A MYANMAR delegation led by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi arrived at Heathrow Airport in London at 7:15 pm local time on Saturday.

The delegation left Yangon on Saturday to pay an official visit to the United Kingdom and the United States to attend the 71st United Nations General Assembly.

They were welcomed at the airport by Ambassador of Myanmar to UK U Kyaw Soe Min and Ambassador of Britain to Myanmar Mr Andrew Patrick.

The State Counsellor met with 12 Myanmar ambassadors assigned in countries in Europe, the Middle East and Africa yesterday.

During the meeting, the State Counsellor clarified priorities in Myanmar as well as the country’s foreign policy, saying that Myanmar has friendly relations with all countries in the world, practicing the non-aligned policy.

She urged the diplomats to give protection to Myanmar citizens in the countries in which they are assigned and to protect the interests of Myanmar. She also clarified undertakings for development of the political, economic and social sectors of the country. In turn, the ambassadors reported on their efforts in their respective countries for bilateral relations and mutual cooperation.

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Practitioners in Mandalay want to amend Traditional Medicine Council Law

The current Myanmar Traditional Medicine Council Law needs to be amended because of its numerous loopholes, said Dr Kyaw Thein Htay, the pro-rector of the University of Traditional Medicine in Mandalay.

Plans are underway to submit a proposal relating to the amendment of the existing laws to the Pyidaungsu Hlutaw (Union Parliament), he added.

Faculty members of the University of Traditional Medicine in Mandalay on Saturday gathered at the university to discuss the amendment of the 16-year-old law.

The current law, which has been in effect since 2000, includes 11 chapters. Almost all chapters need to be amended to promote role of local traditional medical practitioners and protect their rights by amending some outdated provisions.

Views of senior faculty members on the issue on rewriting the law have been collected, said Ko Hein Soe Kyaw, a student from the University of Traditional Medicine, who agreed that some changes need be made.

For instance, under the current law, the traditional medicine council comprises 11 members. The number of participants in the council is likely to be increased in the new law, officials said.—Aung Thant Khaing
Myanmar Girls Guides and Scouts honoured

Myanmar Girls Guides and Scouts Association was honoured for its achievement in increasing its membership by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.

At the recent 12th Asia Pacific Regional Conference in Kathmandu, Nepal that ended on 2 September, Dr Daw Tin Hla Kyi, the Chief of Myanmar Girls Guides and Scouts Association, and Daw Myat Thinzar Tun, the Trainer-In-charge, made a presentation about the progress of the scout sector in Myanmar from 1916 to 2016. —GNLM

Mandalay footballers to get their old pitch back

A sports field in downtown Mandalay between 35th and 71st streets, on which currently stands the temporary Mingalar Market, will reportedly be rebuilt once the market has been taken down, according to the Mandalay City Development Committee (MCDC).

The temporary market was erected to provide a place of trading for displaced sellers after the original Mingalar Market burnt down, while the decision to take down the market comes in a bid to provide young people with a place to play football, together with a current dearth of space to build sports fields in the city. “We consulted with football and sport enthusiasts on utilizing the space to build the market. We had to erect the temporary Mingalar Market here for lack of any alternative locations. Once the market is taken down, the space will be reused as a sports field,” U Thet Naing Htun, joint secretary of the MCDC, told Myitmakha News Agency.

For the meantime, he added that consultations would be made with staff from Mandalay University in a bid to allow football enthusiasts to use the university’s football fields in the time leading up to the dismantling of the temporary market.— Myitmakha News Agency

Fishermen from Bago Region’s Waw Township struggling to make ends meet

Fishermen in Bago Region’s Waw Township are struggling to make ends meet after being forbidden from catching fish in local rivers and ponds, their local stomping grounds, residents have expressed to Myitmakha News Agency.

“We’ve been fishing as a means of a livelihood for over 30 years. We don’t try and catch fish in ponds which have been auctioned off, but yet we’ve recently had our nets confiscated from us at whilst fishing in local creeks and fields. Us poor folk are now left with no place to catch fish,” said U Aung Thaung, a fisherman from Waw Township.

According to the Department of Fisheries, Waw Township boasts a total of 65 ponds which have either been auctioned off or for which a form of tax is being paid.

Since the local creeks fall under part of an area of auctioned-off ponds, it has reportedly rendered the creeks out-of-bounds to small-scale fishermen.

The administrator of Bo U Sein village addressed Bago Region Hluttaw on August 31 stating that roughly 400 local people from five different villages made their living from fishing in local ponds and irrigation channels, with the banning of fishing activities in these areas having been to the detriment of their livelihoods.

Citing a bid by the current government to eradicate poverty in Myanmar, local fishermen expressed to Myitmakha News Agency that they did not intend for such to happen, but the government needs to provide them with an alternative area to fish so that they can continue to earn a living as they know how.

The current problem is the revoking by pond owners of the right for local fishermen to fish, not only in officially demarcated ponds, but even in small irrigation channels by the sides of fields, which fall up the area of the pond ownership.

“It’s augmented the hardships faced by the poor even more,” said U Than Htun, administrator for Bo U Sein village.

According to article 43 of the Fisheries Law, fishing activities are not permitted without being in possession of a rental grant license or permit issued in accordance with the law, while those found to be in violation of article 54(a) of the same law could face a fine of K50,000, a six-month stint in prison, or both.—Myitmakha News Agency

Slips for Hpa-an’s affordable housing project sold off to third parties

ENTITLEMENT slips for units in an affordable housing project to be built in the vicinity of Hpa-an’s Industrial Zone, Kayin State, are already being bought and sold, local real-estate agents have told Myitmakha News Agency.

The ‘slips’, which require the holder to pay off the value of the affordable housing unit with a sum of K30,000 a month over a period of 30 years, reportedly went on sale to those entitled to buy them back on January 26 earlier this year, with payments starting to be made this July.

“The slips are currently fetching K500,000 each. They were issued out in January with the first instalments required to be made from July. But those who received the slips resold them after just a couple of months of making payments, citing an array of excuses from not being able to continue to afford installments to being re-located to a different region with work. The market price for the slips includes two months of payments already made,” said Ko Zaw Lay, a real-estate agent from Hpa-an.

The affordable housing project is comprised of 2,560 studio apartments measuring 20 by 30 feet across a three-story building, and is earmarked for construction nearby the Hpa-an - Haingbywe highway in Nyein Chan Thar Yar San Pya village through the concerted efforts of the Mya Hway Kywe Lin and Infrastructure of Myanmar companies.

The majority of individuals who have purchase housing slips are from Yangon, Hpa-an and the Myanmar - Thazi border town of Myawady. Buyers reportedly include those who desire to live in the housing-estate as well as business opportunists who anticipate an increase in value of the housing slips once the project has been fully implemented.

“I live in Myawady. I bought [a slip] so that I can have a base in Hpa-an, allowing me to travel and stay there freely. A sum of just K30,000 a month must be paid, so the housing unit can be paid-off slowly. I bought my slip for K440,000 with two month’s worth of installment having already been paid on it,” said Ma Nan Kywe Lin, a resident of Myawady.

A member of staff from the Mya Hway Kywe Lin Company, which wished to remain anonymous, told Myitmakha News Agency that he believes the reselling of the slips is due in part to no action being taken by the company against such activities, highlighting a need for all official documentation relating to the slips to be systematically exchanged between buyers and sellers, while the company themselves did not intend for such to happen, issuing out the slips to people through a lucky draw system.

“Of course, it’s something buyers [of the slips] need to check; that they have the contract and receipts for all paid instalments. I’m not in a position to say whether the buying and selling [of slips in this manner] is legal or not. Those that have purchased the slips will naturally try and resell them should they encounter any problems.

There needs to be a level of trust between buyers and sellers,” he said.

But chair of the Mya Hway Kywe Lin Company, U Saw Than Mya spoke confidently on the matter at a public consultation on the housing project’s implementation, which is yet to be confirmed, held in Hpa-an’s City Hall at the start of September, during which he stated that slip holders are entitled to re-sell their slips as long as it means no disruption or delays to the regular monthly payments of K30,000.

