ART MEETS POLITICS

Academy Awards recognise 18 films from 2014-15

Academy Awards ceremony was held yesterday in Yangon, with 18 awards going to films released in 2014 and 2015. A total of 30 Myanmar films came out in that period.

In a message she sent to the occasion, National League for Democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi expressed high hopes for improvement in the areas of art and technology as the film industry has undergone challenges and accumulated more experience.

She also called upon individual citizens to play their part in national development, the same way various people cooperate to produce a successful film.

Myanmar’s film industry will turn 100 years old in 2020. Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko made the opening speech at the ceremony, urging all actors, actresses, directors, producers and technicians in the film industry and other artistic fields to cooperate with the government in order to achieve the government’s goal of establishing a genuine federal Union that can guarantee democracy, fundamental human rights, national reconciliation and eternal peace.

Famous comedians Bay Lu Wa and Gwan Pone won the awards for best supporting actor and actress, respectively, much to the delight of the audience.

“Kaung-kyo-ko-hnai-ti-say min” released in 2014 bagged five awards for music, editing, manuscript, film and supporting actress.

“I am a rose, my dear” released in 2015 won the best actor and actress award, respectively, for the first time, much to the delight of the audience.

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Mandalay hosts discussion on traditional marionette arts

A TALK titled “The Future of Myanmar Marionette Drama Troupes” was held at the National Theatre in Aungmyethazan Township, Mandalay, on 2 April. Officials from the Fine Arts Department under the Ministry of Culture, students and faculty members from the drama departments at the National University of Arts and Culture in Yangon and the National University of Arts and Culture in Mandalay and members of the Myanmar Marionette Troupes Development Association attended the talk.

At the event, Professor U Khine Htun from the Department of Dramatic Arts at the National University of Arts and Culture in Yangon, author Nyo Htun Lu and Thanlyin Maung Wint War discussed “The Future of The Myanmar Marionette Drama Troupes”; author Chit San Win spoke about “Original Myanmar Marionette Drama Troupes”; Mr Dadi Pudumjee, president of the Union Internationale de la Marionette (UNIMA), discussed the history of that organization; Myanmar traditional orchestra artiste U Than Chaung and musician U Sein Mut Tar discussed “Children’s Education and Myanmar Marionettes”; lecturer U Aung Toe and lecturer Daw Win Pa Pa of the National University of Arts and Culture in Mandalay and the National University of Arts and Culture in Yangon discussed “The History of Myanmar Marionette Drama Troupes”.

Three arrested for hunting deer in sanctuary

THREE men hunting deer in Shwesettaw Sanctuary were arrested on 2 April by police. Staff of the Pwintphyu Township Forestry Department found the illegal hunters in the sanctuary while patrolling the area and informed the police.

Local police went to the sanctuary and arrested the three hunters—Win Khang, 32, Aung Ko Zin, 24, and Hlaing Min Htay, 21, while they were hunting the endangered species using 43 traps.

Action has been taken against the three men under Section 37(a) of the Conservation of Wildlife and Flora and Fauna Law.—Myitmakha News Agency

Three suspects arrested for theft

THREE young men have been arrested on suspicion of stealing mobile phones and laptops around Yangon Region, according to an announcement by the Yangon Region Police Force yesterday.

Aung Aung, Kyaw Ye Aung and Kyaw Kyaw were arrested on 13 March, and jewellery, several mobile phones and lap tops were confiscated from them.

Charges have been filed against them.—GNLM

Crime

Greater Mekong farmers hit by water shortages

The falling of Mekong river water level to the lowest point so far this year have caused farmers from the Greater Mekong Subregion, which includes China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, to experience problems caused by water shortages, according to environmentalists.

It is the first time in ninety years that the waters of the Mekong have fallen to such depth, rendering farmers in villages along the Myanmar side of border with Laos unable to cultivate their crops.

“People still rely upon the Mekong river to cultivate their paddy as well as other crops. We farmers are in spot of bother because of declining water level to their lowest point yet. We’ve planted our first batch of crops, but have hesitated from planting our second lot because of scarcity of water. We’re going to have to wait for the raining season before we plant again,” said Ko Win Soe, a farmer from a village along the Myanmar side of the border with Laos.

Chinese State newspapers published on 15 March by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed a decision had been made to open the Mekong Jinghong hydro-power dam, allowing water to flow into the Mekong, in light of the aforementioned water shortages.

“The falling of water level of the Mekong is also related to a lack of rain fall. The stream and water channel reserves in Thailand for instance have all but dried up. The Thai government issued a state of emergency in response, with people now sourcing water from the Mekong enmasse. They are also implementing the direct distribution of water from the Mekong to [Thai] farmers,” explained Daw May Zar Kyi Lin, an environmentalist from Thachileik.

While the Chinese plan of action to introduce water into the Mekong to alleviate current water shortages is a short term solution, farmers residing along the river are concerned about what the future holds for the supply of water from the Mekong, and water channel reserves in Thailand for instance have all but dried up. The Thai government issued a state of emergency in response, with people now sourcing water from the Mekong enmasse. They are also implementing the direct distribution of water from the Mekong to [Thai] farmers, explained Daw May Zar Kyi Lin, an environmentalist from Thachileik.

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Police seize two kilos of heroin, 60,000 yaba pills

POLICE in Lashio seized 2,442 kilos of heroin and 60,000 yaba pills hidden in a Landcruiser on 1 April.

The combined team comprising an anti-drug squad and local police searched the car driven by Le Lauk El carrying passenger Maran Shwe Chint on the Lashio-Mongyaw road in Lashio and found the heroin hidden in 222 soup cans, along with the yaba pills.

Action has been taken against the driver and passenger under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—Myanmar Police Force

Aung Aung, Kyaw Ye Aung and Kyaw Kyaw.

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Union Minister urges state media to embrace ‘public-facing’ content

STATE-OWNED media should report not only departmental press releases but also news that embraces “public-facing content”, said newly appointed Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint yesterday in a meeting with departmental officials and correspondents from the state-owned daily newspapers in Yangon.

The Union minister met officials from the departments and enterprises, including chief editors, editors and reporters from state-owned dailies at the Printing and Publishing Department in Yangon.

The new government will strive to turn state-run media into a public-facing platform—a slight change from what the previous government called ‘public service’.

The cabinet members are ultimately accountable to the people and responsible for informing them of their ministerial undertakings, Dr Pe Myint said, stressing the need for the dailies to act as intermediaries between the government and the public.

He urged state-owned papers to focus on news that commented on the government’s weaknesses, shortages and inconveniences in dealing with governmental departments.

The information minister also hinted at leaving the power to choose news content in the hands of the editors-in-chief.

— Myanmar News Agency

Daw Suu sends message to Academy Awards ceremony

THE Academy Awards Presentation ceremony was held at the Myanmar Event Park in Yangon yesterday to honour the best films of 2014 and 2015, with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi sending a message to the event.

In her message, the Union minister for education, foreign affairs, electric power and energy and the President’s Office described the film industry as the most penetrative and the most influential medium of mass communication. The leader of the National League for Democracy attributed the success of films to the hard work and joint efforts among the people involved in producing them.

She expressed high hopes for further improvement in the areas of art and technology as the film industry has undergone challenges and accumulated experience. The film industry will turn 100 years old in 2020, she pointed out.

Suu Kyi called upon individual citizens to do their part for national development in the same way people must cooperate to produce a successful film.

— Myanmar News Agency

World Kidney Day observed by MMA in Mandalay

THE Myanmar Medical Association in Mandalay celebrated World Kidney Day at its office yesterday, giving educational talks reflecting this year’s theme—“Kidney Disease and Children: Act Early to Prevent It”.

The day was commemorated with the aim of raising public awareness of kidney diseases, which have the potential to affect people of any age, including children, said Dr Khin Maung Kyaw, urinarian and kidney specialist at the Mandalay General Hospital.

The kidney specialist advised families with a history of kidney diseases to have regular medical check-ups. The kidneys help remove waste products from the blood and produce hormones.

The World Health Organisation established the day in 2006.—Aung Thant Khaing

Academy Awards recognise 18 films from 2014-15

Eighteen awards were given out to winners at the Academy Award presentation ceremony for 2016. Myanma Motion Picture Association has a plan to hold the annual ceremony in late February or early March in coming years.

— Myanmar News Agency

Dawei factory owner concessions to payment demands of employees

A DISPUTE between employees and the employer at the Heinyan Fish Cold Storage Facility, located in the Dawei Special Economic Zone, have ended with the employer agreeing to pay 40 hours of overtime per month for a period of four months to employees.

