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STATE COUNSELLOR ADDRESSES UPDJC MEETING

The Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) started at Thingaha Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon with an address by the chairperson of the UPDJC, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

In her speech, she said that the goal of the committee is to achieve peace, which means an end to conflicts. Prosperity is possible, she said, only when peace has been restored. As a result, the major responsibility of the committee should be to end conflicts and to build a prosperous Myanmar. Ending conflicts involves all of the armed forces, she added.

It is necessary to exchange views and to engage in discussions with one another in peace building efforts, she pointed out. Solutions can be reached only in this way. Then, agreements reached will be implemented step by step, she added.

The state counsellor said that national level dialogues are intended for all stakeholders, as there are many ethnic groups in Myanmar. Defining that inclusiveness means participation of those who can represent all.

She added that it can be assumed that the time has ripened for national level dialogues, and as it is impossible to hold all dialogues in the entire country simultaneously, three types of national level dialogues based on region, national cause and ethnic affairs will be held first before future plans are developed.

She called on all parties to nurture friendship, intimacy and mutual understanding and said that each party is responsible for the inclusiveness of the peace process. The restoration of peace is the duty not only of people who are attending the meeting, but also of organisations, individuals and stakeholders that are endeavoring for peace.

She urged all to find the ways and means to enable non-signatories to the NCA to shoulder their responsibilities.

In addition, she clarified that the only way to peace is to end conflicts. As a result, priority should be given to ending conflicts before urging the stakeholders that are outside the process not to delay. As the saying goes “Time and tide wait for no man,” and it is necessary to use time beneficially, she said.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said that the second Panglong conference is expected to be held in February, and expressed hope that all parties would sign the NCA and participate in the process.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi addresses the meeting of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee.

EXCHANGE VIEWS, END CONFLICTS

MoH holds press conference on first Zika virus infection in Yangon

MINISTRY of Health has advised women in Yangon to receive medical check-ups before getting pregnant in the next six months after the first case of Zika virus in the country’s largest city.

The ministry held the press conference in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday one day after detecting the first case of Zika infection, disclosing that they would not allow the woman to leave her home in the next two weeks to prevent the mosquito-borne virus from spreading.

“The authorities have also been giving her psychotherapy because she’s worried about her pregnancy,” said Dr Soe Lwin Nyien, Director-General of the Public Health Department of the Ministry of Health at the press conference.

A 32-year-old pregnant foreign woman, who has been living in Yangon for two years, was detected on Thursday Zika positive in Yangon.

She was believed to be infected with the virus during her foreign trip over the last two weeks.

The ministry has also carried out medical check-ups to more than 30 suspects in the township where the infected woman is living.

Women asked to receive medical check-ups before getting pregnancy in next six months.

“Women have not yet found further suspected patient,” said Dr Soe Lwin Nyien.

The authorities would also take preventive measures in Yangon and Mandalay.

The World Health Organization warned earlier this month that Zika causes mild symptoms in most people, including fever, sore eyes and a rash.

The pregnant women can give birth to babies with microcephaly, a deformation that leads to abnormally small brains and heads.

It has so far been detected in 70 countries worldwide, including at least 19 in the Asia Pacific region. Brazil has been the country hardest hit so far, with more than 1,900 reported cases of microcephaly.

At least 400 Zika cases have been detected in Singapore, while Thailand last month reported its first cases of Zika-linked microcephaly in two babies. There is no cure or vaccine for the virus.

A WHO report released this month warned that the virus is “highly likely to further spread in the region” which includes China, Japan, Australia, most Southeast Asian nations and the Pacific islands.—GNLM
Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker holds talks with S-Korean President Park Geun-hye

U Win Myint, Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw, called on President of the Republic of Korea Park Geun-hye yesterday in the Presidential Palace in Seoul.

At the meeting, they discussed matters on friendship and cooperation between parliaments of the two countries, legislation issues and democratic transition in Myanmar. The Myanmar delegation led by Speaker U Win Myint visited the Samsung Innovation Museum yesterday.

In the afternoon, they visited Gang Nam Resource Recovery Facility, the energy-from-waste plant.—Myanmar News Agency

Three More Armed Attackers

IN an operation launched by the combined forces of the Tatmawat troops and border guard police force, two violent attackers namely Hamitusong and Notularmein who got involved in violent armed attacks were arrested in the village of Samaung, Buthitaung township of Rakhine State at 7:30 am yesterday.

Aryud who took part in the armed attack was also arrested at his house in the village of Koetankauk in an operation made by the troops at about 1:45pm yesterday.

They had already been handed over to Kyaungtaung and Innpin police camps.

During the patrol in the river Nat, the vessel patrol group found 3 suspicious Bengalis swimming to the neighboring country at about 5:20pm between Tan and Huan creeks and arrested Arbusama, Arlizawhtet and Sharkhunthali. It is reported they were handed over to Maungtaw Police Station.

—Myawady

Opium powder worth over Ks600 million seized in Hsenwi

LOCAL police arrested two drug traffickers after they were discovered in possession of a cache of opium speciosa worth over Ks600 million on Wednesday, according to a police report.

During its surprise check programme near Oriental Toll Gate in Hsenwi Township, an anti-drug squad searched a suspected Toyota Hilux being driven by U Yan Yone Sein with another on board heading from Kutkai to Hsenwi.

Police found opium speciosa weighing 74 kilograms from the back of the car and collected them.

U Yan Yone Sein and Maung Lout Law Myint have been charged by the police under Sections 15/19 (A/21) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

U Ko Win, a resident in Lashio, said that kind of cars mostly enter the region from Laikhai, the capital of Kokang in the northern part of Shan State. Driving those cars with highest speed led several traffic accidents. The majority of drivers are Chinese people.

—Myintakahta News Agency

Car fire incidents reached 82 over past nine months

OVER 80 motor vehicle fire incidents occurred across the country between January and September this year, according to the Myanmar Fire Services Department.

Four people were killed in the car fire incidents over the past nine months. In the case that happened in Hpa-an in Kayin State in January, one person died after a car hit a tree and burst into flames.

Two other people also died in the similar that have accidents occurred in Khamti Township in Sagaing Region in May.

Myanmar Fire Services Department confirmed 33 cases of car catching fire that have happened in January, 13 cases in February, 10 cases in March, nine cases in April, 14 cases in May, five cases in June, five cases in July, two cases in August and 11 cases in September.

The car fire is one of the most common causes of fire-related property.

Some cars were damaged by fire due to overheated engine and wire.—Kyaw Kyaw

Australian falls to death from four-storey building

An Australian identified by the police as Rhodes Lachlan William fell from a four-storey building on Thursday. At about 11 pm, some resident of Building No. 97 at Nawarat Housing Complex heard something fall down to the ground and later found a man lying on the ground. They reported to the police, who rushed the unconscious man with head injuries to hospital.

On the roof of the four-storey building were a passport with the foreigner’s name on it, a ticket for a Myawaddy-Yangon express car, a cinema ticket, a pair of shoes, an iPhone, a charger, a black sling bag with Thailand and Myanmar currency notes worth Bahts 4,840 and over MMK 130,000 and other foreign currency notes, a credit card, a learner’s permit card, a travel vaccination book, a pair of trousers and a pair of shorts.

The unfortunate Australian succumbed to the injuries at 2.10 am yesterday morning.—Myawaddy
President arrives back as he concludes Viet Nam visit

A Myanmar delegation led by President U Htin Kyaw arrived back in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday concluding the three-day visit to Viet Nam.

President U Htin Kyaw and wife Daw Su Su Lwin were welcomed at the Nay Pyi Taw International Airport by Vice Presidents U Myint Swe and U Henry Van Thio, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice Senior-General Soe Win, Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council, Commander of the Nay Pyi Taw Command and diplomats from the Vietnam embassy in Yangon.

During their stay in Hanoi, President U Htin Kyaw and wife Daw Su Su Lwin visited Ho Chi Minh House in Hanoi yesterday morning. During his visit to the traditional stilt house where Ho Chi Minh lived from 1956 to 1969 the president signed in the visitors’ book.

 Afterwards, they delegation headed by President U Htin Kyaw visited the One Pillar Pagoda, built by Emperor Lý Thái Tông, who ruled from 1028 to 1054. The temple was destroyed in 1954 and it was rebuilt afterwards and completed in 1960. The President also met with the ambassador and staff families of Myanmar Embassy in Hanoi.

The delegation also visited the Viet Nam National War Museums.—Myanmar News Agency

Union Minister for Information meets with IPRD’s Divisional Heads

Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint has called on divisional heads of the Information and Public Relation Department for turning the departments across the country into community centres.

“Our aim is for our department to be a community centre. It is important for implementing to shape our places as those accessible by every individual. At the same time, we need to make our libraries familiar to everybody and to make libraries work their activities more effectively,” said the Union Minister at meeting with the divisional heads yesterday attending the refresher course 1/2016 in Nay Pyi Taw.

