The Tatmadaw released 46 children and young people from service yesterday, handing them over to their parents as part of an effort to rid its ranks of underage soldiers.

The military has released 744 underage recruits in 12 batches including yesterday’s release and action was taken against 382 soldiers including 73 officers and 309 other ranks involved in the recruitment of children.

“The Tatmadaw is committed to rid its ranks of underage soldiers,” said the Army-run Myawady Daily quoting Maj-Gen Tauk Tun of the Commander-in-Chief’s (Army) Office who delivered an address at the ceremony.

The Tatmadaw has banned recruiting underage children for the army, pledging that it has been scrutinising its forces in order to release those who were recruited wrongly.

At the ceremony held at the Transit Centre in Yangon, authorities presented national citizenship scrutiny cards to the underage soldiers.

The children were discharged to their families in the presence of senior officers from the Tatmadaw, Myanmar Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs, Labour, Employment and Social Security, Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and responsible personnel from UNICEF and UNHCR, International Labour Organisation, Save the Children, World Vision, World Food Programme and UNDP.

The Tatmadaw will provide them with health care, opportunities for formal and informal education, receiving vocational skills and jobs.

Since 2011, the Tatmadaw has taken some steps to professionalise the armed forces, including the release of soldiers recruited under the age of 18.—GNLM

The newly-opened lounge at Yangon International Airport is seen on inaugural day. Photo: MNA
**Crime NEWS**

**Yabba seized in Mingla Taungnyunt**

AN anti-drug squad seized 2,300 yabba pills from Ma Yamin Oo and Kyaw Kyaw Han from a vehicle at gate 2, Kandawgyi circular road, Thabyaygon ward, Mingla Taungnyunt township on Tuesday.

Similarly, police searched a house owned by one Nay Sun Lu in ward 6, Tang Yang town and found 940 yabba pills at his house on Friday. Sai Swun Hay was also found together with the host Sun Lu.

Likewise, police discovered 260 yabba pills from a vehicle driven by Ta Aung (a) Khan Thein Aung with Ma Mi Nge on board at Hopong town on 8 March. The police have filed charges against them under the Anti-Narcotic Law.— *Myanmar Police Force*

**Gas bottle explodes in Sanchaung coffee shop**

A GAS explosion occurred at the Happy Café & Noodles shop at the corner of Shin Saw Pu street and Pyay road, Sanchaung township, on Thursday.

According to an investigation the explosion occurred when the shop manager was handling gas cylinders at the shop. The explosion broke the glasses of the 15 ft by 15 ft room and injured four workers. They are receiving medical treatment at Yangon West general hospital. Local police have filed charges against Daw Nwe Ni Oo, 50, the shopkeeper and Ko Ye Kyaw Swa, 33, the shop manager.— *(040)*

**Faculty members complete special refresher course**

SPECIAL refresher course No 24 for faculty members from universities and colleges concluded yesterday at the Central Institute for Civil Servants (Phaunggyi).

A total of 450 trainees participated in the course which was concluded with the concluding remarks by Union Minister for Education Dr Daw Khin San Yi.

In her speech, she called on the faculty members to make efforts toward the development of human resources and research work producing intellectuals and intelligentsia whilst improving themselves.

She awarded outstanding trainees with prizes.— *Education*

**Police arrested two-digit lottery seller**

POLICE have arrested a woman who allegedly sold two-digit lotteries from her house in ward 4-A, Swa (South) town on Thursday.

The police searched the house owned by one Ma Su Mar, 38, and found K80,200 and the relevant document items of two-digit lottery.

Local police have filed charges against her.— *(059)*

**Road accident kills a woman, injures one man**

A MOTORBIKE being driven by one U Aung Pu, 48, with Daw Naw Yee on board hooked with a vehicle between mileposts 143/1 and 143/2 on the Yangon-Mowlamyine road on Wednesday, leaving one dead and the other injured.

The accident seriously injured the two people and they were sent to the general hospital. Daw Naw Yee succumbed to her injuries.

The police said “We got the information late as the place where it occurred is deserted. The woman died when she arrived at the hospital.

The police are still investigating the reckless car driver who fled from the scene.— *Thet Oo (Tahtoon)*

**WW-Il era Nineteen anti-aircraft rockets unearthed in Inndaw township**

NINETEEN rusted rockets were found near Hae Nu village railway, Inndaw township, Sagaing region on Friday. According to a police investigation, the 19 rounds of rockets were discovered by an archaeological team between railway mileposts 606/24 and 607/1 when they dug in with a bulldozer. The rockets are 14 inches long and seven inches in diameter. And, they are believed to be remains from WW II. The police handed them over to Light Infantry Regiment No. 309.— *Maung Chit Lin (Inndaw)*

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President formally opens new lounge at Yangon Airport

Efforts made to preserve elephant dance troupes in Kyaukse

Tribunal investigates police officer who beat Dawei worker to death
Crab farming is seen in Rakhine State. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

DWINDLING hauls of crab catchers in Rakhine State has led to smaller crab exports to China, according to companies that export the crustaceans abroad.

U Aung Naing Lin, manager of the soft crab meat producing company Ngwe Nga Kyun, said the decline in exports began last August due to a combination of a fall in the volume of crabs being caught and shrinking demand in foreign markets.

“In the first half of 2015, we were able to export on average between eight and 10 tonnes [of crabs] per month, depending on the volume of our catches. The decline in demand from foreign markets, including the EU, at the start of last August was the catalyst for the decline of crab-catchers locally. The first two months of this year have seen us export just between just six and seven tonnes. Our decline is also affected by the direct export of crabs to Muse [on the Chinese border] from the townships of Myaibon, Inn and Kanhaung Gyi,” he said.

Soft crab meat from Rakhine State is mainly exported to China, Singapore, Japan, Australian and EU markets. Despite the lack of fluctuations in the price of crab meat, lower crab yields and shrinking demand have forced crab exporting companies to be forced to reduce their business activities. “The Kyauk Phyu Than River was cleared to make way for Chinese oil tankers. It’s had a disastrous impact on the natural ecosystem, causing distinct declines in the numbers of crabs being caught. People are catching immaturity crabs and selling them in local markets. This is enabled by the weakness of the Fisheries Department in educating crab catchers [on the negative consequences of their actions],” said U Htun Wai, owner of the Shell Yang Aung Shwaytaing Ah Aye Khan crab meat processing company. There are three crab meat exporting companies based in Kyauk Phyu Township. While there has been a decline in demand for crab meat from markets in Singapore, Japan, Australia and the EU, demand from China has remained constant. Kyauk Phyu crab meat companies export their produce through connections with agents based in Yangon. Depending on their size, a kilo of crabs fetches between K6 and K8, while the current market price for a tonne of crabs goes for between K18 million and K20 million, according to export companies.—Myitmaukha News Agency

Rakhine shrimp wholesalers suffer K5 million losses after depreciation in Yangon markets

RAKHINE fresh water shrimp wholesalers have been suffering heavy losses of up to K5 million in the last couple of days after a depreciation in value of the crustacean within Yangon markets, it is known.

“We’ve been suffering financial losses of around K5 million in the last couple of days after a depreciation in value of the shrimp within Yangon markets, it is known. We’ve been suffering financial losses of around K5 million in the last couple of days after a depreciation in value of the crustacean within Yangon markets, it is known.

“Since two years ago we were consistently selling over 50 viss of shrimp a day. These days we’re lucky if we push just 5 viss [of shrimp] a day,” said U Than Kyaw, shrimp wholesaler owner from the town of Paok Daw.

Shrimp bought by wholesalers in Rakhine State for K45,000 is only fetching K35,000 in Yangon markets, with some wholesalers unable rid themselves of remaining shrimp left in stock. It is known that the main factor behind the depreciation in value of shrimp is due to a decline in purchasing demand with Yangon markets.

A viss’s worth of a size of shrimp that each weighs 14 tical (224 grams) fetched K45,000 within Yangon markets on Monday, with the same quantity of sized shrimp with a weight of 12 tical (192 grams) costing K35,000.

The unexpected sudden depreciation in the price of fresh water shrimp by up to K10,000 since 7 March resulted in heavy financial losses for Rakhine State shrimp wholesalers who practice a system of advance purchasing with local shrimp farmers. “We pay a high price for shrimp. On top of that, we pay shrimp catchers in advance for their catch. That’s why all of us have lost out,” said Ko Maung Kyi, manager of Nyi Nyi shrimp wholesalers based in the town of Minbya. It is known that shrimp from Rakhine wholesalers end up in Yangon markets as well as those further afield in neighbouring Bangladesh.—Myitmaukha News Agency

SECM grants securities business license to five companies

SECURITIES and Exchange Commission of Myanmar (SECM) has announced that it has granted securities business licenses to the following companies according to Article 7 (a) of the Securities Exchange Law.

