DAW SUU KYI SPEAKS ON UNITY

Virtuous leaders serve public interests with genuine affection: Chairman Bhamo Sayadaw

VIRTUOUS leaders always act in the best interest of all citizens in their delivery of public service with genuine affection, State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Chairman Bhamo Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Kumarabhivamsa said giving his words of advice to State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Yangon yesterday.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi sought advice and guidance from prominent monks at Kaba Aye Pagoda in the former capital.

The chairman Sayadaw expressed his delight at the state counsellor’s New Year speech, in which she vowed to lead the country with affection and accountability, echoing her father General Aung San’s words in an address.

The state counsellor’s visit to members of the Sangha for advice comes just over one month after the government took office. The chairman Sayadaw expressed his belief that her actions would enable the government to earn the trust and affection of the Buddhist population. Over 88% of the country’s population profess Buddhism.

He encouraged the state counsellor to shield and promote the Sasana, the Buddhist religious faith.

In her articulation of the government’s policy to prominent monks, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said that her government holds the responsibility to commit itself to fulfill the rational wishes and ambitions of the people of all different races and faiths.

The state counsellor vowed that her government would spare no effort to accord great esteem to the religious instruction that reads ‘Never go against monks and people’.

The execution of that responsibility can be interpreted as the protection and promotion of the race and the Sasana, she said.

The state counsellor also described pure love, pure compassion, pure delight and pure disregard as the four virtues of Buddhism, stressing that the exercise of these virtues would keep at bay the act of discrimination on the grounds of race, gender and/or religion.

She also guaranteed the rule of law, equality and human rights based on these virtues as a safeguard against moral corruption. She highlighted the need to establish trust and understanding to ensure peaceful coexistence among different ethnic groups and faith groups residing in the country.

“This is the only way we can build a peaceful, prosperous nation,” she said.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said that she was happy to see the Order of Sangha flourish under the leadership of the Sangha Nayaka Committee at all levels, describing the achievements as a significant milestone in the history of preserving Sasana.

The ceremony came to an end with a sermon delivered by SSMNC’s Secretary Sayadaw Bhaddanta Chandimabubivamsa, followed by the sharing of merits by the congregation.—Myanmar News Agency

First cyclonic storm likely to develop in Bay of Bengal

The Meteorology Hydrology Department has forecast that a low pressure area may form in the Bay of Bengal in the next 18 hours as from yesterday evening as international weather agencies predict a small storm possibly forming on 17 May.

The weather bureau said in its 7 pm announcement yesterday that rain with thunder is expected within 24 hours as from yesterday at 6.30 pm over Sagaing Region, Kachin State, Shan State (north), Chin State, Nay Pyi Taw, Magway, Kayah, Kayin and Mon State with an 80 per cent degree of certainty.

Meanwhile, international weather agencies said that current weather conditions are favourable for the formation of cyclonic storm in the Bay of Bengal.

According to Skymet Weather, a cyclonic circulation was expected to develop in extreme Southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining Andaman Sea by Friday.

Thereafter, the system was likely to intensify into a low-pressure area by today or yesterday and then into a depression by tomorrow. Further retaining strength for few days, the system may intensify into the first cyclone of the season by 19 May. If this cyclone comes into existence it will be named ‘Roanu’. Though the upcoming weather system poses a definite threat to Indian coastline weather models are indicating that it may finally head toward the Bangladeshi or Myanmar coastline.—GNLM
Myanmar moves to extend forest coverage to 9.6m acres over 15 years

PLANS are under way to extend the forest reserve area up to 9.6 million acres over 15 years as of this year, Deputy Director General U Kyaw Kyaw Lwin of the Forest Department told media in a workshop in Yangon yesterday. Forests account for 23.83 acres of the whole area of the country, with the deputy director general saying that the country’s 30-year plan aims to increase the forestry acreage to 30%. The plan was first put into action in 2001.

According to U Kyaw Kyaw Lwin, 80% of the country’s population depend on forests for fuel. The latest national census shows that the country has a population of over 51 million people.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) ranked the country as the third worst for deforestation following last year’s survey which revealed that the country was left with 42.92% forest coverage.

Activists described excessive timber extraction for commercial purpose as the main cause of widespread deforestation. –Ko Moe

US to renew most Myanmar sanctions with changes to aid business

WASHINGTON The United States plans to renew the bulk of its sanctions against Myanmar when they expire next week, but will make some changes aimed at boosting investment and trade, according to several senior U.S. officials and congressional aides.

An announcement on extending much of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, or IEEPA, could come as soon as Tuesday ahead of a visit by the administration also wants to boost investment and trade, according to several senior U.S. officials and congressional aides.

The initiatives of both par-
State Counsellor visits Myanmar Peace Centre

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi speaks to U Hla Maung Shwe of Myanmar Peace Centre during her visit to the MPC.

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi visited Myanmar Peace Centre in Yangon yesterday.

The visit comes five days after she held a coordination meeting on the formation of the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) in Nay Pyi Taw.

“Her visit to the MPC might connect with the formation of NRPC that she spoke about on Monday. What I understand is that such kinds of offices can be established in Nay Pyi Taw or in Yangon under the State Counsellor,” said U Hla Maung Shwe of Myanmar Peace Centre.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi visited MPC, which stopped its functions on 31 March, together with Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein and regional ministers and Dr Tin Myo Win, the peace negotiator of the government.

During the Monday coordination meeting, the State Counsellor stressed the need to focus on the participation of all stakeholders who should be involved in every step of the country’s national reconciliation and peace process.

The meeting was attended by Chief Negotiator Dr Tin Myo Win, government representatives Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Ye Aung and Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo, Tatmadaw representatives Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung and Lt-Gen Min Naung, Myanmar Peace Centre representatives U Myint Soe, U Khin Zaw Oo and Dr Min Zaw Oo and other officials.

The participants agreed to form an NRPC parallel with preparations for the 21st Century Panglong Conference, to focus on the involvement of all stakeholders in every step of preparing for the conference and to hold the second coordination meeting next week.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi called for national peace conference within the next two months at the second meeting of the Union Ceasefire Joint Monitoring Committee (UJMC) on 27 April in her effort to bring eternal peace to the country, stressing the need to hold the national peace conference like historic Panglong Conference concurrently with the nationwide ceasefire.

—Myat Thandar Maung

President U Htin Kyaw to attend the ASEAN-Russia Commemorative Summit in Sochi

U Htin Kyaw, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, will attend the ASEAN-Russia Commemorative Summit to mark the 20th Anniversary ASEAN-Russia Dialogue Relations which will be held in Sochi, the Russian Federation from 19th to 20 May 2016.—Myanmar News Agency

Information Union Minister Inspects IPRD’s library in Yangon

INFORMATION Union Minister Dr Pe Myint went on an inspection tour of the library of the Information and Public Relations Department in Kyauktada township, Yangon Region, yesterday.

The union minister inspected the kid’s reading room, the reference room, the public reading room, the internet room and the training hall at the library, as well as the office of the Yangon Heritage Trust. He proceeded to the Sarpay Beikman’s book shop at the corner of Merchant Street and 37 Street where he gave instructions on the extension and renovation of the shop and the systematic arrangement of books on order in the shelves, urging officials to have an extensive collection of books on a variety of subjects. After a briefing, Dr Pe Myint suggested the establishment of a website for publishers to monitor the sales of their books and stressed the importance of printing quality.

Regarding the selection of winners for literary awards, he said that the board should pick only the books published from 1 January to 31 December.

—Myanmar News Agency

MAPCO to grow quality rice on 5000 acres in coming rainy season

THE Myanmar Agribusiness Public Corporation (MAPCO) is planning to plant 5000 acres under rain-fed fields this rainy season under the contract system in Twante, Dala, Kungyangon and Kawmhu townships in Yangon Region to produce pedigree paddy of quality export.

