Clashes continue in the northern Rakhine, 25 violent attackers dead

The government troops continued its area clearance operations yesterday near Maungtaw Township’s villages such as Mayintaung, Pwintphyuchaung and Gwason, where the deadly clashes occurred on Saturday.

While conducting the clearance operation in Gwason village around 9 am yesterday, the troops found 50 houses burnt by the armed attackers who had retreated on Saturday.

In the operation, seven violent attackers wielding machetes ran towards the soldiers in order to attack. The troops returned fire, killing six.

Similarly, a combined team that comprised of the government troops and the border guard police was attacked by about 20 violent aggressors equipped with machetes and wooden clubs while the security forces were conducting the clearance operation in Dargyizartaung village around 1 pm yesterday. But the troops fired back them and 19 aggressors killed.

The troops also found the bodies of three attackers in the aftermath of its clearance operations nearby Gwason and Dargyizartaung villages. — Myawady
200 acres of pulses in Sagaing destroyed by flood

MORE THAN 200 acres of bean and pulse plantations in Katha District in Sagaing Region were destroyed by floods caused by torrential rain in first week of this month, local growers say.

The unrelenting rain caused Maeza Creek and the Ayeyawady River to reach dangerously high levels that create floods in many parts of Hteegyo Township in early November, damaging numerous plantations.

The recent floods damaged a total of 234.50 acres of crops, including 50 acres of mung bean, five acres of groundnut, 60 acres of green peas and 27 acres of paddy fields that are tended by 90 farmers.

Farmers are now worried about high agriculture costs due to low production, as they cannot cultivate substitute crops in time, one of growers from Wonlogon Village said. Beans and pulses are among the major industrial crops in Myanmar, which remains a largely agricultural country, with 40 per cent of its economy based on farming. The country’s beans and pulses mostly go to India.

Between April and the first week of October, the country earned US$872.348 million from the export of over 758,000 tonnes of beans and pulses, including over $450 million from the export of over 322,000 tonnes of mung bean, over $220 from nearly 229,000 tonnes of green gram export and over $97 million from the sale of 80,768 tonnes of pigeon peas.

— Township IPRD

64 cases of electricity theft in Yangon this year

YANGON, the commercial capital of Myanmar, had 64 cases of stolen electricity this year, causing the government to lose revenue for over 200,000 units of energy, according to a news release issued by the Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation.

Theft of electricity can be the culprit of 50.9 per cent of power theft, which amounts around 1,200 megawatts of electricity this summer, assuming energy consumption nationwide.

The city’s electricity demands increase by around 15 per cent yearly. The region is home to 20 industrial zones and over 6,000 small-and-middle-sized enterprises, all of which account for the higher energy demand in the region compared to other regions. — 200

New 3MDGF health facilities aim to reduce TB in Myanmar

TO REDUCE the incidence of tuberculosis in the country, a new outpatient department will be built in Yangon with the supporting body at the target area located within the compound of the Yangon Regional Tuberculosis Centre (Aung San) in Insein Township on 12 November.

The four-storey facility will be equipped with a laboratory, medical store, dispensary X-ray, counselling, consultation and emergency rooms. In addition, restrooms, entry points and parking areas for people with disabilities will be constructed.

The new OPD will be fully operational by 2018 and will receive between 100 and 150 out-patients a day. This will include referrals of complicated and drug resistant TB cases from across the region.

The new facility will provide diagnostic and treatment services to patients who do not need to stay in the hospital free of charge. It will also support research into the disease, and contain a training centre and resource library for health staff.

Myanmar is one of the world’s countries with the highest TB burden. According to the study, there are approximately 150,000 TB patients detected annually in the country.—GNLM

Crime NEWS

Locals accused of illegal logging detained in Kawthaung

AUTHORITIES detained eight people accused of illegal logging in a jungle near Lohnhaw Village, Kawthaung District on Friday.

Acting on a tip, a combined team comprising police and staff from the district department of forestry raided the temporary tents of the accused and seized about 40 tonnes of timber and machinery used in logging.

Police detained U Hlaing Win, accused of being the owner of the illegal logging business, five workers and two dependents of the workers.

The tents were accidentally discovered by a search team for water resources led by District Chairman of the National League for Democracy and an official of Green Network, an NGO. They reported on the discovery to the state Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Minister. Authorities said that action will be taken against them according to the law.— Kyaw Soe (Kawthaung)

In case of use of stoves

1. Place a person to keep vigil.
2. Don’t overuse fuel fire power.
3. Put out the remnants of fire.
4. Place heat-resistant barriers between stove and roof/wall.
5. Don’t leave the oil pan forgotten.

Warning

1. Don’t run away in case of fire. Seek help from the people nearby.
2. Prompt extinguishing of fire reduces losses and damages.
3. Keep dry chemical powder extinguishers and/or fire extinguishers in all apartments, buildings and shops to put out fire promptly and protect against the danger of fire.

Fire Services Department
Government troops attacked with improvised mines in Maungtaw

A COLUMN of the government forces, who were on their way from Kyikpunyin Border Guard Command Centre to Gwason village, was attacked with an improvised mine by the violent attackers near a bridge in Ocolar village, Maungtaw Township on Saturday.

No one was injured in the attack, but one vehicle was damaged.

Earlier that afternoon, the violent attackers also attempted to blow up a convoy on its way from the Border Guard Command Centre to Taungpyoletwe village. One vehicle was damaged, but there was no one injured during the bomb attack.—Myawady

Authorities makes inspection tour of villages in Maungtaw Township

RAKHINE State Minister for Electricity, Industry and Transportation U Aung Kyaw Zan and Amyotha Hluttaw MP Daw Htu May met with local residents in Kainggyi Village and Mawrawady Village in Maungtaw Township.

At the meeting at Kainggyi Village, the villagers suggested that authorities establish a local bazaar, appoint a doctor to the village’s clinic, make arrangements for security, create job opportunities, set up a library and install TV receivers.

During the visit to Mawrawady Village, locals asked the authorities to boost security measures and to supply more power as they are supplied only two hours of electricity per day.

The authorities also observed the harvesting of rice with the use of a harvesting machine provided by the Agricultural Mechanization Department.

The department has provided two harvesters each to villages in the township, making a total of 40 harvesters.—Myanmar News Agency

Two factories suspended for environmental concerns in Pyigyidagan

Aung Thant Khine

MANDALAY Region Government has ordered two factories in the industrial area of Pyigyi-dagan Township in Mandalay Region to suspend their operations due to environmental concerns, according to U Myo Thit, regional minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Forestry.

Toepwar Fertilizer Factory and Shwe Myinnpyan Distillery are said to have been instructed to temporarily shut down.

“One of them was reported by the public, and the other was discovered to be in violation in a surprise inspection,” the regional minister said.

Factories have been informed of rules and regulations since August, but some have still failed to follow the law, the ministry said.

The factories were accused of improper factory smoke emissions and discharge of untreated waste.

Transportation between Buthidaung and Maungtaw has improved

Ye Khaung Nyunt

ROAD engineers are trying their best to improve the road between Buthidaung and Maungtaw in northern Rakhine State.

Buthidaung and Maungtaw, two towns in Northern Rakhine, are divided by Mayu Mountain Range and transportation between them always posed a problem to local people.

In addition, landslides often occur along the road during the rainy seasons, resulting in blockage of the road.

“During the previous rainy season, landslides occurred along the section of two furlong length and we had to remove about 30 million cubic feet of earth within a week. We are trying to build a gravel road there. In addition, we are widening the road at blind sights so that vehicles can drive smoothly,” said U Khin Maung Lwin, Assistant Engineer of Maungtaw District Road Department.