It has been estimated that construction of the Hpa-an’s affordable housing project will take two years, with a tentative completion date of July 2018. The housing project has been divided up with 30 per cent allocated to Myanmar companies, 40 per cent set aside for regional government staff and civil servants, with the remaining 30 per cent given to the companies responsible for the building of the housing estate. The project is reportedly being implement-ed on 20 acres of land bought from regional government.—Myitmakha News Agency

The affordable housing project in Hpa-an is expected to complete two years after the project launches. Photo: Myitmakha News Agency
Vice President U Myint Swe attends opening of 13th CAEXPO, China-ASEAN Summit in Nanning

Vice President U Myint Swe delivered a speech at the 13th China-ASEAN Businesses and Investment Summit. Photo: MNA

Vice President U Myint Swe visits Guangxi Museum of Nationalities. Photo: MNA

Vice President U Myint Swe delivering a speech at the 13th China-ASEAN Businesses and Investment Summit. Photo: MNA

Defense Services
Deputy C-in-C concludes RoK visit

A Myanmar military delegation led by Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice Senior General Soe Win arrived Yangon yesterday after paying a visit to the Republic of Korea.

The delegation visited the Defence Expo Korea 2016 held in Gintex, Seoul, South Korea, and Seung-Jin Training Centre on 9th September.

On 10th September, they visited the Pannunjeom Demilitarized Zone. Deputy Minister of Defence of South Korea Mr. Hwang In Moo hosted a luncheon in honour of the Myanmar delegation before they left for Myanmar. —Myanmar News Agency

Real-estate augmented out-of-reach for families across Rakhine State

A SURGE in the numbers of land investors in Rakhine State’s urban centers has augmented the price of real-estate to such an extent that it is no longer easily affordable by normal working-class families, residents have informed Myitmakha News Agency.

Including the provincial towns in the vicinity of industrial zones such as Sittwe, Kyaukphyu and Ponnagyun, the price of a bog-standard 60 by 40 feet plot of land in Maung-U, Minbya and Taunggyi currently fetches between K30 - 600 million dependent upon location desirability. “Some plots of land in Sittwe’s urban wards are going for about K100 million, while those beside the main road can fetch even more than K600 million. The majority of proprietors utilize their land by opening up banks, hotels or stores on it. The fact that all these land owners are businessmen makes it rather difficult for the next group of people who want to buy property,” said U Maung Lu Aye, company director of Great Laywaddy Construction.

Real-estate owners cite manipulation of the market; economic development in large urban centers; rental of land by INGOs and NGOs for the opening of offices; and an influx of wealthy folk from the countryside to towns, as all connected to the exacerbation of land prices.

“The village is bustling with people as it’s located by the side of a main road, and is made up of over 1,000 households. The price of a 60 by 40 feet plot of land in the village fetches nothing less than K10 million at the moment. How will poor families ever be able to live on land they actually own anymore?” U Aung Kyaw Maung, a resident of Ponnagyun Township, told Myitmakha News Agency.

The price of land along the side of Yangon - Sittwe highway which cuts through Sittwe, Ponnagyun, Kyaukphyu, Maung-U and Minbya Townships, together with land located in the vicinity of Special Economic Zones, is reportedly continuing to sharply increase in price.—Myitmakha News Agency

State Counsellor in London, meets with Myanmar ambassadors

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Among the dignitaries were: Myanmar Ambassador to Britain U Kyaw Swa Min; Myanmar Ambassador to France U Han Thu; Myanmar Ambassador to Russia U Tin Yu; Myanmar Ambassador to Germany Daw Yin Yin Myint; Myanmar Ambassador to Italy U Myint Naung; Myanmar Ambassador to Belgium U Paw Lwin Sein; Myanmar Ambassador to Kuwait U Aye Khaing; Myanmar Ambassador to Saudi Arabia U Ko Ko Latt; Myanmar Ambassador to Serbsa U Myo Aye; Myanmar Ambassador to Norway Daw Maw Maw; Myanmar Ambassador to Australia U San Lwin and Myanmar Ambassador to Egypt U Myint Lwin. While in London, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi plans to meet British Prime Minister Theresa May before heading to the US, where she is scheduled to meet President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and members of the US Congress. She is also scheduled to attend the UN General Assembly in New York from September 20 to 26 and meet UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.—Myanmar News Agency
**Local News**

**Efforts made to hold biannual MMA bouts in Myanmar**

The Myanmar Lethkamaung Company is reportedly making plans to hold two mixed martial arts (MMA) competitions in Myanmar every year. The Myanmar Lethkamaung Company will reportedly join forces with the One Champion Group, currently organizing MMA competitions in the country, to hold at least two every year.

“We’re working to hold at least two competitions a year. The number of Myanmar Lethwei fighters that actually bout is few. It’s only the famous fighters that get such an opportunity, as the rookies and amateurs have to prioritize their time to earning a living. The primary objective of our initiative is to give more opportunity for other Lethwei fighters to bout,” Zay Thiha, from the Myanmar Lethkamaung Company, told Myitmakha News Agency.

The MMA competition is a sport which uses techniques from a cross-section of different martial arts from across the globe. Dissimilar from traditional forms of Myanmar martial arts, such as Lethwei, mixed martial arts bouts are full-contact and fought inside a steel cage.

“Yeah, I think it’s good what they’re proposing,” says professional Myanmar Lethwei fighter and national champion, Hnin Hnin Min. “Something should be done to raise awareness of the sport [MMA] among people in Myanmar.”

MMA competitions are currently broadcast around the world to audiences of over a million from over 115 different countries.

—Myitmakha News Agency

**Theft news**

**Illegal group arrested for gambling**

Eighteen people were charged with illegal gambling on Friday in Mandalay Region, police reported yesterday.

After a tip-off to police from a member of the public, police raided a house owned by Win Min Thant, 39, of Ward-A in Pyigyaung Township, where authorities found 17 others involved in illegal gambling in the form of card games. Found on the premises was K2.4 million and gambling-related accessories.

All those present were arrested.— Ko Ye

**Three arrested for snatch-and-run robbery**

THREE men suspected with snatch-and-run robberies in Yangon were arrested by local police on Friday, thanks in part to social media users who wrote on Facebook about the case that included strong evidence.

After the tip-off, police searched and arrested the three men— Ko Zin (aka Nyi Nyi Paing), Hla Min (aka Chit Min Oo) and Arka (aka Arka Oo) — who were found at a tea shop in North Oakalala Township in Yangon.

According to the police investigation, it was found that the suspects allegedly committed several cases of theft, robbery and burglary in townships including Thakayta, Dagon Myothit (North and South), North Oakalala, Yanakin, Thingangyun and Mingaladon townships.

—Kyemon

**Illegal raw jade transporter seized in Nawnghkio**

**Gamblers seen with the stake. PHOTO: Ko Ye**

ACTING on a tip, police officers on Friday inspected a car en route from Mandalay to the Oriental toll gate on Mandalay-Lashio Road and discovered multiple kilograms of uncut jade rock.

The transporter, Ton Paung (aka Ko Sai), 30, was charged under the Myanmar Gemstone Law for illegally transferring raw gemstones. According to investigators, the suspect was carrying 114 gemstones weighing 229.6087 kilograms in his vehicle and was unable to prove ownership.

Police are still investigating the case.— Soe Win (Nawnghkio)

**Crime news**

**Truck overturns on Yangon-Mandalay Road**

There were no serious injuries when a vehicle overturned Saturday on the old Yangon-Mandalay highway near Kyaukdag Township in Bago Region, according to police.

A cargo truck loaded with bags of onions being driven by Zeya Lin, 28, en route from Mandalay to Yangon, skidded and overturned between mile posts Nos. 114/6 and 114/7 at around 5 a.m. after the driver lost control of his vehicle, police said.

The right side of the truck was badly damaged after the single-car accident, but the driver escaped with minor injuries.

Action is being taken against the careless driver by local police.— Khin Ko (Kyauk-daga)

**Yaba pills worth K360 million seized in Myawady border town**

THREE men on Friday were arrested by police after they were found in possession of a large cache of yaba pills in Myawady, a border town between Myanmar and Thailand.

Acting on a tip-off, an anti-drug squad searched Sai Nwet Hsai Lon at the corner of Chitkyiyaya Hsihsai Street and Nyet Hsai Lon at the corner of Thakayta, Dagon Myothit (North and South), North Oakalala, Yanakin, Thingangyun and Mingaladon townships.

—Kyemon

**Illegal jade sale by shop owner exposed; 114 stones seized**

Police on Saturday arrested the suspect, identified as Ko Sai, 30, with 114 jade stones in his vehicle.

—Soe Win (Nawnghkio)

**Illegal jade sale by shop owner exposed; 114 stones seized**

Police yesterday arrested Ko Sai, 30, for illegally transferring raw jade stones.