He also stressed the need for the IPRD to hold meetings, discussions and talk shows and to conveniently accommodate guests in department-owned buildings in co-operation with nationwide village-origanized civil societies, local and foreign NGOs so that the departmental places will become community centres.

While the government is carrying out the development and peace of the nation, the Ministry of Information is taking responsibility for broadening knowledge of the public, he added. He also urged the heads of the divisional offices of the IPRD to do the office works based on the allotment of budget, hence to wisely and systematically spend allotted budgets.

Director-General U Maung Pe clarified plans to be implemented and district departmental heads also explained in detail about the activities performed in their respective areas.—Myanmar News Agency

State Counsellor to visit Japan

DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI, State Counsellor of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, will pay an official visit to Japan in the near future at the invitation of His Excellency Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan.—Myanmar News Agency

Union Minister for Information meets MACPJC

UNION Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint met with Myanmar Anti-Piracy & Content Protection Joint Committee (MACPJC) at the ministry yesterday.

They discussed the purpose, work procedures, formation of the committee and legal action against piracy.

The meeting was attended by officials of the Ministry of Information, and artists including leading committee members U Lu Min, U Thein Shwe, U Myo Swe, Myanarmpyi Kyauk Sein, U Min Chit Thu, and Daw Kyi Phyu Shin.—Myanmar News Agency

State Counsellor addresses . . .

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In conclusion, she said that friends and experts believe that development of Myanmar is synonymous with the world being ready to lend a helping hand to the peace process of the NRPC. She also urged all to cooperate.

After the State Counsellor’s speech, UPDJC Vice Chairman for Ethnic Armed Groups Phado Saw Kwe Htoo Win said that armed conflicts that started with the independence of the country are not beneficial for the nation and have led to enormous losses for the state and ethnic peoples.

Therefore, it is necessary for the people to cooperate in the process as much as they can by shouldering whatever duty they can perform, he added, before urging peace building leaders to end war bravely.

Members of the UPDJC for political parties also pointed out the lessons from peace efforts of successive governments.

UPDJC Secretariat explained the work related to political framework review while the process of political dialogues, guides for national level dialogues and work procedures for regions, states and Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, policies for formation of the UPDJC Office, topics for national—level dialogues and tasks related to political dialogues were approved at the meeting.—Myanmar News Agency

Some schools reopened in Maungtaw district

FOLLOWING October 9 violent armed attack in Maungtaw district, Rakhine State schools were temporarily closed and teachers returned home. Now in some places that gained peace and stability, schools resumed teaching.

Out of 402 schools altogether—9 SHSSs, 18 SMSs and 375 SPSs, only 50 schools—4 SHSSs, 9 SMSs and 36 SPSs, are now operating their regular routine. Due to the situation of the security of the area, there are still 352 schools in all—4SHSSs, 9 SMSs and 339 SPSs to be reopened.

Maungtaw District Education Office is currently making necessary arrangements to reopen schools remaining closed, depending on the security of the area—24 schools as first priority, 49 schools as second priority and 82 schools as third priority, 183 in all, it is learnt.

In Maungtaw district, there are 218 SATs, 639 JATs and 1803 PATs—numbering to 2660 in total. Out of them, 87 SATs, 151 JATs and 195 PATs—433 in all returned home.

According to Maungtaw District Education Office, 2 SATs, 3 JATs and 11 PATs—16 in all returned to their classes and 417—85 SATs, 148 JATs and 184 didn’t arrive yet to their assigned locations.—Myanmar News Agency
**Myanmar’s earning from jade export declines this FY**

EXPORT earning of jade was more than US$230 million over the first half of this fiscal year, registering a decrease of over $400 million compared to the same period last year.

The export of jade went down after China’s limitation with heavy tax, an official of the Ministry of Commerce said. The country generated $700 million from the export of jade and mineral resources over the same period last year.

Jade is a major earning in the export of mineral resources. Among other countries, China is the largest jade buyer for Myanmar. About 99 per cent of the total jade export normally goes to the world’s second richest country.

Between April and September this year, the country received over $300 million from mineral export including jade, according to the figures of the Commerce Ministry.

Over the past six months this year, the export value between Myanmar and foreign trade partners reached about $13 billion including over $5.5 billion from export sector and over $7.3 billion from import sector.—Kyi Kyi

**USAID vows to offer technical aid to local entrepreneurs**

THE United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has pledged to provide technical assistance to Myanmar entrepreneurs through Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN), but the body secreted the amount of funds for one-year project.

To give encouragement to local entrepreneurs, the GEN will launch its global entrepreneurship week 2016 from 14 to 20 November in Yangon, with plans to take place 60 events in regions and states.

The week’s discussions and events are designed to inspire and better equip current and future entrepreneurs with knowledge and resources to start a business, said Ms Winnie Khine of GEN.

The Global Entrepreneurship Week is a celebration of the innovators and job creators, who launch startups that bring ideas to life, drive economic growth and expand human welfare.

During one week each November, GEN inspires people everywhere through local, national and global activities designed to help them explore their potential as self-starters and innovators.

The GEN will also invite local businessmen to attend the global entrepreneurship conference in South Africa to be held between 13 and 16 March next year with the aims of creating new business links with international companies.—Myitmakha News Agency

**Digital Winners Asia to be held in Yangon**

DIGITAL Winners Asia, the first-ever regional startup event of Telenor Group, will be launched on 1st and 2nd November in Yangon. The event is focused on merging the creativity, energy, and expertise of nine of the region’s upcoming startups in a two-day platform designed to empower participants to achieve scale across markets.

Digital Winners Asia will bring nine startups and top-tier speakers together over the course of two days in Yangon to build and exercise the right skills, knowledge and tools to tackle digital business opportunities across markets. The format of the event will consist of a mix of keynote discussions from the startups and venture capital communities.

The startup teams will hold case preparation sessions to compete for 100,000 Norwegian Kroner in initial expansion funds on the closing day of the event, it is learnt from Telenor group.

The participating startups come from a variety of industries including marketing services, energy, artificial intelligence, tourism, and education. Among them are MyanZen from Myanmar, a platform that empowers small and medium social media entrepreneurs to sell beyond traditional online marketplaces. MyanZen blends in with the existing selling behaviour of the social commerce and provides solutions at each part of the selling process, it is learnt.

EcoEnergy, Edjunction and Fori Mazdoori are the selected startups from Pakistan. Vase from Malaysia, Skootar and TakeMeTour from Thailand, BuzzAlly and Socian from Bangladesh are also selected to participate in Digital Winners Asia, it is learnt.

“We believe there are promising startups with innovative and entrepreneurial spirit growing here,” said Gunnar Selleg of Telenor Group.

“The startups participating in this inaugural event represent the best of the best from our market-led accelerator programs and we are excited to build this platform for the next stage of their growth.” —Ko Htet

**Agricultural equipment to be sold by instalment plan by MAPCO and SK Network**

AGRICULTURAL equipment will be sold in instalment in cooperation with Myanmar Agribusiness Public Company (MAPCO) and South Korea’s SK Network to enhance Myanmar’s agricultural sector, it is learnt.

After sanctions are lifted, the export market will become wider, reaching the Middle East and European markets. The crops, especially rice, need to be systematically dried, which requires technical know-how and proper machinery. Therefore, MAPCO cooperated with SK to import grain dryers, it is learnt.

MAPCO placed an order of 100 grain dryers, which are expected to arrive in December and January. These dryers are expected to be ready to use in next summer’s crop season. MAPCO provides agricultural facilities to the farmers.

There are two types of instalments provided by MAPCO for the farmers to purchase the grain dryers. The first one is that the buyers have to pay a 30 per cent down payment through a bank and then must pay the remaining in one or two-year instalments. Another type of instalment plan is for those who cannot afford to pay the 30 per cent down payment. They can pay 10 per cent down payment and then make monthly payments.

MAPCO and SK Network entered into agreement by use of the Strategic Cooperation for the Development of Agriculture Sector of Myanmar.—Mon Mon
Struggling Indian savers threaten Modi’s growth ambition

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI — For India’s dream of taking the baton of global growth from China, its savings rate is flashing a warning sign.

Gross national savings as a per cent of the South Asian nation’s gross domestic product will slip this year to 30.2 per cent, the lowest since 2003, and fall further over the next two years, the International Monetary Fund forecasts.

Since companies use domestic savings to fund their capital spending, the fall would increase their vulnerability to external risks — such as uncertainty over the US presidential election or the prospect of money-staunching the flow of emerging markets such as China.

It’s a worry for Prime Minister Narendra Modi who aspires to achieve the economic growth rates of 8-9 per cent — much higher than the current 7.1 per cent — not only to replicate China’s growth miracle but also to create jobs for the one million people who join India’s workforce every month.

Nearly two-thirds of India’s 1.3 billion people are under 35 years old. But to fully harness the biggest youth bulge the world has ever seen, economists say its saving rate needs to be around 35 per cent.

“Raising the savings rate out of the main pre-conditions for India’s long-term sustainable growth,” said Hanna Luchnikova-Schorsh, senior economist for Asia Pacific at IHS Markit.

