. The army said it had concluded operations to clear the campus six hours after the attack began and that four gunmen were dead.

A spokesman for rescue workers, Bilal Ahmad Fazi, said 19 bodies had been recovered including students, guards, policemen and at least one teacher, including students, guards, police said.

Many of the dead were apparently shot in the head execution-style, TV footage showed.

The militants, using the cover of thick, wintry fog, scaled the walls of the university yesterday morning before entering buildings and opening fire on students and teachers in classrooms and hostels, police said.

Students told media they saw several young men wielding AK-47 guns storming the university housing where many students were sleeping.

“They came from behind and there was a big commotion,” an unnamed male student told a news channel from a hospital bed in Charsadda’s District Hospital. “We were told by teachers to leave immediately. Some people hid in bathrooms.”

The gunmen attacked as the university prepared to host a poetry recital yesterday afternoon to commemorate the death anniversary of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a popular ethnic Pashtun independence activist after whom the university is named.

Vice Chancellor Fazal Umar Mansoor, a senior Pakistani Taliban commander involved in the December 2014 attack on the army school in Peshawar, claimed responsibility for the Charsadda assault and said it involved four of his men.

He told Reuters by telephone the university was targeted because it was a government institution that supported the army.

However, later in the day, official Taliban spokesman Muhammad Khorasani issued a written statement dissociating the militants from attack, calling it “un-Islamic”.

“Youth who are studying in non-military institutions, we consider them as builders of the future nation and we consider their safety and protection our duty,” the statement said.

The reason for the conflicting claims was not immediately clear. While the Taliban leadership is fractured, Mansoor is believed to remain loyal to central leader Mullah Fazlullah.

The Pakistani Taliban are fighting to topple the government and install a strict interpretation of Islamic law. They are loosely allied with the Afghan Taliban who ruled most of Afghanistan until they were toppled by a US-backed military action in 2001.

By afternoon on Wednesday, the military said all four gunmen had been killed.

“The operation is over and the university has been cleared,” Pakistan army spokesman General Asim Bajwa said.—Reuters

Nepal constitution talks fail to end protests

KATHMANDU — Talks between the Nepali government and minority groups to resolve a dispute over a new constitution have fallen apart, opposition leaders said on Tuesday, dashed hopes that protests that have led to crippling fuel shortages will end soon.

More than 50 people have been killed since August in anti-government protests in the Tarai region, a narrow strip of plains that runs along Nepal’s southern border with India. A resulting slowdown in cross-border truck traffic has plunged the landlocked nation into a fuel crisis that has hampered aid to survivors of last year’s deadly earthquakes and spawned a lucrative black market.

The ethnic Madhesi groups who live in the Tarai say Nepal’s new constitution, its first since the nation abolished its centuries-old monarchy, alienates their members, granting them low representation in parliament and government bodies.

After talks fell apart on Monday night, dozens of Madhesi activists burned tyres on the road in the southern business town of Birgunj, police said, in continuing protest against the charter’s carving the lowland region into federal states dominated by mountain communities.

Nepal blames India, its largest trading partner, for siding with the protesters near its border and invoking an unofficial blockade on trucks crossing from India into Nepal, a charge that India has repeatedly denied.

In the eastern border town of Kakarvitta, a long row of motorcycles and scooters stood in the middle of a bridge marking the border with India, as their owners poured smuggled fuel into their tanks.

“It’s been good business,” said a woman named Devi, who came from the Indian border town of Raniganj to sell petrol to Nepalese in plastic tubs and bottles. The United Madhesi Front, which wants state boundaries to be redrawn to give their communities more power, said talks with government negotiators that started two weeks ago had become “meaningless”.

Defence Minister Bhim Rawal said the boundary issue would be settled by a political committee in three months, but Madhesi party leaders were not convinced.

“We can’t trust the government,” Laxman Lal Karna, another Madhesi leader, told Reuters. “We have been betrayed in the past on similar assurances.”—Reuters

27 male Bangladeshis arrested in Singapore for terror links

SINGAPORE — Singapore’s Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) yesterday said the Internal Security Department has arrested 27 male Bangladeshis nationals who were planning to take part in extremist activities in other countries, including their homeland.

The authority said the 27 male Bangladeshis, all working in the construction industry in Singapore, were arrested under the Internal Security Act (ISA) between 16 November and 1 December last year.

MHA stated that the Work Passes of the Bangladeshi nationals have been cancelled and 26 of them have been repatriated to Bangladesh. The remaining Bangladeshi is currently serving a jail sentence for attempting to leave Singapore illegally after learning about the arrests of his fellow group members. He will be repatriated to Bangladesh upon completion of his sentence.—Xinhua
Balance of Asia-Pacific military power shifting against US

WASHINGTON — The balance of military power in the Asia-Pacific is shifting against the United States, as China and North Korea challenge the credibility of US security commitments and the Pentagon faces spending limits, according to a study released on Tuesday.

Researchers at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, which conducted the study for the US Department of Defence, were left “concerned” that President Barack Obama’s “rebalance” of US interests towards Asia might not be sufficient to secure US interests in the region.

Congress required the Department of Defence to commission the report under the 2015 National Defence Authorisation Act.

“Chinese and North Korean actions are routinely challenging the credibility of US security commitments, and at the current rate of US capability development, the balance of military power in the region is shifting against the United States,” the study said.

Pentagon leaders, and supporters in Congress, say efforts to keep pace with China’s growing military might and other international security threats have been hampered by mandatory “sequestration” budget cuts imposed across the government in 2011 in an effort to address the massive US deficit.

Congress passed a spending bill at the end of 2016 that addressed some of those concerns, but has not come up with a long-term solution.

The report makes four recommendations.

The first is that the White House should develop a single rebalance strategy, after finding confusion throughout the government. Among other things, the report said the administration should increase its outreach to Congress and coordinate better with it.

The second recommendation is that Washington should accelerate efforts to strengthen its allies and partners, including in the area of maritime security.

“Many states are struggling to mitigate regional security risks that range from major humanitarian crises to maritime disputes to missile threats,” the study said.

The third recommendation is that the United States should sustain and expand its military presence in the Asia-Pacific, and the fourth was that the United States should accelerate development of new capabilities for US forces, such as the ability to resist the growing ballistic missile threat to US ships and forward bases.— Reuters

European border checks would cost German trade billions

BERLIN — Reinstating border controls within Europe’s passport-free Schengen zone because of the migrant crisis would significantly increase costs for German trade operators, a German media outlet confirmed on Tuesday.