Farmers interested in the project can contact the MAPCO office in Phaya Ngoto village, Twante Township, MAPCO said they will provide pedigree paddy seeds, chemical fertilizers and farming implements. Moreover, MAPCO will buy paddy at a fair price as stipulated in the contract. Farmers can gain profits and assistance under the system. The company will receive and sell good quality paddy in advance,” said U Ye Min Aung, the Managing Director of MAPCO.

The above townships such as Twante, Dala, Kungyangon and Kawmhu grow monsoon paddy late, usually at the end of June.

Under this contract, they will cultivate Pawaw and Sintwe Lat, it has been learned from MAPCO.—200

Security ramped up within Naypyidaw Union Territory in bid to reduce crime

A TOTAL of 24 police outposts will be opened and 51 CCTV cameras erected within Naypyidaw Union Territory (NUT) in a bid to reduce crime as part of the new government’s hundred day project initiatives. “The primary objective is to successfully carry out security measures, to ensure the rule of law and to reduce crime within the NUT,” said Police Chief Ko Ko Aung of the Naypyidaw Police Department.

The Naypyidaw Police Department gave an explanation on the forthcoming activities during a ceremony on rule of law and crime reduction initiatives as part of the hundred day project that was held on May 12 within the NUT.

“We have changed to a twenty-first century police force, from existing and conducting affairs as a separate entity to cooperation and team work with a multitude of different actors in order to protect and guard the public. We need to build the trust of the nation’s citizens. We also need contact relations in a fair and impartial manner within society,” said Myanmar Police Brigadier General Win Htun.

Nearly all of the 51 CCTV cameras have been installed and will operate round-the-clock 24 hours a day service within the NUT in a bid to reduce crime rates.

Over 100,000 people live within the territory, it is known, with a police presence amounting to over a 1,000 officers - a ratio of one officer providing security to every 700+ residents.

“Relevant departments will inclusively carry out security, rule of law and crime reduction initiative as their roles dictate. We’ll cooperate together with the police force to be effective in promoting of public awareness campaign side of the initiative. There will be collective participation to ensure practical and effective system of service driven policing,” said Dr Myo Aung, chair of the Naypyidaw Council, the executive body that administers the NUT.

It is known alliance organizations the Police Department will work together with as part of the crime reduction initiative include the General Administration Department (GAD); Department of Law; Law Courts; Department of Information; Department of Health; Special Branch (SB); Department of Immigration and National Registration; Department of Road Transports; Department of Information and Public Relations; Department of Forestry; Municipal Development Committee; Supervisory Committee for Motor Vehicles; Auxiliary Brigade; Non-governmental organizations; town and village elders; and the media.—Myinttukha New Agency

Security police are seen in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE
Water donated to village in Natmauk

TO aid local people suffering from water scarcity issues caused by the rising heat that accompanies El Niño, the Department of Rural Development (DRD) of Natmauk Township together with the Road Transportation Department (RTD) donated yesterday 2,000 gallons of water for drinking, bathing and washing to the local villagers of Oakshitkon village, which has been facing a severe shortage of clean water.

There is currently a 2” tube well and handmade wells installed next to the local stream of the village as well as a nearby lake. These groundwater sources are currently drying up due to the extreme climate.—Hla Win (Natmauk)

ASEAN skills certificate a must for Myanmar workers, says DOL

WHEN the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) comes into existence in Myanmar, many Myanmar workers will be faced with difficulties in getting a well-paid job if they are not holding an international and ASEAN skills recognition certificate, said an official from the vocational training centre (Yankin), the department of labour.

Most local workers who are working for foreign construction companies cannot enjoy the same salaries, wages and fringe benefits as expatriate workers because they are not holding skill certificates from our country.

Currently, our workers cannot be competitive in the labour market because they were not given skills grades or levels, said U Kyaw Kyaw Lwin, Director from the skills development branch of the Ministry of Immigration and Labour.

There are altogether 200 workers or so who have been issued with the skills level certificates for 11 job categories by Myanmar Workers’ skills Standardisation Committee, it has been learned.—Chan Chan

Ice, marijuana and Yaba seized

A LOCAL police squad in Lashio seized 80,000 yaba pills from a motorcycle driver identified as one Hsan Aung with Ma Yay Nwe on board at milepost 6/2, Myo Shaung road on Thursday.

Similarly, a combined team comprising officers and staff from Taunggyi police station discovered 620 yaba pills, from a motorcycle driven by one Ba Soe from Taunggyi police station comprising officers and staff working for foreign construction companies El Niño, the Department of Rural Development (DRD) of Natmauk Township together with the Road Transportation Department (RTD) donated yesterday 2,000 gallons of water for drinking, bathing and washing to the local villagers of Oakshitkon village, which has been facing a severe shortage of clean water.

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Crime NEWS

Passenger vehicle overturns, seriously injuring seven

A PASSENGER vehicle en route to Kawthaung from Myeik overturned between mileposts 95/5 and 95/6 on the Myeik-Kawthaung highway. Pyigymandai town on Wednesday, leaving seven passengers seriously injured.

The accident occurred when the vehicle, being driven by one Maung Nge, 32 and carrying 43 passengers on board plunged into a creek as an old and weakened bridge collapsed.

Seven passengers out of 43 were seriously injured in the accident. They are undergoing medical treatment at Pyigyimandai general hospital. Police are searching for the driver who fled the scene and have filed charges against him. —Township (IPRD)

Overheated air conditioner causes fire

A FIRE broke out due to an overheated air-conditioner at a CB bank branch located at the corner of Shwezedei and Konthe road, Ward 4, Pathein town, on Friday.

The accident happened in the afternoon at the bank due to electric short-circuiting from an overheated air-conditioner unit. The fire was put out by firemen with six fire engines. No one was injured in the accident. Police have taken action against the bank manager.—Maung Maung Myint (IPRD)
European nations team up with cold-storage factories

EUROPEAN nations have hired cold-storage factories using a piecework payment system to manufacture finished fishery products, according to the Myanmar Fishery Products Processor and Exporters’ Association.

“Previously, the cold-storage factories were thriving because of the abundant fishery products. Some factories were subjected to shut-downs due to a lack of raw materials. At that time, the piecework system was introduced and many labourers are working with this system, earning high wages. Actually, this system allows the owners to earn a low profit from which the cost of wages is deducted. The factories will gain more profit if they manufacture the finished products themselves,” said Dr. Toe Nanda Tin from the association.

“The frozen fishery processing factories were forced to halt their businesses due to the shortage of raw products in previous years. When the piecework system emerged in Asia in 2014, the businesses were continued to run. With the European countries entering, over 60 per cent of the factories will keep operating,” he added.

Previously, countries from the ASEAN region such as Thailand, Viet Nam, China, South Korea and Japan made contracts with factories with this system and then more countries such as the USA, Brazil, Norway and France also joined hands with cold-storage factories.—Chan Chan

ILO to support SMEs in Myanmar

THE International Labour Organisation (ILO) is planning to assist in training instructors for management teaching courses for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), it has been learned.

Nine trainers were selected from 60 qualified trainer-applicants who have received the Master Trainer Certificate given by ILO. They will conduct business management teaching courses for SME entrepreneurs to effectuate the development of their businesses.

The long-term objective of ILO is to produce local skilled trainers who can help entrepreneurs to develop their businesses. It is the main purpose of the SIYB programme. “We are so delighted to have found the awe-inspiring master trainers to take these responsibilities”, said Michael Jamar, the technical senior counselor of ILO’s SME.