According to the announcement, the SECME grantedit the license to KBZ Stirling Coleman Securities Co Ltd on 26th February, 2016, to Myanmar Securities Exchange Centre Co Ltd on 26th February, 2016, to AYA Trust Securities Co Ltd on 1st March 2016, to CB Securities Co Ltd on 1st March 2016 and KTZ Ruby Hill Securities Co Ltd on 1st March, 2016.

Types of securities business licenses granted are Securities underwriting license, Securities dealing license, Securities brokerage license and Securities investment advisory license.—GNLM

Bamboo manufacturers in Tatkon see handsome profits

THE bamboo product manufacturers of Byaing-in village in Tatkon Township, Nay Pyi Taw district area, have seen increased prices due to high demand not only for bamboo walls but also the bamboo baskets and bamboo mattresses.

“The demand is on the rise as it is the time when local people are repairing their houses or building new ones,” said U Hla Moe, a local resident.

“The workers are happy as they earn roughly K4,000 per day”, said U Zaw Zaw, a local resident.

They are now receiving a regular income from manufacturing bamboo products. —Lin Let Ce (MMAL)

Broom plants are seen increasing higher income

LOCAL people are earning a higher income because they do not need to make any investment as the broom plants grow naturally in the mountain region and in rubber gardens.

The villagers go to the jungle to collect the broom plants. —Mg Mg (MMAL)

Onion yield likely to fall

ONION cultivators in Taungtha Township are expecting to experience a lower harvest due to the erratic weather.

“Weather this year has been erratic. Insects have increased because of bad weather. Sometimes it is cloudy and sometimes snow is falling. Although we are spraying pesticides they don’t work as we hoped”, said, U Hla Hla, a local farmer.

The onion plants are dry at their tips and there are insects on them.

The farmers spend between K600,000 and K one million per acre for onion cultivation. The local farmers expect to see a good harvest as well as a good price.—Lin Let Ce (MMAL)
Indonesia targets annual furniture export at 5 bln USD by 2020

JAKARTA — The Indonesian government expects the export value of its furniture to reach 5 billion US dollars per year in the next five years, a minister said on Friday. That compares with 2.2-billion-US dollar shipment of the products to overseas market in 2014, Indonesian Industry Minister Saleh Husin told reporters in Jakarta.

“This trend leads to the optimism for the achievement of 5 billion US dollars export within the next five years,” Husin says.

In 2013, Indonesia furniture export stood at 1.8 billion US dollars, rising from 1.4 billion US dollars in the previous year, according to data from the industry ministry. To increase exports, Husin asked sellers to boost the quality and design of their export products. "President Jusuf Kalla on Friday asked shareholders in the industry to develop innovation to comply with the taste of global buyers."

The Indonesian government has barred outbound shipment of woods and rattan in a bid to boost added value of the raw materials.—Xinhua

NEW DELHI — Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the opening on Friday of a giant music and dance festival that has been criticised for environmental damage and the possible safety risks of its enormous stage.

Large crowds braved heavy rain for the start of the event, crossing army-made pontoon bridges across Delhi’s main river, the Yamuna, to the “World Culture Festival”, where 35,000 dancers and musicians will perform to an expected audience of millions over three days.

Modi, the star guest at the opening ceremony, sat next to organiser Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, a well known guru, on a specially built VIP stand, as hundreds of holy men chanted in harmony and women dressed in red and gold danced to drum beats on the stage below.

The festival has pitted Ravi Shankar against environmentalists, concerned about damage to the nature-rich floodplain, and the Delhi police, who said the 7-acre (3-hectare) stage — which organisers say is the world’s largest — lacked a safety certificate.

India’s top environmental court this week fined Ravi Shankar’s organisation 50 million rupees ($750,000) and questioned why authorities had allowed the festival to be held in such an environmentally sensitive area, but it did not stop the event going ahead.

Green groups say the event will destroy the biodiversity of the 1,000-acre (400-hectare) site by ripping up vegetation, flattening land and altering the river’s flow.

Ravi Shankar has rejected criticism and promised to leave the area better than he found it.

Delhi police expressed concern about whether organisers were equipped to manage such a large number of people, warning of the potential for “utter chaos”. The Yamuna, a tributary of the Ganges and the source for much of Delhi’s water, is revered by many Hindus who bathe in it, despite high levels of industrial and human waste.—Reuters

Zhou Xiaochuan, governor of the People’s Bank of China, answers questions at a press conference on the financial reform and development on the sidelines of the fourth session of the 12th National People’s Congress in Beijing, capital of China, on 12 March. PHOTO: XINHUA

Support for HK offshore yuan market unchanged: central bank

BEIJING — Recent fluctuations in Hong Kong’s offshore yuan market are market-driven and the central bank’s support for the market remains unchanged, officials said yesterday.

The issuance in Hong Kong of dim sum bonds, bonds denominated in yuan but issued outside Chinese mainland, dipped and Hong Kong’s pool of yuan shrank recently.

The changes were driven by the market, said Zhou Xiaochuan, central bank governor, at a press conference on the sidelines of the annual parliamentary session. He added that the financial market is inherently prone to fluctuation.

The fluctuations were largely due to the market’s expectation of the value of yuan, said Yi Gang, vice governor of the central bank.

As the expectation stabilises, the offshore yuan market’s advantages would be back, Yi said.

“The development of Hong Kong’s offshore yuan market is unchanged. The market’s business will expand further,” he said.—Xinhua

India shuts down nuclear plant following leak

NEW DELHI — Authorities in India’s western state of Gujarat Friday shut down a nuclear power plant and declared an emergency, following a heavy water leak in one of the reactors, officials said.

All the workers at the plant were reported to be safe.

The leak was detected in Kakrapar Atomic Power Station in Surat, 283 km south of Gandhinagar, the capital city of Gujarat.

“Consequent to a small leak in Primary Heat Transport (PHT) System, the reactor was shut down as intended as per design provisions,” reads a statement issued by Lalit Kumar Jain, a senior official of the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL) in Gujarat.

Reports said the workers within the plant were allowed to go home after thorough checks to prevent any radioactivity is reported outside the plant.

A senior government official Rajendra Kumar posted in Surat told media there was no need to panic and “things were under control.”

A local television news channel NDTV described the leak as a “major one” and quoting officials saying the nuclear reactor was slowly cooling down and was in a “safe stage”.

The plant’s two reactors produce 440 megawatts of power.—Xinhua
North Korea defector reveals late leader’s fears over libido and diabetes

LONDON — As North Korea grappled with a massive famine in the 1990s, scientists were working at an elite institute to find ways to boost then leader Kim Jong-il’s longevity — and his libido, a defector said on Friday.

In the early 1990s scientists were sent to Denmark to find ways to improve the tenderness of North Korea’s beef which Kim thought was too tough, said biologist Kim Hyeongsoo who worked at the centre for six years.

He told a human rights conference in London that some 130 scientists selected from the best universities worked at the centre which was dedicated to promoting the health and longevity of North Korean founder Kim Il-sung and his son who took power in the secretive state in 1994 and died in 2011.

Scientists were tasked with developing aphrodisiacs using ingredients including the genitalia of male lions and seals as well as traditional medicinal herbs, Kim said.

They were also asked to replicate the leader’s favourite western brand of cigarette — Rothmans with tobacco imported from Africa.

The scientists were sworn to secrecy and could not even tell their families what they were working on. The institute was surrounded by armed guards and electric fences, he added.

Kim said the centre’s work continued even as hundreds of thousands faced hunger in the mid-1990s.

The scientist said he had no idea of the extent of starvation until he returned to his hometown in 1998 and saw bodies lying in the street.

Around a million people are estimated to have died in the famine which has been blamed on a combination of economic mismanagement, the loss of Soviet support and natural disasters.

Kim said it was well known that the leader liked to drink and smoke and had young girlfriends.

“Some of the health problems that Kim Jong-il personally was much concerned about was heart function, diabetes, tuberculosis and also his libido, so this was the focus of our research,” he said.

Kim said products developed at the institute were tested on humans as well as animals.

He eventually decided to escape after witnessing close-up a particularly horrific execution in 2008 which he described in graphic detail.

“ Everyone has seen a public execution in North Korea,” he added. “On a day of execution all work places have to close and all schools, from middle and above, have to suspend lessons so that people can (attend).”

Kim was arrested and tortured by state security agents but managed to flee.

“Go through a state security investigation and come out alive is a miracle,” said Kim, now a teacher living in the South Korean capital Seoul.

His mother was also caught and tortured while trying to escape and died six months later.

Kim said bodies of torture victims were disposed of so that they could never be used as evidence.