National Defence Minister Karl-Ernst von der Leyen, a member of the Social Democratic Party, which has called for a rapid border control operation, said checks at the German-Austrian border would cost about three billion euros ($3.27 billion).

“Stefan Genth, head of the HDE retail group, said checks would severely impact the transport of goods throughout Europe due to delays at the borders. European Union member states are bitterly divided over the handling of influx of migrants and refugees fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East and North Africa. Germany took in 1.1 million last year.

The failure to agree on joint measures to handle the crisis has put the Schengen zone, with its 26 European members, on the verge of collapse. German Transport Minister Alexander Dobrindt on Monday urged Chancellor Angela Merkel to prepare to close the country’s borders to stem the influx, arguing Berlin must act alone if it cannot reach a Europe-wide deal on refugees. Merkel has resisted such calls, saying Europe must act together.

The first blast ripped through a workshop of Hongsheng fireworks factory in Kunshan village, Guangfeng district, Shangrao city at around 0:30 am yesterday, said the city’s emergency management office. Several blasts followed.

Rescuers have managed to pull out 21 people who were trapped in the dormitory area of the plant and sent them to hospital. More than 1,000 people nearby were evacuated to safe areas after the blasts.— Xinhua

Three died, 53 injured in East China fireworks plant blast

NANCHANG — Three people were confirmed dead and another one remains missing after blasts swept a fireworks plant in east China’s Jiangxi Province early yesterday, according to local authorities.

Fifty-three injured people are being treated in hospital.

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IS releases 270 out of 400 kidnapped in Syria’s Deir al-Zour

DAMASCUS — The Islamic State (IS) group released 270 out of 400 people it had kidnapped, after its militants stormed a town in the countryside of Syria’s eastern province of Deir al-Zour earlier this week, a monitor group reported yesterday. The 270 released people were kids under 14, and men over 55 years old, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

It added that 130 men between the age 15 and 55 are still held by the IS militants, who will interrogate them on charges of cooperation with the Syrian government in the town of Bughaiyleh. Aside from the originally captured 400 men, the UK-based watchdog group, which relies on a network of activists on ground, said the IS group captured another 50 people over the past 24 hours during raids in Bughaiyleh in the countryside of Deir al-Zour.— Xinhua

Denmark, Greenland sign agreement on uranium

COPENHAGEN — Denmark and Greenland have reached an agreement on the rules for future commercial exports of uranium from the island, local media reported Tuesday.

Denmark’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has signed an agreement with the self-governed Greenland after prolonged discussion, Foreign Minister Kristian Jensen was cited by Danish news agency Ritzau as saying.

“We have had to agree on how we deal with the fact that Greenland has the right to extract uranium, while Denmark is responsible for what happens when it is extracted and to be exported,” Jensen said when briefing the Foreign Policy Committee on Tuesday.— Xinhua

ISIS media outlet confirms death of ‘Jihadi John’

DUBAI — A media outlet associated with Islamic State on Tuesday released a eulogy for “Jihadi John”, a member of the militant group who gained notoriety for his filmed execution of hostages, the monitoring organisation SITE reported.

The militant was identified as Mohammed Emwazi, a British citizen of Arab origin. The US military said in November it was “reasonably certain” it had killed him in a drone strike.— Reuters

Dacic: We will not allow for return of migrants

BELGRADE — Serbia’s Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic said on Tuesday that Serbia would not allow for a return of migrants to its territory and would take necessary measures if some neighbouring countries resorted to unilateral moves.

After a meeting with Serbian PM Aleksandar Vucic and Slovenian Foreign Minister Karl Erjavec, Dacic said that if Croatia, Slovenia and Austria decided to make some unilateral moves in the context of the migrant crisis, Serbia would respond accordingly.

He explained that the Slovenian foreign minister had come to Serbia to inform the Serbian PM about Slovenian PM Miro Cerar’s initiative, addressed to President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker and the prime ministers of the states along the migrant route through the Balkans, about the need for a joint response to an expected surge in the number of migrants.— Tanjug

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Opini On

Roll up your sleeves

Kyaw Thura

O ur country has gone through the dev- astation of ethnic rivalries for over six decades, leaving successive generations suffering from the curse of armed conflict. Despite the ongoing peace conference, sporadic armed conflicts still break out occasionally and harmer efforts to restore lasting peace.

We cannot afford to allow current disputes to escalate into a further threat to the peace process and democratic reform. It seems that all the parties engaged in the peace talks are found lacking proper motivation for trying to reach an agreement by peaceful means. After all, they are left with no choice but to leave their disagreements behind and start looking for common ground on the restoration and maintenance of peace. They have brought limited commitment and enthusiasm to the negotiating table and have acted with some sympathy for innocent victims.

In the event of any outbreak of armed conflict, both sides would assert their right to protect themselves and shift the blame to the other party, thereby widening the gap that undermines peacekeeping. It would benefit warring groups to remember that casualties do not incur on a par with violence.

Nationalization: A Grave Bunder

Khin Maung Myint

T HE 1963 Nationalization move was a real blunder. I should know it, as I had been actively involved in that process. This was when, for the first time, it was the large industries, businesses and companies that were nationalized, irrespective of their own- ers’ nationality. Later, for reasons I couldn’t know, small businesses, including even retail shops belonging to FRC (Foreign Registration Certifi- cate) holders were also national- ized.

During the first phase, on 1 June 1963, the major industries: including the export and import trades, rice, banking, mining, textiles and rubber, which were labeled as the capitalist tools of the Capitalists, were taken over. The next day, when I went on an inspec- tion of peace.

We appreciate your feedback and contribu- tions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email khimaunggye@hotmail.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.
World endangered Dugongs spotted off Rakhine coast

DUGONGS, medium-sized aquatic mammals which are included on a list of the world endangered animals, have been spotted along a stretch of Rakhine coastline between Laung Kyaw and Kan Thayar beach in Gwa township, as well as around the Sunpan Kyaung beach of Mann Aung Island, according to the Kyauk Phyu district Department of Fisheries.

"Studies have shown that the dugong species has become an endangered species not just in Asia but in the whole world. There are only two areas along the Rakhine coastline where they still remain. A dugong died in December of last year after it got entangled in a fishing net off the coast of Mann Aung Island. Fishing vessels which encounter dugongs becoming caught in their nets are prohibited from killing them for food and have been instructed to release them back into the ocean. Unfortunately, few follow these regulations," said U Htin Tin, head of the Kyauk Phyu township Department of Fisheries.