The courses will provide management training described in the context of SYIB, and ILO has provided the management course to over 17,000 trainers. The international context and teaching assistance are changed to be in accord with the current economic climate, aiding the transition into Myanmar. The training methods employed will have a direct interaction with the trainees, including the practical applied courses. This course will help the trainees develop their market strategies and help them to create new opportunities.

The programme will start in the middle of 2017 with the assistance of Norwegian Agency For Development Co-operation (NORAD) and the Swiss State Secretariat For Economic Affairs (SECO).

Entrepreneurs from SME can contact the trainers via this website www.siyb.com.mm and this Facebook page “Start and Improve Your Business”—KMK/Union Daily

Sumitomo eyes Myanmar edible oil market

RISING in demand for edible oil in China has prompted the Japanese Sumitomo Corporation to visit Myanmar and hold talks with the Yangon Region Oil Mill Entrepreneurs Association on exporting locally produced peanut oil to its northern province.

The Japanese company held discussions with the association with the objective of purchasing ground oil products from Myanmar for the purpose of exporting it to China. “There’s been a high increase in demand for edible oil in China. The [Sumitomo Corporation] wants to buy Myanmar-produced oil because of the need for purified cooking oil in China, but they wish to purchase ground oil products in lieu of raw oil producing crops,” said a Yangon Region Oil Mill Entrepreneurs Association and owner of the Ayeyawady Oil Mill.

The Japanese corporation proposed to purchase Myanmar ground edible oils if the association were able to obtain a Codex Standard of Edible Oil certificate, which would serve as recognition of the standard of quality used by 160 countries worldwide.

The proposal was made during the discussion on 11 May, during which the Japanese also expressed interest in Myanmar’s sesame oil.

“They want to distribute Myanmar oil in China if we can acquire a certificate of quality authentication,” explained U Khin Soe. Sellers of genuine peanut oil on the domestic Myanmar market have been hit hard by the influx in cheaper, substandard oil products. Oil millers have said being able to tap into the foreign market would allow them to be able to survive for the long term.

“Only if oil millers provide quality products will good relations with foreign markets be forged, which will also allow for a new avenue of business. It would be better if we had milling machines that could produce good-quality ground oil,” said U Win Htun from the Kaung Thant Miller Enterprise.

U Khin Soe added that plans will be drawn up to send samples of Myanmar peanut oil to food and beverage quality inspection organisations, including that of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in order to acquire quality authentication certificates, which will then be forwarded to the Japanese Sumitomo Corporation.—Myitmakkha News Agency
India announces new trademark, patent policy amid global pressure

NEW DELHI — India announced a new intellectual property policy on Friday, speeding up the online registration of patents and trademarks, but resisted pressure from the United States and other Western countries to amend its patent laws.

The policy will make the Department of Industrial Promotion and Policy the agency in charge of regulating intellectual property rights in India.

Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office in 2014, global drug brands have often complained about India’s price controls and marketing restrictions.

“We hope it will lead to an interpretation of the Indian Patent Act that respects innovativeness, encourages research and facilitates effective enforcement mechanisms,” said Ranjana Sthiram, commerce and industry minister, told lawmakers last month that over 273,000 applications were pending in India’s four patent offices. The policy aims to spread awareness among public about trademarks, copyrights and patents to promote innovation within the country, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley told reporters. The new policy will try to safeguard the interests of rights owners with the wider public interest, while combating infringements of intellectual property rights.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi listens to Finance Minister Arun Jaitley during the Global Business Summit in New Delhi on 16 January, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Australia reaffirms hard-line immigration policy

SYDNEY — Australia on Saturday defended its hard-line immigration policy after two asylum-seeker deaths, weeks of protests and several medical evacuations from a camp in the tiny Pacific island nation of Nauru.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said Australia’s policy of refusing to accept asylum seekers who arrived by boat was necessary to deter people smugglers from organising dangerous sea voyages.

“We do not theorise about border protection,” he told reporters as he came under increasing pressure from Australia’s immigration policy after a cesarean operation.

In the past month two asylum seekers detained on Nauru have set themselves on fire and one of them, an Iranian, died. Another asylum seeker died of a heart attack last week.

On Friday a woman was flown from the island to the Australian city of Brisbane in a critical condition after a cesarean operation.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton on Saturday defended her treatment, saying medical assistance provided on Nauru was “significant” and she was “receiving the medical attention that’s required,” according to Australian Associated Press.

State-owned broadcaster SBS reported that the woman was a 22-year-old Somali named Naima Ahmed, and that her condition was no longer life-threatening.

Refugee advocate Ian Rintoul, a spokesman for the Refugee Action Coalition, said the government was “defending the indefensible”.

“The deterrence policy is what’s wrong, there are plenty of ways for people to get safely from Indonesia to Australia if the government is of that mind,” he said.

He said that refugees on Nauru were “getting increasingly angry and holding demonstrations every day”.—Reuters

Moscow demands North Korea’s explanation on detention of Russian yacht

MOSCOW — A North Korean guard ship has detained a Russian yacht with a crew of five people on board, Russia’s Foreign Ministry said on Saturday, adding it had sent a note to Pyongyang demanding explanation for the cause of the detention.

The yacht was on its way from South Korea’s port city of Pusan to Vladivostok in Russia’s Far East when it was detained 80 miles (129 km) off the coast in North Korea’s exclusive economic zone on Friday, the ministry said, giving no further detail. The yacht is now in the North Korean port of Kimchong, and Russia’s consul general is awaiting permission from the authorities to meet the crew, the ministry said, adding that their lives or health were not in danger.—Reuters
KUMAMOTO, (Japan) — Despite some signs of recovery including resumption of railway and expressway operations, more than 10,000 people were still taking refuge at shelters, as Saturday marked one month after a strong earthquake rocked the southwestern Japan main island of Kyushu.

Magnitude 6.5 and 7.3 quakes hit Kumamoto Prefecture on 14 and 16 April, respective-
leaving 49 people dead and one person unaccounted for. The number of evacuees peaked at about 200,000 in Kumamoto and nearby Oita Prefecture.

Since 14 April, more than 1,400 temblors that could be felt by humans occurred, damaging more than 82,000 buildings in the region. In Kumamoto, 19 people were believed to have died from illness due to stress, fatigue and other quake-related causes after being displaced by quakes.

The Kumamoto prefectural government said Tuesday that 50 people needed to be hospitalised after developing deep vein thrombosis, known as economy class syndrome, in which blood clots develop due to prolonged inactivity including staying in cars.

The number of evacuation centres in Kumamoto fell from 855 as of April 17 to 244. But many residents were still spending nights in cars and tents, fearing aftershocks.

Nearly 80 per cent of 100 evacuees in Kumamoto said they cannot return home as their houses were destroyed, according to a Kyodo News survey conducted between Tuesday and Thursday.

Major transportation services have almost returned to normal in the region, with the restart of bullet train operations on the entire Kyushu Shinkansen Line on 27 April. But a section of one of the local lines operated by Kyushu Railway Co. remains out of service.

The entire expressway network in the Kyushu region was restored Monday, after the last remaining section that had been closed in Oita Prefecture reopened.

In the agriculture sector, the total damage caused by a series of quakes in seven prefectures of Kyushu was estimated at 135.8 billion yen ($1.25 billion), according to the farm ministry and local authorities. Kyushu is known for its wide variety of farm products such as rice.

In a positive sign, the central government will carry out reconstruction work on behalf of affected local municipalities under an ordinance implemented Friday. In order to speed up rebuilding efforts, the government will undertake large-scale restoration work such as road repairs when requested by local governments.