The road department is responsible for maintenance of eight roads including Buthidaung-Maungtaw Road, Buthidaung-Thunbawseik Road, Buthidaung-Kyaiktaik Road, Maungtaw-Alethankyaw-Angukyaw Road, Maungtaw-Kyinkanpyin-Kyaichuang-Aungthapyay-Bandoola Road, Taunggyo-Kyainchaung Road, Taunggyo-Gordonka Road and Liekya-Leikya Station Road in Taunggyo Township. The eight roads has a total length of about 149 miles.

“We are widening and straightening Buthidaung-Maungtaw Road. People can travel from Buthidaung to Maungtaw within 45 minutes. After we have straightened and paved the road, it will take only 30 minutes to travel between the two towns,” said U Zaw Min, Assistant Director of the road department.

The road will be widened from current width of 25 feet to 34 feet with 18-foot wide asphalt road within a five-year plan.

Arrangement to build walls where landslides often occur during the rainy season is also underway, according to the engineers of the department.

The road was built as a railway line in 1916 and completed in 1918 and it was made a road in 1962. During the times of the British colonialists, two tunnels were built through mountains along the road.

“We have done maintenance work along the two tunnels as they were seeping. However, they are too narrow for big vehicles, machinery and armoured vehicles to drive through. We built a round road of about three furlong length and it was completed in 2014. Most vehicles, including light ones and heavy ones are using the round road.

One of the tunnels has a length of 658 feet, a height of 12.5 feet, and a width of 18 feet. Another tunnel has a length of 98 feet, a width of 15.5 feet and a height of 12.5 feet.

The two tunnels were built in 1916 by a railway company from Florida and completed in 1918.

“We never closed the tunnels but almost all vehicles are using the round road,” U Zaw Min said.
Myanmar rice market encounters challenges

THE Myanmar rice market is being faced with many challenges in its attempt to enter the highly competitive international market.

Concerted efforts need to be exerted by all the stakeholders who are engaged in supply chain and the officials concerned to maintain a stable price, to make a profit for those who are participating including farmers, to reduce processing and transportation costs, to have a fair price for input, to boost the yield, to cultivate the pedigree crops to a higher yield, to produce high-quality rice with the use of modern mills and to systematically store the rice in keeping with international criteria, said experts.

Myanmar yielded about 12.20 million metric tonnes from 7.21 million hectares of acres of land in the 2015-2016 fiscal year, whereas the rice volume yielded from Viet Nam from 7.67 million hectares of acres of cultivation land was 28.17 million metric tonnes. More than double the amount of rice was produced by Viet Nam from about the same area of land, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Only 12.5 per cent of the total volume of rice from Myanmar flows into foreign market. Local consumption is found to be the major market. The decrease in production in 2015 and 2016 was attributed to flooding for two straight years, plus the high cost of input materials: fertiliser and pesticides. The high production cost resulted in an increase in price. The volume of rice exports in the 2015-2016 fiscal year slumped by 296,656 metric tonnes, where as that of broken rice slumped by 50,687 metric tonnes when compared to that of 2014-2015 fiscal year, it is learnt.

Rice is the staple food of Myanmar and plays a vital role in the agricultural export sector. Myanmar’s rice was mostly exported to Bangladesh, the Philippines, ASEAN and African markets from 2003 to 2008. The market then extended to Russian and Middle Eastern markets. China has become the main buyer of Myanmar’s rice in 2011 through the border areas. After a lift of the sanctions by the European Union (EU) against Myanmar in 2012, Myanmar’s rice could penetrate the EU market through normal trade, according to the Commerce Ministry.

However, only a limited quota of rice is legally exported to China and anything above that amount that enters China is considered illegal trade. The Chinese market results in a greater profit than other international markets because Chinese merchants do not choose the rice varieties to purchase and offer a higher price than the market price. But rice export are on the decline because of confiscation from the China side, the depreciation of the yuan and flooding in the Shweli river, according to rice merchants.

Dr Than Myint, the Minister for Commerce, authorities concerned, the Myanmar Rice Federation, the Myanmar Rice Millers and Exporters Association.

Agency to be established to enhance SMEs

An exclusive agency will be set up to enhance the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), said an official from the Directorate of Industrial Supervision and Inspection.

This agency mainly aims to handle the SMEs which are usually seen as traditional types which need to be turned into the business type. Therefore, the Directorate of Industrial Supervision and Inspection will conduct matters concerning SMEs as an agency.

A business plan has to be submitted to the agency. Income and expenditure statement needs to be presented to the agency. To enhance SMEs, the government will contribute 30 per cent of the budget while interested associations invest 70 per cent, it is learnt.

Myanmar has been implementing the National Development Plan with an aim to accelerate growth, achieve equitable and balanced development and reduce the socio-economic development gap between rural and urban areas of the country. A country’s economic development depends on economic stability. The country would see an increase in the economic indicators, which generates more job opportunities, more exports and increase in balance of payment (BOP) ratio, according to the Ministry of Industry.

Dubai considers purchase of Myanmar’s muskmelon

DUBAI has already proposed to purchase Myanmar’s muskmelon, which will be exported to Dubai in 2017, said U Naing Win, chairperson of Myanmar Watermelon and Cucumber Growers and Exporters Association.

Myanmar’s muskmelons are being planned to export with the assistance of Winrock International. Over 160 enterprises granted license for microfinance businesses

A total of 168 enterprises have reportedly been granted licenses to provide microfinance services, including INGOs, NGOs, foreign and local consortiums and joint ventures.

The development of microfinance businesses is part of the eight-point tasks of development currently being undertaken to reduce the poverty rate in rural areas. Apart from urban areas, efforts are made for the microfinance services to reach rural areas, said a spokesperson. The request for a license is scrutinised on a basic set of criteria: measures taken by association, ability to enhance the social life of low-income people and ability to survive for the long term.

Enterprises which have been recently granted one-year licenses are ADVANS Microfinance Myanmar, Nong Hyup Finance Myanmar, TUTU Finance-WCI Myanmar, DARIU Microfinance and two local companies—Taw Win Han Thi and Pine Tree Development Corporation.
Abe aims to underscore importance of Japan-US alliance with Trump

MANILA — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has warned he may use his executive power to suspend a legal safeguard against arbitrary arrest and detention, and was willing to use drastic measures and even go to jail to make his war on drugs a success.

“I am the president. Of course I have the powers,” he said at the launch of a foundation late on Friday. “I can be ordered by the Supreme Court to stop it, but there are things that they cannot, and maybe, I will not, stop. “I can go to jail. File all the charges that you can think of. But this country, in my time, will not deteriorate any further.”

In the absence of the writ, police would be able to detain suspects without warrant and hold them for three days without charge.

According to the constitution, the president may “in case of invasion or rebellion, when the public safety requires it,” suspend the writ for periods of up to 60 days. The same clause allows for martial law to be invoked, but Duterte said he would not do that.

The firebrand former city mayor has resolutely defended his drugs crackdown and chastised anyone who has voiced criticism or concern, among them the European Union, US President Barack Obama and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Kishida reiterated Japan’s long-standing position that it has no plans to possess nuclear weapons.

“Japan is going to strengthen its own defence posture both in quality and quantity, strengthen the Japan-US alliance and strengthen ties with other relevant countries,” — Reuters

Prosecution still needs more by-trail evidence

TOKYO — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe aims to underscore the importance of the Japan-US alliance when he meets President-elect Donald Trump on Thursday, Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida said on Sunday.

“This is going to be an important meeting to build trust,” Kishida told public broadcaster NHK. “We also would like to use this opportunity to input the importance of the Japan-US alliance, as well.”

