President U Thein Sein congratulates Chinese Premier of the State Council

New Zealand recognizes Myanmar’s political and economic reforms

NAY PYI TAW, 15 March—President U Thein Sein held talks with New Zealand Prime Minister Mr John Key, at Langham Hotel in Auckland of New Zealand this afternoon.

The New Zealand Prime Minister expressed thanks for Myanmar President’s visit to New Zealand. He recognized Myanmar’s political and economic reforms. He reaffirmed that New Zealand would extend a helping hand to Myanmar’s democratization process and economic reform. Arrangements would be made for appointment of New Zealand Ambassador in Yangon, he added.

The President said that both countries have established diplomatic relations since 50 years. The relations between the two countries did not improve as it should be due to different political systems.

New Zealand Ambassador for New Zealand’s support for removal of sanctions against Myanmar and using the official name Myanmar instead of Burma.

The two exchanged views on cooperation in the sectors of agriculture, livestock, education, mining, hydropower and geo energy. It was attended by Chief of General Staff (Army, Navy, Air) Gen Hla Htay Win, Union Ministers U Wunna Maung Lwin, U Tin Naing Thein, U Ohn Myint, U Khin Yi, Dr Mya Aye, Dr Myint Aung, Dr Kan Zaw, Dr Ko Ko Oo, deputy ministers and departmental heads.

After that, they met the press. In the evening, the President met opposition party leader Mr David Shearer and Foreign Affairs Spokesman Mr Phil Goff at Langham Hotel. At the call, they exchanged views on Myanmar’s political and economic reforms and future expectations. After that, the President and party attended a dinner hosted by the New Zealand Prime Minister.

King Alaungpaya’s message to British Monarch George II kept in Wilhelm Leibniz Library

NAY PYI TAW, 15 March—the golden palm-leaf inscription sent by Myanmar King Alaungpaya to British Monarch George II in AD 1756 is reported to be kept at Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Library in Hanover of Germany. In his palm-leaf letter to King George II, King Alaungpaya had allowed British traders to live in Haiggyi Island for trade and expressed his wish for strengthening ties with Britain.

The message was sent under the status of an independent sovereign on equal terms. And King George II handed it over to a library in Hanover, his birthplace.

The inscription measuring 55 cm x 12 cm is gold foil of standard quality with 12 rubies of the same quality embedded in each ends. The inscription includes ten lines written with stylus and dated 10 Waxing of Kason, 1118 ME. It was put folded in an ivory casket.

Scholar Dr Friedrich Hulsmann discovered the inscription from that library in Hanover in 2007 after 250 years. With the help of a Luxembourg historian, he made research into it and became to know that it was written in Burmese. Then the letter was translated computer-aided. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Library is one of the famous libraries in northern Germany with a collection of over 1.6 million works of literature around the world including the world’s oldest book from 8 AD.

The message was photocopied, magnified and hanged with the fixture. The original one is kept under special care and would be applied to the list of memory of the world. Union Minister for Culture U Aye Myint Kyu and officials had a chance to observe the letter while visiting the library in Hanover.
Seizure of illegal confectionery in Bago Region

WAW, 15 March — Mobile Team-2 seized goods that failed to pay customs while conducting a search of vehicles at mile post No (81/4) near Sattawcharone village in Bago Region on 9 March.

The team confiscated 68 cartons of confectionery on the vehicle driven by Yazar Soe, 21 cartons of confectionery, 12 cartons of lighter and 1193 items of 'men’s ladies' wear on the vehicle by Nyunt Win and 100 cartons of seasoning powder on the vehicle by Wai Lwin.

They were charged with possession of illegal goods.

Mechanical fault leaves container truck crash

YANGON, 15 March — A container truck went out of control and crashed into a wall on new Strand Road, at about 9.30 pm on 10 March. The accident caused damage to the front part of the truck and the wall.

The container truck driving along the new Strand road hit the wall after its swivel joint went out. The driver broke his leg jumping out of the truck before crashing into the wall but the truck conductor got injury to his head.

Candle fire destroys eight buildings of Dhamma Yeiktha in Shwedagone Township

SHWE DAUNG, 15 March — A total of eight buildings—five wooden buildings and three RC ones—were reduced to ashes in the fire occurred at Soonloon Shwegugyi Dhamma Yeiktha in Taungpein-inn village in Kyeteethe village-tract in Shwedagone Township of Bago Region on 9 March.

The fire started at about 10.30 pm in a wooden building of 81-year-old Nun Daw Hay Yi where a candle was lit. The candle had set other materials in the building on fire.

Drug dealers, user arrested in Waingmaw, Myitkyina Townships

MYITKYINA, 15 March—Police members of Myitkyina anti-narcotic special squad led by Police Inspector Zaw Myo Lwin seized 100 stimulant tablets worth K 300,000 and K 14000 from Aik Hlaing (a) Maung Tae while stopping his motorcycle and making a search of his leather jacket near Nat Myin Kha bridge in Waingmaw Township on 9 March.

Aik Hlaing (a) Maung Tae, 39, of Ward-2 in Naungspiw village of Waingmaw Township was charged with possession of narcotics.

According to the confession of Aik Hlaing (a) Maung Tae, a combined force comprising anti-narcotic special squad members and police members of Waingmaw Police Station conducted a search of the house of U Khum (a) Aik Paung in Nantaw village in the township on 9 March. They discovered and seized a package of raw opium, 128 stimulant tablets, about 9.5 grams of heroine and K 1,015,500, and arrested U Khum (a) Aik Paung and his wife Daw Sai Moung and Haw Kyint Wai (a) Ah Wee (a) Ah Wai who was there to use narcotics.

Waingmaw Police Station filed a lawsuit against U Khum (a) Aik Paung, 43, Daw Sai Moung, 37, and Haw Kyint Wai (a) Ah Wee (a) Ah Wai, 39, of ward-1 in Waingmaw Township.

According to a tip-off, Police Inspector Zaw Myo Lwin and party carried out a search of a grocery which was being kept open at the house of Ma Moe Pyone in Mankhawin village of Waingmaw. They discovered and seized 160 Tramadol capsules in a paper box and K 20000 at the grocery.

Ma Moe Pyone, 34, was charged with possession of Tramadol capsules by Myitkyina Police Station No (1).

Old man hit by two cars, killed in hit-and-run incident

YANGON, 15 March — An old man was knocked down by two cars and he was pronounced dead on the spot at the scene of incident on Insein Road, here, at about 7.30 pm on 8 March.

A taxi driving from north to south hit an unidentified 70-year-old man who was crossing over the intersection of U Yang Khe street with Aung Theikdi Street on Insein Road near Khawechan bus stop in Mayangon Township.

The victim was knocked down again by another taxi driving on the opposite lane while he tried to stand up at the place he fell down.

The two vehicles drove away after hitting the old man. The victim died of serious injuries at the scene of the incident. Police are investigating into the case to expose the hit-and-run drivers.

New school building for Kyawzan village affiliated middle school in Mawlamyinegyun Township

MAWLAMYINEGYUN, 15 March — A ceremony to hand over new school building for newly-upgraded Kyawzan village affiliated middle school took place at the school in the village in Mawlamyinegyun Township of Ayeyawady Region on 4 March.

Deputy Minister for Education U Aye Kyu, Ayeyawady Region Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Breeding conducted the ceremony.

Fire negligence in Thingangyun Township

YANGON, 15 March — A fire accident happened to an apartment at Waizayandar Housing on Waizayandar road in Thingangyun Township at 10.15 am on 12 March. The fire started from an overheated washing machine in Room (210) of Building-2 where the flat owner left the machine running.

No sooner had they been informed of the outbreak of fire by duty-conscious persons than fire crews accompanied by two fire trucks of Thingangyun and South Okkalapa Townships rushed there and managed to bring the fire under control.

They put out the fire at about 10.30 am.

Thingangyun Police Station filed a lawsuit against Daw Min Min Than, 38, for fire negligence.

Fuel filling under intense heat cause fire in Hinethaya Township

YANGON, 15 March — A fire broke out while filling fuel from a fuel tank to a fuel bowser under the scorching heat at a jetty in a container yard on the bank of Hline River near Hinethaya Bridge in Hinethaya Township at about 12 noon on 12 March.

The fire spread and destroyed a fishing boat, two fuel bowser, a warehouse and a wooden building nearby. Fire crews put out the fire at about 12.55 pm.

A responsible person said that the trawler which was burnt in the fire is worth about K 200 million. A fire crew said that two victims who were nearby when the fire was caught in fire were hospitalized for injuries.

A witness said that police members had arrested a man who tried to commit a theft of a fuel barrel while firefighters were struggling to control the fire.

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Kyemon
UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Helen Clark speaks during a meeting of Resident Coordinators and Resident Representatives of the UN in the Middle East and North Africa, in Rabat on 30 March, 2012. REUTERS

MEXICO CITY, 15 March—There is increasing evidence that the US-led war on drugs has failed, with criminalisation often creating more problems than it solves, said Helen Clark, the head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Speaking ahead of Thursday’s presentation of the UNDP’s 2013 Human Development Report, Clark, a former Prime Minister of New Zealand, said Latin American leaders should be encouraged to develop different policies to tackle the drug scourge.

West aims to sabotage Iran vote—Teheran rights official

File photo shows Mohammad Javad Larjani talks to Reuters during a private interview in Teheran.—REUTERS

GENEVA, 15 March—Western powers are trying to sabotage Iran’s presidential election in June but the vote will go ahead and offer a fair choice between reformists and conservatives, a senior Iranian official said on Thursday.

Journalists and others suspected of complicity in a plot to destabilise the Islamic Republic have been arrested and will receive due process, said Mohammad Javad Larjani, Secretary-General of Iran’s High Council for Human Rights. “The (Iranian) security people discovered that there is a grouping connected to the secret services of a number of European countries—I can name one of them which is Britain’s secret service, and they were creating a grouping to do sabotage in the structure of the campaign,” Larjani told Reuters.