The government also plans to have a 778 billion yen fiscal 2016 supplementary budget enacted next Tuesday to help quake victims and promote the disposal of rubble in the affected areas.—Kyodo News

People are seen inside an evacuation center in Nishihara, Kumamoto Prefecture, southwestern Japan on 13 May 2016. Despite some signs of recovery including resumption of railway and expressway operations, more than 10,000 people are still taking refuge at such shelters, as May 14 marks one month after the first of a number of strong earthquakes rocked the area. PHOTO/ KYODO NEWS

Over 10,000 people still in shelters one month after Kumamoto quake

SINGAPORE — Singapore on Friday reported its first case of the Zika virus, a 48-year-old male Singapore permanent resident who recently returned from Brazil.

“The patient was tested positive for Zika virus infection on 13 May,” the Ministry of Health and the National Environment Agency said in a joint statement, published in whole on The Straits Times website.

It is “the first imported case of Zika virus infection in Singapore,” the statement said.

The patient traveled to Sao Paulo from 27 March to Saturday last week.

He developed a fever and rash from Tuesday and was admitted to a private hospital.

He will be transferred to the Communicable Diseases Centre at Tan Tock Seng Hospital for treatment.

He has been isolated and is currently well and recovering.

The Zika virus is spread by the Aedes mosquito, which also transmits dengue.

There is already a high incidence of dengue fever in Singapore, which has a warm and humid tropical climate with rainfalls all year round.

While the Zika virus usually causes mild symptoms, such as skin rashes and headaches, it is suspected to cause abnormally small head sizes in newborn children, a condition called microcephaly, when mothers contract the virus during pregnancy. Brazil has seen a rapid increase in such cases.—Kyodo News

North Korea calls Obama’s Hiroshima visit plan ‘height of hypocrisy’

BEIJING — North Korea on Saturday criticised US President Barack Obama’s plan to visit Hiroshima, the site of the world’s first atomic bombing in 1945, calling it the “height of hypocrisy.”

Rodong Sinmun, the official newspaper of North Korea’s ruling Workers’ Party, said the visit slated for later this month is aimed at masking the United States’ “real nature as a nuclear criminal” by highlighting Obama’s push for a world without nuclear weapons.

It is the first reaction out of North Korea about Obama’s scheduled trip to Hiroshima, which was devastated by a US atomic bomb on 6 August, 1945 in the final days of World War II.

An article from North Korea’s most influential newspaper referring to the plan of Obama, who will be the first sitting US president to visit the city, said it is “the height of hypocrisy and shame” for the United States, which threatens the Korean Peninsula with nuclear force, to call for nuclear disarmament.

The barb was also made after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un declared that he has no plans to curb Pyongyang’s nuclear ambitions at a congress of the ruling party, which was held for the first time in 36 years and ended Monday.

With Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Obama is scheduled to visit Hiroshima on 27 May after attending a two-day summit of the Group of Seven major industrialised countries in the Ise-Shima area of central Japan.—Kyodo News

Picture of the Day

Photo taken on 13 May, 2016 shows the portrait of Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni at the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Cambodia began the three-day celebrations of the 63rd birthday of King Norodom Sihamoni on Friday. PHOTO/XHANA

Singapore reports 1st case of Zika virus

Thailand, China to conduct joint military exercise in May-June

BANGKOK — The Thai and Chinese navies will conduct a joint military exercise in Thailand and nearby waters starting 21 May to further their defense cooperation, a Thai naval source said on Saturday.

The Blue Strike 2016 exercise, the third event of its kind, will involve the participation of about 1,000 personnel from both sides and is scheduled to run through 9 June, the source said.

They will engage in training for combat and rescue operations on land and sea in and around Chonburi and Chanthaburi provinces, according to the source.

Thailand has been reinforcing its military cooperation with China since a junta took power in the Southeast Asian country after a coup in 2014, prompting concerns among nations such as Japan and the United States.—Kyodo News

North Korea calls Obama’s Hiroshima visit plan ‘height of hypocrisy’
Romance of the Past: Inlay Taik-tays or Duets

Tu Munt Aung

Inlay, one of the most enchanting beauty spots of Myanmar, is the heart of southern Shan Region. In fact, the term “Inlay” is the combination of two mono-syllabic words in Myanmar — “In” and “Lay.” The former represents “Lake” and the latter “Small,” thus meaning “Small Lake.” However, it covers about 45 square miles (116 square kilometers). It is actually the country’s biggest inland lake situated in Monywa Township in Sagaing Region. Inlay Lake is situated amidst lofty mountains on the Shan Plateau about 3000 feet above the sea level. It is said that one will not see the heart of Shan State, if one does not visit Inlay Lake with its great significance of ten famous leg-rowers or inlay. There is an excellent opportunity to breathe in the romance of the past of the famous leg-rowers or inlay. The breathtaking view of nature at its best and lovely weather, one may feel it will be worth paying one’s heart into their ancient traditional songs — Taik-tays or Duets.

In the past, there was the custom of reciting songs in pair in the region of Inlay. The Taik-tays or Duets duets in the form of singing matches are, in fact, beautiful country songs sprouting from the tender heart of the local masses. These songs, in the past, were performed independently by the singers, in pairs, in the presence of the onlookers including the prompters and the chorists. These pastoral duets are endemic to Inlay Lake and set the aesthetic standard ratio which developed countries keep for maintenance of law and order.

The government to put emphasis on one of the most important things to ameliorate the situation, to place a higher priority on conciliation. Whatever effort should be put to realize this extent; for instance, to place a higher priority on conciliation. The perfect step can be taken as a strategic role and help the government to over the situation.

The group of fishermen from the Inle lake of Myanmar

Photo: Kyaw Kyaw Winn (UNWTO—UN World Tourism Organization)

In the post Nargis era, Yangon was forced to receive or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email ce@newlightmyanmar.com. We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email ce@newlightmyanmar.com with your name and title.

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German government plans to spend 93.6 billion euros on refugees by end 2020: Spiegel

BERLIN — Germany’s government expects to spend around 93.6 billion euros by the end of 2020 on costs related to the refugee crisis, a magazine said on Saturday, citing a draft from the federal finance ministry for negotiations with the country’s 16 states.

The figure is likely to stoke concerns, particularly among growing anti-immigration movements, on the impact of new arrivals on Europe’s largest economy which took in more than a million people last year, many from Syria and other war zones.

The numbers arriving have fallen this year, helped by a deal between the European Union and Turkey that was designed to give Turks visa-free travel to Europe in return for stemming the flow of migrants.

German weekly news magazine Der Spiegel said the finance ministry’s calculations included the costs for accommodating and integrating refugees as well as tackling the root causes for people fleeing from crisis-stricken regions. Officials based their estimates on 600,000 migrants arriving this year, 400,000 next year and 300,000 in each of the following years, the report said, adding that they expected 55 per cent of recognised refugees to have a job after five years.

A spokesman for the finance ministry declined to comment on the figures but pointed to ongoing talks between the government and states, saying they would meet again on 31 May to discuss how to divide up the costs between them.

The report said that 25.7 billion euros ($29.07 billion) would be needed for jobless payments, rent subsidies and other benefits for recognised asylum applicants by the end of 2020.

Another 5.7 billion euros would be needed for language courses and 4.6 billion euros would be required for measures to help migrants get jobs, it added.

The annual cost of dealing with the refugee crisis would hit 20.4 billion euros in 2020, up from around 16.1 billion euros this year, the report said.— Reuters

Trump taps climate change sceptic as energy adviser, pushes back on taxes

WASHINGTON/NEW YORK — Donald Trump on Friday picked a prominent climate change sceptic to help him craft his energy policy and pushed back against renewed calls that he release his income tax returns - saying his tax rate is “none of your business.”

The presumptive Republican presidential nominee is seeking to build out his policy proposals as he typically backed reckless and dangerous schemes to put the profits of fossil fuel executives before the health of the public, so he and Trump are a match made in pollut—er heaven,” Sierra Club Legislative Director Melinda Pierce said in an emailed statement.