The tiger economies of China and East Asia realised their economic potential by keeping their savings rates above 30 per cent for decades.

But India’s economic travails stem from flagging investment, which as a proportion of GDP fell by about 3 percentage points to 29.6 per cent of GDP in the June quarter from a year ago.—Reuters

BEIJING — China will unveil its new generation J-20 stealth fighter jet at an air show next week, the air force said on Friday, the first public showing of a warplane China hopes will narrow the military gap with the United States.

The ability to project air power is key for China as it takes on a more assertive stance on territorial disputes with neighbours in the East China and South China seas.

The Pentagon has said the fifth generation stealth aircraft China is developing, the J-20 and the J-31, are necessary for China’s air force to evolve from a mostly territorial force to one that can carry out both offensive and defensive operations.

The J-20 will give a flight demonstration at next week’s China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition in the southern city of Zhuhai, the People’s Liberation Army Air Force said in a statement on its official microblog.

Air force spokesman Shen Jinke said the J-20’s production was proceeding according to plan and would assist in the air force’s mission to “safeguard sovereignty and national security”.

“This is the first public appearance of China’s indigenously manufactured new generation stealth fighter jet,” the air force said.

In June, it said the jet would enter service “in the near future”.

The new Y-20 military transport aircraft will also give a flight demonstration at the seven-day air show, which is held every two years and opens on Tuesday.

China showed off the J-31 at the last Zhuhai air show in 2014, a show of muscle that coincided with a visit by US President Barack Obama for an Asia-Pacific summit.—Reuters

Philippines’ Duterte says God warned him off swearing

MANILA — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has made a promise to stop swearing, saying God spoke to him during a flight from Japan on Thursday and warned him the plane would crash if he kept using bad language.

The maverick former mayor, famous for his profanity that has included outbursts aimed at Pope Francis and US President Barack Obama, said he heard a voice and realised it was God, telling him to clean up his act.

“I was looking at the skies while I was coming over here … everybody was asleep, snoring, but a voice said that, ‘you know, if you don’t stop epithets, I will bring this plane down now’”, Duterte said at a news conference late on Thursday upon arrival in his home city of Davao.

“And I said, ‘who is this?’ So, of course, it’s God, OK. “So, I promise God … not to express slang, cuss words and everything.”

Duterte, a former outspoken city mayor, emerged as a brash, crude, alternative candidate in a May election which he won by a big margin, owing much to his earthy style and promises to tackle problems important to ordinary people, like drugs and crime.

Advice to act more presidential once he took office was not heeded for long, however, and he resumed his eruptions of profanity with gusto when he started hearing foreign criticism of his deadly drug war.

He has called US President Barack Obama a “son of a bitch” and chose the same words when criticising the pope.

He told Obama to “go to hell”, called UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon a “devil” and said “f--k you” twice to the European Union, while raising his middle finger.

In Tokyo on Tuesday, Duterte used the same language when speaking about his anger with foreign criticism of his drug war.

It was not the first time Duterte has spoken of his connection with God, whom he said had made him president.

Alan Peter Cayetano, Duterte’s vice-presidential running mate and now his foreign affairs adviser, said Duterte was tired and appeared pensive during the flight back from Japan.

“He felt it was a message from God,” Cayetano told reporters on Friday. “I’ve always felt he’s a deeply spiritual person, he’s not religious, but he believes in God.” —Reuters
Malaysia to buy navy vessels from China in blow to US

MANILA/KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia will sign a contract to purchase Littoral Mission Ships from China when Prime Minister Najib Razak visits Beijing next week, according to a Facebook posting by the country’s Ministry of Defence.

The text of a speech to be delivered by Malaysian defence minister Hishammuddin Hussein was posted on Facebook on Tuesday, but was later removed after Reuters asked a defence ministry spokesman for comment.

The purchase of the patrol vessels, if it proceeds, would be Malaysia’s first significant defence deal with China and comes amid rising tensions in the South China Sea between the United States and China to compete for influence in the region.

Malaysia’s ties with the United States became strained after the Department of Justice filed lawsuits linked to a money-laundering investigation at state fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), which Najib founded and had overseen as chairman of its advisory council.

Najib is travelling to China on Sunday for a week-long visit.

“On 5 November 2016, the Defence Ministry will sign a contract for the procurement of Littoral Mission Ships (LMS) with SASTIND (the State Administration for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence), which is an important part of the schedule during the Prime Minister’s official visit to China,” the Facebook post quotes Hishammuddin saying.

However, a video recording of the speech at the Malaysian defence ministry by Hishammuddin does not mention this contract.

A defence ministry spokesman declined to comment and the prime minister’s office did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Littoral Mission Ships are fast patrol vessels that can be equipped with a helicopter flight deck and carry missiles. They are primarily used for coastal security, maritime patrol and surveillance, but can also be deployed for disaster relief and search and rescue operations.

China claims most of the South China Sea as its territory, but Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Viet Nam also claim rival claims to parts of the waterway, which commands strategic sea lanes which carry some $3.5 trillion worth of trade a year.

Ties between Malaysia and China reached a new peak in December when China came to Najib’s rescue with a $2.3 billion deal to buy assets of scandal-hit state fund 1MDB, helping ease Najib’s concern over the firm’s mounting debt.

Najib is travelling with dozens of government leaders and business people to China. In a statement on Wednesday, he said Malaysia was committed to strengthening friendshipship with China and pushing ties to "new highs".

The push to strengthen China ties came after July lawsuits filed by the US Justice Department implicated Najib in a money-laundering scandal.

The lawsuits allege over $3.5 billion was misappropriated from 1MDB, some of which ended up with a ‘Malaysian Official 1’, identified later by US and Malaysian authorities as Najib.

Najib has denied any wrongdoing and said Malaysia will co-operate in the international investigations.

Malaysia could buy up to 10 of the littoral mission ships at a cost of approximately 300 million ringgit ($71.43 million) each, said Lam Chong Wah, senior fellow at REFFSA, a Malaysia research institute. He is also the author of a book on Malaysian military capability.

"The truth is we could have bought these from a number of countries. But China is the only country that has provided political support for Malaysia during the 1MDB scandal. This is payback for that political support,” Najib’s visit follows that of the Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte, who announced the country’s “separation” from the United States and signed a raft of memorandum of understanding for Chinese investment in the country.

Last week, Malaysia announced a 2 billion ringgit ($476.19 million) cut to its 2017 defence budget from last year’s levels.

A project to develop an amphibious corps was among those jettisoned, said Euan Graham, director of the international security program at the Lowy Institute, a Sydney-based think-tank.

"It was the US marines who were liaising with the Malaysians on that," Graham said.

“So a US-backed initiative has effectively died now,” Graham said. "At the same time, a new bridge has been opened to China. If you put these together, whether it’s by Malaysia’s design or not, it does send a combined signal of pulling back from the US and outreach to China.” —Reuters
Clinton ad blitz outscores Trump as his Super PACs bow out

NEW YORK — In the crucial last weeks of the US presidential campaign, Democrat Hillary Clinton has dramatically widened her advantage over Republican rival Donald Trump in ad spending, according to campaign finance reports released on Thursday.

The newest filings showed Clinton’s campaign and Super PACs outspending Trump in the first three weeks of October by a factor of two to one on everything from national TV ads to local outreach on smartphone screens.

At the same time, the two Super PACs associated with Trump’s White House bid have seen their fundraising start to stall out, with one of the groups reserving no broadcast or cable ads between 20 October and Election Day, according to data from ad-tracking firm SMG Delta.

Clinton and Priorities USA, the Super PAC that supports her, have spent $360 million on all types of advertising since the beginning of the campaign, said the new reports, which covered spending through 19 October.

That total blows away the $147 million spent on advertising by Trump and his two affiliated Super PACs during the same period.

What’s more, for the period beginning 20 October and running through the 8 November election, Clinton and her Super PAC have reserved an additional $55 million in TV ads, according to SMG Delta, including $30.5 million from her campaign and $25 million from her Super PAC.

A Super PAC is a fund-raising group that must operate separately from political campaigns but can raise unlimited sums.

The Trump campaign has committed to spending $32.4 million, and Trump, in the same period, with the Trump Super PAC known as Great America PAC, saying it would also contribute another $2.35 million in broadcast and online ad spend.

The newest batch of campaign finance filings also reveal that the celebrity businessman’s recent vow that he would contribute in excess of $100 million to his campaign out of his own fortune has also fallen short.

Trump contributed $56 million through the end of September, chipping in an additional $31,000 since then.

Spending on television commercials does not decide an election, and Trump, with his controversial statements and inflammatory tweets, has mastered the art of garnering free media coverage, which is expected to top $5 billion by Election Day, more than double the amount Clinton is likely to earn, according to data analytics tracker MediQuant.