The suspect was caught with 114 jade stones weighing 229.6087 kilograms.

—Soe Win (Nawnghkio)

**Most wanted accused arrested in Mandalay**

Police on Wednesday arrested two wanted criminals in Mandalay.

—Soe Win (Nawnghkio)

**It’s official: Mingalar Market to be rebuilt**

The fire damaged Mingalar Market, located in Yangon’s Mingalar Taungnyunt Township, will be completely rebuilt from scratch once the rainy season has drawn to a close, the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) has announced.

“The Minister [of Yangon] has informed us of the plans. There is a design for the new Mingalar Market. The current standing market will be rapidly torn down with the new market to be built in its place without delay,” YCDC committee member, Daw Than Myint Aung.

The statement was made during a meeting convened at City Hall on September 5 between YCDC committee members Daw Than Myint Aung and Daw May May Thway together with 27 representatives of shopkeepers from the current Mingalar Market.

The decision to rebuild the market comes in part from a vote held on May 16 to gauge whether the collective desire of shopkeepers favours complete reconstruction or renovation to the current building, with the results revealing a higher percent in favour of the market being reconstructed. The rebuilding of the market will reportedly take between 15-18 months, longer than if it was renovated, which would have taken just one year.

It has been anticipated that shop units measuring 49 square feet will be built, in lieu of the current narrow 25 square feet units which comprise the fire damaged market, in a bid to mitigate against the blocking of passageways by shop stock which is reportedly a regular cause headaches for both shoppers and deliverymen.

“[Current] shop units are 25 square feet. The passageways are also narrow. Shop owners habitually dump their stock by the side of their unit at times when they don’t have enough space inside to store it,” Daw Than Myint Aung told Myitmakha News Agency.

“The bustle of sellers, buyers and deliverymen means it gets very cramped. For sure, the shop units in the new market need to be at least 49 square feet. But if would be even better if they were even more spacious than that. The expansion in size of shop units to 49 square each could see the building hit seven floors, while the narrow shop units of the current market reportedly caused undesirable hindrances in putting out the blaze.

“The rebuilding of the market is the effort of the state. Of course, we’ll take what their giving. There’s no doubt we’ll be assigned a top floor shop unit since we’ll all be wider; how could we possibly acquire a full shop unit on the ground floor? Apparently, building work will commence with the onset of the winter season,” said U Ye Myint, a representative of shopkeepers from the fourth floor of Mingalar Market.—Myitmakha News Agency
Reduction in cost of poultry feed could possibly result in decrease of chicken price

The price of chicken is likely to decrease if the cost of poultry feed is reduced, said Dr. Kyaw Win, the chairman of Myanmar Poultry Business Association.

Poultry feed is 70 per cent of the cost of poultry farming, officials said. Other costs include 17 per cent for breeding chicks, 8 per cent for labour and 5 per cent for medicine.

The illegal inflow of chicken also affects the chicken market. This year, the price of chicken has been unstable due to the rise in the cost of breeding chicks and the illegal inflow of chicken into the domestic market. The illegal chicken import through border channels adversely affects the poultry farming sector.

The suspension of the mobile inspection teams resulted in the increased flow of illegal chicken imports, according to the chicken breeders.

To enhance the development of the poultry business, swift action must be taken against the illegal importers. A government subsidy is also required in this sector to ensure a strong market, it is learnt. —200

Myanmar-Thailand border trade reached almost $500 million in first five months

TRADING between Myanmar and Thailand via border trade camps was worth nearly US$500 million over the past five months, according to the Department of Trade.

The trade value through the two borders has increased by over $100 million compared to the same period last year.

Between April and early September this year, the total border trade value of the two countries reached $499.861 million, including trading of over $340 million worth of products from the Myanmar Border Trade Camps.

To promote trade between the two nations, border trade camps including Tachilek, Myawady, Kawthaung, Myeik, Nabahte/Hikhti and Mawtaung have been opened on the Myanmar side.

Myanmar mostly exports agricultural products, animal products, mining materials, forest and fishery products to its trade partners. Myanmar’s neighbouring countries import personal goods, raw materials and capital goods.

Myanmar has inked cross-border trade agreements with Thailand, India, China and Bangladesh. The trading process has been carried out through 15 trade camps with those countries.

Plans are underway to further expand the border trade camps at strategic areas along the borders.—Kyin Kyun

Indonesia bulk buying rice

INDONESIA has agreed to buy 300,000 tonnes of rice from Myanmar, according to officials from the Myanmar Rice Federation.

Myanmar has 500,000 tonnes of rice ready for export to foreign countries. Indonesia has entered into an agreement to buy more than half of that amount, it is learnt from the federation.

Myanmar mainly exports low-quality rice to foreign countries at US$330 per tonne. During four months of this fiscal year, Myanmar has exported 400,000 tonnes of rice to foreign countries which is a decline of over 200,000 from the same period of the last fiscal year.

China buys 80 per cent of the exported Myanmar rice, officials said. From 21st to 27th August, 654 tonnes of Aezmah (low-quality rice) and 950 tonnes of parboiled rice were exported to European Union countries whereas 2,300 tonnes of Aezmah was exported to China, it is learnt.—200

48 shops in Mandalay fined for failing to place commercial tax stamps on vouchers

FROM 1 April to 22 August this year, Mandalay Region Internal Revenue Department fined 48 shops for failing to put commercial tax stamps on their vouchers, said its Assistant Director U Kyaw Aung Moe.

The department collected tax revenues of K88,488 and K13.1 million in fines.

“Every country in the world collects taxes. We have to take action against those who fail to abide by the laws. The country’s tax revenue will increase if people pay their taxes correctly,” U Kyaw Aung Moe said.

In an effort to crack down on tax cheats, U Kyaw Aung Moe said members of the public will be rewarded for turning in tax offenders. “Among the tax avoiders are hotels and restaurants, he said. “Consumers can inform the IRD about it and enjoy 10 per cent of the fine.” U Thein Hlaik

Extractive industry to be permitted under a limit

TIMBER production will be permitted under certain restrictions in the coming fiscal year, despite the suspension of logging in the forestry sector during this fiscal year, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

Timber production was forced to come to a halt this year, resulting from excessive deforestation in previous years. But officials said timber production will be resumed under limited permits next year, so as not to make those who are engaged in this industry to suffer from a shortage of raw materials. The volume of extraction will be reduced, said U Kyaw Zaw, from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

The ministry will exert a sustained effort at reforestation and conservation in the forests across Myanmar, it is learnt.

There are three schemes concerning the timber extractive industry. The first one is that timber production is permitted every two years to fulfill the requirements of raw materials for the value-added export product. The second scheme allows timber production only for self-sufficiency. The last allowance is for the import of products substituting wood to fulfill the local requirements for raw materials.

The private sector is required to help in the reforestation, said Dr. Sein Win, the chairman of the Myanmar Timber Entrepreneurs Association.—200

Tourism bank to open to provide credit

PLANS are currently being made for the opening of Tourism Banks in Yangon and the capital, Naypyidaw, the Myanmar Tourism Federation (MTF) has told Myitmakha News Agency.

The initiative comes in a bid to provide businesses in the tourism sector with credit loans which are currently otherwise uneasily obtainable. “Companies operating restaurants and hotels can’t borrow money from banks. Construction companies and factories, however, can apply to banks for credit. Upon presentation of the idea to the Ministry for Hotels and Tourism during the erstwhile administration, we told him how the founding of a such bank for our industry would be beneficial,” said U Maung Maung Swe, vice chair of the MTF. The establishment of a Tourism Bank would prioritize the lending of credit to those working within the tourism industry, while the excess finances received from running banking operations would then reportedly be used to provide loans to enterprises in different sectors.—Myitmakha News Agency
Huge potential for China-ASEAN cooperation: Cambodian PM

NANNING — China and ASEAN have huge potential for cooperation given the ASEAN Community’s rapidly growing demand, said Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen on Sunday.

The ASEAN Community, a market with more than 600 million people, has strong demand for power, information technology, agriculture and scientific research, said Hun Sen at the opening ceremony of the 13th China-ASEAN Expo on Sunday in south China’s Nanning City.

To realise sustainable and inclusive growth, ASEAN needs the participation of all dialogue partners, especially China, he said. Cambodia values cooperation with countries within and outside the region. It will continue to pursue a diversified economy and open its market wider for further integration with ASEAN, said Hun Sen.