With Abe set to meet Trump in New York on his way to an Asia-Pacific summit in Peru, Tokyo has been seeking clarity on what direction the Republican political novice wants for bilateral relations after he made comments on the campaign trail that were at odds with longstanding policies.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe reviews Japanese Self-Defence Forces’ (SDF) troops during the annual SDF ceremony at Asaka Base, Japan, on 23 October, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Kishida reiterated Japan’s long-standing position that it has no plans to possess nuclear weapons — might adopt nuclear weapons.

“I don’t believe Japan will possess nuclear arms. This principle won’t change,” Kishida said. Trump’s campaign comments on Japan’s nuclear arsenal and his demand that Japan pay more for the upkeep of US forces on its soil have worried Tokyo about a possible rift in a security alliance with Washington that has been the bedrock of its defence since World War Two.

Defence Minister Tomomi Inada told the same NHK programme that Japan is already shoulder- ing enough financial burden to support US troops deployed in Japan.

“Japan is making sufficient contribution,” she said. “I would like to continue underscoring that Japan is going to strengthen its own defence posture both in quality and quantity, strengthen the Japan-US alliance and strengthen ties with other relevant countries.” — Reuters

Viet Nam destroys mass rhino horns and elephant ivory

HANOI — Viet Nam destroyed nearly 2.2 tonnes of seized elephant ivory and 70 kg of rhino horns on Saturday, in one of its strongest moves yet to stop illegal wildlife trafficking.

The specimens, estimated to be worth more than $7 million on the black market, came from about 330 African elephants and 23 rhinos, said UK-based Humane Society International (HSI), which has been working with the Vietnamese government since 2013 to reduce demand for rhino horn in the country.

Viet Nam is a transit point for elephant ivory for consumers in mostly China and the United States to make jewellery and home decorations, while the Southeast Asian nation is a major consumer of rhino horn.

“The destruction today is a clear indication of our government’s political determination to fulfil our international duty in conventions to protect wildlife,” said Ha Cong Tuan, Viet Nam’s deputy agriculture minister.

The usage and trading of rhino horn is a criminal offence in Viet Nam, but demand is strong due to a long-held belief in rhino horns as an elixir, especially among the country’s growing middle and upper classes.

Saturday’s event added Viet Nam to a list of 20 other countries that also have crushed or burned seized ivory and rhino horns.

“The illegal wildlife trade is very serious, organised crime,” British Ambassador to Viet Nam Giles Lever said.

“The more efforts which Viet Nam and the Vietnamese government can have to working with other countries to stop the illegal wildlife trade, I think that will really help Viet Nam’s international image.”

The African elephant faces an unprecedented poaching and trafficking threat. Between 2010 and 2012, an estimated 100,000 elephants were killed illegally to meet global demand for ivory, HSI said.

Over the past decade, poachers killed more than 6,000 rhinos across Africa, with more than 1,300 known in 2015 alone. With only about 29,000 of five species remaining in the wild, rhinos are facing a crisis, according to HSI. “If we could do something to reduce demand here, reduce demand in China, maybe wipe it out, that will help rhinos in Africa,” said Teresa Telesky, director of the wildlife department at HSI. —Reuters
Prosecutors to question South Korean president over political scandal

SEOUL — South Korean prosecutors will question President Park Geun-hye over a political corruption scandal engulfing her presidency, an official said on Sunday, the first time a sitting president will be questioned by prosecutors over a criminal case.

Hundreds of thousands marched in the capital Seoul on Saturday demanding Park resign. Many protesters said Park, whose public support has dropped to the lowest point ever for a democratically elected South Korean leader at 5 percent, was unfit to rule.

Prosecutors are investigating whether Park exerted improper pressure on “chaebol” conglomerate bosses to raise funds for two foundations at the centre of an influence-peddling scandal involving a friend of hers, Yonhap reported on Sunday, citing prosecution sources.

They are also probing Park’s friend, Choi Soon-sil, who is alleged to have used her ties to the president to meddle in state affairs and wield influence in the cultural and sports communities, a prosecutor has previously said.

Prosecutors have already questioned the defacto head of Samsung Group SAIGRUL Jay Y. Lee and the chairmen of Hyundai Motor Group (005380.KS) and Hanjin Group HANJ.UL over the scandal, media reports said on Sunday.

“It’s correct we’re planning to question the president but the date is undecided,” an official at the prosecutors’ office told Reuters. Yonhap reported.

Park’s office said it would be Tuesday at the earliest before it will have a position on the prosecutors’ plan and was considering retaining a lawyer for the president.

While some previous South Korean presidents have been mired in scandals or allegations of wrongdoing involving family members during their terms, none were directly questioned by prosecutors while they were in office.

The prosecution office official confirmed the chairman of Hyundai Motor, Chung Mong-koo, was questioned on Saturday but declined to confirm whether the other chaebol bosses had met prosecutors.

A Korean Air Lines (003490.KS) spokesman confirmed that Cho Yang-ho, who is chairman of Hanjin and South Korea’s largest airline, had appeared for questioning but did not elaborate further.

A Hyundai Motor spokesman declined to comment and Samsung Group could not immediately confirm the reports of prosecutors questioning their respective officials.

Park faces intense pressure from the public and parliament to step down over the scandal, but the main opposition parties have not raised the possibility of initiating impeachment proceedings.

The presidential office said earlier on Sunday that Park was “earnestly considering ways to normalise state affairs” and that she had “heard the voices of the people at the rally”.

Park has said she had discussed with conglomerate heads in July last year her desire for them to contribute more for culture without elaborating.

South Korean prosecutors raided Samsung Electronics last week as part of the probe over the scandal and whether the company separately gave millions of euros to a company controlled by Choi and her daughter.

— Reuters

Japan conducts defense drill to fight illegal entry of armed fishermen

TOKYO — Japan’s Self-Defense Forces, coast guard and police have conducted their first joint drill to cope with an illegal entry of armed fishermen off a remote island, a government source said Saturday, amid tension with China over a group of islands in the East China Sea.

The exercise was held on an island in Kagoshima Prefecture Friday as Chinese government vessels repeatedly entered Japan’s territorial waters around the Japanese-controlled Senkaku Islands, claimed by China which calls them Diaoyu, in Okinawa Prefecture south of Kagoshima, with the Japan Coast Guard reporting the latest breach Saturday.

The source said the drill, aimed at increasing the coordination and capability of the police, the coast guard and SDF, did not assume any specific country or place.

The three parties examined their collaboration based on a scenario that armed fishermen illegally landed on the island — a situation defined as a so-called “gray zone” incident that is short of an organized, premeditated attack of force by another country but poses a threat of violating Japan’s sovereignty.

The exercise could trigger protest from China as it came after Beijing agreed in September with Japan to accelerate discussions for an early introduction of a maritime and aerial communication mechanism designed to avoid accidental clashes in the East China Sea.

According to the source, dozens of troops from each organ participated in the undisclosed drill held on the island of Eniyabanare on the Amami islands chain in Kagoshima, mobilizing a helicopter and patrol vessel.

The coast guard restricted armed fishermen approaching by boats on the sea followed by responses by the police and SDF to the fishermen who landed on the island, the source said. In July last year, the coast guard and Maritime Self-Defense Force conducted a drill in waters around Izu Oshima Island south of Tokyo based on a “gray zone” scenario in which a foreign military vessel was making suspicious movements in Japan’s territorial waters.

—Kyodo News
Clinton blames FBI’s Comey for her defeat in call with donors

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON — Hillary Clinton blamed FBI director James Comey for her stunning defeat in Tuesday’s presidential election in a conference call with her top campaign fundraisers on Saturday, according to two participants who were on the call.