He described North Korea as a mass hostage situation.

“North Korea is imprisoning 20 million people. They are held hostage not by a gun but by the police,” he told the conference hosted by the European Alliance of Human Rights in North Korea.

But he said even defectors were never free because the regime could target family members they left behind. Some defectors were also placed on assassination lists, he said.

A UN Human Rights Council commission of inquiry said last year that rights abuses in North Korea may amount to crimes against humanity. Speakers at the conference said the abuses were “unparalleled in the modern world”. — Reuters

US, South Korea stage assault drill; North threatens to wipe out enemies

POHANG — US and South Korean troops staged a big amphibious landing exercise on Saturday, storming simulated North Korean beach defences amid heightened tension and threats by the North to annihilate its enemies.

The landing and assault drills on South Korea’s east coast were part of eight weeks of joint exercises between the allies which the South has said are the largest ever. The North has denounced the exercises as “nuclear war moves” and threatened to respond with an all-out offensive.

Tension on the Korean peninsula has been high since the North conducted its fourth nuclear test in January and followed that with a long-range rocket launch last month, triggering new UN sanctions.

About 55 US marine aircraft and 30 US and South Korean ships, including the USS Bonhomme Richard and USS Boxer, which carry AV-8B Harrier attack jets and V-22 Osprey aircrafts, took part in the assault on beaches near Pohang city, the US navy said.

“They will penetrate no-nuclear enemy beach defences, establish a beach head, and rapidly transition forces and sustainment ashore,” the US military said.

The North’s military said it was preparing to counter the US and South Korean forces “with an ultra-precision blitzkrieg strike of the Korean style”.

“The revolutionary armed forces of the DPRK holding tightly the arms to annihilate the enemies with towing her to tide for them are waiting for the dignified Supreme Command to issue an order to launch a preemptive strike of justice,” it said in comments carried by the state KCNA news agency.

DPRK stands for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

CNN reported yesterday that North Korea has been searching for one of its submarines that has been missing for days off its east coast.

The submarine may be adrift under the sea or have sunk, perhaps after a technical problem during an exercise, CNN quoted US officials with intelligence of secret US monitoring the North’s activities as saying.

North Korea has said it is developing submarine-launched ballistic missiles although doubts about that were raised after Western experts said publicly released footage of tests appeared to be fake.

On Thursday, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un watched as his forces fired two short-range ballistic missiles into the sea. This month the North conducted drills with what it said were newly developed large caliber rocket launchers.

Kim has ordered the country to improve its nuclear attack capability by conducting more tests, in defiance of a UN Security Council resolution adopted last week in response to the isolated state’s latest nuclear test.

Kim also said his country had miniaturised nuclear warheads to mount on ballistic missiles, although the US and South Korean governments have expressed doubts about that too.

The South Korean and US militaries have said they had notified the North of “the non-provocative nature” of the exercises involving about 17,000 American troops and more than 300,000 South Koreans.

The United States has about 28,500 troops stationed in South Korea.— Reuters

Australian foreign minister to visit storm-hit Fiji

SYDNEY — Australia’s foreign minister, Julie Bishop, will travel to Fiji on Sunday to meet Fijian prime minister Frank Bainimarama and survey the damage wrought by cyclone Winston, her office said.

The cyclone, which was the worst storm ever recorded in the southern hemisphere, hit the South Pacific archipelago last month, killing 43 people and leaving tens of thousands homeless.

Three weeks later, more than 25,000 Fijians remain in evacuation centers, according to the latest report from Fiji’s National Emergency Operation Centre.

During her visit Bishop will also meet Fiji’s foreign minister, Ratu Karuvadra and disaster management minister, Inia Seruiratu, as well as Australian aid workers there.

Australia has committed A$15 million to the recovery effort and deployed its largest navy vessel, the HMAS Canberra, to Fiji with 60 tonnes of emergency relief supplies.— Reuters
US to raise Iran’s ‘dangerous’ missile tests at UN

UNITED NATIONS — The United States will raise during UN Security Council consultations next week the issue of Iran’s recent ballistic missile test. The US is urging countries to cooperate on undermining Tehran’s missile programme, the US envoy to the United Nations said on Friday.

“We will raise these dangerous launches directly at Council consultations, which we have called for, on Monday,” US Ambassador Samantha Power said in a statement. “These launches underscore the need to work with partners around the world to slow and degrade Iran’s missile programme.”

A series of ballistic missile tests this week conducted by Iran’s Revolutionary Guards units drew international concern. The United States, France and other countries said that if confirmed, the new launches of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles would violate UN Security Council resolution 2231.

President Obama’s administration and others have repeatedly claimed these missiles are designed to be a direct threat to Israel,” she said. “We condemn such threats against another UN member state and one of our closest allies.”

Power added that Washington would continue to demand “full implementation of resolution 2231, which expressly prohibits third-party support to Iran’s ballistic missile programme, as we also consider our appropriate national response.”

The closed-door consultations on Iran will take place Monday morning. The 15-nation Security Council is scheduled to hold separate consultations on Syria by 10am ET (1500 GMT).

The United States has said Iran’s missile tests do not violate the terms of an historic nuclear deal between Tehran and six major powers, which resolution 2231, adopted in July 2015, endorsed. The UN missile restrictions and an arms embargo on Iran are not technically part of the nuclear agreement.

Council diplomats say they will first await confirmation from national intelligence agencies about whether the missiles Iran has fired were nuclear-capable. They also say that Russia and China, which had opposed continuing UN restrictions on Iran’s missile programme, would likely block such action.

Iran’s Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday that the tests were not in violation of the nuclear agreement, which led to lifting of sanctions in January. Western diplomats say resolution 2231, which “calls upon” Iran to refrain from certain ballistic missile activity, offers no green light for nuclear-capable missile launches by Tehran and is therefore a clear bar.

However, they acknowledge that Russia, China and Iran likely interpret that language as an appeal to Iran to voluntarily refrain from missile activity. Tehran has also said that none of its missiles are designed to carry nuclear weapons. While no new UN sanctions may be imminent, Western diplomats say that the United States and some of its allies could take additional punitive action in the form of unilateral national sanctions against Iran over the latest missile launches, something Washington has done previously.

When UN sanctions on Iran were lifted in January, the Security Council’s Iran sanctions committee was shut down. But council diplomats said they expect the former chair of that now-defunct committee, Spain, will take on the task of overseeing the monitoring of Tehran’s compliance with resolution 2231.— Reuters

EU pact to establish full ties as Cuba’s thaw with West progresses

HAVANA — The European Union and Cuba signed an agreement in Havana on Friday to establish normal relations, bringing the Communist-run island further into the international fold and paving the way for full economic cooperation with the 28-member bloc.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez and EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini witnessed the signing of the pact, which will replace a policy imposed by Europe 20 years ago that pushed for changes to Cuba’s one-party political system.

“This accord opens a new chapter in the history of relations between the European Union and Cuba,” Mogherini said, shortly after EU negotiator Christian Lefler and Cuban deputy foreign minister Abkaldo Moreno signed the deal. Rodriguez said the two sides would soon meet to revive a human rights dialogue they started in Brussels last year.

The pact adds to Cuba’s rapidly thawing relations with the West since its 2014 detente with the United States and the renegotiation of debt with creditors from the Paris Club of wealthy nations in December.

It comes just days before a visit to Havana by President Barack Obama on 20 March, as part of a trip by a US president since the victory of Cuba’s 1959 revolution.

Days after the visit, rock group the Rolling Stones will play on the island for the first time, and electronic music act Major Lazer this week entertained 400,000 young Cubans on Havana’s seafront, the largest ever show by US artists on the island. Despite the warming relations, Washington retains an economic embargo against Cuba, making it harder for European companies with US business interests to operate on the Caribbean’s largest island.

Mogherini said those sanctions: “The US embargo is totally obsolete,” she said. “The blockade is a measure that belongs to another century. Now the priorities are dialogue and cooperation.”

Europe’s unilateral “common position,” in place since 1996, sought to make Cuba adopt a pluralistic democracy to unlock aid and commerce. Cuba has always rejected pressure to change its political model.

After ex-leader Fidel Castro handed power to his brother Raul in 2006, Cuba cautiously began to open to private enterprise without major political change.— Reuters

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ANALYSIS

OPINION

Become active participants in the reform process

Khin Maung Aye

The Global New Light of Myanmar

South China Sea territorial dispute

News Analysis (1)

Background

South China Sea territorial dispute has been the top news item of the recent weeks and is still developing as such. China, the fastest growing economy in Asia and the second biggest economy in the world, claims almost the entire energy rich South China Sea waters. Through the South China Sea, more than US dollar 5 trillions worth of marine trade passes cash year. The four ASEAN nations—Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Viet Nam—and the self-ruled territoriability, Taiwan have the overlapping claims over the same South China Sea.