The Clinton campaign also criticised the move.

“Donald Trump’s choice of outspoken climate (change) denier Kevin Cramer to advise him on energy policy is just the latest piece of evidence that letting him get near the White House would put our children’s health and futures at risk,” said campaign spokesman Jesse Ferguson.

Trump has been light on the details of his energy policy, though he recently met with lawmakers from West Virginia that the coal industry would thrive if he were president. He has also claimed global warming is a concept “created by and for the Chinese” to hurt US business.

Clinton, meanwhile, has advocated shifting the country to 50 per cent clean energy by 2030, promised a ban on new coal plants, and said her prospective administration would put coal companies “out of business.”

Trump also took heat on Friday for not releasing his tax returns, something that American presidential candidates have done for decades. Clinton and her rival, Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, have both released their returns.

Trump has said he released his tax returns and he wanted to wait until the review was over before making them public, “It should be, and I hope it’s before the election,” Trump told ABC’s “Good Morning America.”

Pressed on what tax rate he pays, Trump refused to say, “It’s none of your business,” he said.

The candidate has said there is nothing voters can learn from his tax filings.—Reuters
Islamic State attacks north of Baghdad kill 16 —sources

Residents said they had seized the man from a nearby house where he had fled following the attack. They said he had burned him alive after he confessed. An intelligence official confirmed this account.

Islamic State mostly overran Balad, 80 km (50 miles) north of Baghdad, in 2014 and maintains a frontline around 40 km away.

Friday’s attackers had passed three police checkpoints before reaching their target, said police sources. Security forces deployed throughout the town, fearing more attacks.

The intelligence official said fighters from the powerful Irani- an-backed BadOrganisation raided a nearby house and detained 13 members of a Sunni family. There were reports of gunfire in an adja- cent orchard.

Iraqi authorities are facing scrutiny over security breaches that allowed suicide attackers to set off three bombs on Wednes- day in Baghdad, killing at least 80 people.

The country is also struggling through a political crisis over a cabinet overhaul that has crippled government for weeks and threat- ens to undermine the US-backed war against Islamic State, which still controls swathes of territo- ry in the north and west it seized in 2014. The fight against the ultra-hardline Sunni militants has exacerbated Iraq’s sectarian con- flict, mostly between the Sunni minority and the Shi’ite majority, that emerged after the US-led in- vasion in 2003.

A 22-year-old victim named Taiseen told a doctor he had been smoking a water pipe when a man wearing civilian clothes and a bandolier filled with ammunition crossed the street toward al-Furat Cafe. He recounted hearing sever- al blasts, likely from stun bombs, amid gunfire that lasted about ten minutes.

Inside the cafe hung pictures of famous footballers and a sign for a local group of Real Madrid fans. Witnesses said there was no match on Thursday night but spec- tators often congregated there.

Real Madrid said its players would wear black arm bands on Saturday to honor the victims.

“Hezbollah is fighting in Syria, the outcome of the investi- gations, which he says are aimed at contain- ing the explosion, which targeted one of our bases near Damascus International Airport, and which led to the martyrdom of com- mander Mustafa Badreddine, was the result of artillery bombardment carried out by takfiri groups in the area,” Hezbollah’s statement said.

“He is sick. He was attacked. He is tired. He was killed,” the group said, referring to Badreddine. The group said Badreddine was killed on Friday, while Badreddine died on Thursday or when Badreddine died.

Hezbollah blamed insurgent shelling for death of top commander in Syria

BEIRUT — Lebanese Shi’re Muslim militant group Hezbollah said on Saturday its top military commander Mustafa Badreddine was killed by artillery shells fired by insurgents near Syria’s Damascus airport.

Hezbollah announced Badreddine’s death on Friday and held a military funeral for him on the same day in its stronghold in southern Beirut.

“Hezbollah is fighting in Syria, backing the government of President Bashar al- Assad against a range of Sunni Muslim groups including Islamic State and the al-Qaeda-affiliated Nusra Front. Around 1,200 Hezbollah fighters are estimated to have been killed in the Syrian conflict.

“The outcome of the investi- gation (into Badreddine’s death) will increase our determination ... to continue the fight against these criminal gangs and defeat them,” Hezbollah said. The statement did not say when the attack took place or when Badreddine died.

Announcing his death on Friday, Hezbollah quoted Badreddine as saying he would re- turn from Syria victorious or as a martyr.

Badreddine was sentenced to death in Kuwait for his role in bomb attacks there in 1983. He escaped from prison in Kuwait after Iraq, under the leadership of Sadd- am Hussein, invaded the country in 1990. His release from jail in Kuwait was one of the demands made by the hijackers of a TWA flight in 1985, and of the hijack- ers of a Kuwait Airways flight in 1988.

For years, Badreddine mas- terminded military operations against Israel from Lebanon and overseas and managed to escape capture by Arab and Western gov- ernments.

Congo opposition leader in hospital after police fire tear gas

Supporters of Democratic Republic of Congo’s opposition Presidential candidate Moïse Katumbi escort him as he leaves the prosecutor’s office in Lubumbashi, the capital of Katanga province of the Democratic Republic of Congo, on 11 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

LUBUMBASHI (Democratic Republic of Congo) — Congolese op- position figure MoïseKatumbi was treated in hospital on Friday after police fired tear gas at him and his supporters outside the prosecutor’s office in the southern mining hub of Lubumbashi, his lawyer said.

The former governor of Dem- ocratic Republic of Congo’s main copper-mining region had been summoned for questioning over al- legations he had hired mercenaries, including former US soldiers, as part of a plot against the republic.

Katumbi denies the accusa- tions, which he says are aimed at derailing his campaign to succeed President Joseph Kabila, who has ruled since 2001 but is barred from standing for a third term in an elec- tion set for November. Shortly af- ter Katumbi’s arrival, police fired tear gas at thousands of his back- ers, who had gathered outside the prosecutor’s office to show their support, and the two sides pelted each other with stones.

“He is sick. He was attacked. So it’s normal that the doctor would want to keep him under ob- servation,” said Georges Kapiam- ba, who told Reuters Katumbi had inhaled tear gas and was manhan- dled by police upon his arrival. The hearing was almost immediately suspended after Katumbi said he felt unwell, Kapiamba added. Fri- day’s violence was the third time in five days that police have dis- persed Katumbi’s supporters amid questioning by the prosecutor that began on Monday.

“He’s sick that there is not a state of law — police officers who throw stones and wound my older broth- er,” Katumbi said before finally en- tering the building. —Reuters
Venezuela president declares emergency, cites US, domestic ‘threats’

CARACAS — Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro declared a 60-day state of emergency on Friday due to what he called plots from within the OPEC country and the United States to topple his leftist government.

Maduro did not provide details of the measure. A previous state of emergency, implemented in states near the Colombian border last year, suspended constitutional guarantees in those areas, except for guarantees relating to human rights.

Earlier on Friday, US intelligence officials told reporters they were increasingly worried about the potential for an economic and political meltdown in Venezuela and predicted Maduro was not likely to complete his term.

Venezuela’s opposition is seeking to recall the unpopular leader, 53, amid a worsening crisis that includes food and medicine shortages, frequent power cuts, sporadic looting and galloping inflation.

But the former union leader and bus driver has vowed to stick out his term, and accuses the United States of fomenting an undercover coup against him. He pointed to this week’s impeachment of fellow leftist Dilma Rousseff in Brazil as a sign that he is next.

“Washington is activating measures at the request of Venezuela’s fascist right, who are emboldened by the coup in Brazil,” Maduro said during a Friday night broadcast on state television.