Clinton was projected by nearly every national public opinion poll as the heavy favourite going into Tuesday’s race. Instead, Republican Donald Trump won the election, shocking many throughout the nation and prompting widespread protests.

Clinton has kept a low profile since her defeat after delivering her concession speech on Wednesday morning.

Clinton told her supporters on Saturday that her team had drafted a memo that looked at the changing opinion polls leading up to the election and that the letter from Comey proved to be a turning point. She said Comey’s decision to go public with the renewed examination of her email server had caused an erosion of support in the upper Midwest, according to three people familiar with the call.

Clinton lost in Wisconsin, the first time since 1984 that the state favoured the Republican candidate in a presidential election. Although the final result in Wisconsin has still not been tallied, it is leaning Republican, in a state that last favoured the Republican nominee in 1988.

Comey sent a letter to Congress only days before the election announcing that he was re-instating an investigation into whether Clinton mishandled classified information when she used a private email server while secretary of state from 2009 to 2012.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Shooting at New York mall, no injuries reported

NEW YORK — A shooting incident occurred Saturday at a shopping mall in a town west of Albany, the capital of New York, local police confirmed.

The shots were heard at Crossgates Mall, Guilderland, about three hours drive north of Lower Manhattan, Saturday afternoon, an officer with Albany’s LGBT Liaison for the Police Department told Xinhua via phone.

There were no immediate reports of injuries, and the officer had no knowledge if anyone were arrested as the incident took place in the city sharing a border with Albany, the officer said.

Dozens of officers, many with assault weapons, could be seen milling around the mall and every entrance to the mall was blocked off, local media reported.

Shoppers and mall employees were directed to evacuate to the parking lots.—Xinhua

Magnitude 7.4 earthquake strikes near Christchurch, New Zealand — USGS

An earthquake with a magnitude of 7.4 struck 91 km (57 miles) north-northeast of the city of Christchurch, New Zealand just after midnight (1102 GMT Sunday), the US Geological Survey said.

Christchurch is the biggest city on New Zealand’s South Island. A 6.3 quake there in February 2011 killed 185 people and caused widespread damage.

The US Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre said there was no tsunami threat from Monday’s quake.—Reuters

Iraqi troops say recapture Nimrud, site of Assyrian city

BAGHDAD — Iraqi soldiers have captured Nimrud, the site of an ancient Assyrian city overrun by Islamic State militants two years ago, a military statement said on Sunday.

“Troops from the Ninth Armoured Division liberated Nimrud town completely and raised the Iraqi flag above its buildings,” the statement said. The town of Nimrud lies 1 km (less than 1 mile) west of the ruins of the old city.—Reuters

French Far-right leader hopes for Trump-like win in 2016 election

LONDON — Donald Trump’s election win was a victory of the people against the elite, France’s far-right National Front party leader Marine Le Pen said on Sunday, adding she hoped the French people would follow suit next year.

Opinion polls show Le Pen likely to win the first round of French presidential elections next April but lose the runoff round in May to whoever should be her opponent.

Asked during an interview with the BBC’s Andrew Marr show if Trump’s victory in the United States made her own election win more likely, Le Pen said: “He made possible what had previously been presented as impossible so it is really the victory of the people against the elite.”

“So if I can draw a parallel with France then yes I wish that in France also the people up-end the table, the table around which the elites are dividing up what should go to the French people,” she said, according to a translation into English provided by the BBC.—Reuters

Four children injured in suspected militant attack on Indonesia church

JAKARTA — Indonesian authorities on Sunday arrested a suspected militant who threw an explosive device at a church in the eastern island of Borneo and injured four children.

Police in East Kalimantan province said the attacker had been imprisoned on terrorism charges in the past.

“A suspected low-impact bomb was thrown...Four children were injured and four motorcycles were damaged,” East Kalimantan police spokesman Fajar Setiawan said, adding police were looking into links with radical networks.

The attack took place at 10am in the parking lot of Oikumene church in the town of Samarinda.

Indonesia has seen a string of Islamic State-linked attacks this year, the biggest of which was a gun and bomb assault in the capital Jakarta that killed four people.—Reuters
Thank you for your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email ce@

Soup kitchens in Myanmar which people from all walks of life join in

- thanks to the governments' efforts, Samaritan groups in the

The selection of the deserving recipient of Kalbe robe is
to the citizens for consideration.

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stables the full moon day of Thidinkyut
deported to the centre for them.

As the result of the cornea transplant,

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing visited the historical museum of Granatieri in Rome, prior to his official visit to Italy. The Senior General and party arrived back in Rome at 6 pm local time.—Myanmar News Agency

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to undergo a cornea transplant,
KABUL — A Taliban suicide bomber dressed as a labourer blew himself up at the NATO air base at Bagram north of the Afghan capital Kabul on Saturday, killing four Americans and wounding at least 17 people in one of the bloodiest attacks against US forces since President Barack Obama took office.

Two US military service members and two US contractors were killed, and 16 other US service members were wounded, along with a Polish soldier who was part of the NATO mission, US Defense Secretary Ash Carter said in a statement.

“For those who carried out this attack, my message is simple. We will not be deterred in our mission to protect our homeland and help Afghanistan secure its own future,” Carter said.

It was the second attack on US soldiers in the country since a suicide bomber on a motorcycle killed six American troops on patrol near Bagram in December 2015.

Carter said the Pentagon will investigate Saturday’s attack to determine what steps could be taken to improve protection for the base.

The attack, which was claimed by the Taliban, underlines the foreign policy challenge that will face US President-elect Donald Trump when he takes office in January.

President Barack Obama had originally hoped to have all US forces out of the country by the end of his term, but was forced to abandon that goal as Afghan forces struggled to contain the Taliban insurgency.

Under current plans, 8,400 US troops will remain as part of the Resolute Support operation and a separate US counter terrorism mission after Obama decided to slow down a planned reduction of the force, leaving it to his successor to decide future strategy.

Waheed Sidiqji, spokesman for the Parwan provincial governor, said the bomber managed to enter the heavily protected site, the largest US base in Afghanistan, and was standing in a queue with Afghan labourers when he detonated a suicide vest.

The NATO-led Resolute Support mission response team at the airfield weretreating the wounded and investigating the incident.

It follows a suicide attack on the German consulate in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif late on Thursday night that killed four people and wounded more than 100 others. That attack was retaliatory for air strikes near the northern city of Kunduz last week which killed more than 30 civilians.

The Taliban’s spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said Saturday’s attack, which he said had been planned for four months, had caused heavy casualties, killing 23 Americans and wounding 44.

The movement often exaggerates the number of casualties caused by its operations.

—Reuters

KABUL— Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah have urged parliament to halt confidence votes against ministers, fearing further dismissals could rock an already fragile Western-backed government, lawmakers said on Sunday.

In a bold move on Saturday, parliament dismissed three cabinet ministers, including the minister of foreign affairs, because of official performance and vowed to use their votes against 14 more ministers.

Hours later, Afghanistan’s two leaders invited lawmakers to the presidential palace and pleaded with them to suspend further votes.

“President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah told MPs that their decision will deal a huge political blow to the government at this critical time and urged them to stop the process,” Mirdad Najrani, a minister for the presidential palace, told Reuters.

Despite the pleas from Ghani and Abdullah, many lawmakers looked determined to continue the confidence votes with the finance, education and transportation ministers scheduled to appear later on Sunday.

