MONKEYS, TIGERS-OH MY!

Hukawng Valley wildlife survey delayed

A survey on tigers and monkeys in the Hukawng Valley in northern Myanmar has been delayed for security purposes, despite plans for its resumption early this year.

“We have a plan to conduct the survey, but cannot say when we will start it,” said an official from the Wildlife Conservation Society (Myanmar) on condition of anonymity.

“We cannot say the number of the endangered species in the Hukawng Valley because we have not yet entered the forest since 2011, he added.

The number of the tigers and other endangered species are expected to have fluctuated since 2011, the year the last survey was taken, because human-made paths into the forest have been discovered, he said.

According to a report by the Wildlife Conservation Society released in October 2010, only 50 tigers remain in the Hukawng Valley.

Gold mining in the Hukawng Valley Tiger Reserve, the

See page 2 >>

Hukawng Valley in northern Myanmar, home to endangered species including tigers and monkeys. Credit: WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY (MYANMAR)

Media indispensable for nation-building:
C-in-C Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing

MEDIA are indispensable for the nation, particularly at a time when the nation is being built anew, said Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing during a meeting with members of the Myanmar Media Council, led by Chairman U Khin Maung Lay at the Bayinnaung Guest House in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

“Media can contribute effective activities toward building the nation,” the senior general said.

“Media professionals are urged to make the public aware of democratic practices.”

“The cessation of armed conflicts is of vital importance to peace and development,” he said.

“The Tatmadaw, on its part, will exert effort to achieve eternal peace as well as to help the government and the parliament ensure the rule of law. In this function, media professionals are needed to report on the events in a positive manner,” the senior general said.

The Myanmar Media Council was formed by 27 members on 11 November 2015.—Myanmar News Agency
Landslide in Mayangon Tp kills three

A LANDSLIDE at a monastery in Mayangon Township yesterday left three people dead.

The incident occurred around 9:45am when six workers were digging around a 25-foot high earthen wall in preparation for the construction of a retaining wall.

The three victims have been confirmed as Aye Min, 34; Zaw Min Oo, 24; and Kyi Gyi, 35.

“Once we got the information, we went there and carried out an evacuation together with firemen and police with the use of a backhoe. We discovered three bodies,” said U Kyaw Zaw, the head of Yangon Region’s East District Red Cross Society.

“The deadly tragedy happened because the workers have no experience in this kind of work, and there are few worksite safety measures in place,” said U Kyaw Ye Aung, a construction expert.

The local police station is investigating the tragedy.

Work began at the site on 4 January.

The last deadly landslide in Mayangon Township occurred in 1992, according to residents.—Zaw Gyi (Panita)

Hukawng Valley wildlife ...

>> from page 1

World’s largest tiger reserve, is blamed for devastating the tigers’ habitat. The reserve is home to 35 species of mammals, such as the Indochinese tiger, Indochinese leopard, Indian elephant and bears and monkeys; over 370 species of birds; 46 species of frogs; 37 species of fresh water fish; four species of turtle; many species of butterfly and 13,500 plant species.

The Hukawng Valley Tiger Reserve covers 21,890 square kilometres. The Myanmar government has also designated 6,500 square kilometres of the valley as a protected forest reserve.

Myanmar is home to a rich variety of habitats and ecosystems, including 14 terrestrial eco-regions supporting 233 globally threatened species.

Among those species are 37 that are critically endangered and 65 that are endangered. The country contains large expanses of species-rich and globally threatened ecosystems, such as lowland tropical forests and mangrove ecosystems, which are critically threatened elsewhere in the region.

Myanmar Scouting takes 2nd step for revival

A WORKSHOP on scouting in Myanmar was held yesterday, taking a second step in development of Scouting in the country.

In his opening remarks at the National Strategic Planning Workshop in Yangon, S Prassana Shrivastava, Director-WSB/Asia-Pacific Support Center, said the revival of Scouting in Myanmar will establish a strong movement and the young people will enjoy the Scouting program availing themselves the opportunity of all round development that will lead them in adulthood as a responsible citizen contributing to the development of local, national and international societies.

Myanmar Scouts was one of the founding members of the Scout Organization of Asia-Pacific Region in 1956.

Following the workshop, there will be a program development workshop from 31 January to 5 February.—Ko Latt (MNA)
The World Buddhist Peace Conference concludes

The following is the concluding remarks by Sitagu Sayadaw Dr. Ashin Nanissara, Chancellor of Sitagu International Buddhist Academy

OUR Sitagu International Buddhist Academy World Buddhist Peace Conference is nearing an end.

This great and grand conference was an enormous success thanks to the collective efforts and invaluable contribution of you: keynote speakers, distinguished speakers from different faiths, leading members of the Buddhist Sangha, eminent scholars and panelists, and enthusiastic participants. All have worked towards global peace and security during this three-day conference. I would particularly like to

thank Venerable Dhamasami, Venerable Sugandhiko, Venerable Kumara and Venerable Dhammapiya for organizing and moderating the conference.

I would like to thank all of the members of the organizing committee, working committee, and especially to all of the donors and volunteers for their countless hours of service.

To each and every one of you, I express my heartfelt thanks to you. Without you none of this would be possible.

Over 200 representatives from 51 countries were represented here and many of you traveled great distances from around the world to attend, some as far as the Americas and Africa.

Please know that Sitagu International Buddhist Academy along with Sitagu International Buddhist Missionary Association exerted an all-out effort to ensure that this special gathering was a success. I hope we met your needs and exceeded your expectations.

According to the Buddha, as living beings have experienced countless number of past lives and will face the same occurrence until we reach Nirvana. In this journey of lives, we must have been related to each other because of our Kammic connection. It is this same connection that leads to us being gathered here today in this “abode of holy recluses” - Sagaing Hills.

We’ve made great strides forward, 62 messages and papers were presented at this conference, along with one panel discussion. Despite different presentations on different perspectives, all the papers converge on an unique aim to find a common platform and common ground to maintain world peace and security.

We have to work together a lot more in the future and I’m confident that frequent discussions and meetings of this kind will bring us better results in our collaborative efforts towards the prevalence of peace in the world.

Working with this goal in mind, I suggest that the next conference be organized at a place and time convenient to all.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my special thanks to the religious leaders from different faiths that attended the conference: Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islam and Jewish particularly, to the Islamic leaders from Iran for their enthusiastic participation and speech. Even though we have different faiths, I firmly believe that we are walking towards our common goal of peaceful co-existence in ensuring peace and security in the world.

We had two extraordinary events during this conference.

First, I would like to thank H.E. Dr. Ninjika Thueksey Rinpoche and the 67 Tibetan Buddhist monks that brought the Buddha’s relics from Ladakh, India for display at Sitagu, and additionally in Sagaing and Mandalay.

Secondly, I would like to thank Venerable PhraRommameth, the Buddhist Minister for the Overseas Thailand Missionary Office for granting us to be the first ASEAN country to display the Ancient Ghandharan Buddhist Manuscript, which is on loan from the Schoyen Institute in Norway. This manuscript is on display in the front near the Buddha.

Tomorrow, we have arranged for you to travel to Bagan – the cradle of Buddhism of Myanmar. With more than 2,000 temples located in 16 square miles, it is the richest archaeological site in Southeast Asia. Bagan flourished from the 11th-13th century AD and you will see the best of Myanmar’s architecture, including sculptures and mural paintings.

Later in the day you’ll travel to either Mandalay or Yangon. For those going to Yangon, in the evening you will visit the majestic Shwedagon Pagoda, Myanmar’s unique religious symbol. After returning to your respective hotels, you will have time to prepare for your journey home.

I thank each of you and look forward to our meeting again soon to discuss the actions taken since this meeting for world peace and security.

A compilation of your papers will remain on file at Sitagu Buddhist Academy’s library as a reference for the students.

Personally, I’m very pleased that your ardent participation, along with noble spirit of universal brotherhood, will benefit endeavors for world peace and stability.