The Kyauk Phyu township Department of Fisheries started carrying out a series of awareness campaigns during December, 2015 explaining how fishing was not allowed in known grazing areas of dugongs and that fisherman must immediately release a dugong should it become trapped in one of their fishing nets. "It’s difficult to carry out research on the numbers of grazing Dugongs. There still aren’t any efforts being made to conserve sea-grass in the regions which the dugong habitually settle in for grazing and reproduction," continued U Htin Tin. As such, there is a need for areas rich in the volume of sea-grass to be designated ‘no fishing’ zones in a bid to prevent the extinction of this endangered species. The Kyauk Phyu township Department of Fisheries has made it known that they will carry out activities to ensure offshore fishing vessels and trawlers avoid such regions so that sea-grass can thrive without being destroyed.

But not all Dugong die as a result of being accidentally entangled in the nets of fishing vessels. "The Dugong have a habit of getting caught up in fishing nets during the start and end of the rainy season. Last June, a Dugong pup was caught in our nets but we released it straight away as it still showed signs of life," explained U Kyaw Thar, a local fisherman from Mann Aung township.

There are over ten species of animals included on the world endangered species list including the dugong, the manatee and seven species of turtles, while five of those species of turtles come to Thamein Hla Island in Ayeyawady Region to lay their eggs on the beach before returning back into the ocean, according to the Kyauk Phyu district Department of Fisheries. — Myitmaukha News Agency

Over half a million acres of forest to be protected in Rakhine State

THE Ministry of Forestry is planning to turn 550,000 acres of wild and uncultivable land located in Min Pya township, Rakhine State, into protected forest this year.

The land is located between the village tracts of Htee Pin and Min Kuu Lan, with plans to demarcate the area as protected forest in order to conserve the environment and protect life.

"A submission will be made to the State government this month for the cordon off 450,000 to the 550,000 acres. It has become quite evident how deforestation, from a surge in illegal logging activities, is destroying the natural environment. Our aim is to be able to replant trees in these forests. We are also intent on making it so that those, whether an individual or group, will get permission to plant new trees in parts of forest. Whatever happens, we expect to reduce the extent of deforestation," explained U Tin Soe, an official from the Forestry Department of Min Pya.

The department of Min Pya has planted 5,700 acres of teak trees, 2,350 acres of ironwood trees and 795 acres of standard timber for village use within the township. Local villagers habitually slash and burn areas of wild forest to prepare the land for cultivation but this often results in forest fires.

U Ba Sein, the administrator of Huyawgyi village, located within Min Kuu village tract, expressed his mixed feelings about the replanting initiative of the Forestry Department. "I’m glad trees will be replanted in areas that used to be forest. But, it’s made me even more concerned that the trees will fall into the hands for those who carry out logging activities without re-planting. It also brings worry that we will encounter difficulties with our livelihoods as we depend upon the forest to provide for us," he said.

Areas of land within Min Pya township earmarked for protection are dense forest abundant with wildlife and extremely inaccessible. The majority of local residents are farmers who mainly practice shifting cultivation activities and cattle breeding, but also have a habit of seasonally carrying out logging and bamboo cutting, as well as hunting wild animals.

The Forestry Department of Min Pya township made a submission to the Rakhine State government on 31 December 2015 for an area of 283.98 square miles in the area of Than Kyaung and 293.75 square miles in the area of Ko Lone Taung from within Htein Pin village tract, as well as 50.31 square miles from within the area of Ta Yweh and 141.41 square miles in the area of Kar Ma from within the village tract of Min Kuu Lan, to be demarcated as protected forest. — Myitmaukha News Agency

Free Medical Services for Eye Patients in Thandwe, Rakhine State

AN eye specialist team led by Professor Kan Nyunt and Professor Ko Ko Tin provided free Eye Care Services to patients with Eye diseases at Sitagu Eye Hospital, Thandwe from 14th to 17th January.

The medical team comprises (11) eye surgeons and (6) nurses. They treat 1265 out patients and operate on 198 patients with cataract. The patients are from Thandwe, Kyaindali, Gua and Taungup Township. The team work is supported by U Tin Lay, President and members of Sitagu Eye Hospital Administration Association.

Overall expenditure for the team is donated by the well wishers U Chit Khine, Daw Khin Soe Wai (Edin Group), U Kyi Lin, Daw San San Win (Silver Beach Hotel), U Mg Mg © U Kyin Hwet, U Soe Min, Daw Nu Nu Latt, U Mg Mg, Daw Si Si Htay, U Kyaw Kyaw Moe, Dr Kyaw Kay Khine and Daw Cho Cho Win (KTK Co., Ltd.).—GNLM

Creating Youth Employment

POEM:

There is a need, more employment to create for youth who are not in school for some reason before they seek other countries to illegally migrate for earning their livelihood in a job or occupation commonly known as 3D - Difficult, Dirty, Dangerous jobs for which ‘general labour’ are much in demand and which do not require any skills expeditious, except good health and a willing pair of hands.

Policies could be formulated by the Bodies concerned based on the Employment and Skills Development Law for ‘Employers’ both public and private to provide training on-the-job while working, to such youth who are willing, under a Learnership/Apprenticeship Contract to serve for a fixed period as learners and apprentices, paid during their term of Contract an agreed percentage of wages of skilled workers of the Occupation which would enable them to earn as they learn.

And following the terms of Learnership/Apprenticeship period be assessed and certified against the relevant Occupational Standard and either be employed by the establishment concerned or be free to seek skilled employment locally or overseas. — Lokothar

Eye specialist team gives treatment to patients. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

U Kyi Lin, Daw San San Win (Silver Beach Hotel), U Mg Mg © U Kyin Hwet, U Soe Min, Daw Nu Nu Latt, U Mg Mg, Daw Si Si Htay, U Kyaw Kyaw Moe, Dr Kyaw Kay Khine and Daw Cho Cho Win (KTK Co., Ltd.).—GNLM
Children on Syrian refugee route could freeze to death: UN

PARIS — Defence chiefs from the United States, France, Britain and four other nations met in Paris Wednesday to examine ways to accelerate gains against Islamic State, including by potentially ramping up the number of police and army trainers.

US Defence Secretary Ash Carter described the gathering as a chance for face-to-face talks among the core contributors in the US-led coalition, which also includes Germany, Italy, Australia and the Netherlands.