Washington has had an acrimonious relationship with Caracas for years, especially following US support for a short-lived 2002 coup against late leader Hugo Chavez.

Venezuela’s ruling Socialist Party has long been a strong ally of Russia’s Workers Party, however, and her departure adds to Maduro’s isolation in Latin America.

Flanked by his ministers and a statue of Chavez, Maduro signed a state of emergency and extend a state of economic emergency to protect the country from foreign and domestic “threats,” without providing details.

Venezuela’s opposition, which scoffs at Maduro’s accusations of coups-mongering, quickly condemned the measure.

Today Maduro has again violated the constitution,” said opposition lawmaker Tomas Guanipa. “Why? Because he is scared of being recalled.”

—Reuters

Canada PM tours Alberta oil town ravaged by fire, vows major aid

BONNYVILLE, (Alberta) — Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau praised firefighters on Friday for defending the energy hub of Fort McMurray and promised the federal government would pour money in to its recovery.

Trudeau toured the town in a military helicopter and saw a patchwork of neighbourhoods destroyed by an inferno that forced the evacuation of all 88,000 inhabitants. Some homes still stood, while others had burned to their foundations.

The inferno closed the expansive oil sands operations near the town and the effort to restart them is progressing slowly. The wildfire knocked out nearly half, or 1.07 million barrels per day (bpd), of Alberta’s oil sands capacity.

The blaze could cost insurers as much as C$6 billion ($4.7 billion), making it by far the most expensive Canadian natural disaster, according to ratings agency DBRS.

“To the people of Fort McMurray: Know that even though things may look difficult and uncertain and at times perhaps almost hopeless, know that you are not alone. Canadians are standing with you,” said Trudeau.

“There will be significant federal monies invested in that community as we rebuild,” he told a news conference in the provincial capital Edmonton.

Ottawa runs a fund to help provinces recover from disasters and could end up paying 90 per cent of all eligible costs. Trudeau said the government would try to ensure the money was paid out more quickly than usual but gave no details.

After the aerial tour, he was briefed on progress fighting the fire, which has moved east of Fort McMurray into less inhabited areas, and praised emergency officials for their “valor and courage” in preserving much of the town.

“The work you did to save so much of this community, to save so much of this city and its downtown core ... was unbelievable,” he said.

Trudeau has faced criticism in Alberta, a province that does not usually vote for his party, for waiting more than a week to visit the damage. He initially stressed he did not want his visit to interfere with firefighting efforts.

“I think it’s a good thing he’s coming,” said Fort McMurray housekeeper Maureen Pearce at a supply centre for evacuees in Lac La Biche, Alberta. “I hope he provides more aid.”

Many of the evacuees are living in temporary accommodation across the province, while authorities work to restore power, gas, water and communications.

Local officials say it will be 10 days before they can even produce a plan for resettlement, much less allow people to return to a place where small fires are still erupting.—Reuters

Russia will act to neutralise US missile shield threat — Putin

SOCHI — A ballistic missile defence shield which the United States has activated in Europe is a step to a new arms race, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday, vowing to adjust budget spending to neutralise “emerging threats” to Russia.

The United States switched on the $800 million missile shield at a Soviet-era base in Romania on Thursday saying it was a defence against missiles from Iran and so-called rogue states.

But, speaking to top defence and military industry officials, Putin said the system was aimed at blunting Russia’s nuclear arsenal.

“This is not a defence system. This is part of US nuclear strategic potential brought onto a periphery. In this case, Eastern Europe is such periphery,” Putin said.

“Until now, those taking such decisions have lived in calm, fairly well-off and in safety. Now, as these elements of ballistic missile defence are deployed, we are forced to think how to neutralise emerging threats to the Russian Federation,” he said.

“Coupled with deployment in the Mediterranean of US ships carrying Aegis missiles and other missile shield elements in Poland, the site in Romania was ‘yet another step to rock international security and start a new arms race’, he said.

Russia would not be drawn into this race. But it would continue re-arming its army and navy and spend the approved funds in a way that would “uphold the current strategic balance of forces”, he said.

US Deputy Defence Secretary Robert Work said on Thursday that the shield would not be used against any future Russian missile threat.

Frank Rose, deputy US assistant secretary of state for arms control, warned at the time that Iran’s ballistic missiles could hit parts of Europe, including Romania.

Putin said the prospect of a nuclear threat from Iran should no longer be taken seriously and was being used by Washington as an excuse to develop its missile shield in Europe.

The full defensive umbrella, when complete in 2018 after further development in Poland, will stretch from Greenland to the Azores.

It relies on radars to detect a ballistic missile launch into space. Sensors then measure the rocket’s trajectory and destroy it in space before it re-enters the earth’s atmosphere. The interceptors can be fired from ships or ground sites.—Reuters
G-7 ministers meet in Japan to discuss education cooperation

OKAYAMA (Japan) — Education ministers from the Group of Seven industrialized nations will hold their annual meeting in Okayama Prefecture in western Japan on Saturday to discuss ways to advance international cooperation in education in a bid to address such global issues as refugees and the widening divide between rich and poor.

Hiroshi Hase, the Japanese education minister, said in his remarks at the start of the meeting in Kurashiki, Okayama, that it is important for G-7 countries to take steps in the area in a coordinated manner.

During the two-day meeting, representatives from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United States and the European Union are expected to discuss ways to provide quality education to the children of refugees and immigrants.

They are also set to discuss how equal opportunities can be ensured for young people in poverty and women, and promoting science and math education, according to Japanese officials.

The ministers will issue a joint declaration on Sunday, the contents of which are expected to be reflected in a two-day G-7 summit meeting to be held in Mie Prefecture in central Japan from 26 May.

Dutch police spot tigers on the loose from animal shelter

AMSTERDAM — Two tigers escaped from a big cat shelter near a small Dutch village on Saturday and were being tracked by police.

Residents in the village of Oldeberkoop, population 1,500, have been warned to stay indoors. “Tigers in sight,” police tweeted after launching a search with a helicopter and a veterinarian with a tranquilizer gun. “We are now going to try to bring them back to the shelter.”

Oldeberkoop is home to the Felida centre, which receives big cats from circuses and zoos, treats them, and works to replace some in a larger shelter in South Africa.

According to the centre’s website, its residents include two lions, eight tigers, a black jaguar, and a leopard. ”The two tigers appeared to have escaped through a gate that had accidentally been left open.” — Reuters

Chile to examine possible link between salmon industry, red tide

SANTIAGO — A team of scientists will determine if salmon producers dumping tons of dead fish into the Pacific contributed to a massive “red tide” that is wreaking havoc among fishermen in southern Chile, the government said on Friday.

The red tide — an algal bloom that turns the sea water red and makes seafood toxic — is a common, naturally recurring phenomenon in southern Chile, though the extent of the current outbreak is unprecedented.

After starting in the Los Lagos region, the bloom has steadily spread outward, depriving many coastal communities of their livelihood. That in turn has led to massive protests and a network of roadblocks set up by fishermen who consider the government’s efforts to mitigate the economic fallout from the bloom to be inadequate.

Scientists say this year’s El Niño weather pattern is likely a key factor in the red tide, as it warms the ocean and creates bloom-friendly conditions. Along with Chile’s SERNAPESCA fisheries body, they have widely rejected a link between salmon dumping and the recent outbreak.

Many fishermen and communities in southern Chile, however, are blaming the country’s salmon industry, the world’s second largest, for exacerbating the problem by dumping tons of dead salmon into the ocean after a separate algal bloom killed off an estimated 100,000 tonnes of fish.