Use energy-efficient appliances to save energy and money

Honey Win

ENERGY management is important for making the best use of it - reducing consumption while making sure there is enough to satisfy all the needs of the country, said an official from the Ministry of Industry.

“The onus is on all of us to save energy as everyone uses energy every day for various purposes,” Daw Naing Naing Lin, director of the energy saving department of the ministry.

Myanmar has adopted an energy saving goal to reduce energy consumption by 12 per cent by 2020, 16 per cent by 2025 and 20 per cent by 2030.

The goal is aimed at promoting energy efficiency and energy conservation, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emission and contributing towards environmental conservation.

On energy management, the official said that ways and means for effective utilisation of energy are needed as just turning off the lights is not the best way to save energy.

Myanmar formed its National Energy Management Committee in January 2013 to promote energy efficiency through the implementation of short and long term plans.

An energy saving department was also formed under the Ministry of Industry to boost the implementation process for meeting the target of reducing energy consumption annually in the country.

The department plans to explore effective uses of energy, utilisation of renewable energy resources and alternative electricity usage to reduce energy consumption, power waste and household monthly electric bills.

The department also called for the use of energy-saving electrical appliances that have energy labels and stats on them and renewable energy resources such as wind, solar, hydro and other sources for sustainable energy development in the country.

According to the department technology, experts and legal measures are weak in Myanmar to develop energy efficiency.

Four sectors — industrial, residential, commercial and public building — are categorised in the implementation of ensuring the saving of energy, said the department.

As Myanmar lacks energy auditors and energy managers, we need to learn from experts through training courses, said Daw Naing Naing Lin.

Among ASEAN countries, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia are the only three countries that have no rules and regulations on energy efficiency and energy conservation, she added.

She emphasised the importance of setting energy efficiency ratios and minimum energy performance on electrical appliances in accordance with the law, stressing the need to reduce tax on energy-efficient appliances and to increase tax on appliances that have high energy consumption.

According to the department, the Ministry of Industry is conducting training courses on energy efficiency in Yangon and Mandalay in cooperation with United Nations Industrial Development Organisation.

Plans are underway to heighten energy efficiency awareness among the public in regions and states.

The director called for a switch from using tungsten light bulbs that have 40W to 60W to 12W CFL bulb or 8W LED bulbs to reduce energy consumption, lower household electricity bills and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.
Yangon Zoological Garden celebrates 110th anniversary

THE Yangon Zoological Garden, the oldest and second-largest zoo in Myanmar, celebrated its 110th anniversary of its founding on 25 January this year.

To mark the occasion, a festival was held in the compound of the garden, located on 61 acres of land near Kandawgyi Lake.

The three-day event offers a wide range of entertainment programmes, including food stalls, puppet shows, circus and music performances, chinlone demonstrations and elephant dance.

The zoological garden is open from 8am to 6pm daily, and admission fees are K1,000 per adult, K500 per child and K3,000 per foreign visitor.

With a collection of 46 species of mammals, 69 species of birds and 18 species of reptiles, the zoo draws thousands of visitors annually.

The zoo was founded with the aim of offering students and members of the public to learn about different kinds of animals, as well as plants.

A museum of natural history, an aquarium and an amusement park were also opened for public observation within the compound of the garden.—Ko Ko Nay

Green gram farmers in Nyaung U face water shortage

FARMERS in some villages of Nyaung U Township, Mandalay Region, are badly in need of water to grow green gram, though they expect to receive water from nearby river pump projects, according to local farmers.

“Summer green gram is usually grown during the waxing of Tabuang, the 12th month of Myanmar calendar,” one farmer said. “We hope the authorities supply agricultural water to our farmlands as soon as possible.”

One local woman said officials pledged to supply water from the Thukaungtal River Pump through eight canals this year, but the farmers have yet to receive the water.

Many farmers from Thukaungtal, Ahtetnyint, Aouknyint and Yansein villages rely on commercial green gram cultivation for their livelihood.—Kyaw Htay

Illegal timber seized in Mon State

ILLEGAL teak weighing over one tonne was found by police in two taxi cars near Mokepalin Village in Mokpalin Village in Kyaukhto, Mon State, on Friday.

A combined team involving members of local police and staff from the Forest Department searched the two vehicles near the Sittaung New Bridge road in Mokpalin Village.

Those vehicles were on route from Thagaya, Bago Region, to Kyaihto. They were driven by Hlwan Moe Aung and Than Zaw Oo. Both drivers are registered residents of Yangon.

The team found 0.6776 tonnes of timber in one vehicle and 0.5968 tonnes in the other vehicle. —Ye Khaung Oo

Rice prices rise in Bago

FARMERS in Phyu Township, Bago Region, have set high prices for rice, even though a large volume of new monsoon rice is now entering the market, according to one farmer.

The Thukka-2, Sinthukha and Manawtine rice strains doubled this year, trading at around K60,000 ($US461.17) per 100 baskets.

Farmers expect to make record earnings from their current rice stocks.

“Farmers will be able make a profit by selling their stocks this year,” said a farmer from the eastern part of Phyu Township. “We charged just K500,000 for 100 baskets last year.”

Farmers will be able to make a profit by selling their stocks this year. —Ye Kyaw Htay

Gun, drugs seized in Dawei

AUTHORITIES investigated several drug cases over the last two days, arresting nearly ten suspects found in possession gun, drugs and related substances.

Acting on a tip-off, police searched a house owned by Thita Naing in Dawei Township, Taninthayar Region, and discovered a loaded gun, 1,436 yaba pills, K117,000 ($US99.93) and four motorcycles from Kay Thi Soe, the wife of the homeowner, together with other three men. Police arrested them on Wednesday.

On the same day, an anti-drug squad also searched a highway bus en route from Yangon to Sittwe and arrested Kyaw Min who was found in possession of 509,960 yaba pills, K550,000 ($US422.74) and a handset.

On 21 January, local police seized a several yaba pills and over 25 kilos of marijuana from drug dealers in Mingaladon Township, Yangon. All people involved in these cases were charged under the Anti-Drug Law.—Myanmar Police Force

Two men killed in hit-and-run accident

A CAR collided with a motorbike between mile posts No. 145/7 and No. 146/0 on the Yangon-Mandalay highway, leaving two people dead.

The collision which occurred on Saturday at around 3am in Phyu Township, Bago Region, between mile posts No. 145/7 and No. 146/0 on the Yangon-Mandalay highway, left a 19-year-old Poe Ei Thein, from Wedaung Village in Phyu Township, deceased.

She is receiving care at a hospital. Truck driver Hsan Myo Oo, 37, from Aungchantha Street in Magway Region, was found guilty of careless driving by the Kyayaw Police Station.—Ko Lwin (Swa)

Crime News

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BANGKOK — A piece of suspected plane wreckage found off the east coast of southern Thailand on Saturday was unlikely to belong to Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 which vanished nearly two years ago, said aviation experts and Thai officials.

A large piece of curved metal washed ashore in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, Tanyapat Paththongkun, head of Pak Phanang district, told Reuters. Villagers reported it to authorities for identification, he said.

"Villagers found the wreckage, measuring about 2 metres wide and 3 metres long (6.6 by 9.8 feet)," he said.

The find fuelled speculation in the Thai media that the debris could belong to MH370, which disappeared with 239 people on board during a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing in March 2014. A piece of the plane washed up on the French island of Reunion in July 2015 but no further trace has been found.

Geologists said that while powerful currents sweeping the Indian Ocean could deposit debris thousands of kilometres away, wreckage was extremely unlikely to have drifted across the equator into the northern hemisphere.

The location of the debris in Thailand "would appear to be inconsistent with the drift models that appeared when MH370’s flaperon was discovered in Reunion last July," said Greg Waldron, Asia Managing Editor at Flight Global, an industry publication.

"The markings, engineering, and tooling apparent in this debris strongly suggest that it is aero space related," said Waldron. "It will need to be carefully examined, however, to determine it’s exact origin.

Other possible sources of aerospace debris included the launching of space rockets by India eastwards over the Bay of Bengal, he said.