"I'll be soliciting their views and describing to them my thoughts about how we can accelerate the campaign, including the variety of capabilities, military capabilities, that will be required," Carter said, predicting increases in the numbers of trainers in the months ahead, including of police who can help hold territory seized from Islamic State.

France was the first country to join US-led air strikes in Iraq. Since the Paris attacks by Islamic State militants in November, French President Francois Hollande has stepped up French aerial operations against Islamic State, including in Syria, contributing about 20 per cent of coalition strikes. A French defence ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the coalition would discuss ways to broadly intensify the effort.

"It's not just about adding more planes, but also trainers to accelerate the speed with which local forces can retake territory against Daesh," the official said, using a colloquial term to describe Islamic State.

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Three attackers from Burkina al Qaeda assault still at large

PARIS — Three suspected al Qaeda attackers involved in an assault on a hotel in Burkina Faso’s capital that killed 30 people at the weekend were still being sought on Tuesday, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls said.

Three gunmen were killed in a French and US-assisted operation by Burkina security forces to retake the Splendid Hotel and surrounding buildings following Friday night’s attack, which targeted an area popular with foreigners.

Eight Burkinabes, six Canadians, three Ukrainians and three French citizens were among the dead. Other bodies are still in the process of being identified.

"Of the six assailants, three were killed and three others are still being sought," Valls said in remarks before the French parliament, adding that the attack on Ouagadougou was a reminder of a similar attack in Paris in November.

"This attack was claimed by AQIM. This is further proof that this group is dangerous."

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) on Monday identified three fighters it says were responsible for the attacks, giving their names as al-Batir al-Ansari, Abu Muhammad al-Buqali al-Ansari and Ahmed al-Fulani al-Ansari.

The French troops involved in the operation against the attackers were part of a 200-strong force stationed in the country as part of a regional anti-militant operation.

A QMI statement said the attackers were part of a 200-strong force stationed in the country as part of a regional anti-militant operation.

A QMI statement said they were facing a team of 12 gunmen. Gendarmes at the time said they believed at least two assailants were women.

"The investigation is moving forward. Eleven French police and gendarmes are assisting Burkinabe experts with the identification of bodies. There are also five American FBI agents," Burkina Faso’s terrorism minister Simon Compaore said.

Authorities in Ouagadougou have already made a number of arrests though some had since been released, said Foreign Minister Alpha Barry.

"In this kind of situation we pick up everyone who could resemble the suspects and then, bit by bit, we verify," he said.

Leaders from Burkina and Mali have agreed to work more closely to fight jihadists by sharing intelligence and conducting joint security patrols.

Heavily armed security agents on Saturday raided the Ouagadougou home of Mossa Ag Attaher, spokesman for the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) – a Malian Tuareg rebel group. He was questioned but later released.

"What kept coming up was ‘Do you have information on imminent threats to Burkina? Does the MNLA have links with those threatening Burkina?’" Ag Attaher told French radio RFI, adding that he had no reason to connect to the attack. — Reuters
Transgenic mosquito ready to join Brazil’s war on Zika virus

BRASILIA — A genetically modified mosquito has helped reduce the proliferation of mosquitoes spreading Zika and other dangerous viruses in Brazil, its developers said on Tuesday.

The self-limiting strain of the Aedes aegypti mosquito was developed by Oxitec, the UK-subsidiary of US synthetic biology company Intrexon. The male mosquitoes are modified so their offspring will die before reaching adulthood and being able to reproduce.

Oxitec, which produces the mosquitoes in Campinas, announced it will build a second facility in nearby Piracicaba, Sao Paulo state, following strong results there in controlling the population of the Aedes vector that also carries the dengue virus.

Zika virus, first detected in Africa in the 1940’s, was unknown in the Americas until last year when it appeared in northeastern Brazil. The virus has quickly spread through Latin America.

Brazilian health authorities have linked the Zika outbreak to a surge in the number of babies born with unusually small heads, a damaging neurological condition called microcephaly.

The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention issued a travel advisory last week warning pregnant women to avoid 14 countries and territories in the Caribbean and Latin America affected by the virus.

With Brazil’s rainy season underway, authorities are scrambling to fight the seasonal surge in mosquito populations.

Two weeks ahead of Carnival celebrations, a highlight of Brazil’s tourism calendar, officials want to invest in an expansion to fight mosquito populations.

Oxitec began as a spin-off from Oxford University and was acquired in September by Intrexon, which has provided resources to invest in an expansion to fight the mosquito causing Brazil’s public health emergency, Slade said.

Oxitec said its proprietary OX513A mosquito succeeded in reducing wild larvae of the Aedes mosquito by 82 per cent in a neighborhood of Piracicaba, where 25 million of the transgenic insects were released between April and November. Authorities reported a big drop in dengue cases in the area.

“Advancing a powerful and versatile tool that can dramatically reduce the levels of infestation, which is the core of Brazil’s prevention strategy right now,” said Oxitec business development director in Brazil, Glen Slade.

The transgenic mosquito know as OX513A was approved by Brazil’s National Technical Commission for Biosafety (CTNBio), but needs authorisation from the health surveillance regulator Anvisa to move to commercial production.

Oxitec business development director in Brazil, Glen Slade.

Slow heart rate not linked to increased risk of heart disease

WASHINGTON — A slower than normal heartbeat, known as bradycardia, does not increase the risk of developing heart disease, a US study said Tuesday.

“For a large majority of people with a heart rate in the 40s or 50s who have no symptoms, the prognosis is very good,” lead author Ajay Dharod, instructor in internal medicine at the Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, said in a statement.

“Our results should be reassuring for those diagnosed with asymptomatic bradycardia,” Dharod said.

The heart usually beats between 60 and 100 times a minute in an adult at rest. But with bradycardia, the heart beats fewer than 50 times a minute. The condition can cause light-headedness, shortness of breath, fainting or chest pain due to the heart not pumping enough oxygen-rich blood through the body.

However, until now, there had been no research to determine if a slow heart rate contributed to the development of cardiovascular disease.

In the new study, researchers looked at 6,733 participants aged 45 to 84 who did not have cardiovascular disease when first recruited into this study, but who may have been on heart-rate-modifying medications frequently used to treat hypertension.

Study participants were followed for more than 10 years to monitor cardiovascular events and mortality.

CDC issues guidelines for pregnant women during Zika outbreak

CHICAGO — The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention on Tuesday issued guidelines for doctors caring for pregnant women who might have been exposed to Zika virus, a mosquito-borne infection that can cause brain damage in a developing fetus.