“A team of five excellent professionals has been formed that will be working on the task of examining the link between the dumping of salmon and the red tide phenomenon,” Economy Minister Luis Felipe Copes said in a statement. Fishermen have blocked the principal access point to the island of Chiloe for the past three weeks, largely isolating its population of around 140,000 and stranding some tourists.” — Reuters

Forests re-grown on cleared lands in Latin America key for climate, land rights

RIO DE JANEIRO — Forests re-grown on lands that had been cleared for agriculture in Latin America could play a key role in trapping carbon from the atmosphere and mitigating climate change, if they are managed properly, researchers said in a study published on Friday.

Over the next 40 years, such second-growth forests have the potential to sequester greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to all fossil fuel and industrial emissions from Latin America in the past two decades, said the study by scientists at the University of Connecticut.

While preventing deforestation is the best protection against releasing climate-changing gases, the study published in the journal Science Advances shows that re-grown forests have a bigger impact in combating global warming than previously thought.

“Avoiding deforestation and supporting forest regeneration are complementary and mutually reinforcing activities,” said Robin Chazdon, a professor of evolutionary biology at the University of Connecticut and lead author of the study.

For re-growing forests to live up to their potential, climate-change-causing gases in the atmosphere in the tropics, governments across Latin America need to work with local communities to ensure the land is protected, Chazdon said.

“There is a huge link between land rights and forest regeneration,” she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

“If people don’t own the land, they don’t have incentives in its future... There is also a huge potential for community management of some of these restored forests.”

It takes between 40 and 60 years for forests to re-grow much of their carbon storage potential following deforestation, the study said.

This process works efficiently if local people are involved in managing the transition and protecting the re-growth, Chazdon said.

In many cases, especially when small plots of land are cleared for agriculture or livestock, tropical forests can regenerate themselves, without the need to physically replant trees, she said.

Brazil’s re-growing forests hold the bulk of Latin America’s carbon storage potential — 71 percent — followed by Colombia, Venezuela and Mexico. The potential of second-growth forests to sequester carbon could provide a solution for countries in Latin America to meet both their climate change and forest management goals, the study said.” — Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV GSS YANGON VOY NO ( ) Consignees of cargo carried on MV GSS YANGON VOY NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15.5.2016 and cargo will be discharged to the premises of H.P.T 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.

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Russia and Ukraine set to battle it out on stage at Eurovision

STOCKHOLM — Politics could take centre stage at the usually kitsch Eurovision Song Contest on Saturday, with bookmakers making Russia favourite to win and the Ukrainian entry featuring lyrics about deportations by the Soviet Union.

In “1944”, Ukraine’s 32-year-old Jamala sings about strangers coming to “kill you all”, saying “we’re not guilty” — remembering a time when Josef Stalin deported Tatars from Crimea.

Jamala, herself a Tatar, stands alone on the Stockholm stage and sings “you think you are gods” against a blood-red backdrop — leading reporters and online commentators who have seen Ukraine’s rehearsals and semi-final performance to draw parallels with Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Tatars, a Muslim people indigenous to the Black Sea peninsula and numbering about 300,000 in a population of 2 million, opposed the annexation, which followed the overthrow of a Moscow-backed president in Kiev.

Meanwhile, Russia, is tipped to win with a breezy europop number “You are the Only One”, by Sergey Lazarev. A victory for Russia, which started competing by Sergey Lazarev. A victory for Ukraine, which is about Stalin’s deportations from the Crimea in the 1940s, and contemporary events.”

Security for the event will be tight in the wake of militant attacks in Europe and safety issues were further highlighted after Bosnian officials said police had arrested several people suspected of trafficking arms to Islamists in Sweden.

Eurovision, which was started in the 1950s with the aim of uniting Europe after World War II, has expanded ever further outside the continent in recent years due to its popularity.

Organisers expect more than 200 million viewers to tune in from Australia and New Zealand to China and the United States, where Saturday night’s final is being broadcast live for the first time in both countries.

The internationalisation of the contest is underlined by the performance of US singer Justin Timberlake who is set to premiere a new song during the final.

Australia, competing for the first time last year and taking part after accepting an invitation from organisations, could yet steal the show with bookies making Dami Im’s power ballad “Sound of Silence” second favourite.— Reuters

Stone Roses return with ‘All For One’, first single in 21 years

NEW YORK — The Stone Roses, the English band that influenced a generation of others including Oasis, has released its first original single in 21 years to mixed reviews.

The band, formed in Manchester in 1983, was one of the pioneering groups of the so-called “Madchester” scene, producing songs such as “I Am The Resurrection”, “Fools Gold” and “Waterfall”.

“All For One” captures that classic Roses sound but drags it right into the 21st century.”

MNE music newspaper wrote of the new single. It will please the Madchester faithful, who don’t require a fresh take on what these musicians are about,” the newspaper said. “But for those who crave the magic of the band at their peak, the wait goes on.” — Reuters

Meghan Trainor to perform at 2016 Billboard Music Awards

LOS ANGELES — Singer Meghan Trainor will perform at the 2016 Billboard Music Awards.

The 22-year-old singer Grammy-winning pop star will take the stage to perform her hit single “NO” at the 22 May gala, reported E! online.

The first single lifted from her sophomore album Thank You, “NO” reached No 3 on the Billboard Hot 100 last month.

She will join alongside major names like Rihanna, Ariana Grande, Justin Bieber, Gwen Stefani and Blake Shelton, Celine Dion, DNCE, Britney Spears, Pink, Dem Lovato and Shawn Mendes among others.

Ludacris and Ciara will host the evening.— PTI

Justin Bieber takes selfie with restaurant manager

LOS ANGELES — Justin Bieber’s self-imposed ‘fan selfie ban’ didn’t last long as the pop star posed for a photo with a steakhouse manager.

The “Sorry” superstar was in Boston, Massachusetts on 10 May during a two-night concert stint when he agreed to mug for a snap with a STRIP by Strega restaurant boss.

The photo left many fans worried, but for those who crave the magic of the band at their peak, the wait goes on.” — Reuters

“IT made him feel like a “zoo animal”, Justin defended his no-selfie stance in an exchange with an Instagram follower, insisting he needed to set “boundaries” to prevent the onset of insanity as he struggles to deal with the pressures of fame.

However, the 22-year-old appeared to be in a happier mood after his gig that night, when he headed to the STRIP by Strega restaurant in the Boston Park Plaza Hotel sat drinking alone at the bar chatting with a bartender.

“He was super nice and chatty with guests,” a representative for the restaurant.

I was-expecting around outside for a little bit, chatting with the manager, then we went back in and waved goodbye to everyone, and everyone went crazy.”— PTI
Women boxers punch through social taboos in Sudan

KHARTOUM — Sweat drips from Arafat Abkar’s brow as she dodges blows in an open-air arena in Khartoum’s searing summer heat. Wearing only shorts and a t-shirt, the 22-year-old draws crowds in a country where Muslim mores mean women’s boxing is a rare spectacle.

“When I train, more spectators watch because women’s boxing is new and unfamiliar in Sudan,” Abkar said proudly at the private Nile Club in the south of the city.

Sudan is ruled by Islamic law, which requires women to dress modestly. So, when she’s in the street, Abkar follows the fashion by wearing loose, flowing garments and covering her hair.

In the ring, however, her bare head and defined muscles mark her out for criticism and ridicule. That is a price Abkar is willing to pay.

“People mock women who box. They think it’s not feminine but they’re wrong ... I don’t think this sport will stop me getting married. So far, we’ve faced no objections from anyone, governmental or otherwise,” she said.

Most families are not so supportive and another girl at the club said she boxed in secret as her family would object to her taking part in what they see as a man’s sport. Women’s boxing was unheard of in Sudan until four years ago, when Sahar Mohamed took up the sport and represented her country at the All Africa Games last year. She was defeated on points in the Middle-weight category by Yannick Azangue of Cameroon.