The agreement of the employer came after a field visit was made to the cold storage facility on 13 March by the township’s Department of Labour, Employment and Social Welfare together with Yangon-based labour unions, after a complaint was made to the township Department of Labour on 10 March by factory workers, who said they received neither overtime, breaks nor days off.

“The owner will pay a total of 40 hours of overtime for each month of the period between December last year until the end of this March. He will also negotiate [with the workers] over issues relating to breaks and days off from work,” said Ko Aung Soe Naing, manager of the cold storage facility.

He also mentioned there would be consultation with relevant bodies over catering to other employee rights on top of a basic salary, with a new contract to be drawn up, which will be signed before the factory closes its doors for the Thingyan holiday period.

“We employees are satisfied [with the offer of our employer]. Just as he acted in a suitable manner concerning the death of our fellow worker, he will issue us the compensation we’ve called for,” said Ko Ngwe Toe Oo, a factory worker. The Department of Labour has issued a reminder to the factory owner to draw up new contracts for his employees before the factory closes for the Thingyan holiday period.

The Heinyan Fish Cold Storage Factory officially opened in Dawei in 2013 and has a workforce of over 70 employees. The intervention of a local police unit into disputes between employees and their employer earlier this month resulted in the death of an employee.

—Myitmakha News Agency
Employment rises throughout
U Thein Sein administration

THE five-year term in office of President U Thein Sein saw an increase in foreign investment into Myanmar, with a 67.85 per cent increase in employment opportunities, according to a statement released by the Myanmar Investment Commission on 30 March.

During the 2011-12 fiscal year, there was an increase of 6,804 employees working for foreign companies, according to the Foreign Investment Law, and rise of 9,805 workers employed within Myanmar companies, according to the Myanmar Investment Law, while the following fiscal year saw a rise of those employed in foreign companies to 62,412 workers and 18,867 workers within Myanmar companies—a rise of 5.13 per cent.

Furthermore, in the 2013-14 fiscal year, there were 77,497 workers in foreign companies and 17,269 in local companies—a rise of 1.16 per cent, while during the 2014-15 fiscal year, there were 105,500 workers in foreign companies and 12,593 in Myanmar companies—a rise of 1.35 per cent. In the current 2015-16 fiscal year, there are 88,572 workers in foreign companies and 22,894 in Myanmar companies—an increase of 0.87 per cent from the previous year.—Myitmakha News Agency

ARDC to repay Union govt K844 million for misused finds

THE Ayeyawady Region Development Committee (ARDC) must repay the Union govt a total of K844.1 million (US$694,079) in cash advances handed out for paving of roads in the regional capital of Pathein, according to the Pathein Township Development Committee (PTDC).

The repayment was demanded after an inquiry committee, comprising regional department officials, carried out inspections of the director of the ARDC, U Aung Min Naing, and roughly 50 of his staff, as to whether the 2015-16 fiscal budget allocated to the PTDC was used correctly or not.

“We have to pay back some of the state budget as we didn’t realise we had to act in accordance with financial regulations and make submissions to Hlutaw every time we wanted to use the budget. Of course our town is going to suffer as a result of having to pay abck the state for the things our town received,” said U Tin Ohn, chair of the PTDC.

Over 300 concrete roads were paved within Pathein Township using 2016-17 fiscal year budget advances, but the ignorance of the PTDC over having to first request permission from Hlutaw in order to use the budget has resulted in those funds having to be repaid back to the Union government, according to the PTDC.

According to some PTDC engineers, the PTDC Engineer Group will make the repayment to the State on behalf of the ARDC.

“The money that we will use for the coming budget has to be repaid into this budget,” explained U Aung Min Naing.

The PTDC was permitted to use the 2015-16 fiscal year budget of K1.2 billion ($986,842). Thirty per cent of this budget was allocated for staff salaries as well as pensions for retired staff, according to the PTDC.—Myitmakha News Agency

Large trucks can now enter Mae Sot via Myawady

TRUCKS with six or more wheels can now legally enter Mae Sot, Thailand, via Myawady starting from the second week of April after Thailand and Myanmar reached an agreement to recognize the two as sister cities, said U Si Thu Shein, the deputy district administrator of Myawady.

Thailand designated the Bumidaw Bus Station as a stopping point for buses from Myanmar; the station can hold up to 100 buses at a time. Truck drivers must hold licences and are also required to obey the rules and regulations issued by Thailand, U Si Thu Shein added.

Six-wheel trucks from Myanmar must stay within 15 kilometres of the Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge.

The trucks will be used to export dried fish, clothes and other commodities to Thailand.

Trade between Thailand and Myanmar is imbalanced, with hundreds of 12-wheel and 22-wheel trucks bringing Thai goods to Myanmar this year. The new agreement is expected to raise Myanmar exports to Thailand.—200

5th Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Emporium closes

THE 5th Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Emporium (2016), organised by ASIA Connect, was held from 1 to 4 April. The emporium aims to promote finished products from Myanmar. A total of 40 shops displayed gems and jewellery at the emporium.

Only international-quality jewellery was displayed, mostly diamonds.

“The gems and jewellery market is not very successful in our country. We expect to explore the market via this emporium. We plan to display the gems and jewellery in other countries,” said an official from the Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association.

ASIA Connect has held previous emporia at the Myanmar Convention Centre, at the UM-FCCI, the Kaba Aye Gems and Jewellery Emporium Hall and in Mandalay.—200

Shwe U Min Cave Pagoda sets K3,000 entrance fee

AN entrance fee of K3,000 will be collected from visitors to the Shwe U Min Cave Pagoda in Pinhtaya, southern Shan State, starting on 1 April, according to the pagoda’s board of trustees. Previously, the fees were collected in US dollars.

Tour guides have already been informed of the switch to Myanmar kyats. The money collected will be used for local development.

“Previously, we accepted both dollars and Myanmar currency. But the banks do not want to accept old, dirty money, nor do the money changers. So we decided to collect the entrance fees in Myanmar currency, said a member of the pagoda’s board of trustees.

The Shwe U Min Cave Pagoda is a popular tourist attraction in southern Shan State. Around 20,000 tourists visit the pagoda every month. Visitors this year have come from 50 countries, with the highest proportion coming from France.—200

Farmers profit from organic cauliflower

ORGANIC cauliflower yields are high this season, allowing the farmer to earn higher incomes, said farmers from southern Shan State.

A head of cauliflower sells for between K300 and K700, depending on the size. Villagers in Heho, Nyaungshwe and Shwenyang grow cauliflower on a commercial scale.

Cow dung and sesame oil cake are the main fertilisers used for farming cauliflower. A basket of cow dung costs K350, while a viss (1.63 kilos) of sesame oil cake sells for around K1,000.

Farmers use 500 baskets of cow dung and 100 viss of sesame oil cake per acre.

Organic farming is expected to widely penetrate the market because consumers prefer the organic vegetables, which are meant to be free of synthetics chemicals. The farmers mainly send their vegetables to markets in Chauk and Seikphyu townships.—200
Japan to seek greater cooperation for stability in South China Sea

Tokyo — Japan will seek further cooperation with other Asian countries to ensure stability in the South China Sea, Defence Minister Gen Nakatani said Sunday, amid territorial disputes between China and a number of countries in the region.

“It is important for the international community to work together to ensure that the seas are open, free and peaceful,” Nakatani told reporters in Kochi Prefecture.

Earlier in the day, a Japanese submarine and the MSDF and foreign forces in the South China Sea, where Viet Nam, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Taiwan also have territorial claims.

As part of efforts to keep China’s growing maritime assertiveness in check, Japan is keen to help Southeast Asian countries — including the Philippines and Viet Nam, the two most vocal critics of China — improve their surveillance capabilities in the waters.

The MSDF submarine Oyashio and destroyers Ariake and Setogiri made the port call in Subic Bay, north of Manila. The destroyers will then head to Cam Ranh Bay in Viet Nam. Nakatani is planning to visit the Philippines later this month. “I would like to visit as soon as possible and work to further develop and enhance our defense cooperation,” he said. —Kyodo News

Kuala Lumpur — 1MDB says it did not provide funds to produce Hollywood film

1MDB said in a statement it had never invested in nor transferred funds to Red Granite Pictures, whether directly or via intermediaries.

“We, therefore, deny any suggestion that 1MDB funded the production of The Wolf of Wall Street, or had any involvement with the film in any capacity, as has been alleged or implied in some recent media reports,” 1MDB said.

The Red Granite Pictures website names Najib’s stepson, Riza Aziz, as the company co-founder and co-chairman. Investigators in two countries believe that some $155 million, originating from 1MDB, moved into Red Granite in 2012 through various offshore shell companies, the WSJ said, citing sources familiar with the probes.