The new guidelines, first reported by Reuters, lay out recommendations for doctors whose pregnant patients have traveled to areas with Zika virus transmission.

They follow a travel advisory issued by the CDC on Friday warning pregnant women to avoid travel to 14 countries and territories in the Caribbean and Latin America affected by the virus.

In Brazil, Zika has been linked to a rising number of cases of microcephaly, a condition associated with small head size and brain damage. Tourism officials in that country have tried to play down the risks as the country gears up for Carnival and the 2016 Olympics, the first in South America.

On Saturday, health officials confirmed the birth of the first baby born with microcephaly in the United States attributed to the virus. The child was born in Hawaii to a mother who had become ill with Zika virus while living in Brazil last May.

There is no vaccine or treatment for Zika, which causes mild fever and rash. An estimated 80 percent of people infected with the virus have no symptoms at all, making it difficult for pregnant women to know whether they have been infected.

In its latest to doctors, the CDC urges providers to ask pregnant women about their travel history. Women who have traveled to regions in which Zika is active and who report symptoms during or within two weeks of travel should be offered a test for Zika virus infection.

Those who test positive should be offered an ultrasound to check the fetus’s head size or check for calcium deposits in the brain, two indicators of microcephaly. These women should also be offered a test of their amniotic fluid called amniocentesis to confirm the presence of Zika virus.

East China Province reports 1st H7N9 case this winter

XIAMEN — East China’s Fujian Province on Tuesday confirmed its first human infection of H7N9 bird flu virus this winter.

The patient from Zhangpu County was confirmed to have the virus on Saturday. The patient is being treated and is in stable condition, the local public safety department said.

The county authorities have ordered to halt livestock sales in three townships in a bid to reduce the risk of infection.

On Tuesday, health authorities in Shanghai said that one of the city’s two confirmed H7N9 patients has bacularly recovered and another is no longer critical.

The two are a 59-year-old man and a 58-year-old woman.
Venezuela Congress plans to investigate PDVSA, China loans

CARACAS — Venezuela’s new opposition-led Congress plans to investigate state-run oil company PDVSA’s [PDVSA:UL] financial health and hefty Chinese loans, a lawmaker said on Tuesday.

The OPEC member country depends on oil for nearly all of its export revenue. With the political opposition in control of the National Assembly since this month, rivals of leftist President Nicolas Maduro want to use their new perch to push for greater transparency and accountability at PDVSA.

“We want to know the real state of PDVSA’s books,” Elias Matta, an opposition lawmaker and vice-president of the energy and accountability at the commission so we can resolve some important issues,” added Matta, who has been a crucial boost to the country’s oil sector.

The new opposition-led Congress plans to investigate PDVSA’s financial health and hefty Chinese loans, a lawmaker said on Tuesday.

The country wants to know how much money is owed by China and how it repays loans in the terms of an arrangement under which it repays loans in a major soy, wheat and corn exporter. International drug enforcement officials have called the country’s main grains port city, Rosario, the “Tijuana of Argentina,” comparing it to the Mexican border city used to move cocaine into the United States.

Argentina court triggers search for Franco-era victims in Spain

GUADALAJARA (Spain) — Spanish campaigners dug up a mass grave on Tuesday in a search for victims of the country’s civil war and the fascist dictatorship it put in place.

The exhumation, expected to last several days, is the first agreed to by a Spanish court at the behest of the Argentine investigations.

Hundreds of Spaniards turned to the Argentine court two years ago for help in uncovering criminals, committed during the 1936-1939 civil war and the subsequent 36-year dictatorship of General Francisco Franco, by using an international human rights law.

On the edge of a cemetery in Guadalajara, some 50 km from Madrid, volunteers dug open a grave believed to hold 22 or 23 bodies after a campaign by 90-year-old Ascension Mendieta, who is seeking her father’s remains.

“Not only has not been by all this, but I know we’re going to get there and get what we wanted,” she told Reuters TV. “After this I can die in peace.”

Her father Timoteo, who fought against Franco’s forces, is believed to have been shot amid reprisals after the war ended.

Hundreds of thousands of people died during the conflict, with atrocities committed on both sides. The victors under Franco went on to execute thousands of people after the war, according to British historian Paul Preston’s book “The Spanish Holocaust.”

Argentina court searches for Franco-era victims in Spain

BUENOS AIRES — Argentina decreed measures on Tuesday designed to help fight drug trafficking, vowing to crack down on smugglers using the country as a transshipment point for Bolivian and Peruvian cocaine destined for the lucrative markets of Europe.

Declarations of a nationwide public security emergency, the country’s new president said the army would be allowed to “identify, warn, intimidate and use force” against drug flights.

“The resolution includes strong control of air space,” said a statement from Mauricio Macri, who won the presidency in November promising to straighten out Argentina’s troubled economy and step up anti-narcotics efforts after what he called years of inaction by his predecessor, Cristina Fernandez.

The measure overhauls Argentina’s border security network, promising efficient coordination of customs and law enforcement.

It came days after the end of a two-week manhunt for three criminals convicted of the 2014 killings.

A worker of the Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA holds a flag with the company logo, during a meeting with Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro outside Miraflores Palace in Caracas on 12 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Argentina’s President Mauricio Macri. PHOTO: REUTERS

drug enforcement officials have called the country’s main grains port city, Rosario, the “Tijuana of Argentina,” comparing it to the Mexican border city used to move cocaine into the United States.

Experts say drugs enter Argentina from Andean cocaine-producing countries to the north. Smuggling routes narrow the closer the shipments get to Rosario, increasing violence among gangs that want to control the final steps toward the shipping lanes of the South Atlantic. — Reuters

Argentina court searches for Franco-era victims in Spain
Congo cobalt mined by children may be in your mobile phone

KINSHASA — Cobalt used in batteries for phones, laptops and electric vehicles could come from mines in Democratic Republic of Congo that use child labour, an Amnesty International report said on Tuesday.

Working with campaign group African Resources Watch (Afrewatch), Amnesty accused technology giants including Apple, Samsung SDI and Sony of lax oversight of the supply of cobalt from mines in Congo to smelters and on to battery-makers.

As a result, consumer products sold across the globe could contain traces of the cobalt mined each year by informal Congolese mines without companies knowing, the report said.

"It is a major paradox of the digital era that some of the world’s richest, most innovative companies are able to market incredibly sophisticated products while being required to show where they source raw materials for their components," Afrewatch executive director Emmanuel Umpula said.