There has been no official confirmation from Thailand that the wreckage belongs even to a plane, never mind the missing Malaysian jet.

"Personally, I don’t think it’s MH370," Thai government spokesman Sansern Kaewkamnerd told Reuters.

District head Paththongkun said the debris "could have been under the sea for no more than a year, judging from barnacles on it."

A spokesman for the Joint Agency Coordination Centre, the Canberra-based authority which is overseeing the international search for MH370, told Reuters it was "awaiting results of the official examination of the material."

The Malaysian transport ministry is in contact with Thai authorities to verify the debris, a ministry spokesman said.

Investigators believe someone may have deliberately switched off MH370’s transponder before diverting it thousands of miles off course. Most of the passengers were Chinese.

"Cluttering uncertainty surrounding its fate has tormented the families of those on board. Some have said even the discovery of debris could still not solve the mystery.

The fragment found in Thailand "just doesn’t look like aircraft fuselage," aviation expert Geoffrey Thomas told Reuters from near Perth.

"It just doesn’t make any sense," he said. "I don’t think there’s any connection with MH370 whatsoever."—Reuters

Thousands of Malaysians rally against TPP ahead of parliament vote

KUALA LUMPUR — Thousands of Malaysians staged a rally in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday to protest against the Trans-Pacific Partnership pact as the country’s parliament was set to debate and vote on the multilateral agreement next week.

The rally was mainly backed by opposition parties, especially the Pan Islamic Party, or PAS, and Bantah TPPA, a coalition of nearly 60 nongovernmental organisations that are against the TPP accord.

Their contentions range from anticipated increases in medicine prices to erosion of sovereignty and further economic displacement of workers.

Protesters marched from various gathering points chanting “Bantah TPP” (oppose the TPP) or “Hancur TPP” (destroy the TPP) before congregating at a field known as Padang Merbok in the city centre.

Online news daily Malaysia kini quoted the police as putting the number of protesters at between 5,000 and 7,000. Addressing the crowd at Padang Merbok, a PAS leader Nuuruddin Hassan said the TPP agreement could impact small businesses, especially those run by ethnic Malays.

"We are worried the TPPA will disrupt the country. It will impact small businesses. Bumiputra businesses will not be able to compete," online daily, the Malaysian Insider, quoted him as saying.

Bumiputra, literally meaning “prince of soil,” refers mainly to the ethnic Malays who make up some 60 per cent of the country’s population of 29 million and who enjoy special privileges through the state affirmative action policy due to the perception that they are particularly sensitive to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak whose party, the United Malays National Organisation, depends heavily on the Malaysia vote bank.

One of the chief critics of the TPP deal is former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad who is well known for his strident anti-U.S. stance. He views the TPP as a tool by the United States to colonize small nations like Malaysia.

Mahathir seized on the remarks made last week by Internation Trade and Industry Minister Mustapa Mohamad that 26 laws would have to be amended over the next two years to comply with TPP requirements, as a sign that Malaysia is “submitting to foreign forces.”

“Malaysia is not exactly like the other members of the TPP. We have many sensitivities because of our racial mix, our economic disparities, our poverty rates and our low levels of incomes. To accept all the economic, political and social problems certain policies and laws must be put in place,” Mahathir recently wrote in his widely followed blog.

“I have no doubt the rubber-stamp parliament will approve the TPP. That in itself is evidence that we are preparing to submit to foreign forces and give up the Merdeka (independence) that our former leaders had fought so hard for,” he added.

The lower house is scheduled for a special sitting Tuesday and Wednesday to debate and vote on the TPP accord. The Senate will deliberate on the matter Thursday.

With the ruling National Front coalition dominating both houses, the agreement is expected to sail through in time for its signing on 4 February in Auckland, New Zealand, by the 12 member countries.

The TPP agreement involves Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, United States and Viet Nam, which together account for about a third of global economic output.—Kyodo News
NEW DELHI — Vijay Goel, an Indian parliamentarian belonging to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, has successfully restored a 200-year-old three-story crumbling structure in old Delhi opposite the historic Red Fort.

Situating just behind the famous Jama Masjid mosque and between two temples, the building is now ready to showcase India’s traditional architecture, dance forms, art and culture, paintings and antiques — not least the Indian cuisines — both street food and complete meals — that this part of Delhi is famous for.

The structure is locally known as a “haveli” — a mansion of a unique residential architectural style having historical and cultural heritage with different spaces for men and women.

Goel’s successful endeavor may perhaps pave the way for the restoration of havelis to their former glory of the Mughal Empire (1526-1858), which the newer generations can only hear of today.

“My passion for cultural heritage, restoration of old structures and preparing them for the next generations led me to begin this haveli’s restoration six years ago,” said Goel, 62.

“Once I had bought it, around 10 years ago, I thought of restoring it because of its strategic location right in the center of old Delhi’s Chandni Chowk, in the Dharanpura area, overseeing many of the important buildings around.”

He added that the structure was in such a bad condition that he initially had no idea how to restore or renew it, and the government provided no assistance.

“Everyone likes to talk about cultural heritage and restoration work, but no one likes doing it,” he said.

Describing his approach, he said the restoration began with the removal of tons of debris lying on the rooftop so as to lessen the weight on the structure.

“Restoring the basic frame of the structure was most important for us, and we successfully gave it a face-lift using modern engineering techniques with the help of specialised masons,” he said. Finding the right kind of material for carrying out the restoration work was not an easy task for Goel and his son Siddhant.

“After much legwork we procured materials from different cities like Jaipur, Sikandra, Dholpur (all in Rajasthan state), Agra and Moradabad (in Uttar Pradesh state),” said Siddhant.

In the restored haveli, there is an intricate use of stone brackets, marble inlays, multifoliated arched gateways, arches, carved sandstone facades and wooden doorways.

It has 13 rooms for tourists to stay in, two courtyards where old dance forms would be performed, and two restaurants for dining.

“Our plan is to also make it a cultural centre to showcase India’s art and culture, dance forms and the like, and also extend a helping hand to those who want to adopt and restore such old structures in the vicinity,” adds Goel.

The haveli’s design is a confluence of Mughal, Hindu and European architecture, which includes grills, pillars, windows, doors and designs on the ceiling.

Enough care has been taken to give the structure a traditional Indian look.

In particular, the original “jharokha” bricks can be seen on the walls inside one of the restaurants which has been aptly named after the specially crafted red bricks.

In order to attract foreign tourists, the surroundings of the haveli have also been spruced up, with tons of open wiring hanging above the streets being laid underground, and a proper sewage system replacing the open drains of old.

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Wife of missing Hong Kong bookseller says reunited with husband in China

HONG KONG — The wife of one of five missing Hong Kong booksellers said she met with her husband in China, according to a statement released by the Hong Kong police yesterday amid growing diplomatic pressure on Chinese authorities to clarify the disappearances of the men who were all linked to a publisher that was reportedly planning a new book on the private life of Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Lee Bo, 63, an owner of a publisher and bookshop specialising in books critical of China’s Communist Party leaders, vanished in late December amid rising in books critical of China’s leadership.

Lee’s wife, Sophie Choi, told police that she had met with her husband at a guesthouse in China on Saturday and that he was healthy and in good spirits.

Lee, who has dual Hong Kong and British citizenship, surfaced on Saturday, meeting wife at a guesthouse in mainland China, the Hong Kong police said in a statement issued after midnight yesterday.

His wife, Sophie Choi, told police that she had met with her husband at a guesthouse in China on Saturday and that he was healthy and in good spirits.

The statement cited Lee’s wife as saying he was “assisting in an investigation in the capacity of a witness,” though she didn’t give specifics on the location nor the nature of the investigation, the statement added.

The Hong Kong police said they would continue to probe the case, and would put in a fresh request with police in China’s southern Guangdong Province to arrange a meeting with Lee Bo.

Calls to the mobile phones of Lee and his wife went unanswered.

