Myanmar has basic infrastructures and potentials for development of tourism industry. As the best time for Myanmar to attract tourists has come now, hoteliers from foreign countries are eyeing a slice of Myanmar hotel industry.

Accor Group, a French hotel group, is planning to invest in Myanmar hotel industry, said an official from the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism. “The tourism industry would be booming. International tourism agencies are set to include Myanmar in their tourism destinations and international travelers are also interested in visiting Myanmar. So, hoteliers from France are planning to make investment in hotel industry in Myanmar,” he said.

Accor group from France has planned to build three hotels in Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw and Mandalay respectively.

At present, Myanmar has over 36 foreign-invested hotels and business buildings across the country.

Myanmar Alinn: 16-3-2013
Trs: AMS

A high-rise hotel in Yangon attracting globetrotters by offering better accommodation.
Gas generators for Ywama power plant arrive in Yangon

NAY PYI TAW, 23 March — As a short-term plan to generate more electricity, the Ministry of Electric Power is implementing the task of building more gas-fire power plants in Ywama, Ahlone, Hlawga and Thakayta. Thirteen gas generators transported from Germany for a 50 MW Power Plant which is under construction in the compound of Ywama Power Station arrived at Asia World jetty on 17 March. Arrangements are being made to install the generators at the power plant. Upon completion, 50 MW of electricity will be sent to the national power grid, thereby supplying more electricity to the public. MNA

High-voltage fault sparks house fire in NyaungU

NYAUNGU, 23 March — A high-voltage fault sparked a fire at a house in Aung Myaytha ward in NyaungU at about 10 am on 21 March. The fire broke out due to an electrical overload of an air-conditioner at the house of Daw Than Hla, 45. A saloon worth K 21.5 million, a bus worth K 25 million, a house with a built-in garage and a warehouse were completely gutted by fire, but no causality was reported. NyaungU police station field a lawsuit against the house owner. — Kyemon

Cash donation, publications for village libraries in Inlay region

INLAY, 23 March — Leader of social and cultural Working Group of Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation Dr Khin Swe Myint together with WAO members of the Department of Archaeology, National Museum and Library in Shan State visited libraries in Inlay region on 16 and 17 March. Dr Khin Swe Myint and members donated 300 books and different kinds of journals, newspapers and magazines to libraries in Shwe Inn-tein, Heya Ywama, Khaungdine and Mongthauk villages. They also made cash donations for the funds of village libraries. — Kyemon

Reinforced with new diesel generators

Thakayta power plant

YANGON, 23 March — Aiming at ensuring adequate electricity supply in summer, arrangements are being made for timely installation of generators at new gas power plants which are under construction in Yangon Region.

On 19 March, nine 1250 KVA diesel-powered generators shipped from Japan arrived at Asia World jetty in Ahlone Township, here, and they were transported to Thakaiya powerplant project in Thakayta Township. It was the second arrival of generators. Works are being made for the soonest installation of new generators to the project.

Upon completion, nine megawatts will be sent to the national power grid. So officials and staff of the Ministry of Electric Power are trying hard day in, day out to be able to supply electricity to the public as quick as possible. MNA

DEPUTY MINISTERS VISIT SMEs IN YANGON REGION

YANGON, 23 March — Deputy Minister for Industry U Thein Aung, Deputy Minister for National Planning and Economic Development Dr Daw Khin San Yi, Yangon Region Minister for Electricity and Industry U Nyan Tun Oo, Yangon Region Minister for Planning and Economy U Than Myint and UMFCCI officials visited small-and medium-scale enterprise and value-added processing activities of industries, here, on 16 March.

They made an inspection tour of One Two Two rice mill at Shwelinban industrial zone in Hlinethaya Township and observed value-added processing of rice there. Next, they proceeded to bronze smith’s workshop of Thar Myamar Co., in North Okkalapa Township.

In the afternoon, they viewed production process of rotor blades for motorized boat, axles and rudders used in building ships at Swam Ah Pyae industries in South Dagon industrial zone-2.

Because of the bank erosion, 15 houses were relocated to safer places in 2011 and 13 in 2012.

As the bank erosion has now reached 30 yards from the embankment, local people in the village and its environs are in fear of bank erosion. Bank erosion along Sittoung river have caused severe damage to farmlands and forced homes to move to other places. Moreover, the shortage of land has made relocation difficult. Kyemon

Sittoung riverbank erosion forces houses to move to safer places

TOUNGGOO, 23 March — Within two years, bank erosion of Sittoung river disrupted local households and forced 28 houses in Ywadanshe village in Toungoo Township of Bago Region to move to safer places. The scale of bank erosion of Sittoung river which is used to be situated 200-foot east of the village has become larger, and the water course of the river had been diverted to the middle part of the village during the flooding season in 2011.

Sittoung river has now reached 30 yards from the embankment, local people in the village and its environs are in fear of bank erosion. Bank erosion along Sittoung river have caused severe damage to farmlands and forced homes to move to other places. Moreover, the shortage of land has made relocation difficult.

Kyemon

SEABA’s CEC meeting in Nay Pyi Taw

NAY PYI TAW, 23 March — A meeting of CEC members of Southeast Asian Basketball Federation took place at Golden Guest Hotel, here, on 19 March. Submission of annual report, clarification of expenditures and discussion on follow-up tasks of the association were made at the meeting. The SEABA is an organization formed with 10 ASEAN member countries. Its CEC meeting is held every year. Myanmar hosted the 2013 meeting for the first time. — MNA
**Chinese leader bolsters Russian ties on first foreign trip**

Moscow, 23 March—Chinese leader Xi Jinping emphasized the importance of relations with Russia as a counterweight to US influence by visiting Moscow on his first foreign trip as president, and secured more oil to fuel China’s growing economy.

Although relations between Moscow and Beijing have been very friendly for many years, they are said to have improved in the past decade and Xi highlighted this by signing energy, trade and political deals on Friday to strengthen ties between them.

*Russian President Vladimir Putin has long sought to blunt US influence overseas, while China is grappling with the rapid growth in its military and economic interest the United States has displayed in Asia since 2011.*

Xi became the first foreign guest to be met in the Kremlin by an honorary cavalry escort created by Putin in 2002. The meeting was at ease with the Russian leader in its glittering halls despite the formality of the occasion.

Putin, 60, greeted Xi with a firm handshake and a grin then ushered him down a red carpet past a line of officials and into the Kremlin’s gilded Green Room. The meeting was carefully scripted and any disharmony was glossed over. But Putin looked more comfortable with Xi than with the French and German leaders, Francois Hollande and Angela Merkel, who raised human rights concerns during recent visits.—*Reuters*

**What’s at stake in UN arms trade treaty negotiations?**

United Nations, 23 March—Members of the United Nations have been meeting at the world body’s New York City headquarters this week for a final round of negotiations on what could become the first international treaty to regulate the $70 billion global conventional arms trade.