In a statement issued in response to Amnesty’s research, Apple said it had a zero tolerance policy towards child labour and was evaluating ways to improve its identification of labour and environmental risks.

Samsung SDI said it conducted written evaluations and on-site inspections of all suppliers to certify compliance with human rights, labour, ethics, environment and health standards.

Sony did not respond to emailed requests for comment. Millions of Congolese work in informal mining, with rudimentary tools and usually without legal authorisation. They often scavenge in the waste heaps of larger mines.

The report, based on research in Congo’s mining heartland, singled out a smelter in southern Congo owned by Congo Dongfang Mining International (CDM), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Chinese mineral giant Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt Ltd.

The report alleged that CDM did not check the source of the cobalt it purchased from local buying houses, leading to a “high risk” that it came from mines where children and other workers were exposed to hazardous conditions.

The researchers interviewed 17 children at five mines where they said children as young as seven scavenged for rocks containing cobalt. The researchers said they saw workers from the mines queuing to sell cobalt to buying houses that claimed to sell to CDM.

Huayou Cobalt is the largest cobalt chemicals producer in China and sold almost $235 million of the metal in 2013, according to the report.

Once smelted, the cobalt is exported to China before being sold to battery manufacturers who claim to supply top-end electronics companies including Apple, Samsung, Sony and 13 others, the report said.

In a written response quoted in the report, Huayou Cobalt said it had “reasonably presumed that the behaviours of suppliers comply with relevant regulations of the DRC and taken the corresponding social responsibilities”.

A woman who answered the phone at Huayou Cobalt this week identified herself as Ms. Yang told Reuters the information in the report was not true as far as she knew but added that she was not very familiar with CDM’s operations.

The report also said none of the 16 companies linked to the CDM smelter provided enough detail to re-­

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‘X-Files’ reunites Mulder and Scully in search for a truth closer to home

LOS ANGELES — For nine years on Fox’s hit sci-fi show “The X-Files,” FBI agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully searched for an alien truth that was seemingly hidden in the skies. But as they return to screens this week, the truth might be much closer to home.

Starting Sunday, six new episodes will reunite Mulder, played by David Duchovny, and Scully, portrayed by Gillian Anderson. The pair spent nine seasons investigating cases involving government cover-ups, unidentified flying objects and “monsters” stemming from folklore.

From 1993 to 2002 the series followed Mulder, a dogged believer in extraterrestrial existence and unexplained phenomena, and Scully (Gillian Anderson), a skeptic with a medical degree, who tried to debunk her partner’s theories.

The series ended with the two on the run as an alien invasion threatened human existence. As the pair reunite, the year has taken a toll. Scully is a surrogate mother, a human conspiracy. The world, meanwhile, has only served up more unexplained phenomena, said series creator Chris Carter.

“Conspiracy has gone mainstream,” Carter told Reuters.

“‘We’ve got a government who admits to spying on us, so we are in a brave new world of sorts.’

In the new series, an Internet-based conspiracy theorist piques Mulder and Scully’s interest with a young woman who says she has been abducted numerous times. The culprits might not be little green aliens, but rather, a human conspiracy.

“It actually tests Scully’s faith in science being able to explain everything as it always has,” Carter said. “It lights a fire under Mulder. I think that it not only reignites the series, but the quest of the two characters.”

Carter said “The X-Files” could continue as a limited series, pending ratings and Duchovny and Anderson’s respective schedules as both have had success post “X-Files.”


“The idea that the government was conspiring against us was contradictory to what people wanted to believe, which is that the government could protect us,” Carter said.

But in 2016, conspiracy theories still run rife on the Internet and UFOs still perplex people.

“I believe that we are all interested in the supernatural, whether it be faith, or science,” Carter said.—Reuters

Amitabh Bachchan’s ‘TE3N’ to release on 20 May

MUMBAI — Megastar Amitabh Bachchan’s next, “TE3N”, which has been produced by Sujoy Ghosh, is set to hit theatres on 20 May this year.

The film, helmed by Ribhu Dasgupta, also stars Nawazuddin Siddiqui in the lead role.

“TE3N the FILM... Releasing 20 May, 2016... 2 months non-stop shoot and out to the audience... SUPER!” Bachchan tweeted.

Actress Vidya Balan will be seen in a special appearance as a cop in the movie, which will mark the reunion of the “Dirty Picture” star with Sujoy and Nawazuddin with whom she last worked in the 2012 thriller “Kahaani”. Vidya and Bachchan, earlier worked in the 2009 drama “Paa”, where she played mother to the latter, then 67 years, suffering from Progeria.

Just like “Kahaani,” “TE3N” has also been shot in the Kolkata. Dasgupta has previously directed the 2014 TV drama mini-series “Yudh” which starred Big B.—PTI

Lady Gaga to perform tribute to David Bowie at Grammys?

NEW YORK — Pop star Lady Gaga will reportedly perform a tribute to legendary musician David Bowie, who died last week after battling cancer, at the upcoming 2016 Grammy Awards.

Organisers are planning a tribute to Bowie at the upcoming ceremony and are considering Gaga to be part of it, reported the New York Post.

“Lady Gaga is quietly mourning David Bowie and will pay tribute to him at the Grammy Awards,” sources said.

Another source close to the 29-year-old songstress added, “There’s been discussions about a Bowie tribute, but nothing is confirmed yet.”

Since she began working in the music industry years ago, Gaga has made no secret of her love and admiration for Bowie.—PTI

Grammys to air live on West Coast for first time

LOS ANGELES — For the first time ever, this year’s Grammy Awards will be aired live in the Pacific and Mountain time zones.

Stations that choose to participate in the live broadcast will air the 58th annual award show from 5:30 to 9pm EST and 6-9:30pm PST.

Last year’s Grammys received 24.8 million viewers, reported Billboard.

LOS ANGELES — David Bowie at Grammys?

“Amitabh is the perfect choice for ‘TE3N’,” Dasgupta has previously directed the 2009 drama “Paa”, where she starred opposite Bachchan, earlier worked in the movie, which will mark the reunion of the “Dirty Picture” star with Sujoy and Nawazuddin. Dasgupta has also been shot in the Kolkata. Dasgupta has previously directed the 2014 TV drama mini-series “Yudh” which starred Big B.—PTI

‘Sherlock’ season four won’t arrive until 2017

LOS ANGELES — PBS president Paula Kerger has revealed Benedict Cumberbatch-starrer “Sherlock” season four will arrive next year.

“We do have the next ‘Sherlock’ announced, that is coming up about a year from now,” Kerger said.