China’s assertiveness in this “South Sea” has raised tensions with its neighbours and with the United States, which is the dominant security partners of the Philippines and Taiwan. Against this background and China’s assertiveness and unilateral claims over the South China sea, the United States of America has conceded into this sea dispute, in a sense, I think, for the purpose of balance of power and in another sense, for the purpose of getting this solved peacefully and diplomatically according to international law. Moreover, as this territorial dispute is a big international issue, it is actively and intensively discussed in ASEAN and US leaders special summit held in California, U.S.A. At the end of 15-16 February Special ASEAN and US leaders summit this topic is mentioned in the Sunny Lands Declara- tion. But no mention of China is made, as China is not present in the summit. It is an act of diplo-macy, I think. In this article the extract of joint declaration, relevant to the topic will be mentioned as follows:

- Mutual respect for the sovereignity, territorial integrity, equality and political independence of all nations by firmly upholding the princi-ples and purposes of the charter of the United Na-tions, the ASEAN Charter and international law.
- Shared commitment to peaceful solution of disputes including full respect for legal and diplomatic processes, without resort to the threat or use of force in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law and the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Development news

Fox News Agency of the United States reported very recently that China has deployed an advanced surface to air missile system on one of the disputed islands of South China Sea. Taiwan authorities confirmed the deployment. Regarding this news item, China said these reports were creations of some western media, who asked about reports of deployment of missiles, China’s Foreign Minis-try spokesman replied that any deployment of missiles on China’s own territory would be legitimate. But, Viet Nam, one of the rival claimants over the South China Sea protested China’s move, saying it a serious violation of Viet Nam’s sovereignty. Australia and New Zealand urged both China and Viet Nam to exercise restraint.

As this territorial dispute goes far beyond the national int-erests of the parties concerned, US and European Union could not afford to remain silent and un-mentioned. So, US and EU also warn China to respect interna-tional law, and South China Sea ruling. US also accuses China of raising tensions in the South China Sea. And as China has set up air fields and has built an enclosed, and has now deployed missile system on the South China Sea, US President Obama calls for need to lower South China Sea tension. In this situation, U.S.A. states that U.S.A will continue to fly and sail wherever international law allows, emphasizing freedom of air flight and navigation.

News analysis

As regards this issue, the “United States and ASEAN agreed on the importance of a rule-based regional and interna-tional order that upholds and protects the rights and privileges of all states.”

And “with malice towards none, with charity for all and with firmness in the right” or in other words, with a good-will towards all parties to the dispute, I, a retired diplomat, with some legal background, would like to sum my sincere, simple, and humble views on this dispute, in essence, that it should be settled in accordance with the political, economic, and legal background of the party. Therefore, when there is, there is a way. It is a well-known old saying. In addition, may I also submit that diplomacy is the first line of defence, when it comes to settling a dispute. In other words, any assertion, any claims and any dispute should be settled peacefully or by diplomatic means. It is a well-established, time-tested and long-lasting doctrine that diplomacy is the time of resolving disputes.

In this news analysis, I would like to quote the wise re-marks of H.E Bernardo Zuela, UN Under Secretary-General and special Representative of the UNSG for the law of the sea, particularly “on the settlement of disputes,” as prescribed in the UN Convention. It reads as fol-lows:

“The convention obliges parties to settle their dispute peacefully and provides a selec-tion of methods for doing so in the event that they are otherwise unable to reach agreement even with the third party intervention. The system under the convention is a compulsory and binding one in that, with limited exceptions, a party has no choice but to sub-mit to a settlement procedure if requested to do so by the other disputant and is bound to abide by the findings of the body to which the dispute is submitted.”

In this territorial dispute, tensions are escalating especially between China and the United States. So, let’s wait and see how this dispute will be settled finally and also let’s hope and expect that it will be solved diplomatically and legally without threat or use of force by the parties concerned. May peace, law and order prevail in this world of us.

Reference:

(2) Channel News Asia Satellite.
(3) Oxford Advanced Lean-der’s Dictionary.

U Khin Maung is a retired Deputy Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
Sales of recycled instant coffeemix sachets increases

A VILLAGER from Ngathayauk township in Mandalay Region is making money from recycling throwaway sachets of instant coffee mix into mats. The mats, made from old packaging material have captured the attention of people from surrounding villages.

High demand for such mats has created employment for local residents, thereby increasing family incomes, a local said.

“We collect old sachets of some brands and rinse them with soap. We trim off the edges of the packets before weaving them into mats,” the villager said. The mats come in sizes for one person and three persons. A single mat costs K7,500 and a triple mat, K15,000. —Ye Win Naing (IPRD)

Arakan : an international language for communications

THE news report of English test for the MPs from the National League for Democracy and other parties, which appeared in the 4th March issue of 7-day daily compelled me to write this article. After taking the test from 8-10 March, the MPs will have to attend the classes according to their respective results. Furthermore, the attendance of the MPs from the NLD is compulsory whereas those from that of other parties is optional.

So, why is English so important for our MPs? Is it possible to learn a language (English) in a period of short time? Do they concentrate on learning rather than doing their jobs which will keep them fully occupied for the sake of the country.

Actually English is important not only for our MPs but also for leaders from around the world. It doesn’t belong to England nor to the US. It has become a universal language which is officially used in world organizations such as the UN, World Bank and IMF and it is used as an official language even in the ASEAN.

When the World War Two ended abruptly in 1945, the language has become more and more popular with help and participation of the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India, keeping the other languages at bay. French teachers in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos are being replaced by English Language ones.

English expelled the British and gained independence in 1947 but has maintained the language—English, thereby producing the world-famous writers such as V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth and so on.

India-born announcers are often seen on the BBC Radio and TV screens.

Myanmar also expelled the British with the help of Japanese and gained independence in 1948 but downgraded the teaching of English in schools and colleges in 1965, prioritizing Myanmar-sar as our national language. In the same year, Singapore was separated from Malaya Peninsula but English was prescribed as an official language under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew who built Singapore from a fishing village to the most modern state among the Asian countries.

The result is what we have been facing now: the standard of our English language acquisition is much lower than that of Singapore and other Asean countries. This is a reality: like it or not our MPs will have to learn English in order to be able to discuss with their counterparts from around the world. I am really thrilled to know about the results of these crash courses and the expectation towards the respective offices of the civil servants.管理, management, honesty, hard work and finally trustworthiness from the people of our country. I would also like to give an example to encourage the newly-elected MPs who are eligible and are going to attend the crash courses in English.

English is easy to learn but hard to master because it is a living language. A lot of new words are added to this language day by day.

But I feel encouraged to know that the levels of these crash courses will be conducted by qualified teachers under the supervision and cooperation between the respective offices of the Hluttaws and the British Council in Yangon. But don’t expect too much from these courses; Rome was not built in a day.

Something is better than nothing. Hope for the best and prepare for the worst. I would like to advise the newly-elected MPs not to get discouraged: English is one of your tools; you have already got a lot of other qualities—supervision, management, honesty, hard work and finally trustworthiness from the people of our country. I would also like to give an example to encourage the newly-elected MPs who are eligible and are going to attend the crash courses in English.

In Yangon City center well past mid-day daily appear the roadside ‘shops’ with their motley of wares displayed on the pavement temporarily on ground sheets, sometimes with makeshift shelter leaving only a small lane for pedestrians to maneuver. Some new, some used and some imitation articles probably, displayed led the sellers making their sales pitch loudly attracting townpeople, rural folks and curious on-lookers examining the displayed goods and making offers in the hope of an article at a bargain price purchasing compared to similar articles the stores are selling.

Also on the pavements, local ‘fast food’ stalls there are, some cooking varieties of ‘Deep-fried Foods’ of Myanmar some in the open, some under makeshift shelters with gas, coal or wood open fire stoves, mindful of safety in the midst of pedestrians going about their affairs in the city.

The pavement food ‘stalls’, small stalls surrounding with people sometimes in small groups patronizing. Workers, shoppers, or those in the city for official business eating food at prices competitive with permanent food places. The temporary food shops of course are filling a need for people as a source of reasonably priced food indeed. Sad thing is that many of the food ‘stalls’ are situated near garbage containers and some times even located quite near to some of the deep uncovered drains of the city’s liquid wastes with germs of various strains. To make matters worse some of the temporary food sellers often clean their plates and cutlery used by the customers with a few quick dips in often reused storm water instead of fetching more fresh water for that matter.

Perhaps, roadside food sellers of the City center for safety and health reasons could be relocated elsewhere as on designated ‘food-floors’ complete with piped water in the city’s municipal markets or other locations that are proper.