The disappearances have prompted fears that mainland Chinese authorities may be using shadowy tactics that erode the “one country, two systems” formula under which Hong Kong has been governed since its return to China from British rule in 1997.

One of the missing men, Gui Minhai, a Swedish passport-holder, appeared on Chinese state television last weekend, saying he had voluntarily turned himself in to Chinese authorities over a fatal drink-driving offense more than a decade ago.

So far, Chinese authorities have not responded to multiple requests for comment from Reuters, nor have they made any substantial statements explaining Beijing’s role in the disappearances nor the fate of the men.

Earlier this month, thousands took to the streets of Hong Kong demanding to know whereabouts of the men who were all linked to a publisher that was reportedly planning a new book on the private life of Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

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School execs held, allegedly abet foreign students to work illegally

FUKUOKA — A man running a Japanese language school in Fukuoka Prefecture was arrested Saturday for allegedly letting several foreign students work longer than the maximum hours allowed by law, police said.

Susumu Ueno, 57, a top official of the school, Japan International Education Institute in Nogata, the southwestern Japanese prefecture, and two other officials of the school were arrested on suspicion of abetting foreigners’ illegal work in violation of the immigration law.

Four Vietnamese students aged from 19 to 24 were also arrested.

It is rare for police to pursue criminal charges against language school officials in relation to foreign students’ illegally long work hours, police sources said.

Foreign students with a work permit from the Immigration Bureau can work up to 28 hours a week, but the police believe the school’s officials found two or more part-time jobs for each of those students so their total work hours exceeded those allowed by law.

The school officials are suspected of trying to cover up the students’ illegal work by keeping their weekly work hours at each workplace at 28 hours or shorter.

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A 200-year-old building belonging to India’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party is pictured in old Delhi on 19 January, 2016. The structure, a “haveli,” which is a historically significant mansion with different spaces for men and women, has recently been restored, and is set to showcase Indian culture, from dance and music to Indian cuisine.

Photo: Kyodo News
Confident Trump says could ‘shoot somebody’ and not lose voters

PELLA, (Iowa) /ANKENY — US Republican front-runner Donald Trump expressed confidence on Saturday that he could push back attempts by his rivals to knock him off his top perch, saying he could stand on New York’s Fifth Avenue “and shoot somebody,” and still not lose voters.

Nine days from the first nominating contest in Iowa, however, it was Republican rival Marco Rubio who won the endorsement Saturday from the Des Moines Register, the state’s biggest and most influential newspaper. On the Democratic side, the Register picked Hillary Clinton.

The endorsements were big developments for both Rubio and Clinton. Rubio, a Florida senator, has been running third behind Trump and Jeb Bush in national polls. Trump’s signature phrase, saying he could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, has become a key campaign theme.

“I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn’t lose any voters,” he said.

Trump has been a difficult target for criticism from his rivals because not all of his supporters are conservatives and many are most interested in his projection of strength, not where he stands on a particular issue.

The latest Reuters-Ipsos tracking poll had Trump pulling in 40.6 per cent support of Republican voters nationally. A CNN/ORC poll has Trump up in Iowa with 37 per cent to 26 per cent for Cruz, who has led in some other Iowa polls.

Trump did not repeat the “shoot somebody” line at a later rally in Pella, while stressing to the crowd there that he would tone down his rhetoric as president.

Cruz responded to Trump at an event in Ankeny, where he picked up the endorsement of conservative firebrand Glenn Beck, a overweight of sorts to Trump’s endorsement by 2008 vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin.

“Listen, I will let Donald speak for himself. I can say I have no intention of shooting anybody in this campaign,” Cruz said.

Beck was more direct.

“There is one thing to have a healthy ego, there is another to give a man who believes those kinds of things, who has a habit of anyone who stands in his way of destruction,” Beck said. “To give that man the full power and scope of the office of the presidency is something we will grow to regret.”

Iowa Republican Senator Chuck Grassley was an introductory speaker at Trump’s Pella event. Grassley did not endorse Trump but repeated Trump’s signature phrase, saying Republicans have a chance to “make America great again.”

During his speech, Trump called Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly biased and said she should not be a moderator at a Fox-hosted Republican debate in Des Moines on Thursday. Kelly’s questioning at an 6 August debate in Cleveland had prompted Trump to unleash a series of insults at her.

There was no indication that Fox planned to remove her as a moderator.

“Megyn Kelly has no conflict of interest. Donald Trump is just trying to build up the audience for Thursday’s debate, for which we thank him,” said a Fox News spokesperson.

The potential for more chaos in what has been a turbulent race on both the Republican and Democratic sides emerged on Saturday with the news that former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg might launch an independent run for president.

A source said part of Bloomberg’s concern was the problem that Clinton is having in defeating Sanders.

“I hope he runs,” Trump told reporters in Pella. At A First In The Nation forum for candidates in Nashua, New Hampshire, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush was notably withering in his criticism of Trump.

He reminded voters of Trump’s dismissal of Senator John McCain as not a hero because he got captured during the Vietnam War. McCain spent 5-1/2 years as a prisoner of war. He was a two-time winner of the New Hampshire primary and the 2012 Republican presidential nominee.

“It is not strong to insult women. It is not a sign of strength when you insult Hispanics. It is not a sign of strength when you say that a POW was a loser because they got caught. John McCain is a hero,” Bush said.—Reuters

Iran considers buying over 100 Boeing planes

TEHRAN — Iran is interested in buying over 100 aircraft from Boeing, deputy transport minister Asghar Fakhrieh Kashan told Reuters at Tehran’s first major post-sanctions gathering of global businesspeople.

Tehran has long said it will need to revamp an aging fleet, hit by a shortage of parts because of trade bans imposed by Washington and other Western countries. World powers last week lifted sanctions against the Islamic Republic in return for Tehran complying with a deal to curb its nuclear ambitions.—Reuters

Beijing to spend 16.5bn yuan for cleaner air in 2016

BEIJING — Beijing will earmark 16.5 billion yuan (about 2.57 billion US dollars) to improve air quality in 2016, sources with the Beijing environment authorities said yesterday.

The funds will be used to cut back on coal use and eliminate outmoded vehicles in the capital.

The average density of PM2.5, airborne particles smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter, in Beijing last year declined by 6.2 per cent year on year, statistics with the Beijing Environment Protection Bureau show.

Beijing aims for a year-on-year drop of 5 per cent in its average PM2.5 reading in 2016.

The city government has promised to remove 200,000 high-emission vehicles from the roads and promote the use of clean energy in 400 villages this year.—Xinhua

Jordan kills 12 infiltrators attempting to cross borders from Syria

AMMAN — Jordanian troops on Saturday killed 12 infiltrators in a foiled attempt to cross from Syria into the kingdom, an army statement said.

Another 24 fled back into Syria after they were shot at by troops with the army confiscating 2 million drug capsules that were left behind, the statement said.

The Jordanian border guards acted under rules of engagement to shoot and kill anyone seeking to infiltrate across 370-km (230-mile) border with Syria.

Jordan says it has tightened controls over its northern border with Syria and officials say the army has thwarted many attempts in recent years by jihadists trying to cross from the kingdom into Syria to join a Sunni Islamist-led insurgency against President Bashar al-Assad.—Reuters
No life is cheap

Kyan Thura

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ternal settlement, or squatting, is a nagging problem in Myanmar that is often overlooked in the rush to urbanization. In recent years, the new townships in the slums. The problem of squatters living in urban areas in the pursuit of higher living standards is the result of poverty and insufficient infra-

structure.

Without reliable infrastructure, people lead productive lives. People would not so readily leave their native towns if their survival and comfort were guaranteed there. It is, therefore, important to acknowledge that removing the squatters by force is not a solution to the problem.

In addition, squatters are not like moths to the flame. They knowingly occupy vacant lands, risking eviction. Analysts agree that squatter settlements seem to have no choice but to hope for the best and prepare for the worst while earning their livings in urban and rural areas. The government, on the other hand, has to balance the public health and safety of the residents with the need to address the problem of urbanization.