“Their job was to create an atmosphere of worriness, which prevents the tranquillity which is needed for competition,” he said during a 45-minute interview in English in Iran’s mission to the United Nations in Geneva. He offered no proof or details. The UN human rights investigator on Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, said on Tuesday that Teheran’s silencing of journalists and opposition leaders could jeopardise the legitimacy of the presidential election in June.—Reuters

BEIJING, 16 March—Li Keqiang was endorsed as Chinese premier Friday morning at the ongoing session of the 12th National People’s Congress (NPC), the country’s top legislature.

Nearly 3,000 NPC deputies voted to approve the nomination of Li, by newly-elected president Xi Jinping, as the candidate for premier at the ongoing parliament session.

He has been the seventh premier since the People’s Republic of China was founded in 1949, replacing Wen Jiabao who had headed the State Council since 2003.

Li was re-elected to the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee in November.

Xinhua

Iraq war costs US more than $2 trillion

US Navy Hospital Corpsman HM1 Richard Barnett, assigned to the 1st Marine Division, holds an Iraqi child in central Iraq in this 29 March, 2003 file photo.—REUTERS

NEW YORK, 15 March —The US war in Iraq has cost $1.7 trillion with an additional $490 billion in benefits owed to war veterans, expenses that could grow to more than $6 trillion over the next four decades counting interest, a study released on Thursday said.

The war has killed at least 134,000 Iraqi civilians and may have contributed to the deaths of as many as four times that number, according to the Costs of War Project by the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University.

When security forces, insurgents, journalists and humanitarian workers were included, the war’s death toll rose to an estimated 176,000 to 189,000, the study said.

The report, the work of about 30 academics and experts, was published in advance of the 10th anniversary of the US-led invasion of Iraq on 19 March, 2003.

It was also an update of a 2011 report the Watson Institute produced ahead of the 10th anniversary of the 11 September attacks that assessed the cost in dollars and lives from the resulting wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq.

The 2011 study said the combined cost of the wars was at least $3.7 trillion, based on actual expenditures from the US Treasury and future commitments, such as the medical and disability claims of US war veterans.

That estimate climbed to nearly $4 trillion in the update. The estimated death toll from the three wars, previously at 224,000, increased to a range of 272,000 to 329,000 two years later.

Excluded were indirect deaths caused by the mass exodus of doctors and a devastated infrastructure, for example, while the costs left out trillions of dollars in interest the United States could pay over the next 40 years.—Reuters

Action needed to rebuild confidence over Iran’s nuclear programme

VIENNA, 15 March—Iran should take actions to prove its nuclear programme is peaceful instead of making only promises, Vienna-based diplomats said here on Thursday.

Commenting on Iranian plans to submit a written promise to the United Nations that it will not seek to develop nuclear bombs, the diplomats told Xinhua on condition of anonymity that the promise made no sense without substantial step to meet the world’s concerns.

The diplomats urge Teheran to increase the transparency of its nuclear programme, to meet the demands of the P5+1 countries, namely China, US, Britain, Russia, France, Germany, and to cooperate with the UN nuclear watchdog to clarify outstanding issues in its nuclear programme.—Xinhua

Damascenes panicked by call for men to fight Assad’s war

A picture of Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad riddled with holes is seen on the facade of the police academy in Aleppo, after it was captured by Free Syrian Army fighters, on 4 March, 2013.—REUTERS

DAMASCUS, 15 March—When a government-linked Islamic body in Syria said this week it was a “sacred duty” to join the army and fight the revolt, Damascans was abuzz with rumours of a mass military draft.

Men of military age panicked, wondering they would be given a gun and told to fight never-ending street battles with rebel fighters before being returned to their families in a wooden box, like thousands of soldiers over the past two years.

President Bashar al-Assad’s forces are stretched thin across the country as the opposition takes further ground, overrunning military bases and executing prisoners. Flying reservists say morale is low among troops, who are virtually imprisoned in their barracks by officers who fear they’ll defect or flee. Mohammed, a 30-year-old who supports Assad, said he would rather flee the country than fight the rebels.

“So what exactly would I be doing if I got drafted? Killing rebels? They’ll kill me back,” he said, asking to withhold his real name for fear of retribution.

“I’d be dead no matter what, like a lamb to the slaughter,” said Mohammed, who completed his two-year mandatory military service years ago.—Reuters
Chile unveils world’s largest astronomical observatory

SANTIAGO, 15 March—Chilean President Sebastian Pinera on Wednesday presided over the launching of the world’s largest astronomical observatory in the remote Atacama Desert of the northern Chilean Andes. Home to the world’s most powerful telescope, the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA), the observatory is the result of a collaboration between Europe, the United States, Japan and Chile, according to an ALMA Press release.

“One of many natural resources is Chile’s spectacular night sky,” Pinera told the more than 500 guests gathered for the event. “I believe that science has been a vital contributor to the development of Chile in recent years. I am very proud of our international collaborations in astronomy, of which ALMA is the latest and biggest outcome.” said Pinera.

Located 5,000 metres above sea level, the assembly of ALMA’s antennas was recently completed and the telescope has already provided “unprecedented views of the cosmos with only a portion of its full array,” the observatory said. ALMA’s ability to observe the universe by detecting light that is invisible to the human eye (and will show us never-before-seen details about the birth of stars, infant galaxies in the early universe, and planets circling around distant suns,” the observatory added. Already “astronomers are having to rewrite a major part of the history of the universe,” the observatory said, because the telescope has shown that the strongest star bursts in the cosmos “took place much earlier than previously thought.” Those results will appear in the 14 March edition of the journal Nature.

ALMA Director Thijs de Graauw said the telescope “swallows anything else we had before,” adding “we are eager for astronomers to exploit the full power of this amazing tool.”

The antennas of the ALMA array, 54 12-meter dish antennas and 12 smaller 7-meter dish antennas, work together as a single telescope. Each collects radiation coming in from space and the data is brought together and processed by a specialized supercomputer.—Xinhua

Trade panel delays decision on Apple, Samsung patent fight

WASHINGTON, 15 March—The US International Trade Commission said on Wednesday that it would delay a decision on allegations that Apple infringed upon patents owned by Samsung Electronics in making the iPod touch, iPhone and iPad.

An administrative law judge at the ITC had said in a preliminary ruling in September that Apple did not infringe the patents. The full ITC said it would review the matter. If the full ITC reversed its internal judge and found Apple guilty of infringement, the ITC could order its products banned from the US market.

The ITC said it would now issue a decision on 31 May. It requested filings on questions related to the effect of banning the Apple products on the public interest and whether there were acceptable substitutes for the Apple products if they were to be banned.

Apple has a parallel complaint filed against Samsung at the ITC, accusing Samsung, a major Apple global rival, of copying its chip design.

US scientists unearth ancient Chinese coin on Kenyan island

WASHINGTON, 15 March—A joint expedition of US scientists has unearthed a 600-year-old Chinese coin on the Kenyan island of Manda that shows trade existed between China and east Africa decades before European explorers set sail and changed the map of the world, according to a statement issued on Wednesday by the Field Museum in Chicago. The coin, a small disk of copper and silver with a square hole in the centre so it could be worn on a belt, is called “Yongle Tongbao” and was issued by Emperor Yongle who reigned from 1403-1425 AD during the Ming Dynasty. The emperor’s name is written on the coin, making it easy to date.

Emperor Yongle, who started construction of China’s Forbidden City, was interested in political and trade missions to the lands that ring the Indian Ocean and sent Admiral Zheng He, also known as Cheng Ho, to explore those shores.—Xinhua

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Moody’s downgrades outlook for Dutch banks

The Hague, 15 March — Rating agency Moody’s on Thursday downgraded its long-term forecasts for the creditworthiness of three Dutch banks ABN Amro, NIBC and Rabobank from “stable” to “negative”.

The negative outlook for ING Bank was maintained. An outlook is not necessarily a precursor of a rating change, but a negative outlook means that a rating may be lowered. The credit status remains the same now. Last year Moody’s had already downgraded the long-term debt and deposit ratings of the Dutch banks in a status of the many other banks. Rabobank is the most stable Dutch bank on A2, ING Bank and Amro are on A2 and NIBC on Baa3.

“The negative outlook is driven by Moody’s view that the operating environment in the Netherlands is becoming more challenging than previously anticipated,” Moody’s said in a Press release.

“This implies greater downside risk in asset quality in areas where the banks have large concentrations, and the impact that normal cyclical changes would be expected to have.”

Moody’s found three major developments that could undermine the creditworthiness of these big banks. First, the shrinkage of the economy this year, second, the rising unemployment rate and finally Moody’s estimated more losses in real estate.

Hong Kong, 15 March — The economic news is improving here and there, and single every single prescription made by doctors. This has led to more transparency between the hospitals and drug companies, and the benefits are already being felt. Yang Yubin, Patient, said, “I’m seeing the doctor for my cold. In the past, it would normally cost 20 yuan, now, it only costs 7 yuan.” Separating clinics from pharmacies is just one part of China’s medical reform efforts.

HONG KONG, 15 March — China inaugurated a health care system reform three years ago in 2009. The reform is aimed at making health care affordable and accessible for all Chinese citizens by 2020. CCTV reporter Nie Jia takes a look at the progress of the reform over the last three years of a pilot scheme, this is how this health clinic in a small township in Shian Province now operates.

Luo Wei, Head of Health Clinic in Xing Yi Township, said, “By using computers, we streamline our processes and reduce waiting times for patients—from registering, to checking up, to a batch of drug data due this week is unlikely to shake financial markets’ conviction that major central banks are not about to take away the punch bowl.”