Najib has been beset by allegations of graft and mismanagement at 1MDB, and the revelation that $681 million was deposited in his bank account. He has denied any wrongdoing, maintains that he did not use the funds for personal gain and was cleared of any criminal offence by Malaysia’s Attorney General.

Investigations into 1MDB’s finances are under way in Malaysia, Singapore, the United States, Switzerland and Luxembourg. —Reuters

Gunmen seize four tugboat crew off eastern Malaysia

MANILA — Gunmen seized four Malaysian crew off a tugboat off the coast of the eastern state of Sabah, a week after a similar attack on a Taiwanese tugboat in the southern Philippines, media reported on Sunday.

The four were taken at gunpoint on Friday evening and brought by speed boat to the southern Philippines, the Philippine Daily Inquirer said, quoting an unnamed military official. Three other crew were left behind.

The gunmen, suspected to be Abu Sayyaf militants, also took laptops, mobile phones and unspecified amounts of cash. The tugboat returned to Sabah when the gunmen left.

“We confirm receiving reports of this incident,” military spokesman Major Flenron told reporters. “We have coordinated with our Malaysian counterparts.”

It was the second attack in a week on tugboats in the waters that border Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. Ten Indonesians were abducted when a Taiwanese tugboat was intercepted in the southern Philippines.

More than 120 people were killed and hundreds injured early last year in political violence during transport blockades and strikes aimed at toppling the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Bangladesh politics has been mired for years in rivalry between Hasina and Khaleda. Both women are related to former national leaders, and they have alternated as prime ministers for most of the past two decades.

Bangladesh, a Muslim-majority nation of 160 million, has also seen a surge in Islamist violence in which liberal activists, members of minority Muslim sects and other religious groups have been targeted.

Prime Minister Hasina has blamed the rising tide of violence on the opposition BNP and its key ally, Jamaat-e-Islami, many of whose leaders are being prosecuted for war crimes during the 1971 war of independence. The opposition denies any involvement. —Reuters

Bangladesh former PM to seek bail over firing attack

DHAKA — Bangladesh’s former Prime Minister and main opposition leader Khaleda Zia is expected to appear in court and seek bail after she was charged with an arrest warrant over a deadly firing attack, her lawyer said on Sunday.

A court in Dhaka issued arrest warrants on Wednesday for Zia, 70, and 27 leaders and activists of her Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in connection with a petrol bomb attack on a bus in January last year during a deadly anti-government campaign.

Most likely, Madam will appear before the court on 5 April and will seek bail,” Khaleda’s lawyer Sanaullah Miah told reporters. The BNP called for a nationwide protest on Monday against the arrest warrant, saying it was politically motivated. —Reuters

Malaysia’s 1MDB says it did not provide funds to produce Hollywood film

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysian state fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) on Sunday denied reports that it had provided funds to finance the 2013 Hollywood film The Wolf of Wall Street.

1MDB said in a statement it had never invested in nor transferred funds to Red Granite Pictures, whether directly or via intermediaries.

“We, therefore, deny any suggestion that 1MDB funded the production of The Wolf of Wall Street, or had any involvement with the film in any capacity, as has been alleged or implied in some recent media reports,” 1MDB said.

The Red Granite Pictures website names Najib’s stepson, Riza Aziz, as the company co-founder and co-chairman. Investigators in two countries believe that some $155 million, originating from 1MDB, moved into Red Granite in 2012 through various offshore shell companies, the WSJ said, citing sources familiar with the probes.

Najib has been beset by allegations of graft and mismanagement at 1MDB, and the revelation that $681 million was deposited in his bank account. He has denied any wrongdoing, maintains that he did not use the funds for personal gain and was cleared of any criminal offence by Malaysia’s Attorney General.

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Debris found in Mauritius to be examined by MH370 investigators

SYDNEY — Australia said that a piece of suspected aeroplane debris found east of Africa on a Mauritian island will be examined to see if it is part of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, which went missing two years ago in one of the world’s greatest aviation mysteries.

A hotel owner on the island who saw the debris told it looked like it was from the inside of a plane, with what he thought was a wallpaper “design”, which if confirmed would be the first piece of interior debris from the plane yet to be found.

Australia has led the search for the plane, which went missing in March 2014 with 239 people on board on a flight from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Beijing, and Trans-Port Minister Darren Chester said last week, was an “item of interest”.

“The Malaysian government is working with officials from Mauritius to seek to take custody of the debris and arrange for its examination,” Chester said in a statement.

He did not say from what part of the missing Boeing 777 the debris was suspected to have come.

“...Until the debris has been examined by experts, it is not possible to ascertain its origin.”

The Malaysian government could not be immediately reached for comment.

William Auguste, who owns the Mroudek Ebony Hotel on Rodrigues Island, about 560 km (350 miles) east of the main island of Mauritius, said the wreckage was found by guests.

“The Malaysian government is working with officials from Mauritius to seek to take custody of the debris and arrange for its examination,” Auguste said.

For sure it looked like part of an aeroplane — it looks like it’s from the inside part of it,” Auguste said. “...there was wallpaper inside of the plane, you can see this design and part of it is still there.”

Auguste said the wreckage was taken to police.

Last month, Australia said debris found in Mozambique was “almost certainly from MH370” and in 2015 French authorities said a wing part found on the Indian Ocean island of Reunion was part of the plane.

Australia said that more than 95,000 square kilometres of a 120,000 square kilometre target zone had been searched and that the entire zone would be covered by June, when the search is scheduled to end.— Reuters

Japan sub makes first call to Philippines in 15 years amid China tensions

SUBIC BAY (Philippines) — A Japanese submarine made a port call in the Philippines, the first in 15 years, on Sunday in a show of growing military cooperation amid tension triggered by China’s growing assertiveness in the South China Sea.

One of the newest and largest submarines in the Japanese navy, it was escorted into the former US Navy Base at Subic Bay by two Japanese destroyers on a tour of Southeast Asia.

“This is just an exercise and the main objective is to train the officers,” Captain Hirasaki Yoshia- no of Japan’s Maritime Self-Defence Force told reporters.

“We don’t have any message to any country,” he said, adding the ship visits were aimed at boosting confidence between Japan and the Philippines.

China claims almost all the South China Sea, where about $5 trillion of ship-borne trade passes every year. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Viet Nam and Taiwan also have claims.

Japan and China also have conflicting claims over islets in the East China Sea. Japan is increasing its presence in the South China Sea, sending more ships and planes to allies in Southeast Asia, like Viet Nam and the Philippines.

The Philippines and the United States start military drills on Monday, including simulating the retaking an island seized by an imaginary enemy in the South China Sea, an exercise likely to rile China.

Japan has offered to help the Philippines boost its capability in monitoring what is going on in the South China Sea by leasing three TC-90 surveillance planes, a deal that could be sealed late this month.— Reuters

UN Secretary General’s message on the International Day For Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action

Mine action is critical for an effective humanitarian response in conflict and post-conflict situations. This is a central message of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.

Yet in far too many places around the world, new or reemerging conflicts are creating yet another legacy of explosive hazards, such as landmines, cluster munitions and improvised explosive devices.

I am particularly concerned about the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

The United Nations is working to alleviate the suffering of affected communities in high-risk environments.

In South Sudan, for example, more than half a million people have received risk education over the last 12 months; 14 million square meters of contaminated land have been cleared; 3,000 km of road made safe; and 30,000 mines and explosive remnants of war destroyed. This has enabled the delivery of food and water and the safe movement of those fleeing fighting.

Even in the extremely challenging context of Syria, mine action actors are achieving some important life-saving results.

Last year, more than 2 million Syrians received risk education in schools and communities, and more than 5,400 people received physical rehabilitation services. Since August 2015, 14 tonnes of unexploded ordnance have been destroyed.

But millions of Syrian people continue to face this deadly threat every day. There is an urgent need for increased support as well as full, sustained and unhindered access for all mine action activities.

Mine action is an investment in humanity. It helps nurture peaceful societies, where those in need can receive aid, and refugees and internally displaced persons can safely return home, and children can go to school.

It provides the safe space to undertake development and reconstruction activities, and lay the foundations of sustainable peace.

The first-ever World Humanitarian Summit will convene in Istanbul next month. My report in advance of the Summit highlights the unacceptable impact of mines and explosive remnants of war on civilians.

It also stresses the need for States to become parties to, and implement and comply with, relevant international humanitarian instruments.

I am pleased that, in December 2015, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution underlying the need for mine action to remain at the top of the international agenda, especially in humanitarian crises.