“If the ministers do not want to come, we will vote anyway to keep them or dismiss them,” said lawmaker Gul Padsha Majidi. “This is our right and we will use it and will not let the government politicize this process,” he added.

A statement released by Ghani’s office said the government did not want confrontation and respected the decision of the parliament, but asked the House of Representatives to suspend its decision. The Afghan constitution gives parliament the power to sack ministers. On Saturday, Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani, Public Works Minis- ter Mahmood Balgh and Social Services Minister Naseem Oryakhel failed to win confidence votes and were declared to have been dismissed by the speaker. Afghanistan’s national unity government, which the United States helped broker following the disputed 2014 election, has been weakened by infighting and a resurgent Taliban, which has been supported to have overthrown a government at a time when political uncertainty is already being stoked by rising ethnic tensions.

The deteriorating political situation could become a major foreign policy challenge for US President-elect Donald Trump, who said little about Afghan politics in his campaign.

On Saturday, the Afghan government faced its fifth week on Monday, is the most complex in Iraq in over a decade and is complicated by the presence of the more than 1 million civilians still living under Islamic State control.

In Intisar, further south on the same eastern flank of the city, the army’s Ninth Armoured Division has been fighting for nearly two weeks without securing the neighbour- hood.

“We have not been liberated yet,” a mother of four told Reuters by telephone late on Saturday, describing how a mortar bomb had landed on her house while her family was sheltering under the concrete staircase indoors.

“My husband moved us to a relative’s house not far from our house. We walked hurried by a wall, scared of the indiscriminate shelling,” she said.

In areas which are under the control of the army in Mosul and surrounding towns and villages, tens of thousands of people “lack access to water, food, electricity and basic health services”, the Norwegian Refugee Council said on Sunday. More than 54,000 people have been displaced so far in the four-week Mosul campaign, and the NRC said ultimate- ly 700,000 people were likely to shelter, food, water or medical support.—Reuters

THE fierce ebb and flow of battle in Mosul’s eastern districts is leaving residents feeling in constant threat, even after army advances in their neighbourhoods, as counter-attacks by Islamic State jihadists often put them straight back on the front line.

Special forces and a tank division fighting to expand their foothold in the east of the city for nearly two weeks have faced determined opposition from the militants who have launched waves of suicide bombers, sniper attacks and ambushes against them.

The army has said it controls or has advanced in nearly a dozen districts in Mosul. But announcements of gains are often followed by reports of renewed fighting in the same areas which have been declared under control.

One resident of al-Qadisiya al-Thaniya district, which the elite Counter Terrorism Service declared under control, told Reuters she had heard fierce clashes and had seen powerful explosions.

“The Taliban’s spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said Saturday’s attack, which he said had been planned for four months, had caused heavy casualties, killing 23 Americans and wounding 44.”

The movement often exaggerates the number of casualties caused by its operations.

—Reuters

Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers keep watch outside the Bagram Airfield entrance gate, after an explosion at the NATO air base, north of Kabul, Afghanistan on 12 November, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

THE fierce ebb and flow of battle in Mosul’s eastern districts is leaving residents feeling in constant threat, even after army advances in their neighbourhoods, as counter-attacks by Islamic State jihadists often put them straight back on the front line.

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One resident of al-Qadisiya al-Thaniya district, which the elite Counter Terrorism Service declared under control, told Reuters she had heard fierce clashes and had seen powerful explosions.

“She came back to us again, and this is what we feared. At night there were fierce clashes and we heard powerful explosions,” she told Reuters.

In areas which are under the control of the army in Mosul and surrounding towns and villages, tens of thousands of people “lack access to water, food, electricity and basic health services”, the Norwegian Refugee Council said on Sunday. More than 54,000 people have been displaced so far in the four-week Mosul campaign, and the NRC said ultimately 700,000 people were likely to shelter, food, water or medical support.—Reuters

Afghanistan’s President Ashraf Ghani, left, and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, right, speak to members of the media in Kabul, Afghanistan on 12 November, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS
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**Airline Codes**

- 8M = Myanmar Airways International
- BG = Biman Bangladesh Airlines
- MH = Malaysia Airlines
- MU = China Eastern Airlines
- NH = All Nippon Airways
- SQ = Singapore Airlines
- PG = Bangkok Airways
- UB = Myanmar National Airlines
- VN = Vietnam Airlines
- 3K = JetStar
- AK = Air Asia
- AI = Air India
- CA = Air China
- CI = China Airlines
- CZ = China Southern Air
- DD = Nok Airline
- FD = Air Asia
- KA = Dragonair
- KE = Korean Airlines
- MI = Silk Air
- QR = Qatar Airways
- TG = Thai Airways

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- Cotton Travel: 392620, 230398
- Columbus Travel: 229245, 378535
- Saw Pothom Travel: 250880, 323427, 323409
- Seven Diamond Express: 392620, 230398

**Airfare**

- Nice Fare Travel: 393088, 388541
- Oway Travel: 23092101-2
- Hoi Pha Travel: 537002, 0973241241, 0925403798

**Contact Information**

- Advertised Online: www.vietnamairlines.com

**Day**

- 1 = Monday
- 2 = Tuesday
- 3 = Wednesday
- 4 = Thursday
- 5 = Friday
- 6 = Saturday
- 7 = Sunday
Thousands march in US cities against Trump presidency

NEW YORK—Los Angeles—Rallies were scheduled throughout the day in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago, where organizers said they hoped to continue the momentum after several nights of demonstrations triggered by the real-estate mogul’s surprise win in Tuesday’s presidential election.

Protesters hold up signs during a march and rally against the election of Republican Donald Trump as President of the United States in Los Angeles, California, US on 12 November, 2016. Photo: Reuters

Chanting slogans including “Not my president!”, several thousand protesters marched up New York City’s Fifth Avenue to Trump Tower, the president-elect’s skyscraper home.

“We’re horrified the country has elected an incredibly unqualified, misogynist, racist on a platform that was just totally hateful,” said Mary Florin-McBride, 62, a retired banker from New York who held a sign reading, “No Fascism in America.”

There were also demonstrations in Chicago and Los Angeles, where several thousand protesters gathered beneath MacArthur Park’s palm trees holding placards including “Dump Trump” and “Minorities Matter,” before marching toward downtown.

About 100,000 people had indicated on Facebook that they were planning to attend or were interested in the events in the three cities. Organizers stressed that violence and vandalism would not be tolerated.

Hours before Saturday’s rallies began, a protester in Portland was shot as he took part in a march across the Morrison Bridge. He is expected to live, but the suspect remains at large, police said.

Since Trump’s victory, demonstrators in several cities have decried the Republican’s campaign promises to restrict immigration and register Muslims, as well as allegations that the former reality-TV star sexually abused women.

The demonstrations so far have been largely peaceful, although in Portland protesters have smashed store windows, sprayed graffiti and damaged cars as they clashed with police who used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse crowds.

Dozens of protesters have been arrested and a handful of police injured.

The demonstrations since the election have been impromptu affairs, quickly organized by young Americans with a diverse array of backgrounds and agendas.

Protesters were at their most numerous and intense in the rallies immediately following the election before getting smaller in scale. Saturday’s protests, however, were expected to be bigger due to the weekend.

As activists look to the next four years with Trump in the White House while his party controls both houses of Congress, some are preparing for what they hope will be the nation’s most enduring demonstrations since the Occupy Wall Street movement.

Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus said on Friday that protesters have to accept the election results.

Trump initially denounced the protests and said they were “incited” by the media, but reversed course on Friday and praised the demonstrators’ “passion for our great country.

“We will all come together and be proud!” Trump said on Twitter.