The treaty drafting conference will continue until 28 March. Following are questions and answers about the draft arms trade treaty. The point of an arms trade treaty is to set standards for all cross-border transfers of any type of conventional weapon—light and heavy. It would also create binding requirements for nations to review all cross-border arms contracts to ensure the munitions will not be used in human rights abuses, terrorism, violations of humanitarian law, do not breach UN arms embargoes and are not illegally diverted.

It would require governments to refuse to export weapons to countries that would likely use them to violate human rights or commit war crimes. It would also require governments to regulate arms brokering.

The current draft treaty says that the following weapon types will be covered by the pact “at a minimum”: battle tanks; armoured combat vehicles; large-calibre artillery systems; combat aircraft; attack helicopters; warships; missiles and missile launchers; small arms and light weapons; and riot control equipment.

It would not cover unconventional weapons like nuclear, biological and chemical arms. Separate treaties cover those. Human rights groups, arms control advocates and a majority of the United Nations’ 193 member states want a strong treaty that imposes tough new standards on the largely unregulated arms trade.—*Reuters*

**Colombian rebels repeat cease-fire call**

Havana, 23 March—The rebel Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) on Thursday repeated a call for a cease-fire with the government as the two sides were in negotiations for a peace deal to end five decades of fighting. FARC delegate Tonija Nijmeijer, reading from a statement, said the government’s refusal to enter into a bilateral cease-fire has led to several violent incidents.

Recurrent clashes were disruptive to the negotiations, said the negotiator on the last day of the sixth round of peace talks in Havana, Cuba.

The FARC statement also contained six proposals in the areas of social and educational reform, including an initiative to establish free and universal elementary and middle-school education to eradicate illiteracy in the countryside. FARC was founded in the early 1960s by peasant farmers demanding the fairer distribution of land and better living conditions.

The government estimates the group counts between 8,000 and 9,000 members. Xinhua

**S African union urges energy coordination at BRICS summit**

Johannesburg, 23 March—The energy coordination strategy should be on the agenda at the coming 5th BRICS Summit, a leading South Africa’s trade union said on Friday.

“The question of energy, its production, supply and consumption will be a litmus test of whether the constellation known as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) is a coherent political entity,” said the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) in a statement.

The 5th BRICS Summit is scheduled to be held in the South African port city of Durban on Tuesday. “Between themselves the five BRICS countries have abundant energy sources such as coal, oil, gas, nuclear and other renewable energy sources,” said the statement. “There is no doubt that for their continued economic development, the BRICS countries require ongoing supply of energy.”

“There can be no question about the fact that for these economies to grow and develop, they will need to ensure a continually growing supply of energy. As such, one of the agendas of the BRICS summit will have to be the question of energy production, distribution and consumption,” the statement added.

The union expressed hope that the BRICS summit could reach an understanding on the energy cooperation, especially in the development of renewable energy.—*Xinhua*

**Brazil’s President very likely to get reelected**

Río de Janeiro, 23 March—President Dilma Rousseff is the most likely winner of the next general election 18 months away, according to latest survey results.

The Ibope poll released on Friday by the O Estado de Sao Paulo daily shows that 52 percent of the voters backed Rousseff if elections were being held now, while another 24 percent said they might vote for her.

Only 20 percent said they would not vote for Rousseff no matter what, according to the poll, which was conducted among 2,002 voters from 142 municipalities nationwide with a 2-percent margin of error. Ten percent said they would certainly vote for former Senator Marina Silva, who finished third in the last election, and 30 percent said they might vote for her.

Half of the respondents said they would not vote by Obama during their meetings, dispelling the frosty scowls and sniping encounters over the previous four years. “The atmosphere was much better than in all their meetings before,” said a senior Israeli official. “He gave the impression that he really wanted to start afresh,” he said of Obama.

Obama has already spent more time talking to Netanyahu than to any other world leader, according to the White House, and the pair put several more hours on the clock through this week.—*Reuters*

**Obama scores unexpected successes on Middle East trip**

Jerusalem, 23 March—US President Barack Obama flew out of Israel in a dust storm on Friday, leaving behind a trail of symbolic gestures and fine oratory that should help preserve the status quo at a time of regional upheaval.

In an unexpected diplomatic flourish, he also facilitated a surprise telephone call between the Prime Ministers of Israel and Turkey, putting two US allies firmly on track to revive a once close relationship that had become badly frayad. Obama set such low expectations for the three-day trip that he can easily proclaim it mission accomplished, having won over skeptical Israelis and eased their fears over Iran a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace deal is still possible.

This visit marks a “resumption of American attention to the conflict, which is very important after two years of utter absence from the scene,” said Ghassan al-Khatib, an academic and a former Palestinian government spokesman.

“It probably won’t lead to any new negotiations, which in any case would be meaningless given the huge gulf between the two sides. But it might bring some accountability to the Israelis.” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared highly satisfied after a successful visit and an academic and a former Palestinian government spokesman.

Sunday, 24 March, 2013

**US President Barack Obama is greeted by Bedouin Jordanian guard on his arrival at Amman Airport, on 22 March, 2013.**—*Reuters*
ReadCube: An all-in-one tool for reading PDF articles

BEIJING, 23 March—ReadCube, a new program for digital articles reading and managing, has been praised highly on the Internet. “I’m a big fan of ReadCube,” a Facebook user wrote in the name of samantics, adding that the software is fast and easy to operate.

As a comprehensive, all-in-one tool, ReadCube offers specific multi-functions, such as clean operation interface, daily recommendation service and a better experience of reading PDFs of scholarly articles. It is a worthy competitor comparing with existing reference management software, US tech blogger Yaara Lancet wrote in an article of PC World. Launched by the American software company Labtiva in June 2012, ReadCube integrated search on PubMed and Google Scholar, two of the biggest online resources of scientific papers.

Besides, Labtiva has established cooperative relationships with the University of Utah and Nature Publishing Group, so as to provide authoritative articles for the users. Over 100 million researchers worldwide have to purchase articles individually, that may cost them significant research fund. Even the university libraries always want to provide the researchers with immediate access to the resources they need, but no library can afford to subscribe every journal in every discipline.

Moreover, these researchers may spend too much time on managing the mass of article files rather than doing their research. However, ReadCube was seen by many users as a promising programme to solve these problems.

“ReadCube Access programme gives our researchers and students fast and low-cost access to the specialized content they need to complete their scholarly work,” said Rick Anderson, the Associate Dean for Scholarly Resources and Collections from the University of Utah. “Researchers no longer need to pay for reading articles in any journal on Nature.com, including more than 50 titles for which the institution does not hold full site licenses, he added. The goal for ReadCube Access is to establish a model mutually beneficial to researchers, libraries, and publishers to expand access to research literature by supplementing existing site licenses, according to Sinisa Hrvatin, the Labtiva co-founder.

“We want to help scientists access any journal article they need, without having to pay 30 US dollars per article or jump through other hoops,” he said.