“We care about connectivity in fields including infrastructure, institutions and people-to-people exchange,” said the Cambodian prime minister. ASEAN will make it a priority to push construction of cross-border infrastructure, which covers investment in telecommunications, transportation networks and power, he said. — Xinhua

Thailand finds 21 new cases of Zika in Bangkok, including pregnant woman

BANGKOK — Twenty-one new cases of locally-transmitted Zika virus have been confirmed in central Bangkok, including a pregnant woman who later gave birth with no complications, Thailand’s public health ministry said on Sunday.

Residents in the Thai capital were urged not to be alarmed after the cases were confirmed in the Sathorn area of the city, an up-market neighbourhood popular with the city’s expatriate community and part of the capital’s business district.

“It is very rare to see a pregnant woman who recovered and gave birth successfully,” Ministry of Public Health spokesman Suwannachai Wattanayangchai told Reuters by telephone.

“Mother and newborn are safe,” he said, adding that the pregnant woman’s husband had recently returned from Singapore.

Thailand first recorded the Zika virus in 2012 and the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority conducts regular testing for the virus.

The new Thai cases follow confirmation from Malaysia on Wednesday of its first case of the Zika virus in a pregnant woman, a 27-year-old living in a southern city next to Singapore.

An island city-state Singapore reported its first locally infected Zika patient on 27 August and since then, the number of reported infections has swelled to more than 300. Zika infections in pregnant women have been shown to cause microcephaly, a severe birth defect in which the head and brain are undersized, besides other brain abnormalities.

Suwannachai said that 30 pregnant women with Zika have been monitored in Thailand. So far, six of the women had given birth without complications or any birth defects.

Sixteen out of Thailand’s 76 provinces have confirmed cases of Zika since January this year, according to the health ministry, but no birth defects or deaths have been reported.

“They have been no deaths or complications so far, so I urge our brothers and sisters not to be alarmed,” said Suwannachai.

Although microcephaly is typically detected during ultrasounds in the late second and early third trimester of pregnancy, it can be detected as early as 18-20 weeks gestation, according to the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. — Reuters

Militant suspected in Bangladesh cafe attack killed himself, police say

DHAKA — A suspected militant believed by Bangladeshi police to have been among the planners of a July cafe attack that killed 22 people killed himself during a police raid on a hideout in the capital, police said on Sunday.

The attack in Dha- ka’s diplomatic quarter was claimed by the Middle Eastern jihadist group Islamic State and was one of the most brazen in Bangladesh, hit by a spate of killings of liberals and members of religious minorities in the past year.

The government has pinned the blame on domestic militant groups, but security experts say the scale and sophistication of the incident suggest links to a trans-national Islamic network.

National police chief Shahidul Haque said the dead man, identified as Abdul Karim, was suspected to be one of the planners of the cafe attack, and to have rented a flat for the militants who carried it out.

“He killed himself inside the flat so that we can’t collect information from him through interrogation,” another official, Sawwar Hossain, told reporters on Sunday, without elaborating.

Police, who had earlier said they shot the man during Saturday’s raid on the hideout, gave no reason for the change.

Three women who were wounded and arrested in the raid also tried to kill themselves, Hossain added.

Five officers from the police counter-terrorism unit were wounded when women militants attacked them with chilli powder, explosives and knives, police have said.

One of the women could have been the wife of a man killed last week in a shootout with police and believed to have trained the cafe attackers, police said.

Police have killed more than 12 dozen suspected militants in shootouts since the July attack, including its presumed mastermind, Bangladesh-born Canadian citizen Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury.

The United States believes elements of Islamic State are “connected” to operatives in Bangladesh, US Secretary of State John Kerry said during a visit to Dhaka last month.

The targeting of foreigners — nine Indians, seven Japanese, an American and an Indian were among those killed — could hurt foreign investment in the South Asian economy, whose $23-billion garments export industry is the world’s second largest. — Reuters

Brunei airline bans onboard use of fire-prone Samsung phones

BANDAR SERI BEGA- WAN — Brunei’s flag carrier Royal Brunei (RB) Airlines has banned the use of fire-prone Samsung Galaxy Note 7 phones on its flights following a global recall on the devices over battery problems.

“It is important to disseminate facts raised about Samsung Galaxy Note 7 devices,” RB Airlines stated in a notice posted on its website late Saturday night, “with immediate effect passengers are strongly advised not to switch on or charge these devices onboard the aircraft.”

The national carrier said Samsung Galaxy Note 7 phones are also prohibited from carriage in checked-in baggage. Brunei’s Department of Civil Aviation also confirmed to local media that the Samsung Galaxy Note 7 phones are prohibited from being used in other airlines that fly from the Brunei International Airport, including AirAsia and Malaysia Airlines.

The South Korean smartphone maker last week suspended sales of the handsets and issued the recall on 2 September after a number of phones reportedly burned while charging. — Xinhua
Japan, US seek ‘strongest possible’ measures against North Korea

TOKYO — Top envoys from Japan and the United States agreed to seek the “strongest possible measures” against North Korea on Sunday, two days after the reclusive state conducted its fifth nuclear test in the face of global opposition.

“We will be working together very closely in the (UN) Security Council and beyond to come out with the strongest possible measures against North Korea’s actions,” Sung Kim, US special representative for North Korea policy told reporters following his meeting with Kenji Kanasugi, director general of the Japanese Foreign Ministry’s Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau in Tokyo.

Kim added that the two countries will also look at unilateral measures, bilateral measures and trilateral cooperation with South Korea in response to “provocative and unacceptable behavior by the North Koreans.”

The US special envoy on North Korea is visiting Japan and South Korea through Tuesday following the nuclear test and recent ballistic missile launches.

Kim did not elaborate on the measures, saying, “We don’t have any specific measures to announce today but I can assure that both the United States and Japan are looking at full range of possibilities in terms of unilateral actions that can be implemented.”

Following the nuclear test by North Korea, the UN Security Council convened an emergency meeting Friday, where they vowed to promptly work on “appropriate measures” in response to the isolated country’s actions, including a reference to a possible sanctions resolution.

“The is a strong commitment in the Security Council that we must come up with strongest possible response as quickly as possible. We are just getting started with that process so I think it’s too quick to predict the exact timeline at this juncture,” Kim said.—Kyodo News

China, Russia naval drill in South China Sea to begin Monday

BEIJING — China and Russia will hold eight days of naval drills in the South China Sea off southern China’s Guangdong province starting from Monday, China’s navy said.

The exercises come at a time of heightened tension in the contested waters after an arbitration case, China did not have historic rights to the South China Sea and criticised its environmental destruction there.

China rejected the ruling and refused to participate in the case.

The “Joint Sea-2016” exercise will feature surface ships, submarines, fixed-wing aircraft, ship-borne helicopters and marines, the Chinese navy said in a statement on Sunday on its official microblog.

The two countries will carry out defence, rescue and anti-submarine operations, as well as “island seizing” and other activities, it added.

Marines will participate in live-fire drills, island defence and landing operations in what will be the largest operation ever taken together by the two countries’ navies, the statement said.

China announced that it had called the “routine” naval exercise in July, saying the drills were aimed at strengthening cooperation and not aimed at any other country. China and Russia are veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council, and have held similar views on many major issues such as the crisis in Syria, often putting them at odds with the United States and Europe.

Last year, they held joint military drills in the Sea of Japan and the Mediterranean.

China claims most of the South China Sea, through which more than $5 trillion of trade moves annually. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam have rival claims.

China has repeatedly blamed the United States for stoking tension in the region through its military patrols, and of taking sides in the dispute.

The United States has sought to assert its right to freedom of navigation in the South China Sea with its patrols and denies taking sides in the territorial disputes. Russia has been a strong backer of China’s stance on the arbitration case, which was brought by the Philippines.—Reuters
A local business tycoon had a conversation with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi long before the 2015 election. He has maintained a close connection not only with the previous government but also with the incumbent one.

“I heard people say your National League for Democracy is short of people with intellectual capacity,” said the tycoon to the party’s chairperson.

“Do you by any chance know who’s who in the party?” she asked him without a pause.

“No one else but the people here in this country” was his quick response.

“It struck the local business tycoon what he should do and how the private institutions could support the government in its democratic reforms by helping it improve its own mechanisms.

The entire intelligentsia of our society must come together to make you offer us a stage, for it is only by providing a helping hand to the government in its democratic reforms that we can help the government improve its own mechanisms.

All things considered, the need for capacity building at all levels of society merits urgent attention as well as special mention. The private institutions must be able to provide the best possible assistance because this undertaking is too enormous to handle alone.