If anything, even more national policymakers might speak volumes about how much spare capacity there still is in the post-crisis world economy—despite Friday’s surprisingly strong US job figures. “My best guess is that the output gaps are sufficiently large in all the major economies, that central banks can do additional stimulus if needed,” said Derry Pickford, macro analyst at investment managers Ashmore in London.—Reuters

HK’s GNI surges 8.2 pct in Q4 2012

Hong Kong, 15 March — Hong Kong’s gross national income (GNI) rose to 562.7 billion HK dollars (about 72.5 US dollars) in the fourth quarter of 2012, up 8.2 percent on the same period last year, the city’s Census & Statistics Department announced on Thursday.

According to the statistics, gross domestic product rose 7.2 percent to an estimated 556.6 billion HK dollars at the same time. Compared with GDP, Hong Kong’s GNI was larger by 6.1 billion HK dollars, representing a net external primary income inflow of the same amount, and equivalent to 1.1 percent of GDP in that quarter. After netting out the effect of price changes, Hong Kong’s GNI increased 3.7 percent in real terms compared to the corresponding rise of 2.5 percent recorded for GDP.

For a while as a whole, GNI increased 4.6 percent over a year earlier to 2,083.6 billion HK dollars at current market prices. After netting out the effect of price changes, Hong Kong’s GNI increased slightly by 0.4 percent in real terms in 2012 over 2011.—Xinhua

Cove Energy directors look to replicate success in Mozambique

London, 15 March — Three key executives that were behind the creation and sale of Cove Energy Plc (CNVGF.PK) have reunited to raise funds for oil and gas exploration in Mozambique, the Financial Times reported on Sunday.

John Craven, Michael Blaha and Michael Nolan, now directors of Discover Exploration, are looking to raise about $50 million, the Financial Times reported.

Discover Exploration is focusing on waters east of Mozambique in the Rovuma Basin. The waters are controlled by the small island state of Comoros.

Discover Exploration is backed by directors’ funds changes, Hong Kong’s GNI increased slightly by 0.4 percent in real terms in 2012 over 2011.—Xinhua

Dutch dairy company FrieslandCampina reports record revenue

The Hague, 15 March — Dairy company Royal FrieslandCampina reported a record revenue of 10.3 billion euros (13.3 billion US dollars) in 2012, the company said on Thursday.

Although the Dutch company continues to experience difficult market conditions in Europe, sales were up 7.1 percent compared to the 9.6 billion euros of 2011.

Net profit increased by more than a quarter (26.9 percent) from 216 million euros up to 274 million euros. FrieslandCampina benefited primarily from growth in the categories of infant and toddler nutrition, plant-based beverages and branded cheese.

The company expects a slight growth in demand this year for dairy products, mainly by higher demand from Asia, South America, Russia and Africa. The Asian countries are already accounted for about a quarter of the company’s revenue. Cees ‘t Hart, CEO of Royal FrieslandCampina, explained further investments are planned to brew more growth. “Most of the investments are taking place in the Netherlands,” he said.

A man walks past the Bank of Japan in Tokyo on 7 March, 2013.—Reuters

Global economy: Shafts of sunshine try to pierce thick clouds

London, 15 March — Global economic news is improving here and there, but a batch of data due this week is unlikely to shake financial markets' conviction that major central banks are not about to take away the punch bowl.

If anything, even more national policymakers might speak volumes about how much spare capacity there still is in the post-crisis world economy—despite Friday’s surprisingly strong US job figures. “My best guess is that the output gaps are sufficiently large in all the major economies, that central banks can do additional stimulus if needed,” said Derry Pickford, macro analyst at investment managers Ashmore in London.—Reuters

US Senate Democrats offer budget plan with tax increases and spending cuts

Washington, 15 March — US Senate Democrats on Wednesday unveiled their budget blueprint for the new fiscal year starting on 1 October, a competing version to the House GOP plan and the first budget in the Senate in four years.

The plan, presented by Senate Budget Committee Chairwoman Patty Murry, would seek $75 billion dollars in spending cuts over the next decade and roughly the same amount of new tax revenues. The blueprint also proposed a 100 billion dollars stimulus package which would fund infrastructure projects and education programmes.

In contrast with the House GOP budget, the Senate plan will not balance the budget but will put the deficit on a sustainable path. At the markup of the plan among her Senate colleagues, Murry said the highest priority of her budget is to create the conditions for job creation, economic growth, and prosperity built from the middle-out, not the top down. “Our budget is built on three principles: Number one, we need to protect our fragile economic recovery, create jobs, and invest in long-term growth. Number two, we need to tackle our debt and deficit fairly and responsibly. And number three, we need to keep the promises we’ve made as a nation to our senior citizens, our families, and our communities,” Murry stated.

Her comments to some extent echoed the President Barack Obama’s position. He told House Republicans on Wednesday that his priority is to prevent an economic slowdown, but not a 10-year-balanced budget. The House GOP plan, put forth by House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan on Tuesday, revived some controversial issues in the budget battle. —Xinhua
Israel’s Netanyahu clinches coalition deals

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks during a farewell event for outgoing Defence Minister Ehud Barak at Bar-Ilan University near Tel Aviv on 13 March, 2013.—Reuters

Jerusalem, 15 March —Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu clinches deals on Thursday for a coalition government to curb benefits for ultra-Orthodox Jews, a hot-button issue that has pushed peacemaking with Palestinians to the sidelines.

In control of 68 of parliament’s 120 seats, the new administration — the first in a decade without ultra-Orthodox parties — is expected to take office next week, just days before a visit by US President Barack Obama.

“There is a government,” said Noga Katz, a spokeswoman for Netanyahu’s right-wing Likud party, citing agreements with the centrist Yesh Atid and far-right Jewish Home parties as well as a smaller faction headed by former foreign minister Tzipi Livni. Yesh Atid, led by ex-TV news anchor Yair Lapid, and high-tech millionaire Naftali Bennett’s pro-settler Jewish Home rode a wave of anger in a 22 January election over state handouts and military draft exemptions long granted to the ultra-Orthodox minority.

After surprisingly strong showings at the ballot box, the two political upstarts effectively blackballed Netanyahu’s largely loyal religious allies, a dramatic change that left the prime minister weakened as he enters his third term in office.

Although Lapid has advocated a resolution of peace talks with the Palestinians stalled since 2010, his party’s second-place finish was a reflection of renewed public focus on bread-and-butter issues such as the high cost of living.

Public expectations are high that the new government could affect real change in what many Israelis see as state coddling of the ultra-Orthodox that gives them little incentive or opportunity to learn skills and contribute to the economy.

Netanyahu will turn his attention again to the Palestinian issue and Iran’s nuclear drive in his talks with Obama, with whom he has had a testy relationship. But US officials have said Obama is not coming with any peace plan and expectations of any swift movement on the Israeli-Palestinian track are low.

Reuters

France, UK push EU to end Syria arms ban

France President Francois Hollande holds a news conference during a European Union leaders meeting in Brussels on 14 March, 2013.—Reuters

Brussels/Paris, 15 March—France and Britain will urge European Union governments to lift an embargo on supplying weapons to the Syrian opposition, President Francois Hollande said on Thursday, warning that France could go it alone if no EU agreement is reached.

The French president justified his call to increase help to the Syrian opposition after a two-year uprising against President Bashar al-Assad by saying that weapons were being delivered to Assad’s government, particularly by Russia. “We want the Europeans to lift the arms embargo — not to go towards a total war, we think a political transition must be the solution for Syria — (but)

If agreement at EU level is not possible, he indicated that France could go it alone in abandoning the embargo. “If by chance one or two countries were to block the move … I can’t speak for others, but France itself would take its responsibilities,” he told a news conference.

The arms ban is part of a package of EU sanctions on Syria that rolls over every three months. An extension agreed last month expires on 1 June. Without unanimous agreement to renew or amend it, the embargo lapses, along with the sanctions.

France and Britain have stepped up calls to lift the restrictions to permit supplies to the Syrian opposition in a conflict that has cost 70,000 lives.

But other EU governments, including Germany, have resisted the move, fearing it will fuel violence in the region, especially if arms get into the hands of militant Islamists.

Chancellor Angela Merkel said Germany was ready to discuss the issue but warned of the risk of lifting the arms embargo for the rebels could lead to escalation of the conflict.

Reuters

Pentagon says Iran jet tried to intercept US drone

Washington, 15 March —An Iranian warplane tried earlier this week to intercept a US drone but failed, the US Defence Department said on Thursday.

In a written statement, Pentagon Press Secretary George Little said that the Iranian jet tried to intercept an unmanned MQ-1 Predator remotely-piloted aircraft over “international waters” on 12 March, but the attempt was unsuccessful.

Little said that the unmanned aircraft was conducting a “routine classified surveillance flight” over international waters in the Gulf, when Iran sent an F-4 Phantom 2 jet to intercept it.

“The closest point of approach between these aircraft was approximately 16 miles,” Little added.

Two US military aircraft were escorting the Predator, and the Iranian plane broke off pursuit after a verbal warning.

“All US aircraft remained over international waters at all times,” Little stated.

According to the Pentagon, Iranian aircraft fired on a US drone operating over the Arabian Sea last November. The Iranian aircraft was said to have fired two missiles at the drone and missed.—Xinhua

Baghdad

Baghdad, 15 March—Coordinated blasts killed at least 25 people in the heart of Baghdad on Thursday near the heavily fortified Green Zone, where several Western embassies are located, police and medics said.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the explosions, but Sunni Muslim insurgents have been redoubling their efforts to undermine Iraq’s Shi’ite-led government and foment inter-communal conflict this year.

The brazen attacks in broad daylight will fan concerns about Iraq’s fragile security, which has come under growing strain as the increasingly sectarian conflict in neighboring Syria threatens to upset its own Sunni-Shiite balance.