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit an article, analysis or reports please email khinmaungaye@hotmail.com with your name and title.

Letter to the Editor

Access to safe drinking water is very important to prevent the outbreak of infectious diseases. Water is also a potential source of contamination. The lack of access to safe drinking water is a major challenge in many parts of the world, especially in conflict- and post-emergency situations. According to the Sphere Project, safe drinking water is available to only 70% of the population in conflict-affected areas.

One way in which disasters can cause or worsen environmental emergencies is through the damage they do to environmental health facilities and services. For example, floods can damage water treatment facilities, power failures, and lead to the disruption of water distribution systems. Disasters can also affect the quality of water. For instance, heavy rains can lead to the contamination of water sources with pollutants. This can result in the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera and typhoid.

One effective strategy is to ensure that emergency response plans include measures to ensure the availability of safe drinking water. This can be achieved through the provision of emergency water supplies, the establishment of water treatment facilities, and the provision of sanitation and hygiene services. It is also important to ensure that emergency response plans include measures to prevent the spread of waterborne diseases.

The effects of disasters on health facilities, services and infrastructure

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Iran’s leader says never trusted the West, seeks closer ties with China

BEIRUT — At least 63 people, including nine children, have died in air strikes believed to be carried out by Russian warplanes on a town in eastern Syria, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said yesterday.

The raids on Khasham near the city of Deir al-Zor on Saturday were among a series of strikes that also hit two other towns in the past 48 hours, killing scores of people. Russian jets have been bombing around Deir al-Zor as Syrian pro-government forces clash with Islamic State fighters, who control most of the province.

The group has besieged remaining government-held areas of the city since last March and last week launched new attacks. Warplanes have also hit Islamic State’s de facto capital of Raqqa over the past two days, killing at least 44 people in the city, the Observatory said, raising its toll from Saturday after many of the wounded died of their injuries. — Reuters

Haiti protesters stoke political crisis while powers seek consensus

PORT-AU-PRINCE — Stone-throwing protesters stoked Haiti’s political crisis on Saturday, a day after they forced the Caribean nation to call off a presidential election and despite calls for consensus from global powers.

Haiti was due to choose a replacement for President Michel Martelly in a runoff vote yesterday, but the two-man race was postponed indefinitely after opposition candidate Jude Celestin refused to participate on alleged fraud that spread anti-government protests and violence nationally.

Martelly says the fraud claims are unfounded but critics believe he unfairly favoured his chosen successor, banana exporter Jovenel Moise, and some are demanding that Haiti, the poorest country in the Western hemispher, start its $100 million election again from scratch.

Striking a defiant note, Moise criticised the election council for postponing a vote he was confident of winning, and said he was ready to stand whenever a new date was set. The United Nations joined the United States and other major powers that had supported the election in denouncing the vote and calling for a negotiated solution that leads to a new vote.

About a thousand protesters snaked through capital Port-au-Prince’s downtown, a district still largely in ruins after a devastating 2010 earthquake. Some threw rocks and burnt tires, others beat a man alleged to be a thief.

Soldiers from Haiti’s UN peacekeeping mission patrolled the streets in armoured vehicles at sundown.

Martelly is due to leave office in two weeks and Haiti may need an interim body to see the country through to the next election, but he and different opposition leaders will struggle to agree on the contours of such an administration.

Haiti has been unable to build a stable democracy since the overthrow of the 1957-1986 dictatorship of the Duvalier family and ensuing military coups and election fraud.

Drawn from the capital’s poorest neighbourhoods, the protesters deeply oppose Martelly’s business-friendly reign, which they say was artificially propped-up by foreign powers.

They believe that with him out the way, there will be a better chance of electing a president who will champion the poor.

“We demand the departure of Martelly before 7 February,” said Voicy Assad, a protest leader and an aide to Moise Jean-Charles, the third-place candidate in the October round who believes he was cheated of victory.

“We want a transitional government to set up an investigation commission that will determine the sincerity of the elections,” Assad said. — Reuters

Iran’s most powerful figure told Chinese President Xi Jinping during a visit Iran wanted to expand ties with “more independent countries,” adding the United States was “not honest” in the fight against terrorism in the region.

“Iranians never trusted the West... That’s why Tehran seeks cooperation with more independent countries (like China),” Khamenei said.

“Iran is the most reliable country in the region for energy since its energy policies will never be affected by foreigners,” Khamenei was quoted by his office website as saying at a meeting with Xi.

Xi is the second leader of a UN Security Council member to visit Tehran since the nuclear deal Iran struck with world powers last year. Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Tehran in November.

Iran emerged from years of economic isolation this month when the United Nations’ nuclear watchdog ruled it had curbed its nuclear programme, clearing the way for the lifting of UN, US, and European Union sanctions.

“Iran and China have agreed to increase trade to $600 billion in the next 10 years,” President Hassan Rouhani said at a news conference with Xi broadcast live on state television.

“Iran and China have agreed on formulating strategic relations (as reflected in a 25-year comprehensive document),” he said.

Iran and China signed 17 accords on Saturday, including on cooperation in nuclear energy and a revival of the ancient Silk Road trade route, known in China as One Belt, One Road.

“China is still heavily dependent on Iran for its energy imports and Russia needs Iran in terms of its new security architecture vision for the Middle East,” said Ellie Gerannmayeh, policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

“Iran plays quite an integral role for both China and Russia’s interests within the region, much more than it does for the Europeans,” Gerannmayeh said.

Khamenei said Iran would never forget Chinese cooperation during the sanctions.

“The China-Iran friendship has stood the test of the vicissitudes of the international landscape,” Xi was quoted as saying by China’s Xinhua news agency.

The Chinese state-backed Global Times newspaper said in an editorial on Saturday that China hoped to improve ties with Iran as part of its sweeping plan to rebuild trade links with Europe and Asia and carve out new marketes for its goods.

“China is of course considering its self interest in strengthening cooperation with Iran, especially at a time when China is in the midst of expending efforts to push forward the One Belt, One Road initiative, Iran is an important fulcrum,” the paper said.

“Haiti, China seek closer ties with Iran, earlier this week it signaled its support for Yemen’s government, which is fighting an Islamic State-allied militia, during Xi’s visit to Saudi Arabia, Iran’s rival for influence in the region.

Tehran is widely credited with convincing Russia to start its military intervention in Syria and join the fight against Islamic State.

“Although China and Russia backed UN sanctions against Iran on its nuclear programme, they were also heavily pushing for special waivers to continue trading with Iran,” Gerannmayeh said.

“Iran had a relationship both politically and economically with China and Russia for the last ten years in ways that it hasn’t had with Europe. So it’s quite natural to see it opening up first to these countries.” — Reuters

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif (R) shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Tehran, Iran on 23 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

DUBAI — Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Saturday called for closer economic and security ties with China, saying Iran had never trusted the West, as the two countries agreed to increase bilateral trade more than 10-fold to $600 billion in the next decade.

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**Oil rips 10 per cent higher as bears race to cash in on crash**

NEW YORK — Oil prices surged 10 per cent on Friday, one of the biggest daily rallies ever, as bearish traders who had taken out record short positions scrambled to close them, betting the market’s long rout may finally be over.

The onset of a massive snowstorm on the US East Coast sent US heating oil HOC1 up more than 10 per cent, helping fuel a 15 per cent gain in crude prices over two days that has reversed nearly half of the relentless, fund-driven sell-off that had pushed crude below $30 a barrel for the first time in 12 years.

“Oil rips 10 per cent higher as bears race to cash in on crash” — Reuters

**As China cuts green car subsidies, automakers’ electric dreams differ**

BEIJING — China will maintain plans to gradually phase out subsidies for green energy vehicles until they are fully eliminated in 2021 and allow the market to determine the direction of green car development, Finance Minister Lou Jiwei said on Saturday.

But auto executives speaking alongside Lou at an industry conference in Beijing laid out differing visions as to which technology the market will favor: Tesla-style pure electrics or plug-in hybrid cars currently favored by Volkswagen AG and others.