ReadCube was also acclaimed for its compatibility on different format of article files. “ReadCube Access coexists with the content on our existing HTML full-text, PDF and app access options,” said Steven Incoombe, Managing Director of Nature Publishing Group. The convenient and time-saving features on article management were also the reason for ReadCube’s popularity among its users. “ReadCube brings long-needed functionality to the PDF, retaining its benefits of portability, familiarity, and print-like layout while transforming it into an interactive gateway to related articles and cited literature,” said Jay Flynn, an executive from Wiley, a global provider of content and workflow solutions.

Google’s Eric Schmidt uses a BlackBerry, says likes its keyboard!

NEW DELHI, 23 March—Google Executive Chairman Eric Schmidt uses a BlackBerry! May be too surprising, but it’s true. “I am a BlackBerry user. I like the keyboard of Blackberry,” said Schmidt answering some rapid-fire questions from the Editor of a British daily at Google’s Big Tent—a forum to discuss Internet and its impact on economy, governance etc.

Blackberry is a technology riddle of Google’s operating system Android—how it is used in many makes of smartphones, like Samsung Galaxy. BlackBerry’s operating system is BlackBerry OS. Schmidt also categorically said there isn’t any plan to converge Android and Web browser Chrome and Apps divisions. “No is the answer, we don’t make decisions based on who the leader is, we make decisions based on what the technology takes us,” he said when asked if the three will be merged.

“...there can be more commonality for sure (between Android and Chrome) but they surely be remain separate for a very long time because they are so different because they,” Schmidt said.

FRANKFURT, 23 March—A German court ruled in favour of Finnish mobile phone maker Nokia on Tuesday, saying some devices made by Taipei’s HTC infringed on its power-saving patent.

The case was one of 22 infringement suits Nokia has brought against the Taiwanese devices maker, of which 16 had been filed in the UK and at the United States International Trade Commission, with a hearing in the United States to start in two months.—Reuters

A Nokia smartphone is seen in this photo illustration taken in Bucharest on 24 Jan, 2013. Reuters

Nokia wins German patent ruling against HTC

Nokia is pleased with this decision, which confirms the quality of Nokia’s patent portfolio,” Nokia said in an e-mailed statement. The power-saving patent refers to a technology for saving battery power while connected to a network.

HTC said its business in Germany would not be affected by the Mannheim regional court’s ruling as it covers only three handsets the company no longer imports into the country. It said it would appeal the decision while also continuing efforts to have the patent declared invalid by the German Federal Patents Court and the English Patents Court. Nokia said it has also asserted the power-saving patent against HTC in the UK and at the United States International Trade Commission, with a hearing in the United States to start in two months.—Reuters

PuHAN, 23 March—A ground system aimed at enhancing the navigation precision of China’s homegrown BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS) was approved in central China’s Hubei Province on Friday. The ground system improves positioning technology, and to 1.5 metres with the single-frequency differential navigation technology.

The former technology, which is much more precise, will be used in special industries like mapping, land resources, urban construction, planning and water conservation, as well as national construction projects. The latter will be put into public use, including vehicle positioning services, said Shi Chang, Director of the global navigation satellite system research centre of Wuhan University. Planned by the central government, the BGBES was built by the centre and the Hubei Provincial Surveying and Mapping Bureau as a national pilot project.—Xinhua

Google’s Eric Schmidt uses a BlackBerry, says likes its keyboard!
Energy drinks may increase blood pressure, disturb heart rhythm

WASHINGTON, 23 March—Energy drinks may increase blood pressure and disturb your heart’s natural rhythm, according to a research presented on Thursday at the American Heart Association’s 2013 scientific sessions.

Researchers analyzed data from seven previously published observational and interventional studies to determine how consuming energy drinks might impact heart health.

In the first part of the pooled analysis, the researchers examined the QT interval of 93 people who had just consumed one to three cans of energy drinks. They found that the QT interval was 10 milliseconds longer than baseline, and extended by 5 points in a pool of 132 participants. “The correlation between energy drinks and increased systolic blood pressure is convincing and concerning, and more studies are needed to assess the impact on the heart rhythm,” Shah said. “Patients with high blood pressures or long QT syndrome should use caution and judgment before consuming an energy drink.—Xinhua

BEIJING, 23 March—China’s economy should expand by 8.5 percent in 2013 and more in 2014, with inflation and export demand the biggest near term risks to growth that should average 8 percent in this decade at current rates of investment and reform, the OECD said on Friday.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) offered one of the most upbeat assessments of China’s prospects of any of the major multilateral institutions in its new Economic Survey of China, which was unveiled in Beijing.

The 161-page survey, the first such report from the Paris-based OECD since 2010, was particularly optimistic about the outlook for investment spending in the world’s No 2 economy.

It pointed to substantial deficits in rail and road capacity relative to other major economies at similar stages of development, as well as to sub-standard housing as offering scope for more profitable spending on infrastructure.

“The level of investment in the private sector is well-founded by the rates of return, and in infrastructure, we still think there are tremendous needs,” Richard Hurd, the head of the OECD’s China desk, told a media conference.

“We’re positive on investment in the sense that we see rates of return remaining quite high,” he added.

Many private sector economists believe China’s GDP growth by the end of this decade will be nearer 5 percent than the 10 percent average annual rate it has hit for the last 30 years.

China’s official growth target for 2013 is 7.5 percent and 7 percent on average in the five-year plan that runs to 2015.

Growth slowed to a 1-year low of 7.8 percent in 2012, with weak demand in the European Union and the United States — the two biggest export customers — the main drag on growth. —Reuters

China growing strongly

JOHANNESBURG, 23 March—The Cypriot financial crisis might be in discussions at the coming 5th BRICS Summit, the South African media reported on Friday.

The lawmakers in the European Union, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, and the 5th BRICS Summit is scheduled to be held in South African port city of Durban on Tuesday.

“The entire banking system in the country is critically closed. When they reopen in a few days, it is expected that a mass rush of depositors will try to withdraw their money,” the SABC warned.

A woman looks for goods at a supermarket in Beijing on 22 March, 2013. China’s economy should expand by 8.5 percent in 2013 and more in 2014, with inflation and export demand the biggest near term risks to growth that should average 8 percent in this decade at current rates of investment and reform, the OECD said on Friday. —Reuters

China to stabilize its overseas market: commerce minister

BEIJING, 23 March—Despite mounting challenges, China will work hard to stabilize its overseas markets, Commerce Minister Gao Hucheng said on Thursday.

The country will accelerate foreign trade restructuring to improve trade quality and build technology, brands, quality and service as new trade advantages, the new minister said during an interview with Xinhua.

He vowed to realize the goal of not allowing the growth rate in foreign trade to fall below that of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

In the domestic market, the priority is expanding consumption and cutting logistics costs, Gao said.

In regards to regional economic integration, he said every economy has the right to choose a suitable economic integration path based on its own situation.

Malaysia to host IAS conference on HIV

KUALA LUMPUR, 23 March—The 7th Interna-tional AIDS Society (IAS) Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention will be held in Kuala Lumpur from 30 June to 3 July this year, a statement issued by IAS said on Friday.

Leading scientists, clinicians, public health experts and community leaders from all over the world will gather at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre to discuss latest developments in HIV-related research.