Lokethar
US general sought greater powers in Afghanistan before exit

WASHINGTON — The US general who until last week commanded the NATO-led coalition in Afghanistan said on Friday he recommended broader scope for US military activity as the country fends off a resilient Taliban insurgency.

Army General John Campbell declined to disclose the specific powers he requested from President Barack Obama's administration before he stepped down as part of a normal leadership transition. But he expressed a sense of urgency, “otherwise it’s not going to impact” the war in 2016.

“I’m not going to get more people. So the only way that I can impact is potentially change some of the authorities we have. So authorities deal with: what you can strike, what you can’t strike, at what levels you can do train, advise, assist,” Campbell told a group of reporters at the Pentagon.

“So I’ve asked for some modifications.”

The incoming commander, General John Nicholson, will also get to weigh in on the matter, Campbell said.

Campbell acknowledged frustrations over the lengthy bureaucratic process behind decision-making in Washington, something other Pentagon chiefs, including Obama’s three past defence secretaries, have also noted.

“But I would tell you with President Obama — every time I would get to the president, I got the decision I was really looking for,” he said.

Since Campbell’s arrival in Afghanistan in 2014, Obama has rolled back some of his drawdown plans as Taliban militants made gains, Islamic State established a nascent presence and casualties increased among Afghan security forces.

The Obama administration also gave US forces broader authority to hit Islamic State fighters in Afghanistan, who Campbell said probably numbered closer to 1,000 than 3,000 fighters.

Campbell’s successor, Nicholson, inherits a conflict that is testing Afghan security forces and the roughly 13,000 international troops who remain, with insurgents contesting or controlling as much as a third of Afghanistan.

US rules for engagement are far more limited in Afghanistan since NATO ended its combat mission in 2014.

Campbell acknowledged that even with new authorities, much would come down to the performance of Afghan forces, who he said needed to continue to come off checkpoints and become more maneuverable as they seek to push back the Taliban.

“We could have all the authorities we want. If the Afghans aren’t doing what they need to do, it’s not going to make a difference,” he said, even as he lauded their efforts so far.— Reuters

Lebanese minister says garbage crisis ‘99 per cent solved’

BEIRUT — Lebanon’s Interior Minister Nohad Machnouk said on Friday the country’s rubbish crisis had been “99 per cent solved” at a government committee meeting on the issue.

The Lebanese National News Agency quoted Machnouk and reported there would be a cabinet meeting yesterday to finalize the agreement. It gave no further details.

Politicians’ failure to agree on a solution for garbage disposal has left mountains of trash piling up in and around Beirut for months and prompted warnings over the potential spread of diseases. Lebanon cancelled a plan to export its rubbish to Russia last month, a government agency said.

The problem is symptomatic of political deadlock that has left the country without a president for almost two years and prevented the government from taking even basic decisions.

Opposing factions include parties backed by regional rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran. Conflict across the Middle East, including the war in neighbouring Syria, where Iran and Saudi Arabia support warring sides, has strained Lebanon’s sectarian political system.

Saudi Arabia recently halted $3 billion of aid to Lebanon’s armed forces, blaming the government’s failure to condemn attacks on its diplomatic missions in Iran after Riyadh executed a Shi’ite cleric.

Arab states have also labelled Shi’ite Hezbollah, a powerful political and military force in Lebanon, a terrorist organisation.— Reuters

Syria opposition to attend Geneva peace talks

BEIRUT — Syria’s main opposition group said it would attend peace talks on Monday but accused the government of President Bashar al-Assad of preparing to escalate the war to strengthen its negotiating position.

The UN-brokered talks, which coincide with the fifth anniversary of the conflict, will take place in Geneva two weeks after the start of a ceasefire agreement.

The truce deal has reduced violence although not halted the fighting, with further hostilities reported in western Syria on Friday, and as battles against Islamic State raged further east.

The High Negotiations Committee said on Friday it would attend the peace talks as part of its “commitment to international efforts to stop the spilling of Syrian blood and find a political solution”.

But it played down any chance of reaching agreement with the Syrian government to end the war that has killed more than 250,000 people and led to a refugee crisis in the Middle East and Europe.

Russia said it expected its ally Syria to attend, although Damascus has yet to publicly confirm it will do so. The Syrian foreign minister is expected to announce his government’s position on the talks on Saturday.

Peace talks convened two years ago collapsed because the sides were unable to agree an agenda: Damascus wanted a focus on fighting terrorism, the term it uses for the rebellion, while the opposition wanted to discuss a transitional government.

A senior adviser to Assad, Bouthaina Shaaban, said on Friday Russia had done more to fight terrorism in Syria than the United States and its allies, according to a BBC interview cited by state news agency SANA.

The latest talks are intended to focus on future political arrangements in Syria, a new constitution and elections. UN envoy Staffan de Mistura said.

The opposition HNC said it wanted the talks to concentrate on the establishment of an interim governing body with full executive powers.

HNC coordinator Riad Hijab said the group was “concerned with representing the just cause of the Syrian people ... and investing in all available chances to alleviate the Syrian people’s suffering”.

“We know that they (the government) are committing crimes, and that they are preparing an air and ground escalation in the coming period,” he said, without elaborating.

HNC spokesman Salim al-Muslat said they expected a government escalation with the aim of strengthening Damascus’s position at the negotiating table.

“I believe this is a strategy,” he said.

A prominent Syrian dissident who is not part of the Saa di-backed HNC, Haytham Man na, said he would stay away from the talks, which he regarded as a “failing project”.

Manna, co-leader of the Syrian Democratic Council that includes Kurdish members, boycotted the last round of talks because the Kurds were not included.— Reuters
Reading from a tablet before bed may affect sleep quality

SWITZERLAND — People who read from an iPad for 30 minutes before going to sleep felt less sleepy and had different electrical activity in the brain during sleep than those who read from a physical book, a recent study found.

But the time it took to fall asleep and time spent sleeping were similar under both conditions.

“Since light has an alerting effect, we predicted a lower sleep onset as well as the time between lights off and sleep onset as the time between sleep onset and first period of REM (rapid eye movement) sleep,” said lead author Janne Gronli of the University of Bergen in Norway. But it was surprising that the iPad light did not delay sleep initiation, she said.

However, “we found a delay of 30 minutes in the generation of the restorative slow waves during sleep in the iPad condition,” said lead author Janne Gronli of the University of Bergen in Norway. But it was surprising that the iPad light did not delay sleep initiation, she said.

“Since light has an alerting effect, we predicted a lower sleep onset as well as the time between lights off and sleep onset as the time between sleep onset and first period of REM (rapid eye movement) sleep,” said lead author Janne Gronli of the University of Bergen in Norway. But it was surprising that the iPad light did not delay sleep initiation, she said.

The study included 16 non-smokers ages 22 to 33 who were familiar with tablets and had no sleep, medical or psychiatric disorders. For a week before the study began, they were instructed to keep to a regular sleep-wake schedule and to stay in bed at least as long as they needed to sleep.

During the study, in which participants slept in their own beds, the researchers took polysomnographic recordings for three nights of sleep: one to collect a baseline of how each person slept, one night of reading from an iPad for 30 minutes before turning off the light and one night of reading from a book for the same amount of time.

On the night they read from a book, the participants used ordinary reading light in their bedrooms.

The polysomnographic recordings, including electroencephalograms to measure brain electrical activity, collected data on total sleep time, sleep efficiency, percentage of time spent in each sleep stage, and other aspects of sleep quality during the time between lights off and sleep onset as well as the time between sleep onset and first period of REM (rapid eye movement) sleep.

A light metre measured illumination at eye level while the participants were reading in each condition. Illumination was about twice as high while reading from the iPad compared to the book, and the iPad emitted a high level of blue light, the researchers note.

Bedtime and the time at which people got up from bed were similar in both conditions, with an average sleep duration of slightly less than eight hours on both days.—Reuters

US doctor with Lassa fever en route to Atlanta from West Africa

ATLANTA — An American doctor who was working with missionaries in West Africa is being moved to an isolation ward at an Atlanta hospital on Friday with a suspected case of Lassa fever, a deadly hemorrhagic disease similar to Ebola, officials said.

The patient, who has not been identified publicly, was being flown in a specially equipped aircraft from Togo and was expected to arrive at Emory University Hospital sometime Friday or this weekend, officials said.

The isolation ward is where Emory successfully treated four Ebola patients in 2014, said Dr. Bruce Ribner, director of Emory’s Serious Communicable Disease Unit.

“The take-away from this for the public, is that there is absolutely no risk to anyone,” he said. “We’ve shown that we can handle Ebola and this is a lot less communicable.”

Lassa fever has been endemic in Africa for many years, with up to 300,000 infections annually. Only about 3 per cent presenting symptoms severe enough need hospitalisation, Ribner said.