But ever since Trump’s campaign began to falter last summer after he criticized the family of a slain US soldier, Clinton has been able to use her ad spending juggernaut to repetitively pound at criticisms of Trump, which several strategists said had exacerbated his slide in polls, where he now lags Clinton by eight percentage points.

Trump could pour more money into his ad operation in the final 11 days of the campaign.

Republican presidential campaign operatives said areas where Trump could still spend included battleground states, national ad buys and digital outreach and phone banking.

But they also said it may be too late for such outlays to make a difference.

“My stations would gladly take his money,” said Fred Davis, a major Republican ad maker.

“I just don’t think he will.”

During the Republican nominating contests, Trump vanquished 16 opponents in part by eschewing campaign finance mainstays such as ads and pollsters.

“He felt he won the primary with basically no ad spending by being a larger-than-life TV personality. It worked,” Davis said.

But the general election, he added, was “a whole new ballgame.”

Many of Clinton’s TV ads have focused on upbeat messages featuring her work on behalf of women and children. She’s also spent a large amount of her advertising budget attacking Trump, including a commercial that showed children listening to some of his most demeaning remarks about women.

Trump’s ads, by contrast, paint a dark picture of America, besieged by violence and on the brink of economic destruction.

Rick Wilson, a former strategist for Republican Mitt Romney’s 2012 campaign, said “ads don’t matter, until they do,” adding that comments by Trump that critics have called racist and sexist were providing maximum ammunition for Clinton.

Trump may not be able to rely on his small cadre of big donors, either: Make America Number 1 PAC — a super PAC formed by conservative mega-donor Robert Mercer — raised nothing between 1 and 19 October.

At the same time, Trump has also stopped doing high-dollar fundraisers.”—Reuters
Peace and flexibility

Myint Win Thein

PEACE means an end to war and violence in a region or in a country, and priority should be given to ending conflict in all parts of the country. For peace to prevail all over the country, it is important that all stakeholders participate in the peace process. Otherwise, peace cannot be restored in the entire country, and some parts of it will be left behind in development.

As Myanmar is home to various ethnic peoples, it is essential for all stakeholders to participate in the peace process at the national level and ways and means should be sought to enable non-signatories to participate in the national-level dialogues, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi pointed out in her speech yesterday.

In addition, she said that it is not beneficial to procrastinate in the process and every organization, individual and stakeholder, even if they are not invited to the meetings related to the peace process, are responsible for restoring peace in the entire country. Therefore, the onus is on all to find ways and means to ensure the inclusiveness of all stakeholders in the peace process and to exercise flexibility along the process in order to move toward the ultimate goal of peace in the future. It is time stakeholders exerted efforts to build peace in the country because procrastination in the process will take its tolls.

The Parliamentary Oversight of the Police Force and CSOs Participation

DR HTOO MAUNG

Like other democracy countries, we have three main functions in the parliament namely; legislation, oversight and representation. Among them, oversight function is crucial important to strengthen the parliament. First of all, I have four key factors in this article. These are (1) the functions between the parliament and the police (2) the functions between the Hluttaw’s Committee and the police, (3) the legal framework for police force and (4) the role of civil society in the Parliament for which it is consistent of the current situation and in the future prospect.

Now, the first key point I would like to share is about the legislative, budgetary and oversight function of the police force. In terms of the legislative function, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) makes the initial step for drafting for its part such as consulting with experts from Attorney General Office, seeking the approval of the Cabinet and forwarding to the Union Assembly. When we receive the Bill, it is distributed to either Pyithu Hluttaw or Amyotha Hluttaw upon deciding of the Speaker to be discussed and resolved. For example, if it is on the table of Pyithu Hluttaw, the Bill Committee prepares necessary arrangements such as inviting the members of concerned Ministry, the members of Public Management Committee, the members of Commission, the experts from the Attorney General Office including civil society. And they discuss altogether in the Committee. After discussion, the Bill Committee makes a report and presenting the Hluttaw session. In the session, the Bill is forwarded to the other Hluttaw (Amyotha Hluttaw) for further agreement. So also, the other Hluttaw studies and discusses the Bill as the same process of Pyithu Hluttaw and send it back to the Pyithu Hluttaw with some remarks like agreed, disagreed or agreed with amendments. Based on these remarks, the Pyithu Hluttaw makes review and send to the Union Assembly whether agreed or disagreed. It is, however, disagreed we need to make a vote in the Union Assembly. Afterwards, the Bill is sent to the President to be signed to become the law.

And let me moves on the budgetary functions between the parliament and the police. The initial step of the process of the budget for police is made by the Ministry of Home Affairs in consultation with the Ministry of National Planning and Finance. The Ministry send it to the Cabinet and the Cabinet continue to forward to the Union Assembly with all other Ministries’ budget collectively in attached with the approval of the Finance Commission. In this occasion, the Union Assembly assigns the Joint Bill Committee to scrutinize the budget Bill including the police budget. Although the Joint Bill Committee has solely responsible for scrutinizing, the Joint-Public Account Committee performs in practice throughout the process and makes a report in support of the National Planning, Union Budget and Taxation Scrutiny Coordination Committee. After finalizing the budget Bill in the parliament, the Union Assembly is just like always to send the Budget Bill to the President to approve to become the law.

Therefore, I would say that the parliament can overlook the legislative and budgetary functions of all governmental organizations including the police force according to the Constitution. Apart from these functions, the parliament may make question and answer in the session and hearing in the committee relating to police affairs such as riots, over crow management etc. in terms of the oversight function. But this kind of case is very rare even in the Hluttaw.

In terms of the police oversight, the parliament has still weak under check and balance principle even in the communication functions between the Parliament and the police. We did not have any authority to communicate directly with the police force according to government instruction in the past. We did only have the right to correspond with DG to DG. However, we learned from the Yangon supported by Madam Aung San Suu Kyi, we observed that the following things should be included in the new police law:

- To be independent body
- To be professional, (meaning that distinct from military type and not coming from military personnel)
- To be accountability and responsibility
- To be well educated
- To be enough salary and allowance

And the parliament part, the specific committee should be established to oversight the police force effectively or should be placed a liaison office for smooth function as well in the future.

The last point I also would like to share you is about the role of civil society for the parliamentary oversight of the police force. The role of civil society is very crucial for every sector in the parliament. Now some civil societies played in important role by providing their valuable thoughts and ideas in some general debate in the parliament, the work of amending the Association Law, the National Education Law and drafting for the Nationalism Laws. Apart from that discussion, we can come and have any support from them and we do not have any case of police affairs so far. Here, I would like to point out that the government should welcome the CSOs when they introduce the Bill. If the CSOs do not have any opportunity to participate in the drafting process at the government side, they can come and support the legislative process in the parliament in the last chance before approve. So, we are welcome any civil society to help us to have a good law for the country.

The Parliamentary Oversight of the Police Force and CSOs Participation
Shi’ite militias to join Mosul campaign soon

BAGHDAD — Iraqi Shi’ite militias said on Friday they would launch an offensive against Islamic State fighters in Mosul imminently, a move which would block any retreat by the Sunni jihadists into Syria but is likely to alarm Iraq’s northern neighbor, Turkey.

A spokesman for the Iranian-backed paramilitary groups said the advance toward the Islamic State-held town of Tal Afar, about 55 km (35 miles) west of Mosul, would start within “a few days or hours.”

If successful, the offensive would leave Islamic State fighters — and the 1.5 million civilians still living in Mosul — encircled by an advancing coalition of forces which seeks to crush the hardline Sunni militants in their Iraqi stronghold.

Iraqi soldiers and security forces and Kurdish peshmerga fighters, backed by US-led air strikes and support on the ground, already control Mosul’s southern, eastern and northern flanks, and have advanced on those fronts for nearly two weeks.

They have recaptured scores of villages on the flat plains east of Mosul and along the Tigris river to the south, but the battle for Mosul itself, Iraq’s second largest city, could be the most complex military operation in Iraq since the US-led invasion to topple former president Saddam Hussein in 2003.

Adding to the challenges facing the advancing forces, re-entering Islamic State fighters have forced women and children from outlying villages to march alongside them as human shields as they withdraw into the city, according to villagers who spoke to Reuters by telephone from Mosul.

Older boys and men of fighting age were taken off to an unknown fate, they said.

The United Nations said on Friday Islamic State had abduct- ed 8,000 families from around Mosul to use as human shields. A spokeswoman also said they had killed 232 people near Mosul on Wednesday who refused to comply with orders. Ahmed al-Asadi, a spokes-

man for the Shi’ite forces known collectively as the Hashid Shaabi, or Popular Mobilisation, said the operation to cut off Mosul’s western approaches was crucial to the battle against Islamic State, also known as Daesh.

“This is the most important and dangerous line because it connects Mosul to Raqqa and is the only supply line for Daesh,” he told Iraqi state television.

A Kurdish Peshmerga fighter takes a selfie with children after recapturing the Fadiliya village from Islamic State militants, in Nawaran north of Mosul. Photo: Reuters

Qarqa is Islamic State’s bastion in Syria, and the two cities form the symbolic capitals of a cross-border “caliphate” declared by its leader Abu Bakr al-Bagh- dadiri from the pulpit of a Mosul mosque in August 2014.