Police said two car bombs exploded in the Alawi District, one of them near the Justice Ministry building, before a suicide car bomber blew himself up near an Interior Ministry office.

A suicide bomber then walked into the Justice Ministry and militants attacked the building, climbing with military uniform came up to the second floor and randomly started shooting,” he said. “I got shot in the leg and I am very proud to have killed one of them (the attackers).”

Among the dead were at least 7 policemen and 15 civilians, police and medics said. Three militants were also killed. At least 50 people were wounded.

Iraq’s power-sharing government has been all but paralysed since US troops left more than a year ago and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, a Shi’ite, is facing protests in the country’s Sunni heartland, which

The US Consulate in Benghazi is seen in flames during a protest by an armed group said to have been protesting a film being produced in the United States on 11 Sept, 2012.—Reuters

Libya detains suspect in attacks on US outposts in Benghazi

Tripoli/Washington, 15 March—Libyan authorities have detained a man investigators believe could be an important witness or suspect in the attacks on US outposts in Benghazi, Libya last September, according to people familiar with the matter.

The man, a Libyan national identified as Faraj al-Chalabi, fled to Pakistan after the attacks and only recently returned to Libya, said the sources, who included people in the United States and Libya close to the ongoing investigations.

One Libyan security source said he was from Eastern Libya.

The US government is aware of al-Chalabi’s detention and there are signs American investigators may have been able to pose questions to him, according to the sources. It is not clear whether those questions were posed in person or through Libyan authorities.

Precisely what role the detained man played in the 11 September, 2012 attacks is unclear.

US sources in Washington said they did not believe he was a principal instigator or a front-line leader of the attacks on a compound guarded temporary US diplomatic mission compound and a more fortified CIA compound nearby.

US Ambassador Christopher Stevens, two CIA security officers and another US diplomat were killed in the attacks.—Reuters

Members of the Iraqi Army gather near the site of a bomb attack at Alawi District in Baghdad on 14 March, 2013.—Reuters

Blasts, clashes kill at least 25 in central Baghdad

Iraqi security forces, who eventually regained control.

“I went to the second floor to do something when I heard a big explosion, then a second one,” said Ammar Ghanim, a policeman who was inside the ministry at the time of the attack.

“We heard shooting and a few minutes later three attackers wearing black masks entered the building and shot several people,” Ghanim said.

Ghanim, a policeman who was inside the ministry at the time of the attack, boasted to colleagues.

“I got shot in the leg and I am very proud to have killed one of them (the attackers).”

Alarm were dead at least 7 policemen and 15 civilians, police and medics said. Three militants were also killed. At least 50 people were wounded.

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Parking lot under construction along Strand Road in Yangon

YANGON, 15 March—Engineering Department (Road/Bridge) of Yangon City Development Committee reclaims car parks along Strand Road from Botataung Township to Lammadaw Township for declining traffic congestions in Yangon City.

On 7 March, sessions of car parks from 15 feet to 19 feet in length, totalling 1700 feet in length were constructed along Phonegyi Road in Lammadaw Township. In charge of the construction U Soe Win said that the construction tasks of car parks would be completed in the first week of April.

At present, drains are being constructed along newly-built Strand Road in Yangon City.

Free health care services provided to patients by Shwe Parami Health Foundation

YANGON, 15 March—Under the arrangement of the Ministry of Health, Shwe Parami Health Foundation opened the ceremony to provide health care services to local people in Homalin of Sagaing Region on 9 March, with an address by Patron of Shwe Parami Foundation Shwe Parami Tawya Sayadaw Ashin Chandadha. Deputy Minister for Health Dr Win Myint explained eye care services for the people.

Chairman of the foundation U Shein Win briefed on free care for eye patients. Townselder U Tun Shwe spoke words of thanks. The Sayadaw, the deputy minister, Deputy Director-General (Treatment) Dr Than Win of Health Department, the head of Sagaing Region Health Department and party went to Homalin Hospital (100-bed) and put glasses on the patients and explained dos and don’ts for eye patients. They viewed treatments for general, ear, nose, throat and dental patients.

Under the close supervision of Head of Sagaing Region Health Department Dr Tin Maung Aye, Assistant Director Dr Nilar Thein and eye specialists from Mawlamyine, Sittway, Bago and Maubin People’s Hospital and Yangon Eye Specialist Hospital performed surgical operation at eye patients free of charge together with specialists from various fields from 8 to 12 March.

Up to 9 March noon, the specialists provided health care services to 2722 patients in various diseases from Lekhi, Hkamti, Mawlaik and Phaunggyin townships nearby Homalin Township and put glasses on 297 eye patients.

Experience on Annual general meeting of MWAF recounted

BAGO, 15 March—A ceremony to recount the experience in the Annual General Meeting 2012 of Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation by Bago Region Women’s Affairs Organization was held at Seikta Thukha Hall of Bago Region Women’s Affairs Federation by Bago Region Women’s Affairs Organization.

Stimulant tablets worth K 176 million seized in Shan State

HISPAW, 15 March—Members of Lashio Anti-Drug Special Squad of Shan State (North) searched a saloon driven by Phone Maung Maung Oo from Muse to Mandalay at 1 pm on 5 March.

They seized 25 packets of stimulants each containing 2000 tablets each with WY brand in the chest of drawers and 19 packets of stimulant each containing 2000 tablets from passenger Ma Soe Soe Than, totalling 88000 tablets weighing 7.92 kilos worth K 176 million.

Laisho Police Station opened a file of lawsuit against Ma Soe Soe Than, 42, of Sugi Htandaw Ward of Kyaukse under the law.

Officials check illegal commodities and goods without custom duty seized at Sittoung Bridge

Yaunglebin sees better transport thanks to newly-opened Cheinchaung Bridge

YAUNGLEBIN, 15 March—A ceremony to inaugurate Cheinchaung Bridge was held in Kawkemthu Village of Gwaygon Village-tract in Nyaunglebin Township of Bago Region on 3 March morning.

Nyaunglebin Township Constituency Pyithu Hluttaw Representative U Soe Myint, Amyotha Hluttaw Representative U Ye Myint, Bago Region Hluttaw representatives U Saw Lin Aung and U Soe Paing and Township Administrator U Thihan Soe formally opened the new bridge.

The steel frame and wooden floor facility is 95 feet long and 10 feet wide. Its clearance is 25 feet high. Bago Region Government built the bridge spending K 17.3 million from the regional development fund for 2012-2013 fiscal year.

Thanks to the bridge, the local people of villages from Nyaunglebin Township and those of eastern bank in Shwegyin Township of Sittoung River will have easy access to other regions, enjoying betterment of social, health, education and economic sectors.—Myannya Alinn

Illegal commodities, goods without custom duty seized at Sittoung Bridge

WAW, 15 March—Mobile Team-2 seized vehicles with the loads of illegal commodities and goods without custom duty at the strategic road junction of new and old Sittoung Bridges in Waw Township in Bago Region at 2.20 am on 11 March.

The authorities seized 62 refrigerators worth K 7,440,000 from the vehicle driven by U Hu Sein, 15 boxes of edible oil and 37 packets of soft drinks worth K 566,400 on the vehicle driven by Min Thu and 10 containers of 40-visor edible oil worth K 640,000 from the vehicle driven by Zaw Min Oo.

The authorities opened files of lawsuit against illegal commodity carriers under the law.

Objectives of the 68th Anniversary Armed Forces Day 2013

1. To uphold the national policy namely non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty.

2. To play the leading role in the national politics by the Tatmadaw joining hands with all national races with Union Spirit and the true patriotism in line with the Constitution.

3. To crush all destructive elements at home and abroad through the strength of State, People and Tatmadaw.

4. To build up a strong, competent, modern, patriotic Tatmadaw to safeguard the security and sovereignty of the nation.

New Light of Myanmar
LOCAL NEWS
Saturday, 16 March, 2013
**Perspectives**

**Saturday, 16 March, 2013**

**XXVII SEA Games**

It is such a long time Myanmar has waited to host the SEA Games, the regional sports gala of South East Asia, for the third time on her soil. 44 years is rather too long for older generations to relive their enjoyable experiences of the SEA Games. And it would also be the first time for younger ones to witness such a big event in their whole life.

The SEA Games, held every two years since 1959, is the largest sports event in South East Asia. Myanmar first hosted SEA Games in 1961 and for the second time in 1969. Myanmar won 104 medals in the 1961 SEA Games and 149 medals in 1969.

The XXVII SEA Games are to be held in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Mandalay and Ngwesaung Beach from December 11 to 22, 2013. All the sports federations have been undergoing intensive training with their eyes firmly fixed on collecting gold medals.

Clinching victories in sports events is no doubt crucial for Myanmar after decades of disappointing results and performance in almost all regional sports events. But at the same time, it would present us a rare chance to rebuild and restore and give us greater exposure to other cultures, finally after 44 years of waiting.

The games are seen as an opportunity to demonstrate the common characteristics of Myanmar people such as hospitality, friendliness and kindness. As the theme of the games is “Clean, Green and Friendship”, we are to make the host cities cleaner and greener but it seems that the games gain less attention from citizens at the moment. Perhaps more stimulation efforts would be needed to arouse their interests in SEA Games as a means of re integrating with the outside world.

It would be a brand new start for Myanmar sports to wake up and battle back, ushering us into a new diplomatic era with Myanmar taking the ASEAN Chair in 2014. The onus is on all of us to convince that we deserve.

Government ditches tax clearance certificates

**Nay Pyi Taw, 15 March**—Thanks to the development of political, economic and social conditions of the State, there has been an increase in arrivals and departures of inbound and outbound visitors. Myanmar citizens need to take tax clearance certificates (Gha) (Pataku (OC)-12) from Internal Revenue Department if they so abroad. However, the procedures are found to cost much for them while being lengthy. Now, the line ministries are striving for implementation of public services which are people-centered and focused on people’s wishes.