Of those hospitalised, about 20 per cent of the cases are fatal, compared with a 70 per cent rate for all patients who catch Ebola, which is transmitted through blood and bodily fluids.

“With Lassa, most of the people who get it never even know it,” Ribner said.

The worst Ebola outbreak in recorded history began in West Africa in December 2013, spreading to at least 11 countries on the continent before petering out. In all, more than 11,300 people died, almost all in the three worst-affected countries.

At its height, the Ebola outbreak sparked fear around the world, prompting governments and businesses to take emergency precautions.

An outbreak of Lassa fever is now underway in Nigeria, according to the World Health Organisation, and it is starting to spread to nearby countries including Togo. According to a WHO statement, 190 cases of Lassa fever and 82 deaths were reported between August 2015 and January 2016. Some media reports have said as many as 101 people have died from Lassa fever since the outbreak began.

Like Ebola, Lassa causes a severe fever with bleeding, Ribner said. It is most commonly transmitted to people from rodents excreting the virus, which can be transmitted from person to person by contact with blood or bodily fluids, Ribner said. He said the hospital will take every precaution and that the public should not be alarmed.

“You can’t catch it like you get the common cold,” he said. “We can handle this.”—Reuters

Spacecraft to seek life on Mars in European-led mission

BERLIN — A spacecraft is due to set off for Mars next week on a mission that scientists hope will help answer one of the most burning questions of spacefaring times: Is there life on other planets?

The craft, part of the European-Russian ExoMars programme, is to lift off from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on board a Proton rocket at 3:31AM EDT (0931 GMT) on Monday, starting a seven-month journey through space.

It will carry an atmospheric trace gas orbiter and a lander that will test technology needed for a rover due to follow in 2018.

US space agency NASA’s Mars rover Curiosity in late 2014 found spurs of methane gas in the planet’s atmosphere, a chemical that on Earth is strongly tied to life.

Scientists believe the methane could stem from micro-organisms, called methanogens, that either became extinct millions of years ago and left gas frozen below the planet’s surface, or that some methane-producing organisms still survive.

“Proving that life exists or has existed on Mars would show that Earth is not unique in terms of having life on it,” Rolf de Groot, head of the European Space Agency’s (ESA) Robotic Exploration Coordination Office, told Reuters.

“That would make it much more likely that there are other places in the universe that also have life,” he added.

Another explanation for the methane in Mars’s atmosphere could be that it is produced by geological phenomena, like the oxidation of iron.

The second part of the ExoMars mission in 2018 will deliver a European rover to the surface of Mars. It will be the first with the ability to both move across the planet’s surface and drill into the ground to collect and analyse samples.

“The radiation from space destroys all the biological material. If you go two metres into the ground you may be able to find places you were protected (from radiation),” de Groot said.

Landing on Mars is a notoriously difficult task that has bedevilled nearly all of Russia’s previous efforts and has given NASA trouble as well. The United States currently has two operational rovers on Mars, Curiosity and Opportunity.

The ExoMars 2016 mission is led by ESA, with Russia’s Roscosmos supplying the launcher and two of the four scientific instruments on the trace gas orbiter.

The prime contractor is Thales Alenia Space, a joint venture between Thales and Finmeccanica.

The cost of the ExoMars mission to ESA, including the second part due in 2018, is expected to be about 1.3 billion euros ($1.4 billion). Russia’s contribution comes on top of that.

In 2018, NASA also plans to launch a Mars spacecraft, a satellite known as InSight and designed to study the deep interior of Mars, the US agency said this week.—Reuters

An outbreak of Lassa fever is now underway in Nigeria, according to the World Health Organisation, and it is starting to spread to nearby countries including Togo.
Trump snags former rival’s backing, scraps Chicago rally

C H I C A G O / P A L M BEACH, (Fla) — US presidential candidate Donald Trump canceled a campaign rally Friday night amid security concerns just hours after the Republican front-runner earned the endorsement of a former rival who said the billionaire’s pugnacious campaign style is belied by a more thoughtful, private side.

“There are two different Donald Trumps: there’s the one you see on the stage and there’s the one who’s very cerebral, sits there and considers things very carefully,” Ben Carson said Friday as he became the second former Republican candidate to back Trump in the White House race.

The soft-spoken retired neurosurgeon, who dropped out of the race last week, said the American people would be “comforted” when they discover Trump’s gentler side.

The thousands of protesters who showed up for Trump’s rally Friday evening at the University of Illinois at Chicago — along with thousands of supporters — showed little indication they had noticed anything but the candidate’s combative campaign style.

The university arena turned into a chaotic scene as the two warring sides amped up their positions. A half hour after the rally was slated to begin, a Trump campaign staffer announced it was being postponed for safety reasons, unleashing competing chants of “We dumped Trump!” and “We want Trump!” throughout the packed venue.

“We made a great decision not to have the rally,” Trump told CNN after meeting with law enforcement and making the call. “I am not a person that wants to see violence,” he added. Trump blamed protesters for creating disturbances at his campaign events and said it is a “love fest” among his supporters.

“I’ll be in Chicago on Friday’s event in Chi- cago stood out because the huge number of protesters virtually matched the number of Trump supporters, as opposed to other Trump campaign events where protesters have been a very small, albeit vocal, minority.

Earlier in the day, speaking at a public event in St. Louis, Missouri, Trump was interrupted repeatedly by protesters who were led out of the event by police and security, an increasingly common occurrence at his raucous rallies.

“He’s all mouth, get him out,” Trump shouted as one of the protesters was led out. “Go back to mommy,” he said as another protester was led away.

The latest endorsement for Trump followed a Republican debate in Miami on Thursday night at which Trump and the remaining three candidates in the Repub- lican race struck a mark- edly more civil tone.

Carson shot to the top of the Republican pack last year but faltered in the early nominating contests. His endorsement is unlikely to dramatically shift the Re- publican race, but it gives Trump a boost as the Repub- lican establishment cranks up attacks, and comes just days before crucial nomina- ting contests in the battle to be the party’s presidential candidate for the 8 November election.

The Republican primaries are to be held on Tuesday in five states will be critical for Trump to cement his lead, and to determine whether US Senator Marco Rubio of Florida and Ohio Governor John Kasich, whose home states are among those holding contests on Tuesday, will be able to continue with their increasingly long-shot candidacies. Trump’s nearest ri- val in the race is US Senator Ted Cruz of Texas.

Carson’s comments on Friday aimed to soften Trump’s public image after a campaign marked by his de- meaning personal attacks on opponents, harsh comments about Mexican immigrants and calls to temporarily bar all Muslims from entering the country.— Reuters

South African court to try misconduct cases against peacekeepers in Congo

KINSHASA — A mobile South African mil- itary court has arrived in the Democratic Republic of Congo to try 32 South African peacekeepers ac- cused of misconduct, the UN mission in Congo said on Friday.

UN peacekeeping mis- sions have been dogged by accusations of sexual abuse. The United Nations reported 99 such allega- tions against staff members across the UN system last year.

Friday’s statement said none of the 32 cases to be tried in Congo involved alleged sexual abuse. It said that the mobile courts, which South Africa first used in 2001, represented an important tool in the fight against impunity.

“Holding the trial in DRC is indeed more prac- tical, less costly and, above all, more attentive to the circumstances of victims who are not able to travel to another country,” the state- ment said.

It added that the mo- bile court, which arrived this week, consisted of a judge, a lawyer, a prosecutor and a clerk. It will hold hearings in the cap- ital Kinshasa and in the conflict-torn east before returning to South Africa on 22 March.

The statement said the alleged infractions dated back as far as May 2015, but did not specify the charges.

“We’re trying to clamp down on all elements of ill-discipline wherever they are,” military spokesman Xolani Mbanga said in South Africa.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called this month on troop-contribut- ing states to allow prosecu- tions inside countries where the alleged crimes took place and for the creation of a DNA registry of all peace- keepers.— Reuters

Trudeau sees no flood of Americans to Canada if Trump wins

WASHINGTON Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Friday joked that he is not expecting an influx of unhappy Ameri- cans across the border if fire- brand Republican Donald Trump becomes president.

As Trump’s populari- ty builds in the race for the Republican presidential nomination, Internet search providers have noted a spike in queries from Americans about moving to Canada.

Trudeau told students on the third day of an official visit to the United States, however, that the idea of migration by voters who feared ending up on the los- ing side was common during US election campaigns.

“If over the past de- cades that had been the case, we’d have more people in Canada than in the United States ... It becomes an easy thing to cry out,” he said dur- ing a discussion at Washing- ton’s American University. Canada’s population is just over a tenth the size of that of the United States.

Trudeau said Canadians and Americans continually crossed the border to live in the other country.