Iraqi and military sources say there has been a debate about whether or not to close off the western route in and out of Mosul. Leaving it open would offer Islamic State fighters a chance to retreat, potentially sparing civilians inside the city who might otherwise be trapped in a bloody fight to the finish.

Some civilians fleeing Mosul have used the roads to the west to escape to Qamishli, in Kurdisch-controlled northern Syria.

—Reuters

Turkey says gives US new documents on Gulen extradition request

WASHINGTON — Turkey has handed over to the US Justice Department further documents to back its request for the extradition of US-based Muslim cleric Fethul- lah Gulen, who Ankara accuses of orchestrating a failed 15 July coup attempt, Turkey’s justice minister said on Thursday.

Justice Minister Bekir Bozdag said that in a meeting with Attorney General Loretta Lynch in Was-

ington on Wednesday he gave US authorities three new folders of evi-

dence they had sought over Tur-
key’s accusations against Gulen.

Bozdag described his meeting with Lynch as “fruitful,” saying it helped the two sides better understand each other’s positions. But he told reporters Lynch expressed neither support nor opposition for Turkey’s request that the United States extradite Gulen.

The Turkish cleric, who has lived in self-imposed exile in Penn-
sylvania since 1999, has denied in-
volvement in the coup attempt.

Turkey is a critical ally of the United States in its fight against Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria. Turkey’s presidential spokesman said earlier this month that the United States does not appear to have understood the se-

riousness of Turkey’s call to extra-
dite Gulen. The Justice Department said in a statement that Bozdag and Lynch discussed that in both Tur-
key and the United States “extra-
ditions are subject to the judicial process, and accordingly must meet the evidentiary standards of the requested country.”

Bozdag said the folders he gave Lynch contained information and documents that US offi-
cials had requested when visiting Turkey in August. He declined to elaborate. The Justice Department

Syrian rebels launch Aleppo counter-attack to break siege

BEIRUT — Syrian rebels including jihadis began a counter-attack against the army and its allies on Friday aiming to break a weeks-

long siege on eastern Aleppo, in-

surgents said.

The assault, employing heavy shelling and suicide car bombs, was mainly focused on the city’s western edge by rebels based out-
side Aleppo. It included Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, a former affiliate of al Qaeda previously known as the Nusra Front, and groups fighting under the Free Syrian Army (FSA) banner. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a British-based war monitor, said more than 15 civilians had been killed and 100 wounded by rebel shelling of govern-
ment-held western Aleppo. State media reported that five civil-
ians were killed.

There were conflicting ac-
counts of advances in areas on the city’s outskirts. Aleppo, Syria’s biggest pre-war city, has become the main theater of conflict be-
tween President Bashar al-Assad, backed by Iran, Russia and Shi’ite militias, and Sunni rebels including groups supported by Turkey, Gulf monarchies and the United States.

The city has been divided for years between the govern-
ment-held western sector and rebel-held east, which the army and its allies put under siege this summer and where they launched a new offensive in September that medics say has killed hundreds.

—Reuters

UN peace plan for Yemen seems to sideline exiled president

SANAA — A UN peace proposal to end a 19-month war in Yemen appears aimed at sidelining exiled President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi and setting up a government of less divisive figures, according to a copy seen by Reuters.

Hadi fled the armed ad-

vance of the Iranian-aligned Houthis movement in March 2015 and has been a guest of neighbouring Saud-
i Arabia ever since.

A UN Security Council res-
olution a month later recognised him as the legitimate head of state and called on the Houthis to dis-
arm and quit Yemen’s main cit-

ties.

But the Houthis and their al-

lies in Yemen’s army have said he will never return, accusing him and his powerful vice president, Ali Muslin al-Abdrar, of corrup-
tion. The latest peace plan sub-

mitted by UN envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed suggests Ahmad

would step down and Hadi would agree to become little more than a figurehead after a Houthi with-

power to a Vice President, and agree to become little more than a figurehead after a Houthi with-

Hadi will appoint a new Vice

President, the document says.

Hadi will transfer all his

powers to a Vice President, and

the Vice President will appoint a new Prime Minister ... (who will form) a national unity govern-

ment,” it added.—Reuters

US based cleric Fethullah Gulen at his home in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania, US, on 29 July 2016. Photo: Reuters

also declined to comment on the material Bozdag said he provided.

The Justice Department has
taken any steps to initiate ex-
tradition proceedings against Gul-

len based on the information that Turkey has provided so far. Turkey has criticized the United States for not moving faster on the matter.

—Reuters
Bond yields up, stocks sag on enhanced US rate hike prospects

TOKYO — Stocks sagged on Friday as global bond yields surged and pulled the dollar to three-month highs versus the yen, after the latest batch of US data increased chances for a near-term interest rate hike by the Federal Reserve.

Business & Technology 29 October 2016

Unbeat US data including jobless claims, manufacturing activity and pending home sales strengthened the case for the Fed to raise rates by the year-end and lifted Treasury yields that had already risen in the wake of a surge in British and euro zone yields.

The markets’ focus was now turned toward third quarter US-gross domestic product data due out later in the global session.

MSCI’s broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan .MIAPJ0000pus was down 0.3 per cent, pressured by the prospect of easy money flows being crimped should the Fed tighten policy soon.

South Korea’s Kospi .KS11 shed 0.3 per cent and Australian stocks fell 0.2 per cent. Hong Kong’s Hang Seng .HSI lost 0.4 per cent while Japan’s Nikkei .N225 gained 0.7 per cent on a weaker yen.

Spreadbeters expected European stocks to track their Asian counterparts, forecasting a slightly lower open for Britain’s FTSE .FTSE, Germany’s DAX .GDAXI and France’s CAC .FCHI.

Boosted by the spike in Treasury yields, the dollar scaled a three-month peak of 105.370 yen JPY=. “105 (yen) was both a psychological and technical point, and it broke ahead of US GDP later today,” said Kameo Ongino, director at foreign exchange research firm Global-info Co in Tokyo.

“Some people did not want to be short ahead of that, also with the Bank of Japan and Fed meetings next week, and US nonfarm payrolls data one week from today.”

In a week marked by deep slides in prices of US and euro zone debt, the benchmark 10-year Treasury yield US10YT=RR climbed to a five-month high well above 1.8 per cent, helped along by the surging British Gilt and German bund yields.

A sell-off in Gilts had led the way on Thursday as strong third quarter UK growth data doused expectations for monetary easing by the Bank of England.

The 10-year Gilt yield GB10YT=TEWEB has risen about 20 basis points this week, its highest in four months.

The German 10-year bund yield DE10YT=TWEB on Thursday soared 10 basis points to 0.19 per cent, its highest since late May.

The bund yield plunged a record low minus 0.20 per cent in July under the European Central Bank’s extensive monetary easing. But it has recently risen amid concerns that ultra-easy policies practiced by the major central banks could have their limits and may not be continued indefinitely.

The rise was less pronounced in the 10-year Japanese government bond yield JP10YTN=JBTC, but it still made a five-week high of minus 0.050 per cent.

The Bank of Japan in September made a change of tack and now aims to control the yield curve rather than rely on adjusting the pace of its money printing.

The euro was steady at $1.0904 EUR=. holding out better against the dollar compared to the Japanese yen thanks to the big rise in euro zone debt yields.—Reuters

Apple adds touch screen keys to MacBook Pro, price jump startles some

CUPERTINO, (Calif.) — Apple Inc unveiled a revamped MacBook Pro on Thursday, adding a fingerprint reader, replacing function keys with a touch screen and raising prices by several hundred dollars.

The first redesign in several years is a sign Apple still sees a role for the product that launched the company, even though its iPhone has become the flagship.

Ben Bajarin, an analyst at Creative Strategies, described the changes as “important incremental upgrades” which would convince people with old Macs to trade up to new ones.

But he noted that Microsoft Corp’s competing Surface notebook allowed touch on its main screen.

“A lot of people spend a lot of time on these machines. The key for them is incremental innovations that make their job easier,” said Bajarin. “That’s value.”

The new pricing is roughly line with expectations, Bajarin said, but it surprised some.

On Twitter, many potential buyers were overwhelmed by the new features and posted pictures of people crying about the new prices. Others tweeted that they hoped for more products.

Apple shares fell 1.2 per cent.

Customers will be able to access the new machines with Touch ID, the fingerprint reader also used on iPhones, and use the touch screen bar of keys, called the Touch Bar, to control programs on the main screen.

The buttons, which change depending on what programs the user is running, effectively act as a second screen, showing older versions of a picture being edited, for example.

Other computer makers have chosen to use touch screens for the main display screen, including Microsoft’s first-ever desktop and a revamped Surface Book laptop, launched on Wednesday.