It was previously announced that the three-episode season 4 would begin production in April.

Addressing the long gap between each season, Kerger said, “As you know, Benedict has got to be somewhat popular since we began our work with him and he very much wants to continue with ‘Sherlock’. As you know, they are produced almost like films, and we’re hoping the next one will be about a year from now. “Sherlock” recently returned with a special titled “Sherlock: The Abominable Bride” that is set in a Victorian period.

The holiday special was also released in more than 500 theaters in the US and UK on 5 and 6 January.—PTI

I’d like to kiss Adele: Rick Ross

LOS ANGELES — Hip-hop superstar Rick Ross admits he is in love with Adele’s new album 25 and he’d like to kiss her.

“I love Adele. When I see her, I may kiss Adele.”

“She speaks for so many people. When I hear her voice, I stop and make that face and say, ‘What is this man?’ I just gaze off into the sky for a second and think creatively,” he said.

And Ross, 39, is keen to hit the studio with the “Hello” singer, adding, “I’ve got a beat ready for her if I ever run across her.”

Adele recently proved her love of hip-hop after joining British comedian and TV host James Corden for a ‘carpool karaoke’ sketch on his US talk show, during which she rapped along to Nicki Minaj’s verse on Kanye West’s 2010 hit “Monster”, which also featured Ross and Jay Z.—PTI
Snow disrupts traffic in central Japan

NAGoya — Heavy snow hit wide areas of the Japanese archipelago yesterday, with traffic disrupted in the Tokai region of central Japan which is usually accustomed to snowfall.

The cities of Nago- ya and Gifu saw up to 9 centimetres of snow. Bullet train services on the Tokaido Shinkansen Line were delayed by up to about 70 minutes, inconveniencing around 110,000 people, according to Central Japan Railway Co.

At Chubu airport in Aschi Prefecture, two international flights bound for Seoul and China’s Tianjin were canceled, the airport operator said.

NRJ Nagoya Station was crowded with passengers affected by the traffic disruption due to the snow.

In the city of Nakatsugawa in Gifu Prefecture, two people in a light truck sustained minor injuries when they collided with an oncoming snowplow, police said.—Kyodo News

Bollywood A listers’ off-beat on screen pairing in 2016

Mumbai — The year 2016 will see Bollywood top stars, from the three Khans — Shah Rukh, Aamir and Salman to Hritihk Roshan and Ayaj Devgn, pair opposite relatively younger and fresh faces on screen.

Shah Rukh, who in the past has given a dream start to the career of actresses like Anushka Sharma and Deepika Padukone, will be seen opposite newcomers in his upcoming two films “Fan” and “Raees”.

Popular face of Pak-istani entertainment industry, Mahira Khan will be making her Bollywood debut opposite the 50-year-old actor in “Raees”.

While in Maneesh Sharma’s “Fan”, Shah Rukh will share screen space with debutantes Waluscha De Sousa and Shriya Piligaonkar, daughter of Marathi actor Sa- chin. Aamir will be seen opposite popular TV actress Sakshi Tanwar in her first film “Dangal”. Mor, best-known for playing the role of Par- vati in the hit TV show, “Kahani Ghara Ghar Ki”, is playing the “Dhoom 3” actor’s wife in the film. Salmon, too, will be seen for the first time opposite actress Anushka Sharma in Yash Raj Film’s “Sultan”.

Anushka previously worked with Shah Rukh and Aamir in “Jab Tak Hai Jaan” and “PK” respectively.

Superstar Akshay Kumar, who has earlier enjoyed successful on-screen pairing with Sa- nakshi Sinha, Katrina Kaif and Priyanka Chopra, will be seen with actress Nim- rat Kaur in “Airlift”.

The film marks Nim- rat’s second full-fledged role after her breakthrough movie “The Lunchbox”.

In filmmaker Ashutosh Gowariker’s next “Mohenjo-Daro”, Hritihk will share screen space with former beauty pageant contestant Pooja Hegde, who makes her Bollywood debut with the period drama.

This will be the second time the “Bang Bang!” star will be paired with a new face after his own debut “Kaho Na… Pyar Hai!” which also marked the Bollywood in- nings of actress Ameesha Patel.

Grand-niece of legen- dary actor Dilip Kumar and Saira Banu, Sayesha Saigal, will be paired opposite Ajay in his much-ambitious Diwa- li-release “Shivay”.

Another Khan to be seen with a new female face will be actor Irrfan Khan. The “Tamzar” actor will be playing husband to Iranian-French actress Golshifteh Farahani in Anup Singh’s “The song of Scorpions”—PTI

Takiguchi, Motoya share Akutagawa award, Aoyama wins Naoki Prize

TOKYO — Novelists Yusho Takiguchi and Yukiko Motoya have jointly won the presti- gious Akutagawa Prize for emerging authors, while Bumpei Aoyama has won the Naoki Prize for popular fiction, the selection com- mittee said Tuesday.

Takiguchi, a 33-year- old native of Tokyo, won the 154th prize for his work “Shindeinai Mono” (“Those who Are Not Dead”), about a dead man’s large group of relatives remembering him at his wake.

Motoya, a 36-year-old playwright and theater pro- ducer hailing from central Japan’s Ishikawa Prefecture, won with “Ittai Konin Tan” (“Tales of Marriage to a Different Sort”). The humor- ous work describes a married couple whose fac- es come to resemble each other.

Motoya had been nominated for the prize three times in the past.

Aoyama — a 67-year- old native of Yokohama near Tokyo, who began writing historical fiction in his 60s — was awarded the Naoki Prize for his work “Tsuma o Metoreba” (“Taking a Wife”). A collection of stories depicting a cross-section of Japanese society in the Edo period, the awards will be presented at a ceremony in Tokyo in late February, with each carrying 1 mil- lion yen ($8,500) in prize money.

The Akutagawa Prize was founded in 1935 in memory of renowned Japa- nese novelist Ryunosuke Akutagawa, while the Na- oki award, also created in 1935, is named after pop- ular writer Soseki Negi.

Nominations for both prizes are received twice yearly.—Kyodo News

Novelists Yukiko Motoya (C) and Yusho Takiguchi (R), winners of the Akutagawa Prize for up-and-coming authors, and Bumpei Aoyama, winner of the Naoki Prize for popular fiction, hold up their award-winning works while posing for a photo at a hotel in Tokyo on 19 January 2016. The awards will be presented at a ceremony in Tokyo in late February.