According to the statement, the conference is aimed at sharing the latest research in biomedical aspects of the virus and effective ways to prevent and treat the epidemic.

It marks the first time that the biennial event, organized by IAS in partnership with the Centre of Excellence for Research in AIDS, University of Malaya and with the support of the Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau, will be held in Asia, the statement said.—Xinhua

BP announces 8 blln USD share repurchase

LONDON, 23 March—British oil giant BP said on Friday that it intends to carry out a share repurchase programme with a total value of up to 8 billion US dollars, following the completion of the sale of BP’s 50 percent interest in TNK-BP to Rosneft in Russia. The announced repurchase, also called buyback, programme is expected to return to BP shareholders an amount equivalent to the value of the company’s original serious irregular heartbeats or sudden cardiac death.

“Doctors are generally concerned if patients experience an additional 30 milliseconds in their QT interval from baseline,” said Sachin Shah, lead author and assistant professor at University of the Pacific in California.

Researchers also found that the systolic blood pressure, the top number in a blood pressure reading, increased on average of 3.5 points in a pool of 132 participants. “The correlation between energy drinks and increased systolic blood pressure is convincing and concerning, and more studies are needed to assess the impact on the heart rhythm,” Shah said. “Patients with high blood pressures or long QT syndrome should use caution and judgment before consuming an energy drink.—Xinhua

BP boss Bob Dudley (right) and Rosneft chief Igor Sechin announced the TNK-BP deal on Thursday.

BP invested around 8 billion dollars in cash, shares and assets in the formation of TNK-BP in 2003. Over the following decade BP received a total of 19 billion dollars in dividends from the joint venture.

BP sold its interest in TNK-BP to Rosneft, followed by a reinvestment in Rosneft shares, for an overall consideration of 12.48 billion dollars in cash, including 0.71 billion dollars in TNK-BP dividends received by BP in December 2012, together with shares representing 18.5 percent of Rosneft. As a result, BP now holds a 19.75 percent interest in Rosneft.

“BP is moving on to the next phase of its business in Russia, becoming the largest private shareholder in Rosneft, Russia’s leading oil company,” said BP Group Chief Executive Bob Dudley.

“In the process we have also released cash, equivalent to at least six years of BP’s anticipated future dividends from TNK-BP. We look forward now to working closely with Rosneft and together developing opportunities to create value for both companies,” Dudley said that the size of the proposed buyback program, which is expected to exceed that required to offset the earnings per share dilution expected as a result of the sale of TNK-BP. It also reflected the reduction in BP’s asset base following its major 38 billion dollars divestment program over the past three years.

The buyback is expected to take 12 to 18 months to complete.—Xinhua

China eyes an 8-percent increase in foreign trade in 2013. Its foreign trade climbed 6.2 percent year on year to 3.87 trillion US dollars in 2012, considerably lower than the 10-percent growth previously targeted by the government.

Meanwhile, China has targeted 7.5 percent economic growth and 3.5 percent inflation this year.
Turkey’s Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan addresses the media before his flight to Denmark for an official visit at Esenboga Airport in Ankara on 19 March, 2013.—Reuters

ISTANBUL, 23 March—Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan accused Kurdish politicians on Friday of trying to sabotage talks to end a 26-year-old insurrection, lamenting the absence of Turkish flags during a mass rally to mark a ceasefire by Kurdish rebels.

Erdogan, taking a big political gamble in pushing talks with Ocalan, must avoid stirring fears among conservatives that any deal with the PKK will lead to the breakup of Turkey. “We are going through an extremely sensitive process vulnerable to provocations,” Erdogan told a meeting of his ruling AK Party officials in the capital Ankara.

“Ocalan’s sentence, the existence of a cousin and a flag, his face dominated the crowd. In line with that call, the militants’ top field commander based in northern Iraq, Murat Karayilan, ordered his fighters to halt hostilities against Turkish forces, local media reported on Friday, the most concrete sign yet the rebels were behind their imprisoned leader.”

The Kurdish conflict has killed 40,000 people, opened Turkey to accusations of human rights abuses, undermined its ambitions to play a greater role on the world stage and consigned its southeast to poverty. For its part, the PKK is regarded by the United States, European Union and Turkey as a terrorist group.

“The mass rally was organized largely by local Kurdish politicians and officials of the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) represented in the national parliament—figures whose co-operation he will need to press the peace process,” BDP co-leader Selahat Demirtas said Kurds had made no problem flying the Turkish flag but were uneasy about it being forced upon them.

“The Turkish flag is the flag of everyone living in this country. However, I think those who are imposing it do not have good intentions. This imposition by racist elements amounts to having to kneel before the flag,” Demirtas said.—Reuters

France, Britain fail to win easing of Syria arms ban

FRANCE’S Foreign Affairs Minister Laurent Fabius attends a news conference after a bilateral meeting at San Carlos Palace in Bogota on 25 Feb, 2013.—Reuters

DUBLIN, 23 March—France and Britain failed to persuade the European Union to back their call to lift an arms embargo on Syrian rebels on Friday despite warning that President Bashar al-Assad could resort to using chemical weapons.

Paris and London want to exempt Assad’s opponents from an EU arms embargo, a step they believe would raise pressure on Assad to negotiate after two years of a civil war that has claimed 70,000 lives. But they won little support from other EU member states at a foreign ministers’ meeting in Dublin, diplomats said, despite raising concerns about chemical weapons to bolster their case.

“I insisted that very close attention must be paid to the possible use by Assad of chemical weapons... There are indications that he might have used them or that he might use them,” French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius told reporters at the close of Friday’s talks.

Assad’s supporters and opponents accused each other of using chemical weapons after 26 people were killed in a rocket attack near the northern city of Aleppo this week.

In a letter to EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton setting out their case, Fabius and British Foreign Secretary William Hague said they were “increasingly concerned about the regime’s willingness to use chemical weapons”.

The source said Germany and Austria remain opposed to lifting the arms embargo for the rebels. They fear it could lead to weapons falling into the hands of Islamist militants, fuel regional conflict and encourage Assad’s backers, Iran and Russia, to step up arms supplies to him.

“We are reluctant about lifting the embargo... We have to avoid that weapons could come into the wrong hands and that terrorists, jihadists, extremists would misuse these weapons,” Germany’s Foreign Minis- ter Guido Westerwelle told reporters. The EU has until 1 June to decide whether to renew or amend its sanctions on Syria and discussions on what to do about the arms embargo will continue in EU working groups.—Reuters

Fear of army reprisals sparks Mali refugee flight

MBERA, (Mauritania), 23 March—Rebels fleeing conflict in Mali have driven thousands of Arabs and Tuaregs in the country’s north to abandon their homes and flee to Mauritania, under- mining efforts to reunite their war-torn homeland.

At least 20,000 civilians have trekked west- ward across the dunes to the Bamba refugee camp since mid-January when government forces reentered northern Mali on the coattails of a French ground and air campaign that swept Islamist rebels from the region.