Many voters were shocked by the result, after opinion polls failed to predict a Trump victory. Some 60.3 million people voted for Trump, fewer than the 60.8 million who cast ballots for Clinton. But Trump’s strong showing in swing states, including Michigan, meant he triumphed in the Electoral College that ultimately picks the president. The president-elect’s biggest support base was the broad middle of the country, from the Heartland through the Rust Belt, with voters in states that had long supported Democrats choosing Trump after he promised to end corruption in Washington DC, bring back jobs and renegotiate international trade deals.

Security concerns now shield some of the businessman’s most visible properties, including the newly opened Trump International Hotel near the White House and Trump Tower in New York.—Reuters

Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MOALI)
Department of Rural Development (DRD)
Emergency Support for Chin State Livelihoods Restoration Project (ESCSLRP)
JFPR 9185-MYA (ADB)
NATIONAL CONSULTANCY POSITIONS

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar received a USD 10 million grant from Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR) to implement ESCSLRP with DRD as primary Implementing Agency (IA) of MOALI, the Executing Agency (EA). The Government will apply part of the Grant proceeds to engage two (2) national consultants which are:
(a) National Project Advisor (30 person-months) &
(b) National Financial Specialist (18 person-months)

The consultants shall provide project management support, capacity development and technical assistance to DRD Grant Management Unit (GMU) at Union level and the seven project townships covered under the project. The intermittent services for both positions are expected to start in mid-January 2017.

DRD now invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from qualified & experienced national consultants and individuals. In submitting EOIs, consultants must indicate the position they wish to apply for and enclose their updated curriculum vitae (CV) along with the names of at least one reference with contact information. EOIs must be submitted in written form to the address below (in person, by mail, or by email) on or before November 29, 2016.

Additional information and a copy of Terms of Reference (TOR) for each position may be obtained from the DRD web page: http://www.drddmyanmar.org, http://www.cms.adb.org or the address below during from 09:00 to 16:00, Monday through Friday, except public holidays.

Attention to:
Contact to:
U Myint Oo (Director General)
Deputy Project Director (Director)
Department of Rural Development
Tel & Fax: 067-409410, 409447
Office No.14, Nay Pyi Taw.
Email address: rbobdrd@gmail.com

Havana/Bogota—Colombia’s government and the Marxist FARC rebels said on Saturday they agreed on a revised peace deal to end a 52-year war, six weeks after the original was narrowly rejected in a referendum amid objections that it was too favorable to the rebels.

The government and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, which have been holding talks in Havana for four years, said they had incorporated proposals from the opposition, religious leaders and others.

President Juan Manuel Santos hopes to unite the divided nation behind the new deal after the peace process was embarrassed by its rejection in the October plebiscite. Colombian voters were deeply split, with many worried the FARC would not be punished for crimes and others hopeful the deal would cement an end to violence.

“We call upon all Colombia and the international community... to back this new accord and its quick implementation so as to leave the tragedy of war in the past,” the two sides said in a statement. “Peace cannot wait anymore.”

Copies of the new accord will be made public from Sunday. The government has not addressed holding a second plebiscite to approve the deal, though some opposition figures were already demanding one via Twitter.

The new deal will not modify a controversial part of the accord that gives the FARC 10 congressional seats through 2026 or prevent rebel leaders from eventually being elected to political posts. However, the accord will not be integrated into Colombia’s constitution and the FARC will be required to present a complete inventory of its assets, which are destined for victim compensation, Santos said in televised address.

The modified accord also takes foreign magistrates off special peace tribunal, although there will be foreign observers, and stipulates the FARC must turn in exhaustive information about its involvement in the trade business.

The new deal limits the work of the special tribunals to 10 years and requires any investigations be opened within the first two years. A key concern among those who voted “no” on the initial deal is that convicted rebels will not serve jail time and will instead remove land mines and do other reparations work.—Reuters
Tsunami hits New Zealand after series of strong quakes

WELLINGTON — An earthquake with a magnitude of 7.4 struck central New Zealand just after midnight, the US Geologic Survey said, generating a tsunami that hit the north-east coast of the South Island.

New Zealand’s Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management warned of the risk of destructive waves along the country’s entire east coast and urged residents in low-lying areas to evacuate and seek higher ground.

Anna Kaiser, a seismologist at GNS Science, said a tidal signal or surge of up to one metre (3 feet) had been recorded in North Canterbury region of the South Island.

“That’s reasonably significant so people should take this seriously,” she told Radio New Zealand.

The quake was centered 91 km (57 miles) north-east of Christchurch, the biggest city on New Zealand’s South Island. A 6.3 quake there in February 2011 killed 185 people and caused widespread damage.

Trump looking at fast ways to quit global climate deal

WASHINGTON/MARRAKESH — Donald Trump is seeking quick ways of withdrawing from a global agreement to limit climate change, a source on his transition team said, defying widening international backing for the plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Since the US President-elect was chosen, governments ranging from China to small island states have reaffirmed support for the 2015 Paris Agreement at 200-nation climate talks running until 18 November in Marrakesh, Morocco.

Trump, who has called global warming a hoax and has promised to quit the Paris Agreement, was considering ways to withdraw from the accord, according to the source, who works on Trump’s transition team for international energy and climate policy.

“It was reckless for the Paris agreement to enter into force before the election,” he said on Tuesday, speaking on condition of anonymity. The Paris Agreement won enough backing to enter into force on 4 November.

Alternatives were to send a letter withdrawing from a 1992 Convention that is the parent treaty of the Paris Agreement, voiding US involvement in both a year’s time, or to issue a presidential order simply deleting the US signature from the Paris accord, he said.

Many nations have expressed hopes the United States will stay.

Host Morocco said the agreement seeks to phase out greenhouse gases in the second half of the century was strong enough to survive a pullout.

“If one party decides to withdraw that doesn’t call the agreement into question,” Foreign Minister Salaheddine Mezouar told a news conference.

The agreement was reached by almost 200 nations in December and, as of Saturday, has been formally ratified by 109 representing 76 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, including the United States with 18 percent.

The accord seeks to limit rising temperatures that have been linked to increasing economic damage from decertification, extinctions of animals and plants, heat waves, floods and rising sea levels.

UN climate chief Patricia Espinosa declined to comment on the Trump source’s remarks to Reuters.

“The Paris Agreement carries an enormous amount of weight and credibility,” she told a news conference.

She said the United Nations hoped for a strong and constructive relationship with Trump. The Trump source blamed US President Barack Obama for joining up by an executive order, without getting approval from the Senate.

“There wouldn’t be this diplomatic fallout on the broader international agenda if Obama hadn’t rushed the adoption,” he said. —Reuters

Photo taken on 14 November 2016 (local time) shows a kitchen of a house in Wellington, New Zealand. A major earthquake rocked South Island of New Zealand in the wee hours of Monday, followed by a series of strong aftershocks and a tsunami warning. Photo: Xinhua

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY
NATIONAL ELECTRIFICATION PROJECT
Invitation for Bids

Date: 14th November, 2016
SPECIFIC PROCUREMENT NOTICE
IDA Credit No. : 5727-MM
Contract Title: Distribution Transformer for National Electrification Project
Reference No. – C-41-1

1. The Ministry of Electricity and Energy has received financing from the World Bank towards the cost of the National Electrification Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds towards payments under the contract for Distribution Transformer for National Electrification Project.

2. The Ministry of Electricity and Energy now invites eligible bidders, for supply of 11/0.4 kV, 50 kVA, 100 kVA, 200 kVA, 315 kVA and 33/0.4 kV-100 kVA, 200 kVA and 315 kVA distribution transformer, for the total quantities of 5,389 transformers to be delivered in 2017 and 2018 to multiple destinations in all Regions and States of Myanmar. Domestic preference with the margin of 15% will apply. The goods will be grouped into 10 lots and bidders may submit bid for any one or more lots. Evaluation and award of contract will be on a lot-by-lot basis.