The MacBook Pro with Touch ID, Touch Bar and a 13-inch screen will start at $1,799, compared with $1,299 for the previous 13-inch product. Apple also will offer a 13-inch MacBook Pro without the Touch ID and Touch Bar for $1,499.

The 15-inch notebook will start at $2,399, compared with $1,999 for the previous version.

The Mac line accounted for about 11 percent of Apple sales in the just-finished fiscal year, with the number of machines sold down by 10 percent to 18.5 million.

Apple has steadily upgraded components to the MacBook Pro, but the overall form has changed little, and PC Week described the unit being replaced as a “fossil” which had not had a major design change since 2013.—Reuters

EU privacy watchdogs warn WhatsApp on privacy policy, Yahoo on breach

BRUSSELS — European privacy watchdogs said on Friday they had sent letters to WhatsApp over its sharing of information with parent company Facebook and Yahoo over a 2014 data breach and its scanning of customer emails for US intelligence purposes.

European Union data protection authorities said they had serious concerns about WhatsApp’s recent change in privacy policy in which it would share users’ phone numbers with Facebook, its first change in policy since Facebook bought the messaging service.

The authorities, known as the Article 29 Working Party, “requested WhatsApp to communicate all relevant information to the Working Party as soon as possible and urged the company to pause the sharing of users’ data until the appropriate legal protections could be assured.”

A spokeswoman for WhatsApp said the company was working with data protection authorities to address their questions.

“We’ve had constructive conversations, including before our update, and we remain committed to respecting applicable law,” she said.

The watchdogs also wrote to Yahoo over a massive data breach that exposed the email credentials of 500 million users, as well as its scanning of customers’ incoming emails for specific information provided by US intelligence officials.—Reuters
Scientists identify fossilised dinosaur brain tissue for first time

LONDON — British and Australian scientists have identified an unusual brown pebble, found more than a decade ago by a fossil hunter in southern England, as the first known example of fossilised dino-saur brain tissue.

The fossilised brain, found by fossil enthusiast Jamie Hiscocks near Bexhill in Sussex in 2004, is most likely from a species similar to Iguanodon — a large herbivore that lived during the early Cretaceous period, some 133 million years ago.

In a report of their analysis in a Special Publication of the Geological Society of London, the researchers said they believed the piece of tissue was so well-preserved because the dinosaur’s brain was “pickled” in a highly acidic and low-oxygen-water environment — like a bog or swamp — shortly after it died.

“The chances of preserving brain tissue are incredibly small, so the discovery of this specimen is astonishing,” said Alex Liu of Cambridge University’s department of earth sciences, who worked on its identification.

Cambridge’s David Norman, who led the work, said the finding also raised questions about the common perception of dino-saurs as animals with very small brains.

In typical reptiles, the brain is sausage-shaped and surrounded by a dense region of blood vessels and sinuses, meaning the brain itself only takes up half of the space in the cranial cavity.

“The tissue in the fossil- ised brain, however, appeared to have been pressed against the skull, the scientists said, raising the possibility that some dinosaurs had larger brains.

But Norman’s team cautioned against drawing any firm conclusions from this single specimen about di-nosaurs’ brain size or intellect levels.

“As we can’t see the lobes of the brain itself, we can’t say for sure how big this dinosaur’s brain was,” he said. “Of course, it’s entirely possible that di-nosaurs had bigger brains than we give them credit for, but we can’t tell from this specimen alone.”— Reuters

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Living by busy road easier to have high blood pressure

LONDON — People living by busy road and con-sequentially have long-time exposure to a polluted air and loud noise should be careful of the recent study found that they may have higher risk to de-velop high blood pressure.

The study, published Tuesday on the European Heart Journal, reached the conclusion following a follow-up of 41,000 people in five different European countries for five to nine years.

It said up to one extra person per 100 people of the same age living in the most polluted area- es of cities would develop high blood pressure com-pared to those living in less polluted areas.

Referring to traffic noise, the study found that people living in noisy streets had a 6 per cent in-creased risk of developing high blood pressure com-pared to those living in quieter areas.

Here noisy streets are defined as those where night time noise levels of 50 deci-bels, which is described as light traffic or the sound of a running refrigerator according to the www.noise-help.com.

Air pollution and streets noise share many common sources but the researches restrained the two factors differ a lot, said Professor Barbara Hoffmann, who led the analysis and specialized in environmental epidemiology.

“One very important aspect is that these asso-ciations can be seen in people living well below current European air pollu-tion standards. This means, the current legislation does not protect the Europe in an population adequately from adverse effects of air pollution,” Hoffmann said. — Xinhua
France, Britain bicker over child migrants stuck in Calais

CALAIS (France) — Five days into a French operation to clear the Calais “Jungle” France has lashed out at apparent British criticism of the way children are being treated while thousands of migrants are resettled across France and the camp is destroyed.

French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve expressed “surprise” in a late Thursday statement about comments by his British counterpart and sought to remind Britain of its responsibilities with regard to the stranded young people.

British television group ITN said in a wide-ranging British Home Secretary Amber Rudd had spoken to Cazeneuve “to stress the need for children who remain in Calais to be properly protected”.

The French government said Cazeneuve and his housing minister, Emmanuel Cosse, “learned with surprise the declarations of Ms Amber Rudd, British interior minister.”

“The French ministers hope... the United Kingdom will quickly execute its responsibilities to take in these minors, who have been housed separately near the camp.

France says Britain has accepted 274 children from among this group.

Thousands of migrants had until this week been camped near Calais in the hope of making the short journey across the sea to Britain by leaping on trucks and trains or walking through the Channel tunnel.

European Union rules say Britain must take in unaccompanied children who have family ties in the country under so-called Dublin rules.

An amendment to those rules adopted in Britain this year states that such minors whose best interests are served by doing so should also be admitted.

—Reuters

Police arrest 141 in crackdown on North Dakota pipeline protesters

CANNON BALL (North Dakota) — Police arrested 141 Native Americans and other protesters in North Dakota in a tense standoff that spilled into Friday morning between law enforcement and demonstrators seeking to halt construction of a disputed oil pipeline.

Police in riot gear used pepper spray and armored vehicles in an effort to disperse an estimated 330 protesters and clear a camp on private property in the path of the proposed $3.8 billion Dakota Access Pipeline, according to photos and statements released by the Morton County Sheriff’s Department.

Some protesters responded by throwing rocks, bottles and Molotov cocktails at police, attaching themselves to vehicles and starting fires, police said.

“It was a very active and tense evening as law enforcement worked through the evening to clear protestors,” the department said.

A female protester fired three rounds at the police line before she was arrested, the department said.

In another shooting incident, a man was taken into custody after a man was shot in the hand. That “situation involved a private individual who was ran off the road by protestors,” the department said in a Facebook post.

The 1,172-mile (1,885-km) pipeline, being built by a group of companies led by Energy Transfer Partners LP, would offer the fastest and most direct route to bring Bakken shale oil from North Dakota to US Gulf Coast refineries.

Supporters say it would be safer and more cost-effective than transporting the oil by rail or rail.

—Reuters

Venezuela opposition heaps pressure, Maduro scoffs

CARACAS — Venezuela’s Congress on Thursday heard emotional testimony from citizens accusing President Nicolas Maduro of violating their rights, in a political trial meant to pressure the socialist leader into accepting a recall vote.

Taking the podium one by one, speakers accused Maduro of responsibility for executions during police raids, the death of children in ill-equipped hospitals and denial of subsidized food to those supporting a recall vote.

“Nicolas Maduro is responsible for everything happening in our country,” said Brígida Duarte, adding that her son had been wrongly shot dead in a raid. “It’s not enough that they kill us with hunger, but they also execute our children.”

The National Assembly trial of Maduro for violating democracia is largely symbolic, given that both the government and Supreme Court say the legislature is illegitimate.

Maduro, 53, mocked the trial as irrelevant.

“Here I am, working hard despite having abandoned my position!” he quipped during a televised appearance to supervise state housing projects, referring to parliament’s plan to accuse him of abandoning his duties by violating the constitution.

The Democratic Unity opposition coalition has intensified protests since authorities last week effectively scuttled its drive for a plebiscite, with a national strike and march to the presidential palace set for coming days.

Opposition rallies on Wednesday, dubbed the “Takeover of Venezuela,” drew hundreds of thousands of people and triggered dozens of injuries and arrests as protesters clashed with police in provincial cities.

Congressional leaders also denounced early in the morning that power had been cut off to the legislative palace, forcing them to rely on an emergency backup generator.

The opposition says the Maduro government effectively staged a coup by blocking a recall vote that polls suggest he would lose. Maduro says opposition hotheads are seeking to overthrow the government illegally with US assistance.—Reuters

Colombia delays peace talks with ELN rebels until captive freed

BOGOTA — Colombia is delaying peace talks with Marxist ELN rebels until they free a politician held captive for six months, President Juan Manuel Santos said on Thursday, as he struggles to salvage a peace deal with FARC guerrillas that was rejected in a plebiscite.