So, as a task for easing the troubles of people, all people who will leave home (except those who have yet to pay the tax) are not needed to take the tax clearance certificates as of 15 March, announced the Ministry of Finance and Revenue.

**ASEAN countries, US to promote cooperation**

**Nay Pyi Taw, 15 March**—Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Daw Myat Myat Ohn Khin, together with the deputy ministers, received US Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Derek Mitchell, Special Representative and Policy Coordinator Mr. Patrick Murphy and Foreign Affairs Officer Ms. Cecily Brewer at Maykhala Hall of the ministry, here, this morning.

The meeting focused on further cementing bilateral relations and cooperation between Myanmar and US. The Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker also received a delegation led by former British Prime Minister Mr. Tony Blair at the same venue.

They cordially discussed amity and cooperation between the two countries and parliamentary affairs.

The Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker also held talks with a delegation led by Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and European Affairs Mr. Didier Reynders at the same venue at 2:30 pm today. At the talks, they discussed the parliamentary functions and political and economic reforms, further promoting of cooperation between Myanmar and Belgium through amity.

**Union Defence Minister receives Former British Prime Minister**

**Nay Pyi Taw, 15 March**—Union Minister for Defence Lt-Gen Wai Lwin received Mr Tony Blair, Former Prime Minister of Britain at the Ministry, here, this afternoon.

They had a cordial discussion on present democracy reform process in Myanmar and issues on Kachin State. —MNA

**Vice-President U Nyan Tun attends dress rehearsal of equestrian event**

**Nay Pyi Taw, 15 March**—Part of the Leading Committee for holding the 27th SEA Games Vice-President U Nyan Tun attended the opening ceremony of equestrian event as a dress rehearsal for the XXVII SEA Games.

**Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives US, British, Belgian guests**

**Nay Pyi Taw, 15 March**—Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U Hla Myint received US Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Myanmar Mr. Patrick Murphy and party at Zabuthiri Hall of the Hluttaw Complex, here, at 1 pm today.

Also present at the call together with the Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker were Pyithu Hluttaw Committee Chairmen U Hla Myint Oo and U T Khun Myat, Secretaries U Maung Toe and U Ko Ko Tha, and officials concerned of the Hluttaw Office.

The US Special Representative and Policy Coordinator was accompanied by US Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Derek Mitchell and officials.

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**Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann shakes hands with US Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Myanmar Mr. Patrick Murphy. —MNA**

**Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann greets participants at the opening ceremony of equestrian event as a dress rehearsal for the XXVII SEA Games.**

**Nay Pyi Taw, 15 March**—Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Daw Myat Myat Ohn Khin, together with the deputy ministers, received US Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Derek Mitchell, Special Representative and Policy Coordinator Mr. Patrick Murphy and Foreign Affairs Officer Ms. Cecily Brewer at Wunnatheikdhi horse race course, here, this morning.

Among the spectators were Chairman of the Leading Committee Union Minister for Sports U Tint Hsan, Union ministers, deputy ministers, the President of Myanmar Equestrian Federation (MEF) and members.

Union Minister U Tint Hsan, MEF President U Pyone Maung Maung, Technical Director of Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) Maj Yap Mou Soon extended greetings and opened the ceremony. Contestants from Myanmar, Cambodia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia will compete in two-day event at Wunnatheikdhi horse race course as of tomorrow. —MNA
**2013 Union Budget allows pay increase for civil servants**

**NAY PYI TAW, 15 March—Union Minister for Finance and Revenue U Win Min Shein put forward 2013 Union Budget Bill on behalf of the Union government at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session today.**

The budget allows pay rise of K 20,000 for civil servants both in service and retirees in 2013-2014 FY with extra allowances remain unchanged. The budget includes K 385.682 billion for 1,200,000 permanent civil servants, 740,000 daily wage earners at government departments and 760,000 pensioners. The budget also comprises special expenditure—K 156,008, 256 million for XXVII Sea Games, K 752,316 million for taking ASEAN Chair in 2014 and K 13,850,846 million for taking nationwide census in 2014.

According to findings of the joint bill committee, the amount of tax collected has increased significantly while K 580 billion could be allocated to region/state governments, K 134 billion more in comparison with 2012-2013 FY.

The session continues on 18 March.—MNA

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**Pyithu Hluttaw approves motion on reviewing 2008 constitution, US$ 2.6 million injected into saving Inlay Lake**

**Thura U Aye Myint puts forward urgent proposal.—MNA**

**NAY PYI TAW, 15 March—Pyithu Hluttaw unanimously approved an important motion on formation of committee and commissions to review the 2008 constitution.** Thura U Aye Myint of Wetlet Constituency tabled the motion today, suggesting Pyithu Hluttaw and Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to form committee and commission comprising law experts and intellectuals to review the 2008 constitution so that it can be in conformity with the current situation of the country due to reforming process.

U Ye Tun of Hsipaw Constituency expressed his delight for the motion, saying that the motion reflects the altruistic will of the ruling party.

U Lwin Oo of Thanlyin Constituency seconded the motion, stressing the need for reviewing the constitution whether it is right thought it was voted by 92.48 per cent of the people in favour of it and for working for what they found out after reviewing it.

During today session of Pyithu Hluttaw, Deputy Minister for Communications and Information Technology U Thein Tun Oo of Nyaungshwe Constituency seconded the motion.

Pyithu Hluttaw approves motion on reviewing 2008 constitution, US$ 2.6 million injected into saving Inlay Lake

**Dy Minister Dr Daw Thet Thet Zin replies to query.—MNA**

Thura U Aye Myint, Pyithu Hluttaw MP calls for granting autonomy to region/state governments as to religious affairs

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**MP calls for granting autonomy to region/state governments as to religious affairs**

**U Paw Lyan Lwin of Chin State Constituency (9) submits proposal.**—MNA

**NAY PYI TAW, 15 March—U Paw Lyan Lwin of Chin State Constituency (9) at Amyotha Hluttaw session today urged the Union government to grant autonomy to region/state governments in managing religious affairs in line with the rights vested by the Constitution.**

The Amyotha Hluttaw National Races Affairs Committee member said the national races affairs committees of the two Hluttaws and Internal Peace-making committees made field trips to 14 regions and states from May to June and listened to the voices of local people who spoke of difficulties and undesirable delays as regards religious affairs.

The joint committee members from two Hluttaws agreed to put forward the case to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

What the locals have said are realistic and reflect the objective conditions in the grass-root level of the society, said U Paw Lyan Lwin recommending that the region/state governments’ intervention would be the most effective in tackling the problem as the sole means of ensuring fundamental rights and responsibilities embodied in the Constitution.

The Hluttaw approved to discuss his proposal. U Kham Sun Meng of Chin State Constituency (3) said: “U Paw Lyan Lwin’s proposal focuses on equality and non-discrimination in religious affairs.”

The Religious Affairs Ministry allocates funds to respective religions yearly. And the funds usually do well. But, he is asking for grant autonomy to region/state governments in managing religious affairs in accordance with the rights vested by the constitution.”—MNA

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**General Soe Win receives Chinese Special Envoy**

**NAY PYI TAW, 15 March—Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) General Soe Win met Mr Wang Yingfan, Special Envoy on Asian Affairs of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of the People’s Republic of China, at Zeyathiri Beikman, here, this afternoon.**

They had a cordial discussion on cooperation for comprehensive strategic partnership countries and umity and cooperation between two Tatmadaws. It was also attended by Chief of Staff (Navy) Commodore Tin Aung San, Chief of Staff (Air) Brig-Gen Lwin Oo and Maj-Gen Aung Ye Win from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army). The Special Envoy was accompanied by Chinese military attaché to Myanmar SeniorColonel Xiong Shawei and officials. **MNA**
Mexican telecoms reform opens door to all players

Mexico’s President Enrique Pena Nieto speaks during the presentation of a telecommunications reform bill in Mexico City on 11 March, 2013.—Reuters

Women feel pressured to work more as economy finds footing

WASHINGTON, 15 March — Federal employee Leslie Shah went back to work just after her second child celebrated his first birthday, one of a growing number of American mothers who are choosing full-time work since the economic downturn.

“It really came down to a financial decision,” said Shah, 44, who lives in Maryland just outside Washington. “Gas prices are up, my grocery bill is up.”

More American women are feeling pressured to work a greater number of hours even as the country emerges from its economic doldrums. A Pew Research Centre report released on Thursday found nearly one in three Americans mothers last year said they would prefer a full-time job, up from one in five in 2007.

Lead researcher Kim Parker cited the 2007-2009 recession as the likely factor behind the findings, adding that fewer women said they wanted to work full time before the downturn.

“I doubt that’s because that’s what they really need to provide for their families,” Parker said in an interview.

Pew’s findings, based in part on its survey of 2,511 adults nationwide in late 2012, came amid renewed public debate about working mothers in the United States.—Reuters

New York to seek power in case nuclear plant closes

New York, 15 March—New York utility regulators on Thursday approved a proposal to seek 1,350 megawatts (MW) of generation or transmission later in March to keep the power grid reliable in case Entergy Corp’s Indian Point nuclear power plant is closed.

The New York Public Service Commission (PSC) staff said that if the 2,037-MW plant shuts in 2015 when its last reactor operating license expires, the additional power would be needed by the summer of 2016.

One megawatt can power about 1,000 homes. The PSC said it was not taking a position on whether Indian Point, which produces about a quarter of the power used in New York City, should shut down.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo wants the two reactors at Indian Point to shut when their operating licenses expire in 2013 and 2015 in part because the plant is within the heavily populated New York metropolitan area, which is home to about 20 million people.