The refugees joined 54,000 others who already fled to Mauritania when the rebels seized northern Mali in April 2012 and went on to impose a violent form of sharia law involving amputations and public whippings. In the Mbera camp, where rows of plastic-cov- ered shacks and makeshift tents stretch into the dis- tance beneath the beating Saharan sun, many refu- gees have no plans to re- turn to Mali despite the fall of the Islamists.

They say that for Arabs and Tuaregs—minority groups associated by many in Mali’s black African majority with the rebels—life in the north is no longer safe. “Innocent people were being arrested, killed and thrown down wells. It is inhuman,” said Rissa Ag Chebani, a local chief who fled from Gao region, near Mali’s ancient desert town of Timbuktu. “What we are seeing is score settling.”

Nigerian gunmen invade prison, bank, police station in northern state

YOLA, (Nigeria), 23 March—Nigerian police in Adamawa State on Friday said unknown gunmen launched multiple attacks on the Ganye Divisional Police Headquart- ers, prison and a bank. State police spokes- person Mohammed Ibrahim confirmed the attack to Xinhua on phone, but said they had no details yet.

The attack in the north- eastern state came barely two months after similar ones on police stations and prison in Maiduguri and Song local govern- ment areas of the state during which many people died.—Xinhua

Russian military exercises threaten peace

MOSCOW, 23 March—Russia criticized the United States and Georgia on Friday over their joint military exer- cises in the former Soviet re- public, accusing Washington of putting at risk peace five years after a war between Moscow and Tbilisi.

The United States started an annual training exercises in Georgia in 2010, two years after Tbilisi fought a five-day war with its former Soviet master over two breakaway Georgian regions. The Russian Foreign Ministry voiced “concern” about the exercises at Vaziani military training ground, in which 400 US marines are participating. They started on 11 March and continue until 5 April.

“We believe that any foreign military assistance to Georgia, whatever the motivation, complicates the prospects for strengthening peace and stability in the region,” the ministry said in a statement.

Russia and Georgia ac- cuse each other of starting the 2008 war, in which Rus- sian forces repelled a Geor- gian offensive in breakaway South Ossetia and drove deep into the small ex-Soviet republic before a ceasefire brokered by the European Union.

Moscow has repeat- edly warned that US mili- tary aid or cooperation could encourage pro-Western Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, portrayed by the Kremlin as bellicose and unbalanced, to unleash a new conflict.

The United States and Georgia say the exercises are aimed at training for combat in Afghanistan, where Geor- gian soldiers have served since 2004, underscoring the nation’s desire for closer co- operation with NATO.

Ties between Russia and Georgia have improved since Saakashvili’s party lost its dominance in parliament in elections last October and billionaire Bidzina Ivanish- vili, who made his fortune in Russia, became prime minis- ter.—Reuters

Reuters
Thrifty truckers wary of pricey natural gas vehicles

Los Angeles, 23 March —Truckers considering natural gas as an alternative to high-priced diesel say the cost of vehicles that run on the cheap and cleaner, domestically produced natural gas is rapidly gaining momentum.

Suppliers like T Boone Pickens’ Clean Energy Fuels, Royal Dutch Shell and China’s private ENN Group are scrambling to build natural gas fueling stations along US highways, while Cummins-Westport Inc will begin later this year selling a 12-liter natural gas engine able to power the biggest trucks on the road.

Truck companies too, are enthusiastic — up to a point. The trucks that will sport the new engine, made by a joint venture of Cummins Inc and Westport Innovations Inc, will have expensive tanks for storing compressed or liquefied natural gas. With the industry still reeling from an economic slump that pushed margins below 5 percent, truckers have little ability to make big bets on new equipment.

Customs like household products giant Procter & Gamble and building materials maker Owens Corning, however, are increasingly demanding that their products be hauled on cleaner trucks using cheaper fuel. Natural gas trucks’ greenhouse gas emissions are about 20 percent lower than those of diesel trucks. But truck companies must fork over an extra $40,000 to $80,000 per natural gas truck — a big markup considering a heavy-duty diesel truck starts at about $100,000. — Reuters

Senior US envoy to visit China, South Korea, Japan

Washington, 23 March —The top US diplomat for East Asian and Pacific affairs will visit China, the Republic of Korea and Japan next week to discuss “a wide range of specific affairs will visit China, South Korea, Japan next week to discuss the State Department said.

During his stay in Tokyo on 27 March, Yun will meet with senior officials to build on Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s visit to Washington last month and underscore our continued coordination with the government of Japan on a full range of bilateral, regional and global issues, the State Department said.

During his stay in Seoul on 25-27 March, Yun will “consult and coordinate” with senior government officials on a range of bilateral and regional issues, including measures to strengthen bilateral engagement and deepen cooperation on security and defence. In Tokyo on 27 March, Yun will meet with senior officials to build on Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s visit to Washington last month and underscore our continued coordination with the government of Japan on a full range of bilateral, regional and global issues,” the State Department said.

Global conversation conducive to shaping post-2015 agenda

United Nations, 23 March —As the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) draws near, the United Nations has embarked on a new process to consult with diverse stakeholders from all over the world that will ultimately shape the post-2015 agenda, a senior UN official told Xinhua.

In a recent interview with Xinhua, Olav Kjorven, assistant Secretary-General for development policy at the UN Development Program (UNDP), said: “This is the first time ever that we actually are having a global conversation about what sort of world people want to live in, what sort of future people want to have on this planet.”

The World We Want 2015 initiative aims to create a collective vision of the most important priorities of people in every part of the world, including indigenous populations, women and youth, to ultimately inform what the development agenda should include when the current MDGs expire in 2015.

The initiative is part of the UN efforts to gather viewpoints from people worldwide to help shape the future global development agenda after 2015, the deadline for the MDGs, a set of eight anti-poverty targets to be reached in two years. “We have the technological means that allows us to reach out like never before to citizens,” said Kjorven. “What we are hoping is that through this mobilization of citizenship, in terms of their interest in this discussion, is that we’ll be getting a lot of valuable insights and inputs that can help us understand what people would like to see.”

So far, more than 200,000 people from 189 countries have contributed to this process through surveys and on the worldwewant2015.org website. Consultations are also taking place in 83 countries right now, at the regional level and in thematic dialogues. “We are, in a sense, connecting the work of the UN to the realities of people all over the world and creating an opportunity for people to contribute to this process,” said Kjorven. “And I think it makes for a more healthier and more vibrant and hopefully more action oriented global agenda for the future.”

The Global Conversation Begins, a report released by the UNDP on Thursday, reflects the initial findings of the consultations, and a final analysis will be out this summer.

So far, one of the strongest themes emerged from the data is addressing a global inequality gap, which has also been viewed as a target the current MDGs haven’t adequately addressed.

US shuts down 149 airport control towers to cut spending

Washington, 23 March —The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) under the Transportation Department announced on Friday that 149 airport control towers will be closed across the country beginning on 7 April due to the agency’s budget saving implementation plan. “We heard from communities across the country about the importance of their towers and these were very tough decisions,” US Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood said in a statement.