On this International Day, let us work together to advance the goal of a world free of the threat of mines and explosive remnants of war.—UNIC/Yangon
Clinton, Sanders audition for role as anti-Trump candidate

US Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton reacts as she waves to supporters at a campaign rally in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, on 2 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

MILWAUKEE — Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders are tussling in Wisconsin over who would best represent the Democratic Party against Republican front-runner Donald Trump.

The competition was in full force on Saturday night at the Wisconsin Democratic Party’s “Founders Day Gala,” a chance for both Clinton and Sanders to make their closing arguments before the state’s primary vote on Tuesday.

Clinton, as the Democratic front-runner, is more and more taking aim at both Trump and US Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, the top Trump rival who is leading Wisconsin polls of Republican voters. Trump, in response to the threat of Islamic militants, has proposed a temporary ban on Muslims entering the United States and Cruz has called for police patrols of Muslim neighbourhoods. Clinton said these ideas are offensive.

“That does not make Trump and Cruz sound strong,” said Clinton to the crowd of 1,400. “It makes them sound in over their heads... You know loose cannons tend to misfire, and in a dangerous world that is a gamble we cannot afford.”

Sanders, a US senator from Vermont who has been a surprising strong challenger to Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination, told the crowd he would be a better opponent against Trump than Clinton.

Sanders noted national poll numbers showing he leads Trump by a larger margin than Clinton leads the New York billionaire. Sanders said this makes him “the strongest candidate” on the Democratic side to go up against Trump.

“It’s not just polling,” Sanders said. “There is one campaign which has created an enormous amount of excitement and enthusiasm and that is our campaign.”

For the Democratic Party to succeed in the 8 November election, Sanders said, “we need a vibrancy” and energy that brings in young people who have flocked to his campaign.

—Reuters

Dacic: We cannot expect missile systems if we have no money

BELGRADE — Serbia has good military cooperation with Russia but it cannot expect to get the S-300 or S-400 missile systems from Moscow if it does not have the money for them, says Serbian First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic.

The good cooperation with Russia is not merely about military technical cooperation in terms of arms and equipment, but also about cooperation between the two defence ministries and armed forces, Dacic told Sputnik in an interview.

Russia and Serbia have signed agreements on defence and military technical cooperation, and our cooperation with other states is also underway simultaneously in a very transparent way, as part of our policy of military neutrality, he said.

Asked what arms shipment Serbia could expect in the near future, having already submitted a list of required weapons to Russia, Dacic said that a special commission on military technical cooperation will meet in Belgrade in April to discuss all facts.—Tanjug

Conflict kills 6 including security personnel in Afghanistan

PUL-E-KHUMRI, (Afghanistan) — Five militants and a security personnel have been killed as clash erupted in Taliban former bastion the Dand-e-Shahabudin district in the northern Baghlan Province, provincial police spokesman Zabihullah Shuja said Sunday.

“The resurgence of Taliban rebels in Dand-e-Shahabudin area three days ago prompted the security forces to immediately launch operations and so far five armed insurgents have been killed and five others injured, forcing militants to flee,” Shuja told Xinhua.

He said one security personnel was killed in the conflict which has been continuing sporadically.

Dand-e-Shahabudin, which had served as Taliban bastion in southwestern France

PARIS — Three consecutive explosions rocked an industrial zone near the southwestern French city of Bordeaux early Sunday, local media reported.

There were no immediate reports of casualties and damage.

The blasts, along with strong fire, broke out at around 6:40 local time (0440 GMT) in a company specialising in chemical products transportation at the industrial zone in Bassens, near Bordeaux, French radio France Bleu Gironde reported on its Twitter.

Firefighters had already been on the scene to conduct rescue operations.

“The situation seems under control,” Mayor of Bassens Jean-Pierre Turon told news channel iTelev, adding that two firefighters were slight injured in the rescue operations.

The outbreak of a fire may have caused the explosion of two or three tankers filled with gas, he said.—Xinhua

Tsunami alert issued after large quake hits off Vanuatu

VANUATU — A large 7.2 quake struck off the coast of the South Pacific islands of Vanuatu on Sunday and there was a possibility of tsunamis, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre said.

The quake struck 151 km (94 miles) north northwest of Santo on Vanuatu and was 35 km deep, the US Geological Survey said. The shallower a quake, the more damage it is likely to cause. USGS first measured the quake at 10 km deep.

There were no immediate reports of damage.—Reuters

“Out” leads by 4 percentage points ahead of Britain’s EU referendum —poll

LONDON — Support for Britain to leave the European Union stood at 43 per cent, ahead of support to stay within the 28-member bloc, which stood at 39 per cent, according to an online survey taken by pollster Opinium for the Observer newspaper.

The poll of 1,966 adults, who were interviewed ahead of a referendum to stay in the European Union on 23 June, found that 18 per cent of respondents were undecided.—Reuters

Viet Nam coast guard seizes Chinese ship in Tonkin Gulf

HANOI — Viet Nam’s coast guard has seized a Chinese vessel for intruding into its territorial waters, according to a local report Saturday.

In a rare move for Vietnamese authorities against a Chinese vessel, the coast guard in the northern port city of Haiphong seized the ship carrying diesel fuel in the Gulf of Tonkin on Thursday.

The captain of the Chinese ship admitted to the intrusion, telling Vietnamese officials the ship was carrying fuel for Chinese fishing boats operating in Vietnamese waters, according to the report.

Viet Nam, China and other countries surrounding the South China Sea dispute sovereignty of island chains and nearby waters.—Kyodo News

Several explosions rock industrial zone in southwestern France

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Dand-e-Shahabudin, which had served as Taliban bastion in Baghlan Province, was captured by government forces a month ago.

Taliban militants have confirmed the clash, claiming that the Taliban fighters have killed three security personnel.—Xinhua
Institutions and effective governance

Myanmar people use Lunar calendar. Monthly one is governed by the movement of the moon, so month in Myanmar is ‘Lah’ the same word for the moon. There are two types of month—30 day and 29 day. A month starts with the new moon which is 15 days of waxing moon and 15 days of waning moon on the second type which has 15 days of waxing moon and 14 days of waning moon of the second type. There are 12 months in the 32 month calendar. The year always begins with the 29 day month called Taung and ends with the 30 day month called Ta-Hawn. It is customary for the Myanmar people to mark the day not only by day of the month but also whether the day is waxing or waning moon of the month. The day of the month counted in this way has a total of 31 or 32 for the first half and 1 or 2 for the second half of 30 days ( excludes leap months). The 15th day of the waxing moon is called Full Moon and is celebrated. The 15 days of the waning moon is called ‘Hlaub Moon’ and is also celebrated. The 15th day of Myanmar 12 month calendar and its corresponding day of the 32 month calendar. Of the Flowers that bloom in this month-gaut-pauk (Miaou flower) is traditionally regarded as the flower of Taung. Myanmar people celebrate their birthday or their birth month of the festival of Taung is Thingyan festival.

Scholars give different interpretations about the word ‘Thingyan’. Some people believe it is the Scarf that the Buddha wore to the earth, while others believe it is a person who went to the earth. In Myanmar, the word is used to denote the ancient heart hands which correspond to the hands of the Buddha. The scarfed of the Buddha was said to be theThingyan. This is the origin of the word Thingyan.

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit an article, analysis or research paper, please get in touch with us. Your name and title will be used as a reference to your contribution. It is a free space for you to publish your work. The article should be a maximum of 500 words and be submitted to us.

Letters to the Editor

In the last few years certain methods have been applied in the water pouring of the festival. In the past, the water pouring was done in a traditional way. But today, with the help of modern technology, the water pouring has become more efficient and effective. In the past, the water pouring was done by hand, with the help of a pipe. But today, with the help of modern technology, the water pouring has become more efficient and effective.

Water revellers seen on horse cart. Photo: Aye Min

In 1984, the number of days was reduced to seven days instead of the previous seven days. This practice continues to this day. The reason for this change is that the Myanmar people believe that seven days is the most auspicious number. Seven is considered a lucky number in Myanmar culture.

In the past, the water pouring was done by hand, with the help of a pipe. But today, with the help of modern technology, the water pouring has become more efficient and effective.

The legend of Thingyan

Our traditional belief which still holds sway over the conventional beliefs and practices is that the movement of Thingyan is at the time of the full moon, Thingyan Miya or Moon is descending from the Celestial Kingdom to Earth for the annual round of inspection to check whether human beings on Earth are behaving well or not. He is a god of love, life, and fertility. He brings gold, white-kon trenyin (Vishvakarma) and Maitri, the creator of the world in the usual compounded manner, latterly only the young ones, but also the adults, all and everyone to be a good life and to do good work for others. True to the teaching of this god, Thingyan festival with the spirit of goodwill and loving kindness is celebrated in the palace where royalty and nobility and others participate in this festival.