Donors invited to renovate Bagan Pagoda

Well-wishers home and abroad are invited to donate cash to the funds for the repair and renovation of the damaged ancient religious structures in Bagan and Nyaung U areas.

A 6.8 magnitude earthquake, striking 12 miles west of Chaung U in Magway Region, struck the country’s historic site of cultural heritage on 24 August.

Cash donations can be made to following departmental officials:

U Myo Tint Aung
Director, Ministry of Religious and Cultural Affairs (Nay Pyi Taw)
067 408 031, 09 861 7342

Daw Ohnmar Aung
Director, Department of Archaeological Research and National Museum (Yangon)
6½ mile, Pyay Road, Hlaing Township, Yangon
01 513 897, 09 730 302 38, 09 506 1832

U Nyo Myint Tun
Director, Department of Archaeological Research and National Museum (Mandalay)
Chanayethazan Township, Mandalay
02 600 59, 09 201 9004

U Soe Tint
District Administrator
Nyaung U District General Administration Department
061 60 261, 061 602 62, 09 442 003 012

—Myanmar News Agency
NY to mark 15th anniversary of 11 September attacks

NEW YORK — New York will mark 15 years since the 11 September terrorist attacks with a ceremony at Ground Zero on 11 September, 2016, commemorating the nearly 3,000 people who lost their lives in the coordinated acts of terror on US soil.

The memorial, to be held at the site where the World Trade Centre’s twin towers fell, will start with a moment of silence at 8:46 a.m. in observance of the exact time the first hijacked plane struck the North Tower 15 years ago.

All of the names of the 2,983 victims are read out during the annual ceremony, punctuated by five other moments of silence before the program ends at 12:30 p.m.

In addition to 2,753 people who died in New York after hijacked planes struck the two WTC towers, 184 were killed when a third plane hit the Pentagon and 40 died in the crash of Flight 93, which went down in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania after passengers and crew resisted hijackers. The total also includes six victims of the WTC bombing on 26 February, 1993.

The 9/11 Memorial Museum, which opened in 2014, is reserved during the day for visits by family members of the victims, while the memorial plaza with reflecting pools at Ground Zero reopens to the public at 3 pm. From sunset until dawn on Monday, two bright lights representing the twin towers will shine into the sky as a tribute to all the victims.

US presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump will pause their campaigns for the day in observance of the anniversary. Neither candidate is making an appearance at Ground Zero.

According to a Pew Research Centre poll released on Wednesday, 40 per cent of Americans believe that terrorists are more capable of launching a major attack on US soil than prior to 11 September, 2001. Of those who expressed this view, 58 per cent identified as Republicans while 31 per cent were Democrats.——Kyodo News

Third Spanish vote in a year would deliver hung parliament — poll

MADRID — Spain’s third national election in a year would deliver yet another hung parliament and give rival parties no new options in terms of forming a government, a poll published on Sunday showed as the prospect of another ballot edges closer.

Leaders have struggled to form a new administration since last December after upset political parties won widespread support in a general election — forcing several forces, including some traditional rivals, to try and reach pacts.

After the 20 December ballot, a fresh election on 26 June did nothing to resolve the impasse, with all parties, including the conservative People’s Party (PP) of acting Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, failing short of a parliament majority.

Rajoy lost a confidence vote among lawmakers in early September on his bid for a second term, setting the clock ticking on yet another election that would likely fall in December.

The PP would win once again, an opinion poll by GAD3 published in ABC newspaper showed, increasing its parliamentary seats to 142 from 137 in June and 123 on 20 December.

But that would still be shy of the 176 needed for an absolute majority, even if the PP managed to again draw on support from smaller liberal party Ciudadanos (“Citizens”) in any subsequent confidence vote.

Ciudadanos’ seats would fall from 32 in June to 30 in another election, according to the poll, drawn from 802 interviews in the week after Rajoy’s failed attempt to form a government.

Other parties would also lose ground, including the centre-left Socialists, who have steadfastly opposed another PP term in office.

The Socialists would garner 81 seats, compared to 85 at the last election, while Unidos Podemos (“Together We Can”), a leftist alliance that erupted onto Spain’s political scene in the wake of a deep economic crisis, would get 70, down from 71 seats last time.

Spaniards’ frustration with the eight-month political deadlock is on the rise, meanwhile, according to a survey published in El Pais. It said 71 per cent of people were against a third election, and that abstention would rise sharply, to 37 per cent from 30.2 per cent in June.

Spain’s economy has so far largely withstood the uncertainty, removing some of the urgency leaders might otherwise have faced to form a government.—Reuters

forces loyal to eastern Libyan commander claim control over key oil ports

BENGHAZI, (Libya) — Forces loyal to eastern Libyan commander Khalifa Haftar took control of key oil ports in Ras Lanuf, Es Sider and Brega on Sunday, said Ahmed al-Masmari, a spokesman for the forces.

But an official from the force that previously controlled the ports, the Petroleum Facilities Guard, said there was still fighting at Ras Lanuf. Masmari said clashes were continuing at another oil port, Zueitina, and around the nearby town of Ajdabiya.——Reuters

Militants gun down retired judge in North Afghanistan

MAMANA, (Afghanistan) — Armed militants gunned down a retired judge in Afghanistan’s northern Faryab province on Sunday, police said.

“The terrorists shot dead a judge named Mohammad Jalal in Khwaja Sabzposh district today and made their good escape,” police spokesperson in the province Abdul Karim Sarosh told Xinhua.

Without providing more details, the official asserted that Jalal was a retired judge.

Meantime, a local official on the condition of anonymity blamed Taliban militants for assassination of the judge, saying that armed insurgents kidnapped Jalal last year and asked him to stop working with the government.

Taliban militants who are active in Faryab province have yet to claim responsibility for the killing.—Xinhua

Brazilian man gets 56 yrs in prison over triple murder in Japan

RIO DE JANEIRO — A Brazilian court Friday sentenced a man to 56 years and nine months in prison over the 2006 murders of his girlfriend and her two sons in Japan.

The defendant Neves Edilson Donizeti, 53, returned to Brazil after allegedly committing the murders in Yaizu, Shizuoka Prefecture, in December 2006. The Japanese government asked Brazil to try the man in the absence of an extradition treaty between the two countries.

Donizeti was arrested in the state of Sao Paulo in 2008, but went into hiding following his release from detention later that year while on trial. He was detained in 2013 and his trial reopened.

It is not immediately known whether Donizeti appealed the ruling.——Kyodo News
Explosions in and around Baghdad kill 12: police, medical sources

BAGHDAD — Five explosions in and around Baghdad killed at least 12 people on Saturday and wounded 27 others, police and medical sources said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but Islamic State regularly targets civilian areas and security forces in the capital. The ultra-hardline insurgents have lost ground in the past year to US-backed government forces and Iranian-backed Shi’ite militias, but such bombings show the group can still strike outside the territory its controls in northern and western Iraq.

The deadliest blast came in Arab al-Labour, an area of date palm groves on Baghdad’s southern outskirts, when an improvised explosive device went off near a civilian vehicle, killing four civilians. A bomb in a local marketplace in Taji, a northern suburb that hosts a large military base, killed three people and wounded nine, the sources said. A suicide bomber in the central Allawi district of Baghdad detonated his explosives vest, killing two and wounding eight.

Two roadside bombs in the northern al-Husseiniya district and in Yousifiya, south of the city, killed three and wounded 10. — Reuters

Turkey removes two dozen mayors over alleged Kurdish militant links

ANKARA — Turkey has removed 24 mayors deemed to support Kurdish militants and appointed new administrators in two dozen municipalities mostly in the largely Kurdish southeast, a provincial governor’s office said on Sunday.

The 24 municipalities were run by local associates of the pro-Kurdish opposition Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), the third largest party in the national parliament, the Diyarbakir governor’s office said.

President Tayyip Erdogan said on Thursday that the campaign against the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) militant group, which has waged a three-decade insurgency for Kurdish autonomy, was Turkey’s largest ever and that the removal of civil servants linked to them was a key part of the fight.

The crackdown comes as Ankara also pushes ahead with a purge of tens of thousands of supporters of US-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen, accused by Turkey of orchestrating an attempted coup in July. Gulen denies any involvement.

The mayors of four other municipalities, three from the ruling AK Party and one from the nationalist MHP opposition, were also removed on Sunday over alleged links to Gulen.