“Unfortunately we are faced with a series of difficult choices that we have to make to reach the required cuts under sequestration,” LaHood noted. Roughly 85 billion US dollars of spending cuts started to hit various US governmental departments this year starting on 1 March. The spending cuts, the so-called “seques- ter” or “sequestration” in US government budget lan- guage, were included in the August 2011 debt reduc- tion package. The FAA will work with the airports to ensure the procedures are in place to maintain the high level of safety at non-tow- ered airports, said FAA Ad- ministrator Michael Huerta.

The FAA will begin a four-week phased closure of the 149 air traffic control towers beginning on 7 April, part of its efforts to save 637 million dollars spending this year, according to the statement.

UN chief hails normalized ties between Israel, Turkey

United Nations, 23 March—UN Secretary-General on Friday welcomed the agreement between the Israeli and Turkish governments to restore normal bilateral relations, hailing the move “an important and hopeful signal for the stability of the region.”

The Secretary-General welcomes that the govern- ments of Israel and Turkey have agreed to restore normal relations between them, and appreciates the role of US President Barack Oba- ma in reaching this positive outcome,” said a statement issued here by Ban’s spokes- man.

“Assisting Israel and Turkey in restoring their good relations has been a core objective of the secre- tary-general’s efforts in the aftermath of the May 2010 flotilla incident,” the state- ment said. “Today’s announce- ment is an important and hopeful signal for the stability of the region.”

The process of normalizing bilateral relations be- gan on Friday after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called his Turk- ish counterpart Recep Tayy- ip Erdogan to apologize for errors that resulted in the deaths of activists aboard a Gaza-bound flotilla in May 2010. Obama, who is visiting Israel, was reported to broker the call.
Reforestation

On average, more than 400,000 hectares of Myanmar’s forest that covers nearly 50 percent of the country are lost between 2000 and 2005, based on statistics. According to FAO’s 2011 report, the country is ranked number four in the world with annual deforestation rate of over 1 percent.

Although Myanmar is one of the richest areas of biodiversity, some parts of the country are increasingly under threat of deforestation caused by excessive production of firewood and high rate of illegal timber extraction, environmentally unfriendly agricultural methods and reclamation of new farmlands, establishment of salt fields, fish farms, pawn ponds and human settlements. The apparent impact of deforestation is land degradation which includes soil erosion and loss of soil fertility.

Forest depletion not only causes dramatic climate change but also harm food security and livelihood of the people living in land degradation-prone areas, thereby increasing the poverty rate in rural areas where people whose livelihoods depend on the forests. Although we cannot get back the forests we have destroyed due to various reasons, a chance we have to save our carbon sinks is to reforest and preserve the remaining forests what little is left. So an increased awareness of environmental issues at all levels of society is needed to be able to hand down good conditions of the natural environment to future generation. The onus is on all of us to make great strides in reforestation as it is one of the clear commitments to the government’s drive to alleviate poverty.

Everyone is to be aware of the value of forests because healthy forests help to reduce physical and chemical contaminants of the environment and act as an effective sink for a number of pollutants. Provided that forests are totally wiped out, mankind will disappear from this earth in the not too distant future. As they are one of the world’s primary carbon sinks, without them human life shall become miserable.

No matter how much of forests we have destroyed and soil fertility we lost, it is not too late to reverse the causative trend and to start reforestation program, playing our active part in environmental conservation if we act now.

AFD to help in Myanmar’s infrastructural development

NAY PYI TAW, 23 March—Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and French Development Agency (AFD) signed an MoU yesterday.

Under the MoU, Myanmar will receive aids from the AFD in terms of infrastructure for rural areas.

Deputy Minister visits relief camps in Meiktila

NAY PYI TAW, 23 March—Deputy Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Minister U Phone Swe visited relief camps in violence-torn Meiktila. He inspected distribution of aids to victims in relief camps. Plans have been laid to provide foodstuff to 9644 victims for a week with the contribution of wellwishers.

Vice-President U Nyan Tun

(from page 1)

Committee Mr Le Huan Kuam at the committee office and Party Secretary of Ho Chi Minh City Mr Le Thanh Hai at Reunification Palace.

The meetings focused on enhanced cooperation between Myanmar and Vietnam.

The party secretary hosted a dinner to the Myanmar delegation led by Vice-President U Nyan Tun.

Vice-President U Nyan Tun visited Dragon City Real Estate Project, Phulong Real Estate Holdings, HD Holding, Sovico Holdings, CT Group and Vietjet Airline this morning. The delegation left for Myanmar at 11.30 am LST. They were welcomed back on arrival at Yangon International Airport by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe, members of Sangha and wellwishers from Mandalay, The Action Time Foundation, SkyNet, Mandalay Region, the ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, officials, lawmakers made donations this morning. Drinking water, instant noodle and foods are provided to the victims this morning.

Food and relief aids donated by wellwishers in Yangon were transported to Meiktila with Y-8 aircraft.

The victims are allowed to return to their home if their homes are in stable condition.

The security forces have been engaging in clean-up operations since this morning.

A total of 21 dead bodies from damages of wards were reportedly found during the clean-up.

Those bodies were beyond recognition and could not be identified, said the report. The official death toll in Meiktila violence has reached 32, according to the latest report this evening.

MNA
Myanmar Rock fans to greet Michael Learns in Yangon

Entertainment of Michael Learns to Rock (MLTR), which is the first international concert in Myanmar, will be held at the People’s Square in Yangon in the evening of 31 March.

Myanmar Rock stars Nawtung Win Htet and Phyu Phyu Kyaw Thein will join the world famous Rock star Michael Learns at the concert.

Ward/village-tract administrators’ proficiency course concludes

YEDASHE, 23 March—A conclusion ceremony of ward/village-tract administrators’ proficiency course No. 1/2013 was held at the hall of General Administration Department in Yedashe Township, on 16 March.

At the ceremony, Township Administrator U Hay Kyaw gave speeches and presented certificates. Then, he presented awards to three outstanding trainees.

A total of 50 trainees from 50 wards and village-tracts attended the two-week course.—NLM

Water crafts face difficulties in water course of Chindwin River

YESAGYO, 23 March—Chindwin River is flowing between Yesagyo Township of Magway Region and Myaung Township of Sagaing Region, sharing 19 nautical miles border between the two townships.

As a result, about 40 villages along the banks possess alluvial lands for cultivation of crops yearly.

At present, sandbanks emerge in many places in the water course of Chindwin River.

In consequence, the watercraft face difficulties in their drives.

Myanma Alinn

Opening more brokerages to benefit commodity producers, consumers

YANGON, 23 March—As part of efforts to promote local and foreign trade, Myanmar has planned to open more border trade camps, while making preparations for extending commodity brokerages so as to develop domestic trade, said an official of Yangon Brokerage.

“Arrangements are being made to open brokerages for convenience of traders at home. As a result, producers, traders and consumers will enjoy more convenience in trading,” he explained.

At present, two brokerages are bustling in Bayintnaung and on Wadan Street of Yangon. Chilli, onion, beans and pulses and so on are being traded at Bayintnaung Brokerage.