The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), which regulates the country’s nuclear power plants, has said Indian Point is safe. Entergy is seeking a new 20-year operating licenses from the NRC for the Indian Point reactors.—Reuters

Bomb scare disrupts train traffic between Switzerland and Italy

GENEVA, 15 March—Rail traffic through the Alps between Switzerland and Italy was interrupted on Wednesday due to a bomb threat, Swiss police said.

Valais cantonal police said the editor of a local media received an anonymous phone call at about 11:15 am which claimed there was a bomb on a train between the Simplon tunnel for maintenance, Swiss news agency ATS reported.

The tunnel was closed from around 11:30 am until 5:00 pm, and police moved the train out of the tunnel late in the afternoon in order to search for explosives.

Swiss rail company SBB said buses have been arranged to take passengers to the Italian border city of Domodossola.—Xinhua

Two killed, one missing in Portugal’s Azores landslide

LISBON, 15 March—Two men were killed and at least one other man is missing in the village of Faial da Terra on the island of Sao Miguel, in Portugal’s Azores Islands, following a landslide that buried three entire homes on Thursday.

“Today morning there was a mud landslide which affected three homes and four families were rescued by firefighters or managed to escape through a window,” said the mayor of the Village Carlos Avila.

In a statement the mayor added, “Firefighters pulled out a family of five people from a bedroom, but the father was already dead. The mother and three daughters aged five, eight and 16 were rescued alive and unharmed.” According to the mayor, one home where two young brothers lived was “completely buried” and “a body of one was recovered around 6 am this morning.” One of the brothers around 30 years old is still missing.

“Rescue teams totalling more than 40 men, some using dogs, are currently searching for possible survivors amongst the rubble of three very old buildings over 100 years old at the base of a steep slope,” the mayor said.

Avila added that the cause of the landslide was a “huge amount of heavy rain that fell all day Wednesday on the island and became more intense from 5 pm.”—Xinhua

Palestinian children play in the al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza City on 13 March, 2013. About 700,000 Palestinians left their homes and settled in refugee camps in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and neighbouring Arab countries.—Xinhua

UN curbs Golan patrols after peacekeepers seized

BEIRUT, 15 March—UN peacekeepers monitoring the ceasefire line between Syria and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights have scaled back patrols after rebels detained 21 observers for three days last week, diplomats said on Thursday.

The seizure of the unarmed observers, all Filipinos, highlighted the vulnerability of the 1,000-member UN Disengagement Observer Force to the growing violence in Syria.

Diplomats in New York expressed concern that the future of UNDOF, whose mission began in 1974, may now be in doubt.

It also heightened concern in Israel that Islamist rebels, separated from Israeli troops only by a toothless UN force, may be emboldened to end years of quiet maintained by President Bashar al-Assad and his father before him on the Golan front.

“They have reduced their patrols for now, halted patrols in areas like the place where the Filipinos were taken hostage,” one diplomat in the region said.

A senior Western diplomat in New York said the UN peacekeeping department “decided to restrict the movement of UNDOF. So they’re no longer doing patrols, they’re closed down some of the observation posts, and they’re retreated to a safer part of the area.”—Reuters

Mexican telecoms reform opens door to all players

Mexican telecoms reform opens door to all players

WORLD

New Light of Myanmar
Asia’s defence spending overtakes Europe’s

LONDON, 15 March—Asia’s defence spending overtaken Europe’s for the first time last year, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) said on Thursday, reflecting China’s military rise and shrinking European economies.

In its annual report on the world’s militaries, it said China’s defence spending in real terms rose 8.3 percent between 2011 and 2012, while in Asia as a whole, spending rose 4.94 percent last year.

At the same time, nominal defence spending among European NATO members had shrunk to around 2006 levels due to budget cuts, the IISS said in “The Military Balance 2013”. “Indeed, the increase in Asian spending has been so rapid, and the defence austerity pursued by European states so severe, that in 2012 nominal Asian spending $287.4 billion (192.3 billion pounds) exceeded total official defence spending not just in NATO Europe, but across all of Europe, including spending by non-NATO European states,” it said.

The IISS, however, played down Washington’s “pivot” to Asia, saying that it had announced only limited new military deployments there while reducing its forces in Europe. “But as far as China is concerned there was less to this rebalance than first appeared,” the report said.—Reuters

Singapore expected to order F-35 fighter jets soon

SINGAPORE, 15 March—Singapore is in the “final stages of evaluating” the F-35 to upgrade its air force, a process US sources say should turn quickly into orders for several dozen of the stealthy warplanes that have been beset by cost overruns and delivery delays.

Singapore, a major business and shipping hub with the best-equipped military in Southeast Asia, is expected to submit a “letter of request” soon for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, said a defence ministry official who was not authorized to speak publicly on the matter.

Bangladeshi released from captivity of Somali pirates after 12 months

DHAKA, 15 March—One Bangladeshi, who was a sailor in a Panama registered ship-Royal Grace owned by a Dubai businessman, has been released from captivity of Somali pirates, Bangladesh’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Thursday.

According to a statement of the ministry, “Md Alauddin on Wednesday reached the port-Salalah of the Sultanate of Oman.” Alauddin was received by an official of Bangladeshi Embassy in Muscat who went there to extend all necessary cooperation including food, clothing and emergency medicines to the released Bangladeshi national, it said. It is learnt that Alauddin is safe and sound. He spoke with his family members in Chittagong, some 242 southeast of capital Dhaka, said the statement.

It said the Royal Grace and its 22 personnel were hijacked by the Somali pirates on 2 March last year. Among them 17 were Indian, three Nigerian, one Pakistani and this Bangladeshi national, it added.—Xinhua

New Zealand one of world’s friendliest nations for tourists

WELLINGTON, 15 March—New Zealand, along with Iceland, has been judged the world’s friendliest nation for tourists, according to a report released by the World Economic Forum.

This year’s “Travel and Tourism Competitive- ness Report” ranked 140 countries based on attractiveness and competitive- ness in the tourism and travel industries.

One of the rankings looked at how welcome tourists were in each coun- try on a scale of one to seven, categorized as “At- titude of population toward foreign visitors.”

The analysis showed that New Zealand and Iceland were the friendliest, with a score of 6.8 out of 7 a piece. Morocco was next in line, while Macedonia and Austria ranked at fourth and fifth.

Adversely, Bolivia was found to be the least wel- come to foreigners, fol- lowed by Venezuela and then Russia, according to the report.

In the overall Travel and Tourism Competitiv- e Index — which is “based on the extent to which they are putting in place the factors and poli- cies to make it attractive to develop the travel and tour- ism sector” — Europe domi- nated the top five positions with Switzerland, Germany and Austria in the respec- tive top three. Switzerland has held the top spot since the index began five years ago.—Xinhua

Japan’s upper house approves nomination of new BOJ leadership

TOKYO, 15 March—Japan’s upper house on Friday approved the nomina- tion of Haruhiko Kuroda for Bank of Japan governor and that of Kikko Iwata and Hiroshi Nakaso for deputy chiefs.

The House of Coun- cillors, the upper house, ap- proved the government’s selection of Asian Development Bank President Kuroda, Gakushuin University professor Iwata and BOJ Executive Director Nakaso, despite that the ruling coal- ition lacks a majority in the chamber.—Reuters

Indonesia hosts int’l meeting to concept joint tsunami alert drill

JAKARTA, 15 March—A meeting on tsunami alert and efforts to minimize the risk from tsunami began on Thursday in Padang, the cap- ital city of Indonesia’s West Sumatra Province. The two- day meeting gathered experts from 12 countries, including Indonesia, Australia, the United States, Brunei Darus- salam, China, India, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore and Vietnam.

Officials from interna- tional organizations concern- ing the tsunami disaster — the International Red Cross (IFRC), the United Nations’ office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), Japan International Coop- eration Agency (JICA) and Austria-Indonesia Facil- ity for Disaster Reduction (AFDR) also attended the meeting. Secretary of Indo- nesia’s National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BPBD) Fachru Hadi said the meet- ing would concept the simu- lation of tsunami alert drill called Table Top Exercise (TTX) scheduled to be held in Padang in April this year. —Xinhua
Iran, Russia, Vatican threaten to derail UN women’s rights appeal

United Nations, 15 March—An “unholy alliance” of Iran, Russia, the Vatican and others is threatening to derail a UN declaration urging an end to violence against women and girls by objecting to language on sexual, reproductive rights and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) rights, one senior UN diplomat said. “It’s tough going, but progress is being made,” one diplomat said. “People recognize that if there’s a failure again this year to get an outcome, then the whole future of the status of women commission is at risk,” he said on condition of anonymity because negotiations are still underway.

Reuters

Colorado lawmakers approve sweeping gun-control measures

DENVER, 15 March—Both chambers of the majority-Democratic Colorado legislature approved a package of four gun-control measures on Wednesday, capping months of debate in a state that has experienced two of the deadliest mass shootings in US history. The most controversial of the bills that are now headed to the desk of Democratic Governor John Hickenlooper is a ban on ammunition magazines with more than 15 rounds, which the governor said he will sign into law.

The passage of the bills could push Colorado closer to the forefront of a national gun-control debate reignited by several mass shootings last year, including the December massacre of 20 children and six adults at a school in Newton, Connecticut. The sponsor of the Colorado magazine-ban bill, state House Representative Rhonda Fields, told fellow lawmakers in a floor debate on Wednesday the proposal was about “saving lives.” “These are weapons that should be used in a theater of war and not in our local theaters,” she said.

The proposal was one of four gun-control measures approved by the Colorado legislature on Wednesday. The other measures include a ban on online certification for concealed-carry permits, a ban on a ban on online certification for concealed-carry permits, and a measure to make firearm buyers pay for their own background checks and a ban on online certification for concealed-carry permits, both of which Hickenlooper has said he supports. Another measure would bar gun purchases by people convicted of domestic violence or domestic battery. Hickenlooper had previously said he was undecided about that until he could see the final version.