The National Liberation Army (ELN), the nation’s second-biggest insurgent group, must release Odin Sanchez to the International Committee of the Red Cross before talks can begin in Ecuador, Santos said, reiterating a condition he set months ago.

The opening ceremony had been scheduled to take place in Ecuador’s capital at 6 pm EDT (2200 GMT) but it was canceled at the last minute. The government said the talks could still go forward as early as Friday or Saturday if the rebels free Sanchez, however.

The 2,000-strong ELN, considered a terrorist group by the United States and European Union, has kidnapped hundreds of people during its 52-year insurgency to raise war funds and use hostages as bargaining chips with the government.

Santos won the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize earlier this month for his efforts to end a conflict with the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a surprising choice given voters narrowly shunned the deal signed with them.

More than 220,000 people have been killed in Colombia’s long-running armed conflict, which has pitted leftist guerrillas against right-wing paramilitary groups and the security forces.

Founded by radical Catholic priests and inspired by Cuba’s 1959 revolution, the ELN has been in on-and-off closed-door talks with the government since 2014 on how the two sides would conduct negotiations.

The rebels have remained active during that time, kidnapping and bombing oil installations, though in recent months they have released some captives.

The government had previously demanded the release of all ELN captives before formal peace talks could begin and Sanchez is believed to be the group’s last remaining hostage.

The talks with the ELN would likely mirror those held with the FARC. The peace agreement, signed on 26 September with the FARC, was internationally lauded but criticized by many in Colombia for being too lenient on the rebels.

Former President Alvaro Uribe is now leading the effort to change the agreement that would have given the FARC guaranteed congressional seats and immunities from traditional jail sentences. The “no” side won the plebiscite by less than half a percentage point.—Reuters
NEW YORK — A plane carrying US Republican vice presidential nominee Mike Pence skidded off the runway after landing in the rain at New York City’s LaGuardia Airport on Thursday, halting flights for at least an hour, officials said.

No one was injured in the incident which occurred less than two weeks before the US presidential election, crucial campaign days for Pence and running mate Donald Trump.

Pence pledged to hit the campaign trail again on Friday.

“So thankful everyone on our plane is safe,” the Indiana governor said on Twitter after the incident. “Grateful for our first responders & the concern & prayers of so many.”

The Boeing 737 was coming in for a landing and went off the runway at about 7:40 pm local time (2340 GMT). The plane was stopped by a crushable type of concrete runway that arrested the aircraft’s movement, Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Jim Peters said.

The FAA and National Transportation Safety Board said they will investigate the cause of the incident.

Trump called his running mate before a rally in Geneva, Ohio. “I just spoke to Mike Pence and he’s fine,” Trump told the crowd at the rally. “The plane skidded off the runway and was pretty close to grave, grave danger.”

Trump and Pence have slipped in the polls in recent weeks, in part due to negative public reaction to the release of a decade-old video in which Trump made lewd comments about women and said he could grab them by their genitals because he was a celebrity.

Since then, numerous women have come forward to say that they were groped by Trump, claims that he has denied. On Thursday, Pence had been scheduled to attend a fundraiser at Trump Tower in Manhattan, but was not able to make the event after his plane slid off the runway, a campaign aide said.

Pence will resume his normal schedule Friday using a different plane, the aide said. Live television footage showed Pence standing in the rain near the plane among emergency vehicles, talking to police and other officials, Trump’s opponent, Democrat Hillary Clinton, on Twitter said she was glad Pence and the rest of the passengers and crew were safe.

There were about 30 people onboard the plane, including Pence’s wife, Karen, and daughter Charlotte, MSNBC said.

The plane was coming from Fort Dodge, Iowa, where Pence had participated in a campaign event.

The takeoff from Iowa was delayed for about two hours because of bad weather in New York. Pence had earlier posted on Twitter a picture of himself playing football in the bright sun on grass near his plane in Iowa, citing the delay in leaving for New York. In 2015 a Delta Air Lines Inc jet landing during a snowstorm at LaGuardia Airport slid off the runway and struck a fence before coming to rest on a snow-covered embankment just feet from the frigid waters of Flushing Bay.— Reuters
Japanese kabuki actor, silent film narrator keep traditions alive

TOKYO — For Kabuki actor Onee Kikunosuke and silent film narrator Ichiro Kataoka, keeping old traditions alive and sharing them with as many local and foreign fans as possible remain their mission.

Kikunosuke, who performed in an “onnagata” female role in “Sagi Musume” (Heron Maiden) in an event Thursday as part of this year’s Tokyo International Film Festival, said he hopes people watching the traditional Japanese performing art for the first time will appreciate its beauty.

“Heron Maiden is a dance piece that captures all of what is beautiful in the features of an ‘onnagata’,” Kikunosuke told reporters in front of the Kabukiza Theatre in Tokyo prior to his performance at the venue.

It is the third consecutive year a Kabuki event was held in collaboration with the film festival, which is showcasing more than 200 films from around the world. The festival has also become a stage to introduce Japanese performing arts and culture.

Kikunosuke’s performance in one of the famous pieces for “onnagata” depicts a tragic love story of a heron that turns into a young woman and falls in love with a man. Their relationship eventually fails.

Kabuki, a tradition of more than 400 years, features male actors wearing elaborate makeup and costumes. The “onnagata” female roles are also played by male actors.

Kikunosuke, who has performed overseas such as in London and Beijing, said he believes those who are watching Kabuki for the first time will also enjoy what is known as “hakoniku,” a technique involving a quick change of costumes on stage, which he performed multiple times Thursday.

Kataoka, one of Japan’s well-known traditional “benshi,” or live narrator for silent films, said he looks forward to seeing how an old film will “resonate” to the modern-day audience.

“Benshi narrates past films to people of the current times and revives the old films” into something that relevant to the present, he said.

At the same theater, Kataoka gave a lively narration for the classic Japanese silent film, “Chushingura,” accompanied by the music of shamisen guitar, taiko drum and piano.

Chushingura is a famous story of 47 samurais seeking to avenge their master’s death and has been adapted in many forms such as dramas, movies and plays.

Ichiro Furutachi, a well-known Japanese TV personality, also gave a more contemporary take in his performance as a guest “benshi” narrator for another silent film, “Blood’s Up at Taka-ta-no-Baba.”—Kyodo News

Swedish pop group ABBA to reunite for ‘new digital experience’

STOCKHOLM — Swedish pop group ABBA is set to reunite for a “new digital experience” in 2018, more than 30 years after their last public performance together, it was announced on Wednesday.

Band members Agnetha Faltskog, Bjorn Ulvaeus, Benny Andersson and Anni-Frid Lyngstad will team up with “American Idol” creator Simon Fuller and Universal Music Group for the collaboration.

“We are exploring a new technological world, with Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence at the forefront, that will allow us to create new forms of entertainment and content we couldn’t have previously imagined,” Fuller said in a statement.

Over a 30-year-career, Fuller has managed singers Annie Lennox, the Spice Girls and Amy Winehouse, English soccer player David Beckham, tennis player Andy Murray, racing driver Lewis Hamilton and a trio of “American Idol” champions: Kelly Clarkson, Carrie Underwood and David Cook.

ABBA, known for a string of 1970s and early 1980s hits such as “Waterloo,” “Dancing Queen” and “Take A Chance On Me”, split up in 1982.

“Our fans around the world are always asking us to reform and so I hope this new ABBA creation will excite them as much as it excites me!” Lyngstad said in a statement.

Further details of the collaboration will be announced next year.—Reuters

Johnny Depp signs with CAA

LOS ANGELES — Hollywood star Johnny Depp has signed with Creative Artists Agency (CAA), the company has announced.

Depp, 53, was previously with the United Talent Agency. His move comes after a series of failed movies and a very public split from Amber Heard. The pair reached a divorce settlement of USD 7 million after Amber accused Johnny of domestic assault, reportedDeadline.

“We had a great 30-year run with Johnny and we wish him well,” said a UTA spokesman said.

Depp’s diverse performances have earned him more than USD 7 billion at the worldwide box office, including films like “Edward Scissorhands,” “Blow,” “Pirates of the Caribbean,” “Alice Through the Looking Glass” and “Black Mass.”

Disney’s “Pirates” films alone have earned more than USD 3.7 billion at the worldwide box office.

With his career spanning more than three decades, Depp has been nominated for several Oscars and won a Golden Globe for his 2008 performance in “Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street.”

Depp will next star in Universal’s “The Invisible Man,” an on-screen adaptation of HG Wells’ 1933 novel.

He is also set to star in “Murder on the Orient Express” and “Labyrinth,” which will explore the murders of Tupac Shakur and Notorious B.I.G.

Depp is managed by Christie Dembrowski and represented by attorney Jacob A Bloom at Bloom Hergott Diemer Rosenthal LaViolette Feldman Schenkman & Goodman.