3. Bidding will be conducted through the International Competitive Bidding procedures as specified in the World Bank’s Guidelines: Procurement of Goods, Works and Non-Consulting Services under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants by World Bank Borrowers (edition of January 2011 revised in July 2014) (“Procurement Guidelines”), and is open to all eligible bidders as defined in the Procurement Guidelines. In addition, please refer to paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7 setting for the World Bank’s policy on conflict of interest.

4. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information from Project Manager, Office No. 31, Ministry of Electricity and Energy, ep.mpmope@gmail.com and inspect the bidding documents during office hours 08:00-16:00 hours at the address given below.

5. A complete set of bidding documents in CD with English language may be purchased by interested eligible bidders upon the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of Myanmar Kyats 100,000. The method of payment will be transferred to the following account:

Electricity Supply Enterprise, account no. SEE 10316 at Myanma Economic Bank in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. The transferred slip shall be submitted with the above application. Once the application and the transferred slip received the bidding documents will be provided in the CD.

In case of any difficulty in purchasing the bidding documents, interested parties may contact in writing:

1. Director General, Department of Electric Power Planning
Ministry of Electricity and Energy
City: Nay Pyi Taw
Country: The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Email: dep.mpsa.info@gmail.com

2. Ms. Xiaoping Wang, Task Team Leader
The World Bank
Address: 30th Floor, Siam Tower, 899 Rama I Road, Pathumwan Bangkok 10330, Thailand
Email: xswaneg1@worldbank.org

6. Bids must be delivered to the address below or on before 10:00 am, 30th December, 2016. Electronic bidding will not be permitted. Late bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the bidders’ designated representatives at the address below at 10:00 am, 30th December, 2016.

7. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security as described in the bidding document.

8. The address referred to above para 4 and 5 are:

Attention: Director General Office, Department of Electric Power Planning
Office No 67, Ministry of Electricity and Energy, Nay Pyi Taw
The Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Telephone : +95 67 410203
Facsimile : +95 67 410077
E-mail : ep.mpmope@gmail.com
Web site : http://www.mpo.gov.mm/
Five decades and 200 films later, Jackie Chan ‘finally’ wins Oscar

LOS ANGELES — When Jackie Chan saw an Oscar at Sylvester Stallone’s house 23 years ago, he said that was the moment he decided he wanted one.

On Saturday at the annual Governors Awards, the Chinese actor and martial arts star finally received his little gold statuette, an honorary Oscar for his decades of work in film.

“After 56 years in the film industry, making more than 200 films, after so many bones, finally,” Chan, 62, quipped at the star-studded gala dinner while holding his Oscar.

He praised his hometown Hong Kong for making him “proud to be Chinese,” and thanked his fans, saying they were the reason “I continue to make movies.”

He thanked his father always asking him to “make movies, jumping through windows, kicking and punching, breaking my bones.”

The actor was introduced by his “Rush Hour” co-star Chris Tucker, actress Michelle Yeoh and Tom Hanks, who referred to him as “Jackie ‘Chantastic’ Chan.”

Hanks said it was especially gratifying to be able to acknowledge Chan’s work because martial arts and action comedy films were two genres often overlooked during awards season.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, hosts of the annual ceremony, also bestowed honorary Oscars on British film editor Anne V Coates, casting director Lynn Stalmaster and prolific documentarian Frederick Wiseman.

The evening was attended by Hollywood’s elite, including Denzel Washington, Lupita Nyong’o, Nicole Kidman, Emma Stone, Ryan Reynolds, Amy Adams and Dev Patel.

Stalmaster, 88, credited with securing career-defining roles for actors such as Jeff Bridges, Andy Garcia, Christopher Reeve and John Travolta, is the first casting director to receive an Oscar.

Coates, 90, who won the film editing Oscar for 1962’s “Lawrence of Arabia” and has edited more than 50 films, said she shared her honorary Oscar “with all the unsung heroes” of filmmaking.

Wiseman, 86, whose documentaries include 1970’s “Hospital,” 1987’s “Blind” and last year’s “In Jackson Heights,” said: “I think it’s as important to document kindness, ability and generosity of spirit as it is to show cruelty, banality and indifference,” he said. — Reuters

Sting reopens Paris’ Bataclan hall on anniversary of militant attack

PARIS — Rock star Sting headlined a concert in Paris’ Bataclan music hall on Saturday to mark the venue’s reopening a year after three Islamist militants gunned down 90 revelers in France’s bloodiest terror attack.

Sting, 69, opened the hit pop band The Police before a long solo career, opened the emotionally charged gig with a minute’s silence, telling the crowd: “We will not forget them.”

“Tonight we have two tasks to achieve: first to remember those who lost their lives in the attack, and then to celebrate life and music in this historic place,” the performer said.

On 13 November, 2015, the assailants burst through the music hall’s main entrance and sprayed automatic gunfire into the crowd as the Californian rock band the Eagles of Death Metal played on stage.

During a more than two-hour long assault, the attackers executed some victims and took others hostage.

The attack ended after one militant was shot dead and the two others killed themselves by detonating explosive vests.

In coordinated strikes that night, other gunmen and suicide bombers targeted a soccer stadium and several cafes in Paris. In all, the Islamic State militants killed 130 people.

Adrian, a survivor of the Bataclan attack who lost two friends that night, said: “It was my duty to come, to remember those who died here.”

As the concert hall emptied, another concert-goer said: “Tonight was beautiful. He set the place alight and we forgot our fears.”

The Paris attacks prompted the government to impose a state of emergency, which remains in place, following attacks this summer in Nice and Normandy.

Writing in an opinion column published in several European newspapers on Saturday, Prime Minister Manuel Valls said the “heavy and constant threat” of more terror attacks hung over France, and urged Europe to strengthen its defense capabilities.

“And this is all the more so as the United States becomes less and less involved in the affairs of the world. Europe can no longer shirk its responsibilities and take refuge behind its American ally,” Valls wrote.

Proceeds from Saturday’s Bataclan gig will go to two charities helping survivors of the Paris attacks.

“Long live the Bataclan,” Sting said as he left the stage. — Reuters

Shahid, Deepika, Kareena hail currency demonetisation

MUMBAI — Bollywood stars Shahid Kapoor, Deepika Padukone, Kareena Kapoor Khan and Taapsee Pannu have welcomed the government’s move to scrap Rs 500 and 1000 notes.

Shahid said it was an extremely important and bold step taken by the government.

“If we have to eliminate corruption, when it is so much, it is necessary to take a hard step. I think it’s still early to comment on how it’ll go because there are certain practicalities attached to the change in currency notes. It is going to be difficult. Everybody is finding it difficult, but if it leads to less corruption, less black money, less fake money- which is also a very big issue we are facing- then I think it’s a bold step and in the right direction,” the “Udta Punjab” star told reporters.

Deepika called it an exceptional move.

“I think it was high time (we did it). I would not like to comment much. But I think it was an exceptional move by the government… I would like to congratulate them on that.”

Kareena also praised the new development, saying, “It is a very good decision.

When asked if she was facing inconvenience in currency exchange, she said, “I am only carrying Rs 2000 note, I don’t have Rs 500, 1000 note!”

Actress Tanushree Bhattacharya said, “I know the common man is facing a lot of difficulty because of this condition but I know for a fact that it is for a good cause and eventually this will turn out to be the right thing to do. From a long run perspective this is the best thing to have happened.”