Wadan Street Brokerage focuses on trading of rice. At present, trading is convenient for commodity producers and customers but it needs to extend trading on a wider scale for enabling sellers and buyers across the nation to get easy access to brokerage trading.

As such, a plan is underway to open one more brokerage at Thiri Mingala Market in Yangon with the aim of not only ensuring convenience of producers and customers but also contributing to stability and declining of commodity prices.

Moreover, the producers face high transport charge and instable prices of commodity to be sent to Yangon’s brokerages. They have more difficulty of spending long time on transport routes.

That is why arrangements are being made for opening new brokerages in the entire nation for ensuring smooth flow of commodities.

Myanma Alinn

Relief supplies donated to fire victims in Ayadaw Township

AYADAW, 23 March—People from nine households became homeless due to a fire broke out in Naunggyaing Village of Ayadaw Township in Monywa District in Sagaing Region on 1 March evening.

A ceremony to donate relief aid to fire victims by Myanmar Red Cross Society and wellwishers was held at the relief camps on 10 March afternoon.

Commanding Officer of Township Red Cross Battalion Police Major Tin Thein, Deputy Commanding Officer U Myint Lwin and Red Cross members donated relief items worth K 60,000 each to fire victim households, wellwishers of the township cash and clothes to the fire victim households.

Myanma Alinn
**Ghana vows measures against piracy threat to oil, gas industry**

_**HB**_ 23 March—Ghana has vowed measures against piracy threats to its oil and gas industry, following two prison guards being injured during a recent incident in the country.

**Threats to Ghana’s maritime security**

In a recent development, the Ghanaian police have announced the deployment of additional security measures at the Offshore National Security Base (ONS) in the Volta River Delta, following a recent incident where two prison guards were injured in a prison break.

The guards were injured while attempting to prevent inmates from escaping, and the incident has raised concerns about the ongoing threat to Ghana’s maritime security.

**International response**

The situation has also drawn attention from international partners, with the United Nations and regional organizations expressing concern over the incident and calls for increased security measures.

**Ghana Navy and Police cooperation**

The Ghana Navy and Police have been working closely to address the threat, with a joint operation being conducted to apprehend the inmates.

**Future plans**

Ghana is planning to increase its investment in maritime security, with plans for the construction of a new security base in the Volta River Delta.

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**Three-day fighting kills six in Lebanese port city**

_**HB**_ 23 March—At least six people, including a Lebanese soldier, were killed in three days of fighting between two rival neighbourhoods in Lebanon’s northern port city of Tripoli, as of Friday.

A police report said three were killed and 22 injured on Thursday in clashes between residents of Bab el-Tebbaneh, who are Sunni and back the government, and Alawites from Asad’s sect.

A tension was increased after a shooting incident on Wednesday afternoon at the governmental hospital in Tripoli, which left three people injured.

“Army continued to take security measures in the tense neighbourhoods... including raids in areas where the gunmen are located,” said a military statement on Friday.

Some suspects were arrested and arms and ammunition were seized from them, said the statement.

One soldier, identified as Hassan Dah, was killed, and several others were injured during the mission, it added. The two neighbourhoods have been engaging in clashes since August 2008. The past rounds of clashes left more than 100 dead and over 1,000 wounded.

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**Point of the Western Region exploration off Cape Three Points**

_**HB**_ 23 March—Ghanaian Minister for the Interior Kwesi Ahwoi on Friday vowed to step up protection of oil and gas exploration off Cape Three Points of the Western Region from piracy and other forms of maritime security threat.

The minister was speaking at the official sod-cutting ceremony for the construction of administrative and academic blocks for the Marine Police Academy at Aiyinase, 287 km west of the national capital, Accra. He noted that collaboration between the two security agencies would help clamp down on any threat posed by pirates to the oil and gas industry and ensure peace and harmony on the West African country’s territorial waters.

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**Most Germans expect euro zone crisis to worsen**

_**HB**_ 23 March—Nearly two thirds of Germans expect the euro zone crisis to worsen and almost half fear for their savings, according to an opinion poll released on Friday, amid rising concerns that Cyprus may be forced to quit the common currency.

The Mediterranean island country risks a bail-out deal with the euro zone before next Tuesday or face the collapse of its banking sector.

Germany has led euro zone calls for Cyprus to stomp up nearly six billion euros through a levy on depositors in Cypriot banks as part of the bailout deal, a plan Nicosa has rejected.

The ZDF Politbarometer poll showed 64 percent of Germans expect a deepening of the euro zone crisis and only 9 percent expect it to ease. Some 49 percent of those polled said they feared for their savings, up from 39 percent in a previous poll last June.

The survey, which canvassed the views of 1,296 people on 19–21 March, also showed Merkel’s party retaining a clear lead over other parties but suggested she may have to forge a “grand coalition” with the main opposition Social Democrats in September.

But despite such assurances the poll showed slightly more than a third of Germans did not believe their savings were secure while 63 percent did. A large majority of respondents did not expect a bank-run in other EU states because of Cyprus.

The survey, which can be seen as one of the last before the Greens 14 percent and the Left Party 7 percent. But Merkel’s current coalition partner, the business-friendly Free Democrats (FDP), were on 4 percent, below the 5 percent threshold for entering parliament. Such a result would probably force Merkel into renewing a coalition with the SPD like the one she led from 2005 to 2009.

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**Fuel tanker hits into Emirates aircraft at Zambian airport**

_**HB**_ 23 March—More than 350 passengers were stranded for several hours at Zambia’s biggest international airport, the Kenneth Kaunda Airport, after an Emirates aircraft EK 714, a Boeing 777-300ER, was severely damaged by a fuel tanker before take-off, the Zambia Daily Mail reported on Friday.

The Dubai-bound plane was about to refuel in readiness for take-off on Wednesday night when the fuel tanker rammed into it.

There were however no injuries.

Gillian Langmead, the airline’s spokesperson said the plane was bashed by a tanker and all the passengers were told to go back to their hotels while fresh arrangements were being made.

The aircraft is currently parked at the airport and is being repaired by a team of engineers, she added.
**REGIONAL**

**Indonesian cities to take part on earth hour**

Jakarta, 23 March—

Over 30 cities in Indonesia, a vast archipelago country, will join in Earth Hour 2013 on Saturday (23 March) at 8:30 pm, as the world’s largest environmental movement to help save the planet, Antara news wire quoting official said here on Friday.

“Thanks to the increasing public campaigns particularly on the social network, Earth Hour has been able to attract more Indonesia particularly on the social network, Earth Hour has been able to attract more Indonesia,” said here on Friday.

The NGO has been campaigning Earth Hour in Jakarta since 2009. In 2012, Earth Hour was considered the world’s largest environmental campaign which was participated in by two billion people in 7,001 cities in 152 countries.

This year, 14 mayors and district heads as well as 5 governors across Indonesia have been committed to joining Earth Hour.

The huge participation indicates the success of Earth Hour campaign in Indonesia, said Nyoman Subroto, and Rasuna Said streets, will also be turned off.