Erdogan and the government view the HDP as an extension of the Kurdish PKK militant group. The HDP denies direct links and says it promotes a negotiated settlement to the insurgency.

There were internet and phone outages in several areas across the southeast on Sunday, local residents said, although the reason was not immediately clear.

On Friday, police detained dozens of people and used water cannon to disperse several hundred teachers demonstrating against their suspension from classrooms in the main regional city of Diyarbakir.

More than 40,000 people, most of them Kurds, have died since the PKK launched its insurgency against the Turkish state in 1984.

The PKK is regarded as a terrorist organisation by Turkey and the United States.

Iran welcomes Syria deal, urges political solution

DUBAI — Iran, a close ally and military backer of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, welcomed a US-Russian deal for a truce in Syria, saying on Sunday the conflict should be ended through politics.

The agreement, by the powers that back opposing sides in the five-year-old war, promises a nationwide truce from sundown on Monday, improved access for humanitarian aid and joint military targeting of hardline Islamist groups.

“Iran supports any ceasefire and peace plan to end the humanitarian crisis in Syria or limit it that involves a political solution ... based on the Syrian people’s votes,” said Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Jaber Ansari, quoted by the state news agency IRNA.

“Iran has always believed that there is no military solution to the Syrian crisis and that it should be resolved through peaceful means,” he added. Washington and Moscow reached the breakthrough deal early on Saturday to try to restore peace in Syria, but air strikes hours later on a busy market place that killed and injured dozens added to rebels’ doubts that any ceasefire could hold.

Russia and Iran are both providing crucial military support to President Assad against rebels and jihadi fighters in Syria’s civil war. Iran has sent what it said were military advisers to help Assad and allowed Russian fighter-bombers to use an Iranian base to launch operations in Syria since August. — Reuters

At least 21 civilians killed in Saudi-led air strikes in Yemen: residents

SANAA — At least 21 civilians were killed in two separate air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition in northern Yemen on Saturday, residents said on Sunday, as fighting intensified in the country before the Muslim Eid al-Adha feast.

They said at least 15 civilians were killed when war planes targeted workers drilling for water in the Beit Saadan area of the Arhab district north of Sanaa, and that 20 other people were wounded. Residents said Saudi-led coalition warplanes, apparently mistaking the drilling machine for a rocket launcher, bombed the site and killed four workers. The planes conducted a second raid when residents of the village rushed to the scene, killing at least 11 more and wounding 20.

A spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition could not immediately be reached for a comment. The coalition, which has been fighting to roll back gains made by the Iran-allied Houthi group since 2014 and restore ousted President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi to power, says it does not target civilians.

UN-sponsored talks to try to end the fighting collapsed in failure last month and the Houthis and allied forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh restocked shells into neighboring Saudi Arabia.

Saturday’s attacks were the latest in a series of strikes that have hit schools, hospitals, markets and private homes.

Local media put the number of dead and wounded at the water-drilling site at around 100 and published pictures of burned bodies and mangled equipment, and videos showed workers collecting mutilated bodies and carrying them away in blankets.

In the second attack on Saturday, residents reported an air strike hit the home of Sheikh Masbool al-Harmali, a local tribal chief in Hajjah province, killing six civilians.

The United Nations says more than 10,000 people have been killed in the fighting, many of them civilians. — Reuters

A man looks at a hole caused by a Saudi-led air strike on a building in the northwestern city of Saada, Yemen on 10 September 2016. Photo: Reuters
Mother Teresa’s canonisation celebrated in NE India

Girls pray in front of a portrait of Mother Teresa during a peace rally to celebrate Mother Teresa’s canonisation in Agartala, capital of Indian northeastern state of Tripura, on 10 September 2016. PHOTO: XINHUA

Woman kissed by sailor in famed photo at World War II’s end dies

WASHINGTON — Greta Friedman, the woman in white kissed by a sailor in New York’s Times Square in a photograph symbolizing the end of World War II, has died at age 92, media reports said on Saturday.

Her son, Joshua Friedman, said she died on Thursday in Virginia after suffering a series of ailments, including pneumonia, NBC News reported.

CBS News said she would be laid to rest with her late husband, Mischa Friedman, at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

Friedman, then a dental assistant on a break, was the woman in one of the most famous pictures of the 20th century, the moment Americans learned of the Japanese surrender on 14 August, 1945.

Photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt snapped a sailor or in a dark uniform kissing Friedman with his arms around her and her white-clad body bent backwards as revelers in New York’s Times Square celebrated the victory over Japan, or V-J Day.

“I did not see him approaching, and before I know it I was in this vice grip,” Friedman told CBS News in 2012. After the embrace, Friedman and the sailor, quartermaster George Mendonsa of Rhode Island, went their separate ways.

Eisenstaedt’s photo, “V-J Day in Times Square,” ran the following week in Life magazine.

The photographer recalled in his 1985 book “Eisenstaedt on Eisenstaedt” that a sailor in Times Square was kissing women randomly. When he saw a flash of white, he took four shots in 10 seconds.

“If she (Friedman) had been dressed in a dark dress I would never have taken the picture. If the sailor had worn a white uniform, the same,” he said.

Mendonsa and Friedman were not identified until 1980 when Life asked the unknown pair to come forward. Mendonsa told CBS he and his future wife had been celebrating the end of the war when he began kissing women in the street.

In a 2005 interview with the Library of Congress’ Veterans History Project, the Austrian-born Friedman said she later designed dolls’ clothes, worked in summer theater and became a book restorer.

She moved to Frederick, Maryland, and graduated from Hood College in 1981, the same year her son and daughter graduated from university.

Friedman said of the photo, “It was a wonderful coincidence, a man in a sailor’s uniform and a woman in a white dress...and a great photographer at the right time.”

India’s Sarkozy outlines measures to get tough on militants

PARIS — France needs to get tough on militants by creating special courts and detention facilities to boost security, the country’s former Prime Minister Nicolas Sarkozy said in a interview published in Sunday newspaper Le Journal du Dimanche (JDD).

The French capital was once again put on high alert last Sunday after a car loaded with gas cylinders was found near Notre Dame cathedral in an incident that could have been an attack on a Paris railway station.

Security is a key topic in the presidential elections in 2017, as more than 230 people have been killed in militant Islamist attacks on French soil since January 2015.

Sarkozy’s comments come after French President Francois Hollande, a Socialist, took a swipe at his opponents this week, saying their hardline reactions to a wave of militant attacks demonstrated an intent to destroy France’s social model.

Sarkozy took an even tougher approach on Sunday by proposing to systematically place French citizens, suspected of having militant links, in special detention facilities.

“Every Frenchman suspected of being linked to terrorism, because he regularly consults a jihadist website, or his behaviour shows signs of radicalisation or because he is in close contact with radicalised people, must be preventedly placed in a detention centre,” Sarkozy said in the interview.

Sarkozy, who announced last month his candidacy for the April 2017 presidential election, has said there is no place for “legal niceties” in the fight against terrorism.

According to French Institute for Public Opinion, Ifop, voters turned out to have most confidence in former Prime Minister Alain Juppé to guarantee security, with Sarkozy in second place, Prime Minister Manuel Valls in third, and Hollande a distant 8th.

French Justice Minister Jean-Jacques Urvoas said in a separate interview with the April 2017 presidential election, has said there is no place for “legal niceties” in the fight against terrorism.

“Do not advocate creation of facilities dedicated to terrorists...The real challenge is to prepare the release of those who are sentenced for a short or medium term,” Urvoas said.—Reuters

NEW DELHI — The Indian Army foiled an infiltration bid in Indian-controlled Kashmir on Sunday by gunning down four militants after a fierce encounter, a defence official said.

“Soldiers posted along the Line of Control, the military control line between India and Pakistan, spotted intruders in Nowgam sector of Kashmir’s Kupwara district in the wee hours. When challenged, the four militants opened fire, forcing the security forces to retaliate,” he said.

The four militants were killed in the ensuing encounter and four assault rifles recovered from their possession, the official said.

In separate incident, a policeman was killed and two persons sustained injuries in a gunfight between the security forces and militants in Poonch district, local TV channels reported. Reports said the clash is still on and security forces are also combing nearby areas.

The two gunfights came amid unrest in Kashmir, where more than 75 people have been killed in violence since the killing of 22-year-old militant commander Burhan Wani by Indian security forces two months ago.