“That’s just the nature of our friendship and rela- tionship and to link it too much to politics is humor- ous ... There will always be flows back and forth and one must never fret or be disap- pointed with that,” he said.

Migration data from after Republican George W. Bush’s 2000 election and 2004 re-election — other times when some liberal Americans pledged to move to Canada in protest — sug- gests few followed up on their promise.

Trudeau, whose Lib- erals took power in Cana- da last November, had previously largely avoided questions about the conse- quences of a Trump victory, saying he will work with whomever wins.

Earlier this week he said he would neither fight Trump nor support him but understood his appeal for people fed up with politics.

Trudeau made his com- ments a day after talks at the White House that set the seal on better ties with the United States. Trudeau and Presi- dent Barack Obama agreed joint steps to combat climate change and make it easier for people and goods to flow back and forth across their countries’ border.

Trump has in the past made clear he was not interested in the North American Free Trade Agreement, which could cripple the Canadian econ- omy. Keeping good relations with the United States is crit- ical for Canada, which sends 75 per cent of its exports to its southern neighbour.— Reuters

Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau. Photo: Reuters

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South African teen finds suspected piece of missing MH370 plane

JOHANNESBURG — A South African teenager has found debris which will be sent to Australia for testing as part of the investigation into the disappearance of a Malaysian Airlines plane two years ago, the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) said on Friday.

Liam Lotter, 18, told South Africa’s East Coast radio he found the piece of debris on a beach in Mozambique while on holiday in December and his family took it back to their home in South Africa.

He said that after a suspected part of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 was found in Mozambique last week his family made the connection with his find.

“That white, metre-long chunk of metal is being tested by officials in Australia, with help from Malaysian authorities and representatives of manufacturer Boeing Co (B.A.N.). South African authorities plan to hand over the debris found by Lotter to the same Australian team.

“We are arranging for collection of the part, which will then be sent to Australia as they are the ones appointed by Malaysia to identify parts found,” SACAA spokesman Kabelo Ledwaba told Reuters.

Flight MH370 disappeared on 8 March, 2014, with 239 passengers and crew on board, shortly after taking off from Kuala Lumpur bound for Beijing. It is believed to have crashed in the Indian Ocean.

A piece of the plane’s wing was washed up on the French Indian Ocean island of Reunion in July.—— Reuters

Canada dam construction moves ahead following indigenous protest

TORONTO — Construction of a major dam in northern Canada is moving full steam ahead after some work was halted by an occupation by indigenous activists angry about its impact on land rights, its builders say.

At a cost of more than $8 billion, the hydroelectric dam project in northwestern British Columbia province will flood more than 5,000 hectares of land, the equivalent of about 5,000 rugby fields.

Local farmers and indigenous people who have lived and hunted in the area for generations say their traditional lands will be inundated to provide power to far-away urban centres.

“This is our home. We use this land,” Helen Knott, an indigenous activist told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, adding, “Rivers are the arteries of Mother Earth. When you block those, the planet is going to get sick.”

Knott and other community members dismantled a protest camp at the construction site this month following a court injunction.

Their protest lasted about two months, halting construction on part of the project.

Supporters of the dam known as Site C, which include businesses and government, say it will generate clean energy and economic growth and flood sparsely populated land in the vast hinterland.

“This project is expected to create about 10,000 construction jobs and about 33,000 direct and indirect jobs,” said Dave Conway, spokesman for B.C. Hydro, the government-linked company behind the project, earlier this month.

“Protesters left the site peacefully, and work has resumed,” he said.

The dam should begin producing electricity in 2024, Conway said. Much of the current work involves building labour camps for workers and clearing the land.

Four separate court cases challenging aspects of the project are making their way through Canadian courts, and more protests are planned, opponents said.

The project conflicts with long-standing treaties between indigenous people in the region and the Canadian government, a spokesman for Amnesty International said.

Northern British Columbia is already a major site of natural gas extraction and other resource projects, and the dam could leave indigenous groups unable to hunt on the land, Amnesty said.

The land they use is being chipped away, said Amnesty’s spokesman Craig Benjamin.

“Year after year, project after project, little pieces have been taken away until there is almost nothing left,” he said.— Reuters

French government fails to convince student unions on labour reform

PARIS — The French government failed to convince student organisations in talks on Friday of the merits of its labour reform plans, and the unions stepped out of the meetings making renewed calls for street protests next week. Students and unions staged rallies across France on Wednesday, and more are scheduled for Saturday, Thursday and 31 March.

Just over a year before presidential elections, Socialist President Francois Hollande, already deeply unpopular, has found ways to tackle growing anger from left-wing youth organisations that would usually back him.

Hollande and his government have said they are willing to make some tweaks but want to stick to the main aspects of a reform that aims to loosen labour relations and make them open to negotiation at individual companies. “We want that law to be withdrawn,” William Martinet, the head of France’s biggest student group Unef, which is close to the ruling Socialist party, said after talks with Prime Minister Manuel Valls and his labour and economy ministers.

He told reporters that Friday’s talks had only strengthened the union’s belief that protests were all that could be done to persuade the government to change its mind.

Unef has for decades been close to the Socialist party, and many of the party’s top officials come from its ranks, some of whom are giving the union cash handouts to support its campaign.

Alexandre Levy from students union FAGE, which says it represents 2,000 students associations, also called on students to take to the streets yesterday.

“If nothing’s done, we’re heading to a dead-end,” he said. The government’s reform plan aims at limiting the cost of laying off workers and puts most aspects of France’s strictly codified rules on labour relations up for negotiation.

Initially due to be adopted in a cabinet meeting this week, the bill was postponed by two weeks after it triggered harsh criticism from within the Socialist party.— Reuters

French police apprehend a man during a demonstration against the French labour law proposal in Lyon, France, as part of nationwide labour reform bill protests by students and union members, on 9 March.—— Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV IRAWADDY STAR VOY NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV IRAWADDY STAR VOY NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 13.3.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim’s Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: M/S CONTINENTAL SHIPPING LINE PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV MARENS VOY NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MARENS VOY NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 13.3.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T/M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim’s Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT (S’PORE) PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185
Beyoncé's new album is very powerful

LONDON — Beyoncé has the ability “to make you forget she’s a superstar,” according to songwriter Carla Marie Williams.

The music professional has been working with the R&B legend on her upcoming album. She has written a track for the record, which is top secret.

“I haven’t heard the whole album but we’re talking real issues. The new single we’ve done is very powerful.”

Carla has previously worked with the likes of Kylie Minogue and Paloma Faith in the past and she is now collaborating with Britney Spears.—PTI

Lukas Graham set pop record in Britain, Adele returns to top

LONDON — Four-piece Lukas Graham set a new record in Britain on Friday by becoming the longest-reigning Number 1 single from a Danish act in UK pop chart history, while Adele returned to the top of the album charts with “25.”

“7 Years” had been tied with Whigfield’s “Saturday Night” and Aqua’s “Barbie Girl,” before scoring a fifth week at the top, the Official Charts Company said on Friday.

“When I’m in the studio with Beyoncé she makes you feel so at ease you forget she is a superstar. I am loving where she is going.”

— Jennifer Garner explains how new faith film made her return to church

LOS ANGELES — In new faith film “Miracles from Heaven”, which is based on a true story, actress Jennifer Garner plays Christy Beam, the mother of a young girl Annabel (Kylie Rogers) who is diagnosed with an incurable and painful disease.

Because of the illness, pressure on the young family was high as Annabel had to undergo numerous hospital appointments and procedures.

However, one day Annabel was involved in a freak accident and fell from a tree and hit her head. When she came to, doctors discovered she’d somehow been cured.

“I mean there’s reason there’s a movie and a book about it,” explained Garner in an interview.

“It’s not a small thing that happened, it’s a really big thing that happened that this child would be cured of something that’s incurable and free from pain that she had for so many years but yeah, I think maybe I had a moment of cynicism about the story but not when I met Christy and certainly not when I met Annabel.”

— “This movie did bring faith back into the conversation of my life and did make me realise that my kids weren’t just going to get this via osmosis because my parents had given this to me, that I actually had to be intentional and to participate in it. I think I’d been lazy about it so I got off my duff and we had a conversation and found a church we loved where they’ve been totally embraced and really happy,” she said.

— “Miracles from Heaven” goes on release in North America on 14 March.—Reuters
Brazil’s mothers left to raise microcephaly babies alone

CAMPINA GRANDE (Brazil) — Ianka Barbosa’s 7 months pregnant when she found out her child had microcephaly. Before the baby was even born, the father had gone.

Ianka, 18, blames the break-up on her baby’s abnormally small head and brain damage that doctors link to the Zika virus she contracted during pregnancy. “I think, for him, it was my fault the baby has microcephaly,” said Barbosa, wearing a blue dress and cradling tiny two-week old Sophia in a cramped bare brick house where she now lives with her parents in Brazil’s northeast.