Green car sales more than quadrupled in 2015 with the market finally taking off after years of subsidies and preferential government activity, leading China to surpass the United States to become the world’s largest market for electric cars.

The government sees new energy vehicles, a catch-all for pure electric, hybrid and fuel cell cars, as a means for China’s auto industry to catch up to foreign competition while also combating pollution that chokes many urban areas.

Lou reiterated plans to cut subsidies by 20 per cent over the next two years and 40 per cent by 2019-2020, eliminating them altogether after 2021 so that the industry does not grow dependent on them.

Instead, Lou said China should pursue market-based policies. He praised California’s emissions policy, under which Tesla can generate environmental credits from its emissions-free vehicles and then sell the credits to other companies.

Lou said the market economy needed to play a critical role in the success of the Silicon Valley carmaker.

“This was an example to learn from, he said. China has yet to institute a similar system.” — Reuters

**VERIZON EYES BRANDS, CONTENT FOR GO90 SPONSORED VIDEO**

NEW YORK — Verizon Communications Inc (VZ.N) is in talks with advertisers and content makers to offer sponsored video, such as sports games and music concerts, to users of its mobile-video service go90 at some time in the future, CFO Fran Shammo told Reuters. Sponsored data is like a future, CFO Fran Shammo told Verizon’s go90 at some time in the future, CFO Fran Shammo told Verizon’s go90 at some time in the future.

He did not provide details on discussions with potential sponsors and content makers or a timeframe on when sponsored content will begin appearing on go90.

Verizon launched its go90 mobile video app in October and has announced content partners such as the National Football League, the National Basketball Association, AwesomenessTV, the Food Network and Vice Media. Since acquiring AOL Inc and its advertising technology for $4.4 billion in June, Verizon executives have said that its ad-supported go90 model will include a combination of highly targeted commercials, content sponsorships, exclusive content and pay-per-view live concerts and sporting events.

Sponsored content is the “basis of the go90 model,” Shammo said. When asked if companies such as the National Football League could partner with Verizon’s go90 to bring advertisers and brands to sponsor content, Shammo said “we’re open to anything.” — Reuters

**TOYKO — Japan’s Toshiba Corp plans to sell part of its chip operations**

TOKYO — Japan’s Toshiba Corp plans to sell part of its chip business as it aims to recover from a $1.3 billion accounting scandal, three people familiar with the matter told Reuters on Saturday.

The electronics conglomerate has started accepting bids, with early interest shown by the Development Bank of Japan Inc, said the sources, who declined to be identified because they are not authorised to talk to the media.

The state-owned bank has already invested in Seiko Holdings Corp’s semiconductor operations.

The sale would exclude Toshiba’s mainstay NAND flash memory operations, according to two people with direct knowledge of the matter and one person familiar with the discussions.

On the block are businesses that handle system LSI and discrete chips, which are widely used in cars, home appliances and industrial machinery. The loss-making operations posted losses of $3.8 billion yen ($2.78 billion) in the year ended March 2015. A Toshiba spokesman told Reuters the company hadn’t made a decision yet on the sale of its chip operations, while a spokeswoman at the Development Bank of Japan declined to comment.

Following the accounting scandal, Toshiba has been focusing on nuclear and other energy operations, as well as its storage business, which centres on NAND flash memory chips used in smartphones. The Tokyo-based company, which is selling off non-core chip operations, plans to invest heavily in its flash memory production capacity in Japan to better compete with South Korea’s Samsung Electronics Co Ltd. — Reuters

**Toshiba to sell part of its chip operations** — Reuters

**A climber ascends a silo covered in ice in Cedar Falls, Iowa, United States, on 17 January. PHOTO: REUTERS**

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NEW YORK — Millions of residents, business owners and workers began digging out yesterday from a massive blizzard that brought Washington, New York and other northeastern US cities to a standstill, killing at least 19 people in several states.

The storm was the second-biggest in New York City history, with 26.8 inches (68 cm) by midnight Saturday, just shy of the record 26.9 inches set in 2006, the National Weather Service said.

People were killed in weather-related car crashes in Arkansas, North Carolina, Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee and Virginia on Saturday. One person died in Maryland and three in New York City while shoveling snow. Two died of hypothermia in Virginia, officials said.

On the New Jersey shore, a region hard hit in 2012 by Superstorm Sandy, the storm drove flooding high tides.

After dumping about two feet of snow on the Washington area, the storm unexpectedly strengthened as it spun northward and slammed into the New York metropolitan area on Saturday, home to about 20 million people. Winds gusting to more than 40 mph (64 kph) sculpted drifts many feet high, burying cars.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo declared a state of emergency, as did 10 other governors. A ban imposed on many feet high, burying cars. Subways running above ground and trains operated by the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North halted service on Saturday and were to be evaluated for service restoration at 6 am.

By early Sunday the storm had all but moved off the coastline, with remnants trailing over parts of Long Island and Cape Cod. Much of the northeast was expected to see a mix of sun and clouds yesterday with temperatures just above freezing.

Given the massive storm’s impact, it was too soon to tell how much Wall Street’s reopening on Monday would be affected.

Broadway theaters cancelled Saturday matinee and evening performances at the urging of the mayor, and a Bruce Springsteen concert set for Sunday was called off.

As an otherworldly quiet descended on the usually bustling city of 8.5 million, the nation’s most populous, tourists and residents took to city streets, venturing into the expanses of parks, some on skis. Others built snowmen and had snowball fights.

Authorities in New York and New Jersey halted public transportation and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority took the rare step of suspending operations through Sunday.

About 3,500 flights were canceled on Sunday, with more than 600 already canceled for Monday, said FlightAware.com, the aviation data and tracking website.

United Airlines said it would not operate at Washington-area airports yesterday, and would gradually resume service on Monday. The airline plans to start “very limited operations” yesterday afternoon at its Newark, New Jersey, hub.

The brunt of the blizzard reached the New York City area after battering Washington, where snow piled up outside the White House and famous monuments were frosted with snow.

The record high of 28 inches of snow in Washington was set in 1922 and the biggest recent snowfall was 17.8 inches in 2010.

High winds battered the entire East Coast, from North Carolina to New York, reaching 70 mph in Wallops Island, Virginia, late on Friday, whipping up the tides and causing coastal flooding, said National Weather Service meteorologist Greg Gallina.

The snow also engulfed the Mid-Atlantic cities of Baltimore and Philadelphia while about 150,000 customers in North Carolina and 90,000 homes in New Jersey lost electricity. Accumulations in parts of Virginia and West Virginia reached 40 inches.

Tides higher than those caused by Superstorm Sandy three years ago pushed water onto roads along the Jersey Shore and Delaware coast and set records in Cape May, New Jersey, and Lewes, Delaware, said NWS meteorologist Patrick O’Hara.

Some evacuations were reported along the New Jersey shore. Wildwood, a town of more than 5,000 people about 30 miles (48 km) southwest of Atlantic City on a barrier island, saw some of the worst flooding.

Emergency workers in inflatable boats rescued more than 100 people from homes, said Wildwood Fire Chief Christopher D’Amico.

Water levels reached chest-high in parts of Wildwood and refrigerators and soda machines floated down the main street.

Further north, barrier islands near Atlantic City were also experiencing significant tidal flooding, said Linda Gilmore, the county’s public information officer.

The high tides were set to return yesterday morning.

The storm developed along the Gulf Coast, dropping snow over Arkansas, Tennessee and Kentucky on Friday. On the coast, warm, moist air from the Atlantic Ocean collided with cold air to form the massive winter system, meteorologists said.—Reuters

India’s ruling BJP re-elects Amit Shah as president for second time

NEW DELHI — India’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) yesterday re-elected Amit Shah as its president for a second term.

Shah was elected unopposed.

“Amit Shah has been unani-
mously elected as the president of party and will hold the post for the next three years,” Indian home minister and senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh told media. “Only one candidate has filed nomination paper and that is Amit Shah.”