Depp continues to be managed by Christi Dembrowski, his sister and producing partner in Infinitum Nihil, and he’s lawyered by Jacob A Bloom at Bloom Hergott.—PTI

Actor Manfred Krug, a star in East and West Germany, dies at 79

BERLIN — German actor and singer Manfred Krug, one of the few performers to find fame on both sides of his divided country during the Cold War, has died in Berlin aged 79, his management company said.

Communist authorities banned him from performing in East Germany in 1977 after he expressed support for a dissident folk singer and he asked to leave soon after.

In West Germany, his career picked up again, as he released songs, published books and starred in television series.

Krug became the public face for Deutsche Telekom’s gigantic initial public offering in 1996 — only to burn his bridges with his corporate sponsors later by publicly apologising to shareholders who lost money.

“His greatest accomplishment was that he was first a star in East Germany and then became a star in all of Germany,” said Berlin Mayor Michael Mueller.

“Krug was never afraid to stand up for what he believed in.”

Krug was born in Dinsburg, West Germany in 1937 and moved to Communist East Germany with his father, an engineer in the steel industry, in 1949.—Reuters
World’s largest marine park created in Antarctic Ocean

SYDNEY — Twenty-four countries and the European Union agreed on Friday to create the world’s largest marine park in the Antarctic Ocean, covering a massive 1.55 million square km (600,000 square miles) of ocean. The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, meeting in Hobart, Australia, said the Ross Sea marine park would be protected from commercial fishing for 35 years.

The Ross Sea is seen as one of the world’s most ecologically important oceans.

The sanctuary will cover more than 12 per cent of the Southern Ocean, which is home to more than 10,000 species including most of the world’s penguins, whales, seabirds, colossal squid and Antarctic toothfish.

Fishing will be banned completely in 1.1 million square km (425,000 square miles) of the Ross Sea, while areas designated as research zones will allow for some fishing for krill and sawfish.

Scientists and activists described the agreement as a historic milestone in global efforts to protect marine diversity.

“The Ross Sea Region MPA will safeguard one of the last unspoiled ocean wilderness areas on the planet — home to unparalleled marine biodiversity and thriving communities of penguins, seals, whales, seabirds, and fish,” US Secretary of State John Kerry said in a statement, referring to the marine park authority.

Russia agreed to the proposal, after blocking conservation proposals on five previous occasions.

The 25-member commission, which includes Russia, China, the United States and the European Union, requires unanimous support for decisions.

“They all have diverse economic, political interests and to get them all to align — especially in the context of there are divergent economic interests — is quite a challenge,” Evan Bloom, director at the US Department of State and leader of the US delegation, told Reuters. — Reuters

Chinese glass art exhibition held in Brussels

BRUSSELS — An exhibition of contemporary Chinese glass art under the name of “A Chinese Liuli Flower” was held in Brussels on Thursday.

On display were 12 glass works made through the technique “Pate de verre”, a kiln casting method to make glass. These “dream-like” glass reflects inconstant character of life which is common in Chinese philosophy, according to an introduction to the works.

“Liuli flower could perfectly express the Chinese concept of ‘flower and Budism’,” Loretta H. Yang, creator of these glass art said.

The exhibition also showed a glass work of flower-de-luce.

A 83-year-old visitor named Susan said it was her first time to see the Chinese glass art, which is “fabulous and enlightening.”

Loretta H. Yang was a household name in Taiwan in the 1970s as a result of her renowned acting career and won the Golden Horse Awards for best actress.

She, together with partner Chang Yi, devoted nearly three decades to the Chinese contemporary glass art. Their works have been collected in many renowned museums including the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Palace Museum in Beijing. — Xinhua

International tourists to Viet Nam soar in 10 months

HANOI — More than 8 million international tourists are forecast to arrive in Viet Nam in the first ten months of 2016, up 25.4 per cent year on year, said the General Statistics Office (GSO) on Friday.

Growth was seen in most markets, including China (up 55.2 per cent-year-on-year), the Republic of Korea (up 40.1 percent), New Zealand (up 35 per cent), Thailand (up 30.8 per cent), and the United States (up 14.2 per cent) among others.

In October alone, Viet Nam is likely to see some 812,000 foreign visitors, up 23.3 per cent against the same period last year.

The tourism sector grossed 331.5 trillion Vietnamese dong (14.4 billion US dollars) in the 10-month period, a yearly increase of 19.1 per cent, said GSO.

Viet Nam aims to welcome 8.5 million foreign visitors and 60 million domestic travelers in 2016, pocketing a total of 370 trillion Vietnamese dong (16.8 billion US dollars) in revenue. — Xinhua

Chile seeks help to protect world’s oldest mummies

ARICA (Chile) — Chilean researchers are seeking conservation aid to protect a collection of mummified human remains found in northern Chile, the oldest mummies discovered in the world to date.

The nearly 300 “Chinchorchos” mummies, which have been recovered in recent years from the dry coastal area near the Peru border, are thought to date from between 5000 BC to 1500 BC.

“The dates that we have for the bodies are from 7,000 years ago – so they have more relative antiquity in terms of intentional work on the human body than that found in Egypt,” said Sergio Medina, anthropologist and department head at University of Tarapaca in the northern city of Arica.

Medina is leading an attempt to get the Chinchorchos mummies recognized by UNESCO as a world heritage site.

“The application is not a goal in itself, but the start of a process, of improved conservation tools, with the Chilean state and the international community,” he said.

The mummies need to be kept under specific conditions of temperature and humidity to prevent deterioration. — Reuters
LOS ANGELES — Manny Pacquiao is regarded as one of the greatest boxers ever but says he will not be taking his opponent lightly when he faces World Boxing Organisation welterweight champion Jessie Vargas next week.

Seven months after defeating Timothy Bradley in his much trumpetted farewell to the sport, the Filipino southpaw will farewell to the sport, the Filipino southpaw will

“I do not underestimate Vargas, says Pacquiao

“He is a good strong champion. Every opponent gets my full attention and respect. I respect Jessie and that is why I trained hard. This is the most important fight because it will determine the direction of my boxing career.”

The 27-year-old Vargas (27-1) beat fellow American Sadam Ali in March to claim the WBO welterweight crown and has won 10 of his bouts via a knockout or stoppage, with his only defeat coming via a points loss to Bradley in June 2015.

“I need to win convincingly,” said Pacquiao. “We have three different plans for Jessie Vargas, but my first concern is for the fans; that the people who are going to watch the fight will be happy and satisfied.”

Pacquiao, an eight-discipline world champion, is excited by the prospect of adding another title to his bulging career resume, and his first since he was elected to the Philippines’ senate in May.

“I am fighting for history,” said the Filipino, who is renowned for his lightning hand and foot speed and has compiled a 58-6-2 career record in the ring. “I was the first sitting congressman to win a world title.”

“For this one, it is not enough to be the first sitting senator to fight for a world title. I want to be the first senator to become world champion. For me, that would be quite an accomplishment.—Reuters

Muguruza rallies past Kuznetsova for consolation win

SINGAPORE — Garbine Muguruza ended her WTA Finals campaign with a 3-6, 6-0, 6-1 consolation victory over Svetlana Kuznetsova on Friday, the Spaniard rallying from a slow start to blow away her Russian opponent.

Despite defeat, the 31-year-old Kuznetsova still won the White Group after round robin wins over defending champion Agnieszka Radwanska and Karolina Pliskova, the Russian advancing to face Dominika Cibulkova in Saturday’s semi-finals.

Poland’s Radwanska and big-hitting Czech Pliskova meet in the group finale later on Friday with the winner going on to face world number one Angelique Kerber in the second semi-final.

Kuznetsova started her previous two matches slowly but she was quick out of the blocks against Muguruza, breaking the Spaniard in the third game to move ahead before she repeated the feat in the ninth to wrap up the opener in 29 minutes.

The Russian had been fairly untapped on her serve, not even taken to deuce in the opener, but her radar was off target at the start of the second set when a second double fault gifted Muguruza a break in the first game.

The French Open champion was suddenly back in the contest as Kuznetsova appeared to lose her range and focus, the tall Spaniard breaking twice more while holding comfortably to race through the set without dropping a game.

Muguruza carried the momentum into the deciding set, breaking immediately and staving off seven break points as Kuznetsova can out of steam and her opponent ran away with the contest, the 23-year-old winning 11 of the last 12 games to seal victory.—Reuters

Live from London

Liverpool ready to challenge under Klopp — Ferguson

LONDON — Liverpool have found their identity under manager Juergen Klopp, who has transformed the Merseyside club into genuine Premier League title contenders this season, former Manchester United boss Alex Ferguson has said.

Liverpool have won nine of their 12 games in all competitions this season and are third in the league behind leaders Manchester City only on goal difference. “He has done a really good job and revived Liverpool’s enthusiasm,” Ferguson, who won the league 13 times, told British media. “It can happen that big clubs lose it. For two decades, Liverpool have not been good enough to be the first. Klopp has turned them into genuine title contenders.”

“I’m worried about them because the one thing United don’t want is Liverpool to get above us.”

Liverpool face Crystal Palace (11th) at Selhurst Park on Saturday.—Reuters