A beautiful scene of water throwing. Photo: Mya

In the early days of the Myanmar kings Thingyan was celebrated in the palace and Thingyan festival with the spirit of goodwill and loving kindness is celebrated in the palace where royalty and nobility and others participate in this festival. In the early days of the Myanmar kings Thingyan was celebrated in the palace and Thingyan festival with the spirit of goodwill and loving kindness is celebrated in the palace where royalty and nobility and others participate in this festival.
UN investigating sex abuse allegations against Tanzanian peacekeepers in Congo

KINSHASA — The UN peacekeeping mission in Democratic Republic of the Congo said late on Friday that it has received allegations of sexual abuse against Tanzanian peacekeepers based in Congo’s northeast, the latest in a series of such accusations against UN forces.

The mission said in a statement that it received the allegations against members of its Force Intervention Brigade, tasked with offensive operations, in the village of Mavivi on 23 March and immediately launched an investigation.

“Initial results suggest that there is evidence of transactional sex and sex with minors,” the statement said. “There are also a number of paternity claims.”

The statement did not say how many cases of abuse had been alleged or provide any further details about the accusations.

UN peacekeeping missions have been beset by accusations of sexual abuse. The United Nations reported 99 such allegations against staff members across the UN system last year.

The United Nations said this week that it has expanded an investigation into new allegations of sexual abuse by foreign peacekeepers in Central African Republic. UN officials said they have interviewed some 108 alleged victims, most of them minors. — Reuters

Uncertainty reigns a day before migrants are to be returned to Turkey

LESBOS (Greece) — Less than 24 hours before Greece is due to begin returning migrants to Turkey, little sign of preparation is evident on Lesbos, the island through which hundreds of thousands of people have poured into Europe since last year.

More than 5,600 migrants have been registered on Greek islands since 20 March, the date on which the agreement takes effect. Returns are due to begin on Monday, but where they will take place from and how many will be returned remains unclear.

“Planning is in progress,” said George Kyriass, a Greek government spokesman for the migration crisis.

The returns are a key part of an agreement between the European Union and Turkey aimed at ending the influx into Europe of migrants and refugees fleeing poverty and war in the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

Under the agreement, migrants who cross into Greece illegally from Turkey on 20 March will be sent back to Turkey once their asylum applications have been processed.

The Athens News Agency reported over the weekend that the returns would begin on Monday morning on two Turkish passenger ships chartered from Frontex, the EU border agency. The ships will sail from Lesbos across to the Turkish coastal town of Dikili.

Some 250 people would be returned each day through Wednesday, it said, without citing sources.

Greek officials would neither confirm nor deny the report. A police spokesman on Lesbos said the force was still awaiting instructions.

The EU plans to send hundreds of police and migration officers to Greece over the weekend to help carry out the first returns.

On Friday, Greece’s parliament passed an asylum amendment bill needed to implement the agreement. The legislation does not explicitly designate Turkey as a “safe third country” — a formula to make any mass returns legally sound.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and human rights groups have denounced the deal as lacking legal safeguards. Amnesty International has called it deal “a historic blow to human rights”. It said it would send a delegation to Lesbos and nearby Chios on Monday to monitor the situation.

“The returns in particular are a flagrant violation of EU and international law, making a mockery of the global Refugee Convention,” Amnesty said in a statement. — Reuters

Armenian-backed troops fight Azerbaijan over disputed region for second day

YEREVAN — Fighting between Armenian-backed troops and Azerbaijan over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region flared for a second day on Sunday after clashes killed dozens, drawing international calls for an immediate ceasefire.

Nagorno-Karabakh, which lies inside Azerbaijan but is controlled by ethnic Armenians, has run its own affairs with heavy military and financial backing from Armenia since a separatist war ended in 1994.

But the situation along the tense “contact line” has deteriorated in past weeks and a fresh eruption of violence on Saturday left multiple dead on both sides.

The Nagorno-Karabakh military said its troops were attacked by Azerbaijani forces at 0600 (0200 GMT) on Sunday morning.

“The enemy continued aggressive military action, using rocket artillery and armoured vehicles,” the military said in a statement. “The army is taking necessary measures to suppress the enemy’s aggressive attack offensively.”

The Armenian-backed side and Azerbaijan have both reported civilian casualties and accused each other of violating the 1994 ceasefire, a sign that the two-decade-old conflict which has left some 30,000 people dead is far from a peaceful resolution.

Azerbaijan’s ambassador to Moscow said Baku was willing to discuss a compromise with Yerevan once Armenian troops ended their occupation of what he said was 21 per cent of his country’s territory. “For 22 years there have been attempts for a peaceful resolution to this conflict. How many are possible? We are ready for a peaceful resolution to this issue, but if the peaceful route is not chosen, then we will take the military route,” Ambassador Polad Bulbuloglu told the Govorit Moscow radio station.

Crisscrossed with pipelines and sandwashed between the Caspian and Black seas, stability in the southern Caucasus is a major strategic objective for Azerbaijan and other large oil and gas producers in the region.

World top oil producer Russia — which maintains a garrison of troops, jets and attack helicopters in northern Armenia — has been a key mediator in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and moved on Saturday to suppress the renewed violence.

President Vladimir Putin urged the warring sides to immediately observe the ceasefire while Russia’s foreign and defence ministers talked by phone with their Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts.

The Azeri presidential press service said Turkey, the other major power along with Russia in the region, had voiced support for Baku’s actions, Russia’s RIA news agency reported. — Reuters

A woman bathes a child at a makeshift camp for migrants and refugees near the island of Iomdeni, Greece, on 3 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Syrian forces enter Islamic State-held town near Palmyra

BEIRUT — Syrian and allied forces, backed by Russian air strikes, entered the Islamic State-held town of al-Qaryatain on Sunday, having gradually surrounded it over the past few days, state media and a monitoring group said.

Al-Qaryatain is 100 km (60 miles) west of Palmyra, which government forces recaptured from Islamic State last Sunday.

The town has been held by Islamic State since late August.

Syrian state media said government forces entered the town from a number of directions.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said fighting continued between Islamic State and government forces in the town, which is surrounded by mountains. “Practically speaking, the town can be said to have fallen militarily, because the regime controls the surrounding hills,” the Observatory’s director Rami Abdurrahman told Reuters.

The Observatory said that more than 40 air strikes from Russian and Syrian planes hit near the town on Sunday. — Reuters
Japanese researchers clone mice from cells in urine

TOKYO — A team of Japanese researchers has successfully produced cloned mice from cells found in urine, according to an article published Friday in the British science journal "Scientific Reports." The discovery by researchers from the University of Yamanashi and other institutions has potential applications in breeding endangered species, as urine can be obtained without causing harm to animals.

Along with water and waste products, animal urine contains some body cells, such as from inside the urethra. Researchers isolated certain cells in mice urine, and put the nuclei from these cells into mice eggs that had been stripped of their nuclei. They then implanted cells that had been stripped of nuclei from these cells into mice egg cells in mice urine, and put the nuclei into the egg cells. They then implanted the resulting cloned embryos into the fallopian tubes of surrogate mother mice.

Of the four mice lineages used in the experiment, two lineages produced a total of four healthy mice. The two lineages that yielded the healthy mice had a successful birth rate of between 1 and 3 percent of the treated embryos. Breeding the cloned mice with each other resulted in successful birth, an encouraging sign for the application of the technology in breeding programs.

Further research will focus on whether the cloned mice live as long as normal mice.

Lead researcher Teruhiko Wakayama of the University of Yamanashi said more examination is necessary to evaluate the limits of the process.

"We want to see how long after urination the cells can be used, because urine samples taken outdoors may have been sitting around for some time after leaving the body," Wakayama said.

—Kyodo News

As Ebola flares up, Guinea plans to vaccinate contacts of survivors

CONAKRY/MONROVIA — Guinea will soon vaccinate people who have come into contact with more than 500 men who have recovered from Ebola, a senior health official said, the first time it has vaccinated the contacts of survivors.

The decision reflects research that indicates Ebola can remain in the bodily fluids of survivors for months. The contacts will include but will not be limited to sexual partners, said Fode Tass Sylla, the spokesman for the West African nation’s centre for the fight against Ebola.

"We know the virus can stay in the sperm of a healed patient for a certain period of time," Sylla said. "That’s why we want to vaccinate the circles of 501 men, to avoid all risk of spreading the disease."

The vaccinations will begin in the next few days, Sylla said. The centre also plans an awareness campaign to warn mothers of newborns, he said.

One of three countries at the epicentre of the world’s worst recorded Ebola outbreak, along with Liberia and Sierra Leone, Guinea was declared free of active transmissions of the virus in December 2015. But it announced eight new cases last month.