Reuters

Three pro-secession activists killed in fresh clashes with Yemeni police

ADEN, (Yemen), 15 March—At least three activists of a secessionist movement were killed and 10 others injured in fresh clashes with police troops in Yemen’s southern port city of Aden on Wednesday, a security official told Xinhua.

The police troops opened fire and attempted to disperse hundreds of secessionist demonstrators in Aden’s neighbourhood of Mansoura, leaving at least three people killed and 10 others injured, the local security official said on condition of anonymity.

“The pro-secession activists blocked main roads with rocks and burned tires across the Mansoura District after a protest rally,” the security source said.Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi has called for separatist groups in the country’s southern regions to take part in a planned reconciliation national dialogue to settle disputes and promised to compensate them. Separatist sentiment escalated after a four-month civil war in 1994. Southern-Yemeni leaders claim of being economically and politically marginalized and discriminated. Hadi announced that the government will hold the national dialogue on 18 March to solve disputes among political factions and pave the way for amending the constitution and preparing for presidential elections in 2014.—Xinhua
Miley Cyrus, Liam Hemsworth break up, reportedly over her love of partying

NEW DELHI, 15 March—Miley Cyrus and Liam Hemsworth—who have been dating since 2009 but separated twice in 2010—have reportedly gone their separate ways after the former Hannah Montana star’s partying ways became a “problem” for the Hunger Games actor.

One source said: “Miley and Liam are done; it’s over. She likes to party really hard and can be pretty wild. It became a problem for him.”

Another source added to the New York Post newspaper: “They have broken up before, and are broken up again now. There was drama because she suspected he had a wandering eye. And she recently tweeted a denial that he cheated.

“While Miley has insisted they are still together, right now they are very, very much apart.”

Liam—who proposed to the 20-year-old singer-and-actress last March—recently flew back to his native Australia to escape his problems and spend time with his brother Chris Hemsworth and the actor’s family, wife Elsa Pataky and nine-month-old daughter India Rose.

A source said: “He needed to get away from Los Angeles and spend some time with his brother and friends.”

However, despite the split friends close to Miley—who was recently photographed without her engagement ring—are hopeful they will reconcile their differences and reunite once again.

One pal said: “Miley is a fiery character, and they do fight, but she is crazy about Liam. She isn’t ready to accept it might be over for good.”

Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes happy after divorce

NEW DELHI, 15 March—Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes are “incredibly happy” since they got divorced.

“The former couple’s good pal Adam Shankman, who directed the 50-year-old actor in Rock of Ages and worked with Katie, 34, when she appeared as a guest judge on So You Think You Can Dance, claims Tom is “happy as a clam” after spending time with their daughter Suri, six, recently.

He told UsMagazine.com: “They are incredibly happy. I’ve just been emailing with him. He’s coming back. He’s shooting [‘All You Need Is Kill’] in London and seems as happy as a clam. I know he sees his daughter.

“Katie seems really happy. You just fight through all the noise. And Jennifer Aniston’s wedding guests are on standby for her big day

NEW DELHI, 15 March—44-year-old actress Jennifer Aniston, who is reportedly set to marry Justin Theroux, hasn’t told anyone about where the wedding will be held till now for privacy reasons.

Jennifer has told guests, including her mother Nancy Dow, who she recently estranged from, to be prepared to move quickly once they receive information about the whereabouts of the extremely private celebration because they will only be given short notice.

A source told gossip website RadarOnline.com: “Indications are it’s going to be a small, private affair with just a select few invited. Those that are going have been told to expect a call at short notice, drop everything they are doing and head to the location when revealed.”

Guests have heard rumours about the wedding being held in Hawaii or even Greece—but most expect it to be staged in California.

“One person who has been told to expect a call is Jen’s mom Nancy. She has been told to hang by the phone for a call any day now with all the arrangements.”

After being encouraged by Justin, Jennifer, who was previously married to Brad Pitt, has been steadily rebuilding her relationship with Nancy in recent years, who was hospitalised in November after falling and breaking her elbow and is still suffering from the effects of a stroke in 2011.—PTI

Steven Spielberg’s special gift for Amitabh Bachchan

MUMBAI, 15 March—Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan has received a special gift from Hollywood filmmaker Steven Spielberg, who has been mingling with the Hindi film fraternity. Steven Spielberg gifted his coffee table book to Amitabh Bachchan.

“Another evening with Steven Spielberg at dinner… a gift for me from him… his coffee table book. What he wrote inside CBD. CBD: Cannot be disclosed,” tweeted Amitabh.

The 70-year-old veteran not just anchored Spielberg’s masterclass with as many as 61 Indian filmmakers, but he was also the first guest to arrive at a party organised by Indian business tycoon Anil Ambani and his wife Tina in Spielberg’s honour.

Ranbir Kapoor comes to the rescue of injured make-up man on set

MUMBAI, 15 March—Ranbir Kapoor may be in the news for his films and his romantic dalliances but the actor flaunted his kind side when he stalled a shoot to come to the aid of his make-up man Hemant Naik. Hemant had sustained injuries on the sets of his film.

A source says, “Ranbir was shooting for Karan Johar’s Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani in Manali when a huge reflector fell on his make-up man. It was a windy day and the reflector fell on Hemant’s man. Within no time he was bleeding and Ranbir rushed to him along with other crew members. While he was being taken to the local hospital, Ranbir insisted on going as well.”

The actor apparently took him in the production’s car and the make-up man was given some stitches. “And only when the doctors said that he was fine and would be discharged by the evening or the next day, did Ranbir leave and report back on the sets. Hemant and the others were touched by his gesture,” adds the source.—PTI

Jennifer Aniston’s wedding guests are on standby for her big day

NEW DELHI, 15 March—Jennifer Aniston’s wedding guests are on standby for her big day.
Thai Chinnarat leads in Delhi after birdie blitz

New Light of Myanmar
Saturday, 16 March, 2013

SPORTS

New Delhi, 15 March—Eight birdies in nine holes on the back nine gave Thailand’s Chinnarat Phadungsil a five-shot lead after the first round of the Avantha Masters golf on Thursday.

The 24-year-old hit a bogey-free round of 11-under-par 61 in the event, co-sanctioned by the European Tour and the Asian Tour, at the Jaypee Greens Golf & Spa Resort near the Indian capital. Chinnarat’s compatriots Chawalit Plaphol and Chapchai Nirat were among the five who were tied for second place, five shots back on six-under 66. After making the turn on 33, Chinnarat holed seven straight birdies before parring the 17th hole and finished his round after gaining another shot on the last.

“That’s my best-ever round,” he said later. “Today I had a lot of great puts. Back nine I hit the driver better than the front nine. But I holied my putts, that’s why I made my score.”

Home favourite Abhijit Singh Chadda, who turned professional last year, was equally impressive in the morning when he overcame strong winds for a bogey-free round of 66 in the 1.3-million-pound ($2.69 million) event.

“It’s a good field and it’s the first time I’m playing in an event sanctioned with the European Tour,” the 21-year-old said. “I’ve got no experience at all. I’ve played a couple of events on the Asian Tour, and playing with the big boys really gives you lots of confidence and it’s a really good feeling for me.”

Eight players, including Finn Joonas Granberg and Jaakko Maekitalo and the Australian duo of Scott Hend and Scott Bard, were six shots off the pace at five-under 67. ($1.06700 British pounds)—Reuters

Indian Wells, (California) 15 March—Rafael Nadal produced vintage form against an out-of sorts Roger Federer, crushing the Swiss 6-4, 6-2 in their heavily anticipated quarter-final at the BNP Paribas on Thursday.

The Spanish left-hand-er, competing in his first hardcourt event since his return from seven months on the sidelines with an ankle injury, outplayed his long-time rival with a sharp display at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden.

Nadal broke the defending champion once in the first set and three times in the second to wrap up victory in one hour 24 minutes in front of a packed house on the Stadium Court.

The Spanish world number five improved his record against Federer to 19-10 and will next face sixth-seeded Czech Tomas Berdych, who swept past big-serving South African Kevin Anderson 6-4, 6-2 earlier in the day.

“After seven months away, I am very happy to be in the semi-finals here,” a beaming Nadal said courtside after taking advantage of a slew of backhand errors by his opponent, who has been struggling with a back niggle throughout the season.

“Nadal crushed Federer, plays Berdych next

WELLINGTON, 15 March—Matt Prior produced an exceptional counter-attacking innings then Stuart Broad captured two wickets in successive balls as England took control of the second test against New Zealand by the close of play on the second day of Friday.

England, bowled out for 465 just minutes before the tea interval, reduced New Zealand to 66 for three at stumps and put themselves firmly in charge of the match with three days still to play.

Kane William-son was 32 not out, while Dean Brownlie was on eight after Eng-

England’s Kevin Pietersen acknowledges the crowd after he reached fifty runs during the second day of match against New Zealand at the Basin Reserve in Wellington on 15 March, 2013.—Reuters

Vettel on top in season-opening practice

Melbourne, 15 March—Red Bull’s Sebastian Vettel began his quest for a fourth successive Formula One world title by setting the quickest time in first free practice for the season-opening Australian Grand Prix on Friday.

The German steered the car he has nicknamed ‘Hungry Heidi’ around the Melbourne street circuit in one minute 27.211 seconds to finish ahead of the Ferrari duo of Brazilian Felipe Massa (1.27.209) and Spain’s Fernando Alonso (1.27.547).

Briton Lewis Hamilton was fourth quickest in his first outing for new team Mercedes, ahead of Vettel’s Australian team mate Mark Webber, still searching for his first win in his home race.

A Finn Kimi Raikkonen had set the early pace in his Lotus and ensured four for-

Vettel and his teammates were on cloud nine when they crossed the line in first place, ahead of Alonso and Hamilton while fourth-placed Alonso.