Prime Time
(11:00 Am-03:00 Pm)-Wednesday repeat (07:00 Am-11:00 Am)
(03:00 Pm - 07:00 Pm) - Today repeat (07:00 Am - 11:00 Am)

(21-1-2016 07:00 am – 22-1-2016 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh
07:03 Am News
07:26 Am Unique Pattern Of Myanmar A Trend Of ChitTraditonal Dress
08:03 Am News
08:26 Am Exquisite Myanmar Silk
08:45 Am Famous Pagodas of Sagaing
08:53 Am Young Artist Maw Thu Du Nu
09:03 Am News
09:26 Am The Art of Making Glaze Ware
09:44 Am … Changes
10:03 Am News
10:27 Am Travelogue: A Tour in Korea (Ep-4)
10:39 Am On the River

Entertainment Channel
(21-1-2016, Thursday)
6:00 pm • TV Drama Series
6:45 pm • Musical Programme
7:05 pm • TV Drama Series
7:45 pm • TV Drama Series
8:25 pm • TV Drama Series
9:05 pm • TV Drama Series
9:45 pm • TV Drama Series
10:25 pm • TV Drama Series

From 21.1.2016 (Thursday) 06:00 Pm To 22.1.2016 (Friday) 06:00 Pm
This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.
LONDON — Aston Villa forgot their Premier League woes and moved into the fourth round of the FA Cup with an unconvincing 2-0 win over fourth tier Wycombe Wanderers in their third round replay at Villa Park on Tuesday. A 75th minute header from Ciaran Clark and a last minute strike from Idrissa Gueye settled the tie as Villa, beaten finalists last season but currently bottom of the Premier League, won for only the fourth time this season to set up a home meeting with Manchester City. West Bromwich Albion, the only other Premier League team in action, were also made to battle for victory over lower league opposition, seeing off Championship (second tier) strugglers Bristol City 1-0 at Ashton Gate. The home side, who sacked manager Steve Cotterill last week, kept the Baggies out until the 52nd minute when Venezuela international Salomon Rondon, West Brom’s record 12.0 million pounds ($17.00 million) signing, trapped the ball on his chest before sweeping it home. West Brom will face third tier Peterborough United at home in the next round. Luke Villa, deb-ridden Bolton Wanderers are another club whose glory days seem long gone but they also enjoyed a much-needed win. Four-times FA Cup winners Bolton, struggling at the bottom of the Championship and facing a fight for survival with debts of 172.9 million pounds, won their replay against minor league Eastleigh 3-2 at the Macron Stadium. Eastleigh, who play in the fifth tier National League, gave Bolton an early scare when they took the lead after 11 minutes through Gary Madine and Dean Mostey just before half-time. —Reuters

Serena slams Hsieh to march into third round

MELBOURNE — Defending champion Serena Williams ramped up her bid for a 22nd grand slam title with a dominant 6-1, 6-2 win over unseeded Taiwanese Hsieh Su-wei to charge into the Australian Open third round yesterday.

The top seed had to survive a tough opening match against Italian Camila Giorgi but destroyed the 90th-ranked Hsieh in exactly one hour in glorious sunshine at Rod Laver Arena. Hsieh, a two-time grand slam doubles champion, prised three break points but the American saved them all and closed out the match with her seventh ace.

“I think I was really focussed and that first round really helped me because I was really just fighting,” world number one Williams told reporters after setting up a third-round clash against 18-year-old Russian Dar’ia Kasatkina.

“I really gave a big effort there. Today again, I just wanted to stay focussed for the whole time. I don’t think I made that many errors today. Something I was hopefully trying to get back into. And I moved much better today, so slowly but surely, feeling a little bit better.” Williams pulled out of the lead-up Hopman Cup midway through her first match with knee trouble but looked untroubled as she burned around the court to fire 26 winners past the Taiwanese. She was particularly pleased with her scramble for a winner around the net, which she thought was the first of her career, but poured cold water on the idea of pulling off an a between-the-legs trick shot in subsequent matches.

—Reuters

Myanmar chess players booked for HD Bank Cup

SELECTED chess players from Myanmar are set to take part in the 6th HD Bank Cup International Open Chess Tournament 2016 in Viet Nam, according to the Myanmar Chess Federation on Tuesday. Win Zaw Tun and Nay Oo Kyaw Tun, who are International Masters, and Khin Ko and Sithu will be competing in the tournament, said the MCF.

“We hope for good results in the tournament as our players are well experienced and they have enough time to prepare,” U Myo Zaw Min of the MCF said. According to the MCF, Win Zaw Tun beat international grandmasters and stood first in the Myanmar International Open Chess Tournament 2015. Likewise, other Myanmar chess players did well in the tournament Myanmar hosted. Chess players from ASEAN countries are also set to compete in the tournament set for eight days from July 7 to 14 March in Ho Chi Minh City of Viet Nam. — Ko Moe

Sharapova armed and dangerous at Melbourne Park

MELBOURNE — Maria Sharapova declared herself free from the worry of a forearm injury after charging into the Australian Open third round yesterday.

The fifth seeded Russian had to pull out of the lead-up Brisbane International with a sore left forearm but was in full flight in a 6-2, 6-1 rout of unseeded Belarusian Aliaksandra Sasnovich, the early match at the Rod Laver Arena.

“Yeah, I feel pretty good. I felt I was more confident with my left hand today,” Sharapova, runner-up last year to Serena Williams, told reporters.

“That’s always something that — especially when it’s like in the hand-wrist area — it’s in the back of your mind even though you’re feeling it.”

“I felt really good and confident today about it.”

Long a baseline blaster rather than an all-court player with a delicate touch, the five-times grand slam champion had enough comfort against Sasnovich to launch a few drop-shots from the baseline, with mixed results.

Sharapova said she had been working on mixing up her game, which some pundits have seen as too one-dimensional to beat top seed Williams, who has long dominated the Russian.

“When I’m aggressive and I have depth on my shots, it’s just good to have that variety to bring (players) in, to move forward myself,” said Sharapova, who next faces American Lauren Davis.

“I mean, I had a couple of good (drop-shots), I had a couple of really crappy ones. I’d say it was pretty mediocre today.”

“It’s actually something that I had to add, because I was getting really frustrated losing to my hitting partner all the time.”

“He just stood so far back behind the baseline, I was like, just can’t handle him beating me so often. “I have to just change things around. That’s kind of when I started getting into that a little bit.” “He was a little surprised (laughed). But it started working, so that was good.”

— Reuters