There are 10,000 survivors of the deadly hemorrhagic fever in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, according to the World Health Organisation.

The WHO said 800 possible contacts of people suffering from Ebola had been vaccinated against the virus in the so-called "ring vaccination" method. That means swiftly vaccinating anyone who has come into contact with an Ebola sufferer and contacts of theirs.

More than 1,000 people were under observation.

Liberia, which has declared the outbreak over three times, closed its border with Guinea after its neighbour announced its fresh cases.—Reuters

New planet with triple-star system found

WASHINGTON — Scientists have discovered a rare triple-star system with a gas giant planet similar in size to Jupiter.

Researchers at the Harvard-Smithsonian Centre for Astrophysics in US found that a binary system once thought to be a single star was actually a pair of stars orbiting one another, and are a part of the triple-star system.

Known planets with three stars appearing in their sky are rare — the new discovery is just the fourth and the closest one yet, allowing for a better look than has been possible, researchers said.

The main star is also brighter than the other stars that serve as suns for their planets, making it easier to study both the star and the planet.

In the new system KELT-4Ab, a gas giant planet, similar in size to Jupiter takes approximately three days to make its way around the star KELT-A, which serves as its sun.

The other two stars, named KELT-B and C, are much farther away and orbit one another over the course of approximately 30 years. It takes the pair approximately four thousand years to orbit KELT-A, ‘Phys. Org.’ reported.

The view from KELT-4Ab would likely be one where its sun, KELT-A, would appear roughly forty times as big as our sun does to us due to its close proximity, researchers said.

On the other hand, the two other orbiting stars would appear much dimmer due to their great distance, shining no brighter than our moon, they said.

Scientists have known of the existence of the KELT system for several years, but it was thought that the binary stars were actually just one star.

The triple-star system offers a unique opportunity for scientists trying to understand how it is that gas giants, such as KELT-4Ab, manage to orbit so close to their star.

The research was published in The Astronomical Journal.—PTI

Drinking coffee may cut colorectal cancer risk

LOS ANGELES — Coffee drinkers, rejoice! Drinking coffee, including decaf, instant and black, may decrease the risk of colorectal cancer, according to a new study which found that the benefits increase with more consumption.

Researchers from the University of Southern California (USC) examined over 5,100 men and women who had been diagnosed with colorectal cancer within the past six months, along with an additional 4,000 men and women with no history of colorectal cancer to serve as a control group.

Participants reported their daily consumption of boiled (espresso), instant, decaffeinated and filtered coffee, as well as their total consumption of other liquids.

A questionnaire also gathered information about many other factors that influence the risk of colorectal cancer, including family history, diet, physical activity and smoking.

“We found that drinking coffee is associated with lower risk of colorectal cancer, and the more coffee consumed, the lower the risk,” said Stephen Gruber from USC.

The data showed that even moderate coffee consumption, between one to two servings a day, was associated with a 26 percent reduction in the odds of developing colorectal cancer after adjusting for known risk factors, researchers said.

Moreover, the risk of developing colorectal cancer continued to decrease to up to 50 percent per one cup when participants drank more than 2.5 servings of coffee each day, they said.

The indication of decreased risk was seen across all types of coffee, both caffeinated and decaffeinated.

“We were somewhat surprised to see that caffeine did not seem to matter. This indicates that caffeine alone is not responsible for coffee’s protective properties,” said Gruber.

Coffee contains many elements that contribute to overall colorectal health and may explain the preventive properties. Caffeine and polyphenol can act as antioxidants, limiting the growth of potential colon cancer cells, researchers said. Melanoids generated during the roasting process have been hypothesised to encourage colon mobility. Diterpenes may prevent cancer by enhancing the body’s detoxify ability by oxidant oxidative damage, they said.

The findings were published in the journal Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention.—PTI
Japan to have record 1 million foreign workers this year

TOKYO — The number of foreigners working in Japan is expected to top 1 million for the first time this year as the nation moves toward utilizing their labour power more, especially in nursing care and housekeeping fields, government sources said on 2 April.

Kuala Lumpur — Chinese companies are widely considered as the frontrunner for the proposed high-speed railway project linking the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, according to the Star.

Malaysia favours China on high-speed rail project

One of the advantages of the Chinese side is the experience of working with Malaysia on the latter’s regular railway system and light rail transit projects, according to the Star.

Indian priest kidnapped in Yemen ‘could be freed soon’

MUMBAI — An Indian priest abducted by gunmen in Yemen last month is safe and could be released soon, a Catholic group said on Sunday, quoting the Indian foreign ministry.

République du Bénin  —  La médiation sud-africaine pour le printemps au Sahel était attendue à Abidjan.

Trump again slams NATO allies despite Obama plea

WASHINGTON — Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump on Saturday accused his allies of not pulling their weight in the NATO military alliance, despite a call from President Barack Obama to tone up for the upcoming 2016 Republican national convention in July.

KUALA LUMPUR — Chinese companies are widely considered as the frontrunner for the proposed high-speed railway project linking the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, according to the Star.

The announcement came three months after CREC’s successful bid with its Malaysian joint-venture partner in December to acquire 60 per cent of the equity in the Bundar Malaysia project.

One of the advantages of the Chinese side is the experience of working with Malaysia on the latter’s regular railway system and light rail transit projects, according to the Star.

The implementation of the project remains in an early stage.

Despite being a late comer in high-speed railway, China has developed the most cost-effective rail system in the world, thanks to China’s research and development on major train projects and super lengthy development on major train projects and super lengthy track tests, said Goh Kock Yen, a well-known transportation planning consultant.

However, Goh told the newspaper that it was far from a done deal as the project remains in an early stage.

The governments of Malaysia and Singapore are expected to finalise the commercial model and procurement approach of the project by this year. — Xinhua
**Doping-British doctor alleges he doped 150 sportsmen**

LONDON — UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) said it was “deeply concerned and shocked” by a Sunday Times report in which a British doctor alleged he had prescribed banned performance-enhancing drugs to 150 sportsmen including several Premier League footballers.

The paper said Dr Mark Bonar claimed his “clients” included an England cricketer, British Tour de France cyclists, a British boxing champion, tennis players and martial arts competitors as well as footballers. In the past six years he had treated more than 150 sportsmen from the UK and abroad with banned substances such as erythropoietin (EPO), steroids and human growth hormone, and the performance improvements were “phantommal”, the report added.

The Sunday Times said that during a series of meetings with undercover reporters, Bonar had spoken about sportsmen he had treated. The newspaper also sent a sportsman to Bonar’s clinic, who recorded his appointments with a hidden camera. Neither the newspaper nor Reuters was able to substantiate the claims made by the doctor.

UKAD chief executive Nicole Sapstead said the body had been aware of allegations against Bonar after a sportsperson approached them two years ago but had not been able to act upon them because he was not affiliated to any particular sport.

“Under current legislation, UKAD has the power only to investigate athletes and entourage (including medics) who are themselves governed by a sport,” she said.

UKAD had considered informing the General Medical Council, which oversees medical practitioners in Britain, but decided the evidence they had was insufficient for such a referral, Sapstead added.

UKAD chairman David Kenworthy said an independent review would be conducted into the issues raised by the report.

“They will be asked to look at the way the information supplied by the sportsperson was handled and whether proper procedures were followed,” he said.

“They will also be asked to make any recommendations to improve the way in which intelligence is dealt with in the future so that UKAD can be as effective as possible in keeping sport clean.” The news is likely to cast a further shadow on the sporting world ahead of the Rio Olympics.

Russia was suspended from international track and field last year following a report exposing widespread cheating and corruption among its athletes.

The country faces a ban from the Olympics unless Russia can prove to the World Anti-Doping Agency and the IAAF governing body that it has met a series of conditions regarding its anti-doping operations.— Reuters

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**One person dies when small plane hits car on California highway**

LOS ANGELES — A passenger in a car died when a small plane carrying two people made an emergency landing on a Southern California highway on Saturday and struck the vehicle in a crash that left five others injured, officials said.

The single-engine Lancair IV came down on I-15 near Highway 76, in the area of Fallbrook, said Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Ian Gregor in an email.

The propeller plane made an emergency landing on its belly and skidded along a lane for more than 100 feet (30 metres), crashing into the back of a Nissan Sentra parked at the side of the highway, said North County Fire Protection District spokesman John Buchanan.

Before the plane came down, the four people in the Nissan had stopped to sync the sedan’s Bluetooth wireless system, Buchanan said.