Shah is considered to be a close aide of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has served as home minister of western state of Gujarat when Modi was its chief minister.

He took charge as BJP presi-
dent in July 2014, midway from Singh who joined Modi’s cabinet as India’s home minister.

Following the announce-
ment celebrations broke out at the BJP headquarters with sup-
porters beating drums and play-
ing the tune of conchshells near the dice.

BJP leaders credit Shah with the party’s spectacular perform-
ance in several states and as-
suming power in Maharashtra, Haryana, Jharkhand and Indi-
an-controlled Kashmir.

However, BJP suffered badly in New Delhi and recently held Bihar elections.

BJP will soon plunge into its election campaign for polls in five states later this year.

Senior BJP veterans LK Advani and Murli Mano-
har Joshi were conspicuous-
ly missing during Shah’s nomination.—Xinhua

Snow shutters airport on South Korean resort island Jeju

SEOUL — Flights at the airport on the South Korean holiday island of Jeju were halted yesterday for a second day due to the biggest snowfall in three decades and high winds, forcing hundreds of cancellations, officials said.

The popular vacation spot off the south of the Korean peninsula, recorded its biggest snowfall in 32 years at 11 cm (4.33 inches) as of Sunday, with more than 1 metre of snow in mountain areas.

Many flights were either cancelled or delayed before Jeju airport was shut at 5:45 pm (0845 GMT) on Saturday, when all flights were cancelled until 9am on Monday, the transpor-
tation ministry said.

On Saturday, 296 flights were cancelled and 122 de-
layed.

All 517 flights scheduled for Sunday as well as around 60 flights scheduled for Monday morning were cancelled, Korea Airports Corp said.

Roughly 6,000 passen-
gers were stranded at the air-
port on Saturday, the ministry said, but the number had fall-

en to 1,500 early yesterday
morning.—Reuters
Congratulation Kanbawza Bank Ltd
On World Finance 100 (2015)

We congratulate Kanbawza Bank Ltd on its being incorporated into the list of ‘World Finance 100’ at the World Economic Forum held at Davos, Switzerland from 21st to 23rd January, 2016. This listing is done by London-based World Finance in England, which selects every year the best and the most successful companies of 100 from among the leading business firms around the world.

The Central Executive Committee/Executive Committee
Union of Myanmar Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industry

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U Win Aung-Dr Moe Mya Mya
Chairman
Dagon Group of Companies
Hollywood producers name ‘The Big Short’ year’s best film

LOS ANGELES — Hollywood producers named “The Big Short” the best film of 2015 at a glitzy awards show on Saturday, which was dominated by talk of racial bias in voting for the Oscars to be awarded next month.

The Producers Guild of America, which is among the leading industry organisations representing makers of movies and TV shows, also named its best animated film which went to “Inside Out,” favourite documentary, won by “Amy,” about the late singer Amy Winehouse, and honoured “Game of Thrones” as top television drama. In past years, the PGA’s best film winners have often gone on to win the best picture Oscar, Hollywood’s big prize.

The Academy Awards will be bestowed on 28 February to producers, directors, actors and actresses by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

But Oscar talk has been overshadowed by a cloud of racial bias since nominees announced earlier this month did not include many actors and directors of colour. The lack of diversity for a second straight year resurrected the social media hashtag #OscarsSoWhite, and elicited plans for a boycott among A-list actors such as Will Smith and director Spike Lee.

“The Big Short” producer Dede Gardner acknowledged the issue during her acceptance speech for the evening’s top award.

“Yes, we have a real problem, we do. We need to tell stories that reflect our world, our country,” Gardner said. She was not alone in acknowledging that filmmakers needed to directly confront the troubling issue. Shonda Rhimes, creator of television drama “Grey’s Anatomy,” also addressed the need for greater diversity, while Producers Guild of America president Gary Lucchesi said the industry must “make a conscious decision to challenge the status quo.” —Reuters

Iggy Azalea wants bejewelled white horses at her wedding?

LONDON — Rapper Iggy Azalea is reportedly planning two wedding ceremonies, and wants “bejewelled white horses” at each one.

The 25-year-old “Fancy” rapper is currently planning her nuptials to Nick Young and won’t be sparing any expense when it comes to the festivities, and is even considering tying the knot twice, reported Female First.

“She is insisting on not one, but two weddings. She wants one in Australia, where she’s from, and another in Nick’s hometown of L.A. She wants 20 bejewelled white horses and a USD 100,000 firework display at both,” a source said.

“She’s insisting on over 250 guests for each ceremony and is also pushing for two honeymoons — one to Fiji and the second to Hawaii. They’re looking at a bill close to USD 500,000.” —PTI

Feels great to see my mother happy with my fame: Varun

MUMBAI — He has been part of seven films in two years, and actor Varun Sharma says he feels great to watch his mother happy with all the fame he has received.

Varun, who was last seen in “Dilwale”, is happy that he has achieved the dream of becoming an actor, for which his family supported him.

“If I am with my family and if a fan or an admirer comes and gets a picture clicked, the smile on my mother’s face is beautiful. I know she has struggled for it, she had the strength of sending her son in an industry which doesn’t give you certainty of revenue or persistence of work,” Varun told PTI. “Now, when she smiles with all the fame I’ve got, it feels great that you can make your parents happy by achieving your dreams which they believed in too,” he said.

Varun made his debut in “Fukrey” in 2013 as the character of ‘Chucha’ and received rave reviews. The actor credits the Shah Rukh Khan-Kajol starrer “Dilwale” for making him a household name. “With ‘Dilwale’ the audience expansion has been on another level. From ‘chucha’ it has become ‘Varun Sharma’ so the transition has been really great. When I went home in Punjab the response I got was amazing. When I meet people they now recite me my own dialogues.”

The actor has appeared mostly in comedy films like Kapil Sharma’s “Kis Kisko Pyaar Karna” and Sonam Kapoor starrer “Dolly Ki Doli”. Varun now wants to try other genres.

“I really want to shift. Even though I enjoy doing comedy, I never thought I could do it. Even in theatre I used to do very intense roles. I’ve never done comedy before I was doing theatre...But I will never leave the comedy genre because it has given me an identity, love and affection.” —PTI

Oscar diversity campaign may take time but Chris Rock will still host

LOS ANGELES — The Oscars have launched a landmark campaign to diversify the ranks of Academy Award voters who decide which actors, movies and filmmakers earn recognition, but Hollywood’s highest honours may remain a predominantly white affair for some time to come.

Amid an outcry against a field of Oscar-nominated performers lacking a single person of color for a second straight year, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced a sweeping affirmative action program on Friday, pledging to double female and minority membership by 2020.

But host Chris Rock will not step away from the high-profile job, the show’s producer Reginald Hudlin said on Saturday, telling Entertainment Tonight at an NAACP Image Awards luncheon the comedian has scrapped his material.

“As things got a little provocative and exciting, he said, ‘I’m throwing out the show I wrote and writing a new show.’” Hudlin told ET.

“You should expect #OscarsSoWhite jokes,” Hudlin said, adding “And, yes, the Academy is ready for him to do that.” The largely white, male and older makeup of the 6,000-plus film industry professionals who belong to the academy has long been cited as a barrier to racial and gender equality at the Oscars. “It’s unprecedented for the academy to make this kind of drastic overhaul,” said Tom O’Neil, editor of the awards-tracking website Gold Derby. “It’s a very dramatic announcement and a very welcome breakthrough.” —Reuters
Heavy snow hits western, central Japan, and even Okinawa feels chilly

TOKYO — A cold air mass gripped the Japanese archipelago, bringing heavy snow and gusty winds to a wide area of western and central Japan on Sunday, forcing airlines to cancel many flights and West Japan Railway Co to reduce the speed of bullet trains on sections of the Sanyo Shinkansen lines.

The heaviest snowfall reached as far as southwestern Japanese cities such as Nagasaki and Kagoshima and the temperature in Naha, the prefectural capital of Okinawa, dropped to 8.9C on Sunday morning, far below the average low for January.