Pakistan has eulogized Wani, while India accused Islamabad of fanning violence in Kashmir over which the two arch-rivals have fought at least three major wars in the past 65 years.—Xinhua
Cracks in building hamper search after Bangladesh factory fire

DHAKA— The fire at a food and cigarette packaging factory in Bangladesh that killed at least 26 people has been extinguished, but heavy smoke and the risk of the building collapsing further were hampering the search of the premises, officials said on Sunday.

Saturday’s blaze was the country’s worst industrial accident since the Rana Plaza building collapse of 2013 that killed 1,135 garment sector workers, and raises further questions about Bangladesh’s safety record.

“The building is hot and it is not possible to enter,” said Afit Kumar Bhoomik, a senior official with the fire department, early on Sunday.

“There are huge cracks in the building, so it is very risky to enter without precautionary measures.”

He said that the death toll from the blaze had risen to 26. Some fear it could increase further once search efforts begin.

The cause of the fire in the Tongi industrial area about 20 km (12 miles) north of the capital, Dhaka, was not immediately known, but officials said a boiler explosion probably triggered it. The blaze broke out as workers prepared to swap shifts in the early hours of Saturday morning. Mikail Shipar, government secretary with the ministry of labour and employment, told Reuters the government was now going to investigate safety at all of the hundreds of factories in the Tongi industrial zone.

“We checked the design of this factory and initially it is our understanding that it was a one floor building and later the floor had been raised, similar to case of Rana Plaza,” he said.

Shipar added that an investigation would be carried out and if anyone was found guilty of negligence, action would be taken.

“I have already been asked to formulate a project to inspect all the factories in all four industrial zones in the country,” he said. The location of the boiler in the building was also being scrutinized. The fire is the latest in a series of industrial accidents in the South Asian country, which is the world’s second biggest garment exporter behind China.

The Rana Plaza disaster sparked demands for greater safety in the country and put the onus on foreign companies sourcing clothing from Bangladesh to act. The disaster led to the creation of two international coalitions designed to help fund improvements to building and fire safety at thousands of garment factories across Bangladesh.

One official on Saturday said that the government’s focus so far had been mainly on garment factories, and less so on other industries, but that was now likely to change.

The blaze at Tampaco Foils caused the partial collapse of the factory building, which packages various items, including food and cigarettes, for several local companies and global brands such as British American Tobacco (BATS.L) and Nestle (NESN.S).—Reuters

Britain eyeing work permits to control EU immigration — interior minister

LONDON — Britain’s interior minister Amber Rudd said on Sunday she was looking at a work permits system to control immigration from the European Union, responding to Brexit voter’s demand for tighter border controls.

Although formal negotiations on leaving the EU have yet to begin, Britain is searching for a way to secure deals with EU nationals who backed leaving the EU because they wanted lower immigration and an end to open borders with the bloc, while preserving the needs of an economy in which some sectors depend on foreign labour.

“Work permits certainly has value,” Rudd told the BBC, saying her department was examining immigration control systems and that no decisions had yet been made.

Britain currently has a visa system for non-EU nationals, but under EU rules citizens from within the 28-country bloc are free to live and work in Britain.

“What we’re going to look at is how we can get the best for the economy, driving the numbers down but protecting the people who really add value to the economy,” Rudd said.

Earlier this month Prime Minister Theresa May rejected a “points-based” system to screen immigrants - something Brexit campaigners promised to implement - stirring fears among some voters that her government was not taking a hard enough line on key issues like immigration.

But May has said the June 23 vote to leave the EU showed Britons wanted to control the movement of people from the bloc.

Rudd, a close ally of May, backed the government’s long-standing target of bringing net annual migration into Britain, currently at 327,000, down below 100,000.

Migration controls are likely to form one of the most contentious negotiating points in talks with the EU on leaving the bloc, as Britain looks to tighten border controls without losing access to the EU single market.

Britain’s EU partners are so far adamant that it cannot enjoy full trade benefits unless it continues to provide free movement for EU nationals. —Reuters

Clinton sparks ire by calling Trump backers ‘basket of deplorables’

NEW YORK — Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton took aim at supporters of Republican rival Donald Trump by saying half of them belonged in a “basket of deplorables” as people who were racist, sexist, xenophobic, or Islamophobic.

But Clinton, in a statement on Saturday, walked back the remarks, saying she regretted using the word “half” and seeking to reframe on what she described as episodes of “deplorable” behaviour by Trump and his campaign.

Her remarks at a fundraiser Friday night unleashed a fierce response from Republicans and Trump supporters on social media on Saturday and threatened to distract from her efforts to paint Trump as unqualified for the presidency.

Speaking at a LGBT fundraiser in New York, Clinton said Trump had given voice to hateful rhetoric through his behaviour as a candidate for the White House in the 8 November election.

“To just be grossly generalistic, you can put half of Trump’s supporters into what I call the ‘basket of deplorables,’” Clinton said. “Unfortunately there are people like that. And he has lifted them up.”

Some of those were irredeemable, she said, but they did not represent America.

The other basket of Trump’s supporters constituted individuals desperate for change who felt let down by the government and the economy, Clinton added.

“They don’t buy everything he says, but he seems to hold out some hope that their lives will be different,” Clinton said. “Those are people we have to understand and empathize with, as well.”

Trump’s campaign pounced on Clinton’s candid views.

“Hillary Clinton’s low opinion of the people that support this campaign should be denounced in the strongest possible terms,” said Mike Pence, the governor of Indiana and Trump’s running mate, speaking at the Values Voter Summit in Washington.—Reuters
Philippine revenge drama wins Venice Film Festival’s top prize

VENICE — A nearly four-hour long movie about a woman’s thirst for revenge and her feelings of forgiveness after 30 years in jail for a crime she did not commit won the Venice Film Festival’s top prize on Saturday.

Director Lav Diaz has described “Ang Babaeang Humayo” (“The Woman Who Left”) as a testimony to the struggles of the Philippines after centuries of colonial rule.

“This is for my country, for the Filipino people, for our struggle, for the struggle of humanity,” the 57-year-old said as he accepted the Golden Lion award for his black-and-white movie.

Diaz, who at the Berlin Film Festival in February had premiered a film that ran over eight hours, said he hoped the latest recognition would create more appreciation for longer movies.

Actor Ewan McGregor admits to nerves in debut as director

TORONTO — Scottish actor Ewan McGregor admitted to being “very nervous” about making his directorial debut with the movie adaptation of Philip Roth’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, “American Pastoral.”

The film, which premiered Friday night at the Toronto International Film Festival, also sees McGregor in the lead role of the hard-working man in late 1960s America whose family begins to fall apart after his daughter Merry (Dakota Fanning) becomes politically radicalised.

McGregor, 45, said he had spent years waiting for the right directorial opportunity to emerge but felt pressure in interpreting Roth’s work on the big screen.

“I was very nervous,” said the star of “Trainspotting” at a news conference on Saturday.

“I think it’s a massive responsibility to take on — a responsibility to the producers, a responsibility to Philip Roth, a responsibility to everybody who had read that novel and who liked that novel,” he added.

He also wanted to make sure the film “represented me in some way.”

McGregor said Roth has described “very nervous” about making the film. It’s a film that pushes the medium forward, he said. American Emma Stone took the Best Actress prize for her role in the musical “La La Land” and Argentine actor Oscar Martinez was named Best Actor for his performance in the comedy-drama “El Ciudadano Ilustre” (“The Distinguished Citizen”).

German actress Paula Beer received the Marcello Mastroianni Award acknowledging an emerging performer, for her role in post-war drama “Frantz.”

I couldn’t control my destiny as an actress: Jessica Alba

LONDON — Actress Jessica Alba says she enjoys being in control of her billion-dollar business after she was left frustrated by Hollywood.

The 35-year-old actress first made a name for herself in television show “Dark Angel”, before starring in movies such as “Into the Blue”, “Fantastic Four” and “Sin City.”

These days though, she’s mainly kept busy with her The Honest Company, which has become a billion-dollar enterprise since she founded it in 2011.

Alba says her route to becoming a business woman was made a lot easier because of her pragmatic and ambitious approach to working in the movie industry.

“I weirdly always approached Hollywood like a business, but now I have an actual business to put that mindset to,” she smiled during an appearance on “The Late Show with Stephen Colbert”.