Since then, the Sudan Amateur Boxing Federation has sought to encourage women to join the sport despite social challenges.

“Four years ago, I was the first Sudanese girl to box and I faced big pressures from my family and people but I’ll continue as this is my life’s dream,” said Mohamed at a state-run youth centre in Khartoum, where she trains. Nearby, two women were training alongside men, shouting as they jumped from foot to foot and punched each other with worn gloves. The equipment is worn and basic, but the centre is busy, the atmosphere buzzing with young people practicing everything from martial arts to soccer.

“People watch satellite channels and look on the internet and that has changed the culture and given new courage to women in the past few years to pick up boxing gloves,” Mohamed Youssef, head of the Sudanese national boxing team, said. “The Sudan Boxing Federation asked us put more emphasis on girls to encourage them to continue in the sport.”

Ali al-Aqrab, 78, a retired Sudanese boxing champion and the first to begin training women said a lack of funds, not enthusiasm, was the biggest hurdle.

—Reuters

Portugal haunted house show seeks shivers and shrieks in eerie tour

LISBON — At the Quinta Nova da Assuncao mansion near Lisbon, all is not quite right.

During a tour of the empty house, there are apparitions, shadows and the sound of doors randomly shutting. All accompanied by the terrified shrieks from the group of visitors.

Portugal theatre company Reflexo is terrifying audiences with its “Casa Assombreada” (haunted house) project, an immersive show where small groups of visitors walk through the 25-room house with just an audio guide — and each other — for company.

Faced with some scary scenes as well as riddles to get to one room to the other, there are plenty of screams as well as tears. Some do not even make it to the end of the show, fleeing through the front door.

The project has been running since last June at the house, which has stood empty for several years, drawing visitors from all over the country for the freak experience in the village of Belas, near the town of Sintra.

“Normally what you see is the scary actor running through corridors ... It’s not like this. You don’t see the things, you are not sure if you are seeing things,” director Michel Simeao told Reuters. “It’s a very intense experience.”

—Reuters
Resilient Djokovic fends off Nadal, Murray wins

ROME — World number one Novak Djokovic fended off a resurgent Rafael Nadal 7-5, 7-6 (4) in a pulsating battle on Friday to reach the semi-finals of the Italian Open.

Nadal led 4-2 in the first set and had five set points on serve at 5-4 in the second but Djokovic held firm for a bruising clay-court victory which took two hours 24 minutes.

It was his seventh straight win over the Spaniard and third in 12 meetings. However, it took all of the Serb’s incredible defensive skills to withstand a much-improved performance from the nine-times French Open champion.

Coping better with a blustery wind that swirled around the Foro Italico, Nadal broke to lead 3-2 but Djokovic recovered to level at 4-4 and then won the first set on his fourth set point.

In the second set Nadal broke in the opening game and despite calling the physio because of pain in his left foot, he held his advantage to 5-4.

Serving for the set he held five set points but Djokovic saved the lot and broke back, eventually sealing the match on a tiebreak.

Djokovic next meets Kei Nishikori of Japan or Dominic Thiem of Austria. Earlier, Andy Murray held off a strong fightback from David Goffin to beat the Belgian 6-1, 7-5.

In a repeat of their clash in last year’s Davis Cup final, world number three Murray raced through the first set for the loss of just 10 points.

After recovering from 3-1 down in the second, the Scot served for the match at 5-4 only to be broken thanks to a stunning pass by Goffin.

Murray broke again in the next game and served out second time round to set up a meeting with France’s Lucas Pouille.

Having reached the semi-finals in Monte Carlo last month and the final in Madrid last week, Murray said he was enjoying himself on clay.

“I always said it was the surface I enjoyed playing on the most because it is very challenging,” he added.

In the women’s event, last year’s Wimbledon runner-up Garbine Muguruza of Spain beat Swiss Timea Babos 6-3, 7-6 (10-5) to reach the final four.

She plays American Madison Keys who overcame Czech Barbora Strycova 6-4, 6-3, Russia’s Irina-Camelia Begu saw off Misaki Doi of Japan 6-2, 7-6 (3) and next faces world number one Serena Williams or Russia’s Svetlana Kuznetsova—Reuters

Terry mulling over ‘different role’ at Chelsea

LONDON — Chelsea captain John Terry says he will ponder his future carefully before deciding whether to accept the club’s offer of a new one-year deal and what he describes as “a different role”.

The Londoners announced earlier on Friday that the former England skipper, who is out of contract at the end of the season and feared he had played his last game for the club, had been offered a 12-month extension.

However, it is uncertain whether Chelsea’s 35-year-old idol will agree to the deal.

“The contract extension the club have offered me is a different role and I hope everyone will understand I want to take the time to consider it carefully before making a decision,” Terry said on Instagram without elaborating.

The offer of a new deal suggests Antonio Conte, who will take over as manager from Guus Hiddink after leading Italy at next month’s European Championship, wants to keep the centre half.

Some fans staged a protest in the 26th minute, the number of Terry’s shirt, of Wednesday’s 1-1 draw at Liverpool urging the club to keep him.

“(Director) Marina Grano-vskiia and (chairman) Bruce Buck met with John and his agent this week and offered him a one-year contract extension,” a Chelsea spokesman said on Friday.

“Terry is banned for Chelsea’s final game of the season, Hiddink’s farewell match against champions Leicester City at Stamford Bridge on Sunday, after he was sent off at Sunderland last weekend.

If Terry decides to stay it will lift the supporters at the end of a poor defence of the club’s Premier League title.

Chelsea were one point above the relegation zone following defeat at Leicester in December, after which manager Jose Mourinho was sacked, and cannot now finish higher than ninth.

“I still want to play a couple more years and hopefully that’s at Chelsea,” Terry told Sky Sports earlier this week.

“I’m a Chelsea player, Chelsea’s been my club from the age of 14.” He made his first-team debut in 1998 and is one of only three players to have appeared in more than 700 games for the club, the others being Peter Bonetti and Ron Harris.

Terry is the most successful skipper in Chelsea’s history and has won 14 major trophies with the club. “It would be very difficult (to replace him),” said team mate Gary Cahill. “Not only as a player but as a character in the dressing-room.”—Reuters

Mourinho has no agreement with United – Sky report

LONDON — Former Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho has no agreement in place to take over at Manchester United, Sky Sports television said on Friday quoting unnamed sources.

The 53-year-old Portuguese has been the long-time favourite with British bookmakers to succeed Louis van Gaal in the Old Trafford hot seat.

Mourinho, who has also coached Real Madrid, Inter Milan and Porto, has been out of work since being sacked by Chelsea, for the second time in his career, when the 2014-15 Premier League champions were one point above the relegation zone in December.

The Londoners have since climbed to ninth in the table under interim manager Guus Hiddink and play their final game of the season at home to newly-crowned champions Leicester City on Sunday.

Van Gaal said on Friday that he expected to see the final season of his United contract signed in 2014. “I have said I shall be here, that is my opinion, so the board has to decide if it is that,” the Dutchman told reporters. United, who are fifth in the league, end their season with a home game against Bournemouth on Sunday.—Reuters

Photo: Reuters

Photo: Reuters

Photo: Reuters

Djokovic returns the ball during Italy Open Men’s Singles Quarterfinal match at Rome, Italy on 13 May 2016.

Former Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho walks during a friendly soccer match between FIFA Football Legends against Mexican all-stars as part of the 60th FIFA Congress and 50th anniversary of the Azteca stadium, at Azteca stadium in Mexico City, Mexico, on 11 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

John Terry says he will ponder his future carefully before deciding whether to accept the club’s offer of a new one-year deal and what he describes as “a different role”.