Amami Island, a subtropical island located some 380 kilometres southwest of Kagoshima City, also observed snowfall for the first time in 115 years, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

On Kyushu island, Nagasaki saw 15 centimetres of snow, Kagoshima 10cm and Saga 6cm.

In the Chugoku region in western Japan where the snowfall was heaviest, the town of Kitahiroshima in Hiroshima Prefecture recorded 142cm of snow, while Onna, Ishikawa Prefecture on the Sea of Japan coast in central Japan, saw 99cm of snow.

Shortly after midnight Saturday, 11 cars and other vehicles were involved in pileups on a road in Fukuoka Prefecture in freezing condition amid snowfall, injuring two men, police said.

Around 6am, six teenagers who climbed the 847.5-metre Mt. Kusenuma straddling Fukuoka and Saga prefectures called for help, saying they were unable to descend due to snow.

Local firefighters found them near the peak of the mountain and rescued them about 90 minutes later.

The weather agency warned of continued stormy weather in western and central Japan through Monday and further traffic disruption.

Up to 1 metre of snowfall is expected through Monday morning in the Hokuriku region, according to the weather agency.—Kyodo News

Endangered snow leopards spotted at Mt Qomolangma

LHASA — Wild snow leopards were caught on camera in a Tibetan county at the north face of Mt. Qomolangma, suggesting that the endangered species also lives at the mountain, researchers said on Friday.

Lhapa Tsering, an official with the Administration Bureau of the Qomolangma reserve, said that the Mt. Qomolangma Snow Leopard Conservation Centre and the Wildlife Institute of Beijing Forestry University surveyed the population density of wild snow leopards in Dingri and Gyirong counties on the north face of the mountain from October to November of 2015.

They found clear images of snow leopards from seven infrared cameras they had placed in Dingri County last year at an altitude of 4,000 metres.

Lhapa Tsering said, adding that the number of the animals recorded has not been calculated so far.

A total of 120 infrared cameras were placed in the wild during last year’s survey. The remaining 113 cameras are expected to be retrieved by the end of this month, he said.

Gao Yufang, executive director of the Mt. Qomolangma Snow Leopard Conservation Center, said scientists will research the snow leopard population, their prey and habitat after retrieving the cameras in order to come up with more specific protection plans for the animals.

Snow leopards, one of China’s Class A protected animals, are usually found in the Himalayas in central and south Asia at altitudes between 3,000 and 5,500 metres.

The animal has rarely been seen in the wild over the last century due to loss of habitat and poaching. An estimated 3,500 to 7,000 snow leopards live in the wild worldwide, with about 2,500 to 3,500 in China. The 8,844-metre-high Mt. Qomolangma, located on the border of China and Nepal, is the world’s tallest mountain.—Xinhua

8th Johannesburg International Mozart Festival kicks off

JOHANNESBURG — Ballet dancers perform during the Viennese New Year Concert at Linder Auditorium in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 23 January 2016. The 8th annual Johannesburg International Mozart Festival (JIMF) kicked off here Saturday, starting with two popular Viennese New Year Concerts which are given by the famous Vienna State Opera Orchestra and Joburg Ballet on the first and second days. Running from 23 January to 7 February 2016 and with the theme of “Alla Turca (in the Turkish style)” this year, the JIMF this year are scheduled to bring 19 concerts, workshop and master classes.—Xinhua

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Leicester back on top, Liverpool win thriller at Norwich

LONDON — Leicester City went top with a win over Stoke City, title rivals Manchester City lost ground and Liverpool edged a nine-goal epic at Norwich City on Saturday as a weird and wonderful Premier League season churned on.

As 20-times English champions Manchester United were losing at home to Southampton, pre-season relegation favourites Leicester moved three points clear of Arsenal with 15 games remaining. Danny Drinkwater, Jamie Vardy and Leonardo Ulloa struck to secure a 3-0 win for Claudio Ranieri’s unlikely lads.

Leicester’s day then got better as Manchester City were held 2-2 in a lively late kickoff with West Ham United — Sergio Aguero earning his side a point after City twice trailed. What epitomised the appeal of the world’s richest football league, however, was Liverpool’s 5-4 win at relegation-threatened Norwich City.

Liverpool took the lead at Carrow Road through Roberto Firmino but with 35 minutes remaining trailed 3-1 as Deeney Mbock, debutant Steven Naismith and a Wes Hoolahan penalty put the hosts in control.

Jordan Henderson, Firmino’s second and James Milner then swung the game Liverpool’s way only for Norwich defender Sebastian Bassong to score a stoppage-time leveller.

There was still time though for Adam Lallana to decide a rollercoaster of a match, sparking crazy Liverpool celebrations in which manager Juergen Klopp broke his glasses.

Eight players were on the scoresheet in only the fourth Premier League match to finish 5-4.

“It was spectacular, wild, good football, and both teams had good moments,” Klopp told reporters. Leicester have 47 points, City and Arsenal, who play Chelsea on Sunday, 44 with fourth-placed Tottenham Hotspur in the hunt after a 3-1 victory at Crystal Palace moved them up on 42.

Harry Kane cancelled out Jan Vertonghen’s own goal but he was upstaged by England teammate Dele Alli, whose 25-yard volley after flicking the ball up and over his own head to put Tottenham ahead is a candidate for goal of the season. Nacer Chadli scored Tottenham’s third. “It was a fantastic goal,” Tottenham boss Mauricio Pochettino, whose side have 42 points, said. “I think it will be shown around the world on the TV.”

Manchester United stayed in fifth place, one point above West Ham, but it was a disappointing day at Old Trafford where United were boomed off after losing 1-0 to Saints’ Charlie Austin scored in the 87th-minute on his debut, heaping more pressure on United manager Louis van Gaal. Lacklustre United managed only one shot on target and have now gone eight hours 26 minutes without scoring in the opening half of a game at Old Trafford. “You can’t say the fans are not right,” Van Gaal told Sky Sports. “They are disappointed and have a right to boo.”

Ranieri praised his Leicester side’s passion and heart as they gained a timely fillip ahead of fixtures against Liverpool and title rivals Arsenal and Manchester City.

Leicester’s Danny Simpson in action with Stoke’s Jonathan Walters during Barclays Premier League at King Power Stadium on 23 January. PHOTO: Reuters

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Swift Serena into Australian Open quarter-finals

MELBOURNE — World number one Serena Williams set up a rematch of last year’s Australian Open final against Maria Sharapova after she comfortably accounted for Russian Margarita Gasparyan 6-2, 6-1 in the fourth round on Sunday.

The victory for Williams, who is seeking a seventh Australian Open title and 22nd grand slam trophy overall, could not have been in sharper contrast to that of Sharapova, who preceded her onto Rod Laver Arena.

Sharapova was made to work hard for her 7-5, 7-5 victory over 12th seeded Swiss Belinda Bencic before eventually sealing a place in the eagerly anticipated quarter-final in two hours, five minutes.

Williams then swept aside Sharapova’s Russian compatriot in 55 minutes with little fuss.

Her only hiccup came in the first game of the match when the 21-year-old raced out to a 0-40 lead and then achieved the second break of the powerful American’s serve this tournament to take a surprising 1-0 lead.

Unfortunately for Gasparyan, that was as good as it got against the 34-year-old, who rattled off the next four games on her way to sealing the set in 30 minutes and then breezed through the second in 25 minutes. The victory was the third successive straight forward win for the American, who has not been pushed in Melbourne since her first round clash with Italy’s Camila Giorgi.

Williams has not lost to Sharapova since 2004, a run of 17 successive victories, and holds an 18-2 career record overall against the Russian’s five-time grand slam winner.

“I think the person who’s winning could definitely feel the pressure because there is a lot of expectations,” Williams added. “The person who is losing (could think) ‘well, I have lost X amount in a row, I don’t have anything to lose’.

“But in this situation, I don’t have anything to lose because I’m just here. Every tournament for me is just a bonus at this point in my career.” — Reuters