“For me as an actress in Hollywood I was never in control of the marketing, the distribution, the final cut, the edit and so much of my life was in someone else’s hands. So it was quite frustrating because I like to control things, so to try and control my destiny as an actress (I wasn’t able to).” — PTI

US actress and special envoy to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees(UHCR) Angelina Jolie(1st R) talks to children during a visit to a Syrian refugee camp in Azraq, Jordan, on 9 September, 2016. Photo: Xinhua

Actor Angelina Jolie visits Syrian refugee camp in Jordan

Actor Ewan McGregor attends a press conference to promote the film American Pastoral at TIFF the Toronto International Film Festival in Toronto, on 10 September, 2016. Photo: Reuters

Director Ewan McGregor attends a press conference to promote the film American Pastoral at TIFF the Toronto International Film Festival in Toronto, on 10 September, 2016. Photo: Reuters

Director Lav Diaz (C) poses with actress Charo Santos-Concio (L) and actor John Lloyd Cruz (R) as they attend the photo call for the movie ‘Ang Babaeang Humayo’ (The Woman Who Left) at the 73rd Venice Film Festival in Venice, Italy on 9 September, 2016. Photo: Reuters
India acid attack survivor redefines beauty at NY Fashion Week

NEW YORK — An Indian model scarred in an acid attack challenged perceptions of beauty as she strutted down the runway at New York Fashion Week to promote a ban on the sale of corrosive substances used to maim thousands of women and children each year.

A smiling Reshma Quereshi, 19, opened the FTL Moda show on Thursday to applause in a long-sleeve, white gown with embroidered appliques by Indian designer Archana Kochhar during her first trip to the United States.

The buzz and glamour of the event was a world away from Allahabad, India, where she suffered severe facial burns and lost an eye two years ago after being attacked with sulfuric acid by her estranged brother-in-law and two men.

Quereshi never thought she would be going abroad, much less modeling in New York.

After enduring numerous skin graft surgeries and contemplating suicide, she met the founder of Make Love Not Scars, a group that helps survivors of the gender-based crimes.

Quereshi is the face of the group’s online video campaign, which has been viewed by 1.3 million people and led to her appearance in New York. “I couldn’t believe it was happening to me,” Quereshi said about the trip through a translator. “In that moment I felt extremely happy.”

She said she hopes her turn on the catwalk will inspire hope and confidence in other acid attack survivors and spur countries to recognize and address the issue. And each year — partly due to a long economic crisis — there has been a decline in the number of corridas, where audiences watch elaborately dressed toreros confront bulls at close range with red capes and swords.

“It makes me sad that some people want to have fun at the expense of another living being. There are other ways to pass the time,” said Mari Paz Rojo, a 42-year-old administrative assistant, as she marched through the capital with thousands of other demonstrators.

“We don’t want Spaniards to be identified with bullfighting, this is not our national fiesta,” she added.

Animal rights political party Pacma said Saturday’s rally was the biggest anti-bullfighting protest to date. Surveys show public support for bullfighting has waned in recent decades in Spain. An Ipsos Mori poll from January, carried out for animal welfare organization World Animal Protection, found that only 19 per cent of adults in Spain supported bullfighting, while 58 per cent opposed it. Though Pacma does not have any lawmakers, its share of votes has increased in recent general elections, including in ballots in December and June.

Politically the issue has been divisive. Spain’s parliament, under the center-right government of the People’s Party (PP), moved to protect bullfighting in 2013, declaring it a cultural asset and enabling it to draw on public funding.

But some regions have cracked down on events of these festivals, including northeastern Catalonia, which banned bullfighting outright in 2011. —Reuters

Thousands protest bullfighting in Spain as calls for ban strengthen

MADRID — Several thousand people rallied in Madrid on Saturday to demand a ban on bullfighting, adding their voices to a growing animal rights movement that has prompted some local authorities to clamp down on the centuries-old tradition.

Bullfighting is still common in Spain and the practice retains a loyal following. Some annual events such as the San Fermin bull runs through the crowded streets of the northern city of Pamplona attract many tourists too.

But a backlash against bullfights and other blood sports is also gaining force, and each year — partly due to a long economic crisis — there has been a decline in the number of corridas, where audiences watch elaborately dressed toreros confront bulls at close range with red capes and swords.

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Indian model and acid attack survivor Reshma Quereshi has made up applied before walk ing to present Indian designer Archana Kochhar's Spring/Summer 2017 collections during New York Fashion Week in the Manhattan borough of New York, US, on 8 September 2016. (Photo: Reuters)
Brutal Golovkin bludgeons Brook to retain middleweight belts

LONDON — Middleweight marauder Gennady Golovkin retained his WBC and IBF titles when challenger Kell Brook was pulled out by his corner five rounds into a compelling fight on Saturday.

Kazakh Golovkin had won his previous 22 fights by knock-out but was rocked by unbeaten welterweight world champion Brook in the early exchanges before his superior power told. Brook, who suffered a suspected fractured eye socket, went the second round with a left uppercut that produced huge roars from the huge O2 Arena crowd, who were mainly supporting the British underdog.

He was standing his ground in the fourth but by the fifth it became clear the step up from welterweight to fight the man who has brutally dominated the middleweight division for six years was a step too far.

There was little coming back as Golovkin landed some thumping blows and trainer Dominic Ingle threw in the towel which was initially unseen by the referee. Some of the crowd booed, but afterwards Brook said the eye injury had left him with restricted vision. Unbeaten Golovkin took his record to 36 wins. “Kell is a huge fighter, a very good fighter, but he’s not a middleweight. I respect him, he is good, but not so strong,” 34-year-old Golovkin said at ringside.

“I respect Kell, he’s a warrior. And his corner, for his career, was correct. It was game over.” Brook was wobbled by a huge body shot in the first round but connected with a couple of stinging jabs. Golovkin has rarely been hurt in his outstanding career but he was marked around the face by the end of the second as the skilful Brook landed a fearsome uppercut.

The 34-year-old Golovkin looked rattled in the third as he missed with some sledgehammer shots, although he landed enough to leave Brook’s right eye swollen.

The fourth round looked about even, with Golovkin relentlessly moving forward in search of the knockout and Brook counterpunching with some precise jabs. There was a menacer about Golovkin in the fifth though and he began to unload in devastating fashion, forcing the intervention of Brook’s corner as the gallant Sheffield fighter tasted defeat for the first time in his 37-fight pro career. — Reuters

Kerber begins reign as number one with US Open win

NEW YORK — Germany’s Angelique Kerber began her reign as world number one in imperious style, battling past a determined Karolina Pliskova 6-3, 4-6, 6-2 to win the US Open final on Saturday and claim her second grand slam title of the year.

Kerber, who officially takes over from Serena Williams as the world’s top ranked player on Monday, underlined her number one status displaying the heart of a champion as she fought off a fierce challenge from Czech 10th seed Pliskova on a steamy afternoon at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

The 28-year-old began the grand slam year beating Serena Williams to lift the Australian Open title and celebrated again on Saturday when she became the first German to win the US Open in 20 years.

Kerber recovered from a break down in the third set, pouncing on her wilting opponent with two breaks in the third set to end a compelling, high-quality battle of attrition that stretched for two hours and seven minutes.

“It’s just amazing,” a beaming Kerber told an adoring crowd after being handed the winner’s cheque of $3.5 million. “I won my second grand slam in one year. That’s the best of my career.” “Actually just incredible. “When I was a kid I was always dreaming to be the number one player in the world and win grand slams and today is the day I won my second grand slam here, especially in New York. I’m the number one player on Monday.” — Reuters

Djokovic/ Wawrinka big-game talents in US Open final

NEW YORK — World number one Novak Djokovic has enjoyed a whirlwind trip to Sunday’s US Open final, but the top-seeded Serb expects hard work ahead when he meets Stan Wawrinka at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Defending champion Djokovic, who became the third man to hold all four grand slam singles titles at once after his triumph at Roland Garros in June, owns a 19-4 career head-to-head advantage over the Swiss third seed. He leads 4-2 in grand slam meetings against Wawrinka, with three of Djokovic’s victories going five sets, including a memorable 2013 Australian Open fourth-rounder decided 12-10 in the fifth set. “He’s a big match player. He loves to play in the big stage against big players, because that’s when he elevates his level of performance,” said 12-time slam winner Djokovic.

“He just gets much better. “Gifted by a second-round walkover and two retirements along the way, Djokovic has spent less than nine hours on court, completing 13 sets through six rounds at Flushing Meadows, reaching the final 6-3, 6-2, 3-6 6-2 over 10th seed Gael Monfils. The hard-working Wawrinka has been on court twice as long, 17 hours, 54 minutes, playing 23 sets.

— Reuters