The crash killed a woman in the car’s back seat, Buchanan said.— Reuters

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**Advertisement for YWB Seismic Survey IEE Report**

Total Exploration & Production Myanmar is going to carry out a marine seismic survey in Yetagon West Block (YWB) located 250 km west of the territorial water of Tanintharyi Division, Myanmar. This survey is scheduled to start in April 2016 and requires 25 days to complete.

Total EP Myanmar has prepared an Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) with Artelia Co., Ltd. for the proposed project. The report is available to see at:

- Total EP Myanmar office in Yangon: No. 5, Sacred Tooth Relic Lake Avenue, Punn Pin Gone Quarter No.5, Mayangone Township, Yangon,
- Artelia’s office in Yangon: No. 53/61, Thein Phyu Road, Kyauktada Township, Yangon-Myanmar
- Chief Minister Office, Tanintharyi Region, Dawei
- Myeik District Fisheries Department office, Tanintharyi Region, Myeik
- Dawei Department of Fisheries, Tanintharyi Region, Divisional Fisheries Office, Dawei
- Environmental Conservation Department, No. (59) Seik Kan Thar Lane, Kyat Sar Pyan Ward, Tanintharyi Region, Dawei

Feedback and comments on the report can be provided in writing to ELAFeedback.TEPM@Total.com, Charles.bouhelier@arteliagroup.com and Artelia’s offices in Yangon by 15 April 2016.
Amid ticketing fraud, China box office up 51% in first quarter

BEIJING — China’s box office revenues grew 51 per cent in the first quarter of 2016, Chinese state radio said on Sunday, although a ticketing scandal has cast doubt on the real size of the country’s booming movie market.

Total sales of tickets in China were 14.5 billion yuan (1.57 billion pounds) in the first three months of the year, boosted by a 6.9 billion yuan haul in February as millions flocked to cinemas over the Lunar New Year holiday, said China National Radio.

Despite government censorship and an influx of 34 foreign films a year, Hollywood has become increasingly reliant on China’s rapidly growing box office as US market growth has stalled.

In February, Chinese sales topped the US for the first time, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

Eager to cash in on the boom, and create a rival to Hollywood that could promote Chinese culture, domestic companies like e-commerce giant Alibaba Group Holding Ltd are working with US studios in an effort to produce local blockbusters.

But a ticketing fraud has called into question the validity of sales data. More than 100 Chinese investors descended on the offices of one financier of martial arts movie Ip man 3 on Thursday, demanding their money back after the film’s distributor admitted to buying $5 million yuan in tickets to bump up sales.

Among the bright spots for China’s film industry was local hit “The Mermaid”, an oddball romantic comedy which broke box office records by bringing in around $3.4 billion yuan.

Chinese films accounted for almost three-quarters of the country’s box office in the first quarter, China National Radio reported.—Reuters

Reese Witherspoon honoured by magazine

LOS ANGELES — Actress Reese Witherspoon and singer Dolly Parton have been named among Southern Living magazine’s top Innovators Changing the South for 2016.

The 40-year-old “Sweet Home Alabama” actress-turned-lifestyle entrepreneur, who hails from Nashville, Tennessee, has been celebrated by the publication’s editors for her Draper James clothing and home collection, applauding the star for prioritising “made-in-America, made-in-the-South products”.

They notified Witherspoon of her inclusion in the annual list via Twitter, to which she exclaimed, “Such an honour!!! Thanks @Southern_Living! @ draperjames #SouthernPride”.

Country legend Dolly Parton was also recognised for her continued philanthropy work with Imagination Library, which provides free books to underprivileged kids, and the success of her biographical TV movie, Coat of Many Colours, which became a huge hit with viewers in December last year.

Others included as top innovators of the south were blues rockers Alabama Shakes and their frontwoman, Brittany Howard, comedians Aziz Ansari and Tig Notaro, documentary maker Joe York, authors Jesmyn Ward and Brene Brown, US women’s soccer star Morgan Brian, and jazz musician Jon Batiste and Stay Human, the house band on America’s The Late Show with Stephen Colbert.—PTI

I can inspire young women: Rihanna

LONDON — R&B star Rihanna says she might not be given the title of a role model by people but the singer feels she can inspire young women.

The 28-year-old “Work” singer received the Rock Star Award at the BET’s Black Girls Rock! ceremony in New Jersey on 1 April and used her acceptance speech to encourage her fans to love themselves, reported Female First.

“Thank you so much for celebrating us in a world that doesn’t celebrate us enough. The minute you learn to love yourself, you will not want to be anybody else.

“Role model is not the title they like to give me...But I think I can inspire a lot of young women to be themselves and that is half the battle. Hopefully one day I’ll be raising my own little black girl who rocks,” she said.

Actress Tracee Ellis Ross hosted the event which will air on BET on 5 April.

Founder/CEO Beverly Bond created Black Girls Rock! to highlight the achievements of black female pioneers in art, music, philanthropy and community service.—PTI

Amber Rose’s emojis rake USD 2 million on first day

LOS ANGELES — Model-designer Amber Rose’s new emoji kit reportedly made USD 2 million on its opening day.

The 32-year-old star debuted her MuvaMojis, a set of 900 symbols available from Apple and Android app stores on 31 March and the model is said to be set to receive a cut of the profits after the successful start.

Rose has already made USD 4 million out of the app after signing a deal with developer Appmoji.

Her app features many designs, including one glittery emoji stating ‘Free Kesha’, in support of the “Tik Tok” hitmaker who is currently involved in a very public legal battle with her record label to be released from her contract over allegations of sexual abuse she has made against producer Dr Luke. Announcing MuvaMoji, Amber said, “Hey, you guys. It’s Amber Rose, and I’ve got a new app — MuvaMoji.”

“Download it on iTunes and Android. Have fun, Rosebuds! I love you guys! (sic).”—PTI

‘I Am Cait’ wins outstanding reality show at GLAAD Awards

LOS ANGELES — Caitlyn Jenner’s “I Am Cait” has tied with TLC’s “I Am Jazz” to win the honour of outstanding reality program at the 27th Annual GLAAD Media Awards.

In its applauded first season, the show documented Jenner’s transition and her introduction into the world as a transgender woman, including legally changing her name and accepting the Arthur Ashe Courage Award at the 2015 ESPYs.

Now currently in its second season, “I Am Cait” follows Jenner, 66, and her friends, including trans activists Candis Cayne, Chandi Moore and Jenny Boylan, as they embark on a cross-country road trip to raise awareness for LGBT issues, reported E Online.

The other nominees in the reality television category included Discovery Life’s “New Girls on the Block”, “Oxygen’s The Prancing Elites Project” and “Fuse’s Transcendent” — PTI.
Greeks celebrate Pillow Fight day with anti-war message

ATHENS — Hundreds of Greek citizens “armed” with pillows participated in a fun street fight in the center of Athens and the northern city of Thessaloniki on Saturday, celebrating the International Pillow Fight day and sending an anti-war message.

In the second annual edition of the flash mob event held in Greece, children and adults played “clashing” on central squares in order to release stress and spread the joy.

The main goal of the organisers of the pillow fight in Greece, as well as their “fellow” fighters abroad, is to offer people a chance to decompress and have fun.

“We are all hiding a kid inside. It is time to let it free to play and let go for a few minutes all the problems on its mind,” Elina Andreadou, a member of the Greek organising committee explained.

With about 50,000 migrants from war-torn countries stranded in tragic conditions in Greece over the past two months, Greek pillow fighters added one more goal for the event this year: call for an end to wars.

“Our message is clear: The only war we accept is pillow fight... We strongly believe that our world would be a better place if only we could hold pillow fights more often, let’s say once a week,” Andreadou said. The International Pillow Fight Day is celebrated over the past decade annually on 4 April.

Organisers explained that the flash mob of the past few years went beyond the fun and stress relief to create a public demonstration opposing the war in the region.

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Chef uses burning passion for smoked food to stoke unique business

SAPPORO — Kosuke Nagai, a chef based in northern Japan, has been so charmed by the magic of smoked foods that he created “smoked cakes,” taking the cooking method to new and unusual lengths and coming up with interesting results.

Exposing food to smoke is an ancient method for cooking and preserving many types of food, and Nagai says the “magic of smoke drastically transforms ingredients.”

In January, Nagai opened “Ozu Smoke Lab” in Sapporo in the northernmost Japanese prefecture of Hokkaido, a specialty shop which sells smoke-cooked cakes.

“Some people visit here lured by the smell. (A lot of people) are surprised when they learn that I’m making cakes,” said Nagai, 34, while smoking scores.

To make his creations, Nagai smokes almost all the ingredients, such as flour, cheese and butter, for up to one day. After mixing them, the chef bakes cakes in an oven and smokes them in a high heat to add the final touch. His shop is filled with the spicy odor of wood chips used in the smoking process.