Adrian Sutil made an excellent start on his return to the sport after a year out of the sport by setting the eighth quickest time.

McLaren had a disappointing morning with 2009 world champion Jenson Button, who has won three of the last four Australian Grand Prix, only managing the ninth fastest time and his new team mate, Mexican Sergio Perez, lapping 11th quickest.—Reuters

Red Bull Formula One driver Sebastian Vettel (L) of Germany smiles with Ferrari Formula One driver Fernando Alonso (L) of Spain before the drivers parade ahead of the Australian Formula One Grand Prix.—Reuters

Paraguay drop 2010 World Cup captain

Villar

Asuncion, 15 March—Former captain and goalkeeper Justo Villar was dropped from Paraguay’s squad Thursday for this month’s World Cup qualifiers in Uruguay and Ecuador.

Gerardo Pelusso also opted for a c r e a l i n g s t r i k e r Roque Santa Cruz, in good form for Champions League quarter-finalists Malaga, to face the coach’s home country Uruguay on Monday and Ecuador in Quito six days later.

Santa Cruz and Villar were a key part of the Paraguay side that reached the quarter-finals in October when Paraguay, bottom of the South American group, ended a run of four defeats with a 1-0 home win over Peru, his place having been taken by Diego Barreto.’

Santa Cruz, who last played for his country in the 3-1 defeat in Argentina in September, was dropped substitute in October when Paraguay, bottom of the South American group, ended a run of four defeats with a 1-0 home win over Peru, his place having been taken by Diego Barreto. Santa Cruz, who last played for his country in the 3-1 defeat in Argentina in September, was dropped substitute in October when Paraguay, bottom of the South American group, ended a run of four defeats with a 1-0 home win over Peru, his place having been taken by Diego Barreto.

Paraguay, who hired Pelusso last year after sacking Paraguay’s national team head coach Mario Ledesma have announced a training session in Ypane, some 30 km (19 miles) from Asuncion on 8 Oct, 2012.—Reuters

Prior and seamers put England in control

Wellington, 15 March—Prior and seamer put England in control as New Zeland opted against playing two spinners for the fifth test against New Zealand at the Basin Reserve in Wellington on 15 March, 2013.—Reuters

Paraguay’s World Cup captain Justo Villar (L) and Diego Barreto attend a training session in Ypane, some 30 km (19 miles) from Asuncion on 8 Oct, 2012.—Reuters

England’s impressive 1-0 home win over Peru in their last qualification match in September, was dropped substitute in October when Paraguay, bottom of the South American group, ended a run of four defeats with a 1-0 home win over Peru, his place having been taken by Diego Barreto.

Paraguay, who hired Pelusso last year after sacking Paraguay’s national team head coach Mario Ledesma have announced a training session in Ypane, some 30 km (19 miles) from Asuncion on 8 Oct, 2012.—Reuters

England’s Kevin Pietersen acknowledges the crowd after he reached fifty runs during the second day of match against New Zealand at the Basin Reserve in Wellington on 15 March, 2013.—Reuters

land’s pace bowlers had given the New Zealand lineup a torrid working over in the final session.

Broad seized on the earlier work by James An-

derson and Steven Finn to lure Hamish Rutherford (23) into chasing a full width delivery that only suc-

ceeded in catching an outside edge and the ball flew to Alastair Cook at first slip.

Former New Zealand captain Ross Taylor was then clean bowled with a beautiful delivery that seemed slightly away and clipped the top of Taylor’s off stump to leave the hosts in dire straits on 48 for three.

Brownlie survived the hat-trick delivery with a push to midwicket for two runs.

“For Broady to get two balls in the right area back to back was credit to him (and) those couple of wickets at the end certainly turned that last session,” said Prior, who launched a blistering counter-attack to score 82 runs from 99 balls
MR provides Best service for foreigneers

YANGON, 14 March— For the convenience of traveller, Myanma Railways placed LED Board showing the departure and arrival time of the trains, at Yangon Railway Station. As there are language barriers between foreigner and local people, such kind of the activity could contribute a lot to tourists and travellers.

Kymon

Victoria Azarenka of Belarus talks about withdrawing from the tournament due to a right ankle injury before her quarterfinal match against Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark at the BNP Paribas Open WTA tennis tournament in Indian Wells, California, on 14 March, 2013.— Reuters

INDIAN WELLS, (California) 15 March— In a bizarre coincidence, top seed Victoria Azarenka and seventh-seeded Australian Samantha Stosur withdrew from their quarter-final matches at the BNP Paribas Open on Thursday due to leg injuries. Australian Open champion Azarenka of Belarus pulled out with an inflamed right ankle after Stosur had exited earlier in the day with a calf injury, handing walkovers for fourth seed Angelique Kerber and Caroline Wozniacki into the semi-finals.

Azarenka, who demolished Russian Maria Sharapova 6-2, 6-3 in last year’s final, had complained about her ankle the week before as she made her way toward the players’ dining area after her warm-up for the match. The Belarusian’s premature departure gifted eighth-seeded Dane Wozniacki, the 2011 champion here, a place in the last four for a third time at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden.

“I tested it out as much as possible,” a visibly distressed Azarenka told reporters. “I tried absolutely everything I could to do, but have been advised by the doctor, by my own team, that it’s just a very, very high risk already.”

“There is a big inflammation which keeps bothering one part or another,” said the Belarusian, who had an MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) on her ankle on Wednesday. “It cannot get better with me playing on it, especially playing the last three matches on it. I’m still looking forward to next week (the WTA event in Miami) to see if I can recover and take it from there.”

New cruise debacle for Carnival as ship stuck in port

LONDON, 15 March— A Carnival Cruise Lines ship with 5,600 passengers and crew was stuck at a Caribbean port with equipment trouble on Thursday, a month after another Carnival vessel was disabled by a fire that trapped thousands of passengers at sea for days.

The incident is the latest black eye for an industry battered by problems ranging from norovirus outbreaks to the Costa Concordia accident in Italy in 2012 that killed 32 people.

Carnival Corp said the cruise ship Carnival Dream was stuck in port in St Maarten after its emergency diesel generator malfunctioned during testing on Wednesday. The liner, among the company’s largest, was on a weeklong cruise and had been due back in Port Canaveral, Florida on Saturday.

The problem caused temporary disruptions to elevator and toilet services but the ship never lost power, the company said, adding that only one public toilet had overflowed.

Carnival Corp said it was arranging to fly the passengers, via charter flights and regularly scheduled flights from the Caribbean island, to Orlando or their final destination. Passengers will get a refund equal to three days’ worth of travel and half off a future cruise.

China exports more mechanical, electronic products in 2012

BEIJING, 15 March— China increased the value of its exports of mechanical and electronic products to 1.18 trillion US dollars in 2012, or about 3.3 percent of China’s total exports, reaching more than 230 billion US dollars, said on Thursday that the 8.7-percent year-on-year growth brought the global share achieved by products from China to 16.1 percent in the first 11 months of last year, up 0.9 percentage points from 2011.

The combined import and export volume of the products rose 6.7 percent year on year to 1.96 trillion US dollars, said the China Association (CLA) projects that the number of people taking cruises this year will rise 3.3 percent. Carnival Corporation and smaller rival, Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd, have said bookings are recovering from a slump following the Costa Concordia accident.

But a slew of headlines about mechanical problems and passengers stranded at sea without functioning toilets - coming at the busiest time of the year for bookings - could take a toll, especially if it deters potential first-time passengers.

“It’s first-time cruisers that will have issues. This is definitely a PR (public relations) concern,” said Morningstar analyst Jaime Katz. “This is some inflection point.”

Carnival canceled the Carnival Dream’s next voyage, which had been scheduled to start on Saturday.— Reuters
President U Thein Sein visits Auckland University

Vice-President U Nyan Tun receives former British Prime Minister, Belgian Dy PM

Nay Pyi Taw, 15 March—Vice-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Nyan Tun received a delegation led by former Prime Minister of Britain Mr. Tony Blair at the Credentials Hall of the Presidential Palace, here, this morning. Also present at the call together with the Vice-President were Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Thant Kyaw and departmental heads. The former Prime Minister of Britain was accompanied by British Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Andrew Richard Heyn.

At the meeting, they discussed cooperation in implementation of a long-term plan for economic development that is crucial for frameworks of economic and social reforms of Myanmar in 2012-2015 and further strengthening governance and public administration. The Vice-President also received Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and European Affairs Mr. Didier Reynders and party at the same venue in the afternoon.

They focused on environmental conservation, maintenance of watercourse in major rivers, cooperation in education and health sectors, investment in port construction at economic zone, relationship between EU and Myanmar, assistance for XXVII SEA Games and chairmanship in ASEAN in 2014.

It was also attended by Union Minister for Commerce U Win Myint, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Thant Kyaw, Deputy Minister for Transport U Han Sein and departmental heads. The Belgian delegation was accompanied by Belgian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Marc Michielsen.

Kachin State chief minister meets EU ambassadors

Nay Pyi Taw, 15 March—Kachin State Chief Minister U La John Ngan Hsai held talks with ambassadors from EU member countries led by French ambassador to Myanmar at the meeting hall of the state government office on 13 March.

The chief minister also attended a ceremony to open a new school building at Myitkyina University yesterday. During the ceremony, Deputy Education Minister Dr Ba Shwe, State Social Affairs Minister Daw Bauk Ja, the director-general of the Department of Higher Education (Upper Myanmar) and the rector of the university formally opened the new school building. The chief minister looked round the new school building.

Vice-President U Nyan Tun to pay goodwill visit to Viet Nam

Nay Pyi Taw, 16 March—At the invitation of Her Excellency Madam Nguyen Thi Doan, Vice President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, U Nyan Tun, Vice-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, will pay a goodwill visit to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam in the near future.

Vice-President U Nyan Tun cordially greets Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and European Affairs Mr Didier Reynders.