Actress Rasika Dugal said the common man is facing trouble with the sudden currency demonetisation but she feels it will benefit in the long run.

“People like vegetable vendors and others are facing inconvenience and I am trying to help them. But it is a very good step by the government.” — PTI
Italian composer Ennio Morricone conducts during a Jubilee concert in Paul VI hall at the Vatican on 12 November, 2016. Photo: Reuters

Oscar winner Ennio Morricone honors homeless at Vatican concert

VATICAN CITY — Homeless people were the guests of honor on Saturday night at a special benefit concert in the Vatican conducted by Oscar winning composer Ennio Morricone.

Morricone, 88, who won this year’s Academy Award for “The Hateful Eight,” premiered a new, short composition for the event called “God, One of Us,” and also conducted the orchestra in some of his most famous film soundtracks.

They included three tracks from one of his most evocative sound scores, for the 1984 film “Once Upon a Time in America.”

Morricone holds some of his general audiences. Diplomats, Vatican officials and other VIPs were behind them.

“I live in a tent. It was something else for me to be in the front row here,” said Attila, a 48-year-old Hungarian man who lost his construction job in Rome and was brought to the concert by a Catholic charity.

The pope is due to say a special Mass in honor of homeless people on Sunday as part of the Roman Catholic Church’s Jubilee Year of Mercy. Morricone, one of the world’s most prolific composers of film scores, is best known for the music that accompanied Italian director Sergio Leone’s so-called Spaghetti Westerns, such as “A Fistful of Dollars,” “For a Few Dollars More,” and “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly.”

Donations made at the concert, where entry was free, will go to help build schools and churches in Uganda and Burkina Faso.—Reuters

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Slovak brothers win burial competition with fastest, neatest grave

TRENCIN (Slovakia) — Two brothers from Slovakia won a grave-digging competition at an international exhibition of funeral, burial and cremation services on Thursday.

Ladislav and Csaba Skladan, aged 43 and 41 respectively, dug a grave 1.5 meters deep, two meters long and 90 centimeters wide in 54 minutes in the western Slovak town of Trencin, beating 10 other two-member teams from Slovakia, Poland and Hungary as a small audience cheered loudly. Their grave was also the neatest, a five-member jury agreed.

“We want to show and appreciate the hard work of grave diggers,” said Ladislav Striz, who established the contest last year.

“Most Slovak graveyards are so crowded and spaces between graves so narrow that we need human diggers instead of machines,” he said. “They work hard, come rain, come snow.”

“I am happy we won, it’s a satisfaction after fifteen years in this job,” Csaba Skladan said. “I had to focus on speed today but usually, when the weather is nice and I can chat with my brother, it’s a dream job,” added Ladislav Skladan.—Reuters

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Vintage biplanes attempt Greece-South Africa imperial route

ATHENS — Twelve vintage biplanes from the 1920s and 1930s set off from the Greek island of Crete on Saturday bound for South Africa for a 12,800-kilometre (8,000-mile) race never attempted before by so many antique aircraft.

The planes are following the route plied by Imperial Airways, a British commercial air transport company that linked Britain’s colonies in Africa. The trip is expected to take 35 days and teams are representing 18 countries, including Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa, the United States and Britain.

They will travel through 10 nations such as Egypt, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Tanzania and make 37 stops en route before finishing in Cape Town.

“Hopefully, we’ll all get there and have a massive party when we arrive,” said Vintage Air Rally organiser Sam Rutherford. The planes will make a stop at the Giza pyramids in Egypt, the first time a group of aircraft have been allowed to land there in 80 years.

The plane flown by Robert Redford in the Oscar-winning film “Out of Africa”, which he starred in with Meryl Streep, will join the journey in Kenya. Pilots will be challenged by weather conditions in open cockpits and will sleep in tents, under the wings of their planes in tents and on riverboats on the Nile.—Reuters

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Garcia upsets Kvitova as France draw level in final

STRASBOURG — Caroline Garcia stunned Petra Kvitova 7-6(7) 6-4 to pull France level at 1-1 with champions Czech Republic in the Fed Cup final after Karolina Pliskova won an epic first singles earlier on Saturday.

Garcia produced an aggressive performance to down Kvitova and the Czech threatened a comeback in the second set but the Frenchwoman was too hot and closed it out on her second match point.

World number six Pliskova had overcome Kristina Mladenovic’s stubborn resistance to put the visitors ahead with a thrilling 6-3 4-6 16-14 win.

Mladenovic will take on double Wimbledon champion Kvitova while world number 23 Garcia will play Pliskova in Sunday’s reverse singles as the Czech look to claim a fifth title in six years.

After surrendering the first set in a tie break, world number 11 Kvitova fell further behind as she trailed 4-1 in the second set.

She did close the gap to 4-3 before Garcia held her nerve to break again and wrap up victory with a forehand winner.

The highlight of the show, however, was earlier.

In one of the competition’s finest rubbers, US Open finalist Pliskova downed Mladenovic in a nail-biting third set which was the longest ever played in a Fed Cup final.

Pliskova appeared to be cruising to victory after breaching the first set but then lost her focus in the second to allow Mladenovic back in the contest.

The Czech served for the match at 5-3 in the decider but lost her composure. Mladenovic broke back with a forehand winner before leveling for 5-5.

The world number six earned two match points on Mladenovic’s serve breaking 9-8, but the Frenchwoman served an ace on the first while Pliskova’s forehand flew wide in the contest. Play was interrupted as the Frenchwoman had her left thigh strapped by the trainer before the breaker.

With the Frenchwoman struggling physically, Pliskova proved she had the stamina to get over the finishing line and finally won her opponent in three hours 48 minutes.

“It’s the longest match I have ever played,” said Pliskova. “She was serving so well and looking so strong. It was a fight before being swept aside.”

— Reuters

England keep their heads to down Scotland 3-0

LONDON — A trio of thundering headers gave England a thumping victory over their oldest foes as Scotland put up a fight before being swept aside 3-0 in Friday’s World Cup qualifier at Wembley.

Daniel Sturridge’s bullet header in the first half and equally impressive efforts after the break from Adam Lallana and Gary Cahill ensured England emerged from international football’s oldest fixture having consolidated their lead at the top of Group F.

While it was not the one-sided romp the scoreline suggests and England only pulled clear in the second half having survived some nervy moments, the result will have strengthened interim boss Gareth Southgate’s chances of claiming the role on a permanent basis.

With his side having moved onto 10 points from four games, two behind leaders Ireland who have 1-0 winners in Austria. Wales are third on six points while fourth-placed Austria have four.

Bale fired the Welsh ahead with his 26th international goal when he unleashed a sizzling low shot in the 30th minute to close in on their all-time leading scorer Ian Rush (28). Bale missed a golden opportunity to double the home side’s lead moments before Serbia struck at the other end, when Mitrovic got away from his marker to head home Antonio Rudovic’s cross from the right.

England’s Gary Cahill scores their third goal during the match between England v Scotland in 2018 World Cup Qualifying European Zone - Group F - at the Wembley Stadium, in London, England on 12 November, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

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— Reuters

Late Mitrovic header earns Serbia 1-1 draw in Wales

CARDIFF — An 85th-minute header by striker Aleksandar Mitrovic gave Serbia a 1-1 draw against Wales after Gareth Bale had given the home side a first-half lead in a pulsating World Cup Group D qualifier on Saturday.

The result left Serbia second in the section on eight points from four games, two behind leaders Ireland who have 1-0 winners in Austria. Wales are third on six points while fourth-placed Austria have four.

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