“When I most needed his help, he left me.”

The house, which overlooks a polluted stream on the edge of a poor neighbourhood, is now home to a family of nine. Only Barbosa’s father has a job doing occasional building work. Her ex-partner, Theresa, says he does not see Sophia, but avoids discussing microcephaly and blames Barbosa’s parents for the break-up. “I gave her the choice, are you your parents’ woman or mine … And she chose her parents.

Single parents are common in Brazil where some studies show as many as 1 in 3 children from poor families grow up without their biological father, but doctors on the frontline of the Zika outbreak say they are concerned about how many mothers of babies with microcephaly are being abandoned.

With the health service already under strain, abortion prohibited, and the virus hitting the poorest hardest, an absent father is yet another burden on mothers already struggling to cope with raising a child that might never walk or talk.

At a specialised microcephaly clinic in Campina Grande, psychologist Jacqueline Loureiro works with mothers to help them cope with stress and trauma. Of the 41 women she counsels, she says only 10 receive adequate financial or emotional support from their partners.

“At first many of the women say they have a partner, but as you get to know them better you realise the father is never around and the baby and mother have effectively been abandoned,” Loureiro said. Loureiro blames Brazil’s macho culture, which she says is particularly strong in the northeast.

Gender roles are strictly defined and women still tend to care for the baby and look after the household. The added burden of having a child with microcephaly strains this dynamic, says Loureiro, and often the man ends up leaving or refusing to help.

Much remains unknown about Zika, including whether it actually causes microcephaly in babies. Brazil said it has confirmed 745 cases of microcephaly since October, and considers most of them related to Zika infections in the mothers. It is investigating another 4,230 cases of suspected microcephaly.

Until the World Health Organisation declared Zika a global health emergency last month, there was little interest in microcephaly and no data for its toll on parents. But studies into children with other special needs shows it substantially increases the chance of marital breakdown. Jennifer Lewis, who runs the US based Microcephaly Foundation and has a 12-year-old daughter with the condition, is not surprised fathers in north-east Brazil are abandoning partners and children. Her charity has a network of around 5,000 families and she says the majority are single mothers.—Reuters

Graffiti artwork of drowned Aylan highlights refugees’ plight

FRANKFURT — A huge graffiti image of toddler Aylan Kurdi, pictures of whose dead body stirred global sympathy for migrants fleeing war and poverty, confronts motorists, pedestrians and river travellers in Frankfurt.

Thousands of weekend-day commuters using the Main river footpath and road bridge will see the 120-square-metre image of the three-year-old Syrian boy who drowned in September along with his mother and brother as they tried to reach Europe. The artwork is on a peninsula about a 15-minute walk from the city centre will stay until the autumn.

The artists’ previous projects include graffiti on the boundary fence around the new ECB building in 2014 which showed a female figure representing Justice holding a scales with euro symbols in one weighing pan and refugees in the other.

The Aylan project, which has used 50 litres of wall paint and about 80 cans of spray paint, is intended to provoke by bringing the issue of refugees to Germans’ front doors, explains Becker.

“We hope to have people emotionally rethink their selfish fears of refugees coming to Germany,” says the artist.—Reuters
Late goals send Palace through to FA Cup semis

READING — Late goals by Yo-ohan Cabaye and Fraizer Campbell gave Crystal Palace a 2-0 victory at Championship (sec-ond-tier) club Reading in their FA Cup quarter-final on Friday.

Cabaye opened the scoring with a penalty in the 85th minute after Jake Cooper was sent off for fouling Yannick Bolasie. Substitute Campbell made sure of Palace’s place in the Wembley semi-finals when he pounced on a clever pass from Wilfried Zaha and beat goal-keeper Ali Al Habsi in stoppage time.

“It was a tricky tie for us but we were really good today and should have wrapped it up before the penalty,” Palace manager Alan Pardew told the BBC after his side reached the last four for the first time since 1995.

“It has been a strange run we have been on. We have been ter-rific in the FA Cup but edgy and nervous in the Premier League,” Pardew said.

“Hopefully we can take this into the league,” said former Reading boss Pardew, referring to the fact his team have yet to win a league match in 2016.

France midfielder Cabaye praised Reading’s performance at the Madejski Stadium.

“It was tough, this is a good team with good players but we have done the job,” he said. “It would be amazing to win some-thing and we are one step closer to the final.”

On Saturday, Premier League champions Chelsea visit Everton while on Sunday holders Arsenal host Watford and Manchester United entertain West Ham United.— Reuters

Yorke wants Giggs in charge of Manchester United

SINGAPORE — Manchester United should sack Louis Van Gaal and install his assistant Ryan Giggs as manager, according to former striker Dwight Yorke who wants to launch his own manag-er career at struggling Aston Villa.

The former Trinidad and Tobago striker said changes were needed at United, with the 20-times English champions sixth in the Premier League, out of the Champions League and suffering a 2-0 loss to arch-rivals Liverpool in the Europa League this week.

“At the end of the day, it’s all about results,” Yorke was quoted as saying by Singaporean daily The New Paper yesterday after a promotional event in the Southeast Asian citystate.

“In the two years that he’s (Van Gaal) been there, he’s spent tons of money, brought in tons of players, and simply hasn’t got the results that he and everyone else had hoped to.”

“You see a lot of young man-agers, Zinedine Zidane’s been given the opportunity at Real Madrid, you got Luis Enrique at Barcelo-na, Pep Guardiola who’s coming to Manchester City, Tottenham’s Mauricio Pochettino, they’re all ex-players.”

“And I feel that the game is going down that road, and maybe this is the right time to give Giggsy the job.”

Yorke won three Premier League titles and the 1999 Cham-pions League with United under former manager Alex Ferguson after joining from Aston Villa.

The 44-year-old said he was heartbroken to see Villa struggle at the foot of the table under manager Remi Garde and said he would love the chance to try and rectify the problems. “I feel feel I can turn it around for them, if they give me the opportunity to do that,” he said.

“They’re a club I know very well, the structure is very strong, and if they go into the Champion-ship (second-tier) next year...I have the experience and what it takes to win that Championship down there.”— Reuters

Venus makes early exit, dominant Serena advances

INDIAN WELLS — Venus Williams’ return to Indian Wells lasted just one match but sister Serena looked poised for a long run after a dominant win at the BNP Paribas Open on Friday.

Venus returned to the event for the first time since 2001, having boycotted it after being booted and heckled by fans during her previous trip, but made a quick exit after a 6-4, 6-3 defeat to Japanese qualifier Kurumi Nara in the second round.

The 15-year-old incident had occurred when Venus withdrew from a semi-final match with Serena, drawing fire from the crowd aimed at the Williams family.

This time, though, Venus was greeted warmly by the crowd before her match and throughout it, a consolation for her poor performance.

“It was enough of a fairy-tale to come here and play,” Venus told reporters. “A win would have been nice, but that means I have to come back, play next year.”

Serena had no such issues with German opponent Laura Siegemund in a 6-2, 6-1 romp.

The world number one had already reconciled with the event last year when she ended her own boycott and she appeared freed up as she needed a little over an hour to advance.

“My intensity was key. I knew if I didn’t start fast it was going to be a long match,” Serena said.

In earlier action, third seeded Agnieszka Radwanska prevailed in a three-set thriller against Dominika Cibulkova 6-3, 3-6, 7-5. She rallied from an early 4-1 deficit to push through.

Defending champion Simona Halep made easy work of Vania King 6-1, 6-1.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova, the No.8 seed from the Czech Re-public, needed a third-set tie-breaker in a 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (5) victory over Danka Kovinic of Montenegro.— Reuters

Powell to carry Jamaica’s hopes at world indoors

Asafa Powell of Jamaica celebrates with teammates after winning the men’s 4 x 100 metres relay final during the 15th IAAF World Championships at the National Stadium in Beijing, China in 2015. PHOTO: Reuters

KINGSTON — Asafa Powell will carry Jamaica’s sprinting hopes at the world indoor championships this month as the former 100 metres world record holder was named to his country’s squad on Friday.

Powell will be the biggest name on the Jamaican team at the 17-20 March worlds in Portland, Oregon, that will not include Usain Bolt as the world record holder over 100 and 200 metres does not race indoors.

The Jamaican team will be made up of 11 men and 13 women, the Jamaica Athletics Administrative Association said in a statement.

Powell, 33, is a two-time world championships 100m bronze medallist. The women’s team includes reigning 100m hurdles world champion Danielle Williams and 200m silver medallist Elaine Thompson from the 2015 world champi-onships in Beijing.— Reuters