“The smoke mellows the sweet flavor, so people who are not very fond of sweet stuff also love it,” said Nagai.

Nagai, who is schooled in traditional Japanese cuisine, opened a smoked Japanese food store when he was 27, seeking to establish a “one-of-a-kind” outlet.

Nagai’s pursuit of his passion has not always been easy, and he has quite literally had some ideas go up in smoke. But while there were many failures, there were also breakthroughs — opening up new possibilities for the cooking method, he says.

Experience prompted him to take on the challenge of baking the cakes he has always loved.

Almost all ingredients he uses, except chocolate, are locally sourced in Hokkaido. “Hokkaido’s climate with low humidity is very suitable for smoked food,” Nagai said.

He is now trying to develop “new smokers” using rice chaff and buckwheat husk, introducing them at three stores he runs — respectively specialised in “washoku” Japanese food, meat and baked goods.

“I would like to spread Hokkaido’s charms through the characteristics of smoke,” Nagai says — Kyodo News.

Millions of Chinese honour deceased on Tomb-Sweeping holiday

BEIJING — The first day of China’s traditional Qingming holiday, or Tomb Sweeping Day, saw millions of Chinese visit burial sites to honour their deceased family members.

More than 3.9 million people followed the Chinese tradition of visiting the grave sites of relatives on Saturday, according to a statement by an office of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, quoting statistics collected at 150 major cemeteries nationwide.

This figure marked a 13.6-per cent decrease from the same period last year, it said.

The authorities sent more than 23,000 workers to help ensure order at relevant areas across the country — Xinhua

Spring beauty attracts many people on 1st day of Qingming Festival

Children play at the botanic garden of Shijiazhuang, capital of north China’s Hebei Province, on 2 April 2016. The spring beauty at the botanic garden attracted many people on the first day of the three-day Qingming Festival. Photo: Xinhua

Entertainment Channel

(4-4-2016, Monday)

6:00 pm • Weather Report
6:30 pm • International Drama Series
7:00 pm • Music Programme
7:40 pm • International Drama Series
8:30 pm • Myanmar Video
9:30 pm • Next Weekend

From 4-4-2016 (Monday) 6:00 Pm To 5-4-2016 (Tuesday) 6:00 Pm
This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.
**Sport**

**Ronaldo goal hands Barca first defeat in a year**

BARCELONA — Cristiano Ronaldo struck late to give Real Madrid a 2-1 victory in the ‘Clásico’ and ruin Barcelona’s 39-game unbeaten run in all competitions as the game was overshadowed by debatable refereeing decisions on Saturday.

Gerard Pique headed in a corner to give La Liga leaders Barcelona a deserved lead after 56 minutes but Karim Benze- ma’s acrobatic volley levelled for the visitors who were lucky to avoid conceding a penalty in the first half.

Real captain Sergio Ramos was also fortunate to escape with a yellow card from refer- eree Alejandro Jose Hernandez in the second although the defender was eventually sent off in the 83rd minute.

Hernandez also ruled out a headed goal by Gareth Bale. Barcelona failed to capital- ise on their numerical advantage in the closing stages and went 2-1 behind in the 85th minute when Ronaldo chested down a high cross from Bale and fired the ball in at the near post.

"Winning here is a huge prize for all our players because we put in an enormous per- formance," Real coach Zinedine Zidane told a news conference after handing Barca their first defeat in any competition since February 2015.

"I’m very happy because it’s not easy to win here, few teams win here."

Barcelona have 76 points from their first in the league at the Nou Camp since 2012. It was also Barca’s first home defeat since they were beaten 1-0 by Malaga in February 2015.

"It’s painful to lose at home but it had to happen some day," said coach Luis Enrique.

"I’m happy with the attitude of our players if not the result. We could have won, or drawn, but Madrid were effective at the end. Barca made a rampant start and Luis Suarez missed a glaring chance in the 10th minute. They could also have had a penalty midway through the first half when Lionel Messi fell over Ramos’ trailing leg after a mazy run into the box.— Reuters

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**Kane keeps Spurs dreaming as Arsenal, City win**

LONDON — Harry Kane was on target again to earn Totten- ham Hotspur a 1-1 draw at Liver- pool on Saturday but the stale- mate opened a path for Leicester City to forge seven points clear in the title race this weekend.

While Arsenal crashed Wat- ford 4-0 and Manchester City hammered Bournemouth by the same score to breathe fresh life into their faint hopes, Leicester’s closest pursuers moved to within four points thanks to Kane’s predatory instincts.

After Philippe Coutinho had put Liverpool ahead soon after halftime in a vibrant contest, Kane conjured a brilliant strike out of very little to become the first Spurs player in the Premier League era to score 22 league goals in a season.

Leicester, who have played one game fewer, now have the chance to open a huge gap over Mauricio Pochettino’s side with just six matches left if they can beat Southampton at the King Power Stadium on Sunday.

Kane, who felt “very proud of a great achievement” after becoming Spurs’ highest scorer in any league season since Gary Lineker in 1991-92, said his team were “a tad disappoint- ed” with the result.

“We will watch the Leicester game tomorrow and hope Southampton can get a result and do us a favour,” he told Sky Sports.

In the battle for Champions League football next season, not even another free kick master- piece from Dimitri Payet could inspire fifth-placed West Ham United as they had Cheikhhou Kouyate sent off in a 2-2 draw with Crystal Palace.

At the other end of the table, Aston Villa’s dissatisfied fans made a long, loud protest as their side were humiliated 4-0 at home to Chelsea and now stand on the verge of relegation.

Newcastle United are hot favourites to join Villa in the Championship next season after going down 3-2 in a dra- matic clash at fellow strugglers Norwich City who celebrated a 23rd-minute winner from Mar- tin Olsson.

United’s north-east rivals Sunderland are also in deep- est trouble, four points behind safety after a goalless home match with West Bromwich Al- bion.

After losing three home games in a row, Arsenal re- bounded to dominate Watford, who had knocked them out of the FA Cup at the Emirates Stadi- um last month, with Alexis Sanchez, Alex Iwobi, Hector Bellerin and Theo Walcott on target.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, who singled out excit- ing young Nigerian Iwobi for praise, said the performance had “brought a lot of belief back”.

On whether the Gunners were still in the title hunt, Wenger said: “It doesn’t matter how realistic our challenge is, we can only believe in our own game. We just continue”.

Manchester City had lost four of their last six games but stopped the rot with a blistering start at Bournemouth, Fernando, Kevin de Bruyne and Sergio Aguero scoring within 19 minutes.

Aleksandar Kolarov added the fourth in the dying seconds. Arsenal remain two points behind Leicester and four adrift of Spurs, but they lead fourth-placed Man- chester City by four.

The most dramatic action came in the relegation dog-fight at Carrow Road where Aleksandar Mitro- vic looked set to be Newcastle’s hero again.— Reuters

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**Classy Medvedeva bags world title on debut**

BOSTON — Russian teenag- er Evgenia Medvedeva put on a flawless display with a re- cord-setting free skate to cap a stunning debut senior season with the women’s title at the world figure skating championship- ships in Boston on Saturday.

The 16-year-old combined seven triples with exquisite spins as she tallied 150.10 in her four-minute programme that ended with her thrusting both fists in the air in triumph as she broke the record set by South Korea’s Kim Yuna at the 2010 Olympics.

Medvedeva finished with 223.86 points overall to add to the world crown to her Grand Prix Final and European titles, fin- ishing 8.47 points ahead of Ash- ley Wagner, who claimed a first podium place in 10 years for an American in the event.

“I won’t realize quickly I won today because one year ago, I was still skating juniors,” she told reporters through a transla- tor. “Actually I don’t really have any emotions right now... I left everything on the ice.”

Medvedeva also became the first women to win world junior and senior women’s titles in suc- cessive years.

Earlier, Canadians Megan Duhamel and Eric Radford came from behind to successfully de- fend the pairs title they won in Shanghai 12 months ago.

The Canadian duo had struggled for most of the season since that triumph in China but Duhamel and Radford found their form with a personal-best free skate score of 153.81 points for a 231.99 total. They skated to Adele’s “Hometown Glory” and were the only pair to land a quadruple Salchow. “It was an out- of-body experience,” Duhamel said. “How did we just do that? It’s like a dream.”

China’s Sui Wenjing and Han Cong, who led after the short programme, struggled with a poor free skate to settle for a silver medal for the sec- ond straight year. The Chinese pair led by 2.67 after the short program but could only manage a score of 143.62 for 224.47 to- tal points. Five-time champion Aliona Savchenko of Germany and new partner Bruno Mass- rot, skating together at a world championships for the first time, took bronze with a 216.17 total. — Reuters