**Bangladesh tornado death toll rises to 20**

Dhaka, 23 March—

The death toll caused by a devastating tornado in eastern Bangladesh rose to 20 on Saturday, a local TV channel reported.

According to local TV channel “Time”, the tornado, which swept through four sub-Districts of Bangladesh’s northeastern Brahmanbaria District, some 109 km east of the capital Dhaka, Friday evening left over 200 others wounded.

Mahmud Mozunzer, chief executive officer of the district, Friday told Xinhua over the phone that the tornado had flattened hundreds of houses, trees and electric poles while dam-ageing crops on farmland in four sub-districts.

The tornado, with a speed of over 70 kilometres per hour, was accompanied by hail storm and lasted for a few minutes, he said, adding that the victims were killed by collapsed houses and fallen trees.

The railway connecting Dhaka to the country’s Chattogram port, some 242 km southeast of capital Dhaka, and northeastern Syllhet, some 241 km north-east of capital Dhaka, re-mained disrupted as trees fell on the tracks. Road communications in some districts also remained sus-pended.

The Disaster Management and Relief ministry announced Saturday that 20,000 Taka (about 250 US dollars) will be given to each family of dead person, and 5,000 Taka (about 62.5 US dollars) to the family of the wounded.

An army medical team from Comilla Cantonment has been sent to the affected areas.—Xinhua

**23 killed, over 30 injured in east Pakistan road accident**

**ISLAMABAD, 23 March—**

At least 23 people were killed and over 30 others in-jured in a road accident that occurred in Pakistan’s eastern Punjab Province early Saturday morning, said local police.

Local Urdu TV channel Dunya quoted undenti-fied police sources as saying that the accident took place at about 2:00 am (local time) when a bus hit a roadside pole near Shekupura, a dis-trict located some 40 kilometers northwest of Lahore, capital of Punjab Province.

The bus was on the way from Lahore to Faisalabad, a key industrial city in central Punjab Province.

Police and rescue team rushed to the site after the accident was reported. Local media quoted eyewitnesses as saying that the bus over-turned after it smashed onto a pole on the roadside. All the injured have been shift-ed to the district hospital in Shekupura. Hospital sources said that many of the injured were in critical condition and the death toll may fur-ther rise.—Xinhua

**Japanese gov’t applies for land reclamation on US Futenma base**

Tokyo, 23 March—

The Japanese government on Friday submitted an application to Okinawa prefectural government for land reclamation to relocate the US Futenma base within the island prefecture, local media reported.

The application is for land reclamation in the less-populated coastal area of Henoko in Okinawa to relocate the US Futenma air base, which now locates in a crowded residential area in Ginowan in the prefecture, according to Japan’s Kyodo News Agency.

Japan and the United States agreed to move the key US base within the prefecture and both sides con-firmed the plan would be proceeded during a meeting between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and US Presi-dent Barack Obama last month in Washington.

However, Okinawa government and residents have given voice to protest the plan and wanted the base to be moved outside the prefecture, which hosts a bulk of US bases in Japan.

Relations between the prefectural government and Japanese central govern-ment chilled due to the relocation issue, although Abe said his government is nulling to reduce Ok-inawa’s burden of hosting the US bases.

**One NATO soldier killed in blast in E Afghanistan**

KABUL, 23 March—

One soldier with the NA-TO-led coalition forces was killed in a blast in restive eastern Afghanistan on Fri-day, the coalition confirmed in a Press release.

“A International Se-curity Assistance Force (ISAF) service member died following an improvised explosive device attack in eastern Afghanistan today,” the ISAF said in the release.

However, the brief re-lease did not reveal the na-tionality of the victim under the ISAF policy, only saying “It is ISAF policy to defer casually casualties,” the ISAF said.

The latest causality brings the number of foreign soldiers killed in Afghan-i stan to 22 so far this year. Currently about 100,000 NATO-led ISAF forces, with nearly 66,000 of them Americans are de-ployed in the country to help provide security in the war-hit central Asian state.

**Security officials work at the bomb blast site in southwest Pakistan’s Jafferabad, on 22 March, 2013. At least six people were killed and over 40 others injured when a bomb hit a bus terminal in Jafferabad District on Friday morning, local media reported.—XINHUA**

**Singapore, Belarus tie up in trade, investment**

Singapore, 23 March—

Singapore and Belarus enhanced their trade and investment ties by signing cooperation agreements during the inaugural Singapore-Belarus Business Forum on Friday, local media Channel NewsAsia reported. The agreements were signed between the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Singapore Business Federation (SBF), as well as Singapore International Chamber of Commerce.

They committed to explore “opportunities, as well as technological and industrial cooperation.”

Belarus’ Senior Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Semashko said Singapore companies may have potential business opportuni-ties in petrochemical and pharmaceutical sectors in Belarus.

The forum is in con-junction with Belarus Presi-dent Alexander Lukashenko’s state visit in Singapore, from Wednesday to Thurs-day. The city-state’s Min-istry of Foreign affairs said on Thursday that the two countries also signed an agreement on the mutual waiver of visa requirements for holders of diplomatic and official passports.

**A staff member introduces meteorological knowledge to children at Ningxia Meteorological Bureau in Yinchuan, capital of northwest China’s Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, on 22 March, 2013. The bureau invited students and citizens to visit the observatory on 22 March, one day before the World Meteorological Day.**

**New Light of Myanmar**

Sunday, 24 March, 2013

Regional
Nigerian journalist kidnapped by gunmen

AKURE, 23 March—Four gunmen abducted a journalist in Nigeria, leaving behind her little child and house-help, local television disclosed on Friday.

Ohubunmi Oke, who works with the Nigerian Television Authority in Ondo, the southernmost state of the West African country, was returning home when a taxi-trailing her car forced it to a stop on Thursday.

“This is serious. I cannot imagine what they want from a journalist. Where is the money they are asking for, I pray for God’s immediate intervention for the safety and peaceful release of my staff,” she said.

The General Manager said the police said the taxi cab used to carry out the abduction had been recovered at Igbara-Oke in Ifedore Local Government Area of the state.

The police spokesperson in the state Wole Ogodo, confirmed the incident, saying the police was on top of the case. A colleague of Oke’s, Kemi Fakaye, said the victim’s mother earlier on Friday received a telephone message from the abductors, in which they demanded for a ransom of 8 million naira (more than 500,000 US dollars) for her release.—Xinhua

Indonesia moves to improve power service, cut energy subsidy

JAKARTA, 23 March—The Indonesian government, state-run power utility of PLN and presidential task force authorized to monitor development (UKP4) signed on Friday an agreement on a particular scheme designed to improve PLN’s service in expanding the country’s electrification ratio thus reducing the energy subsidy set in state budget.

Through the scheme called Service Level Agreement (SLA), 11 ministries, PLN and UKP4 are expected to intensify coordination in order to improve PLN’s capability in securing power supply in the country.

“Continuing communication among institutions at the forum should be conducted so as to make PLN comply with its obligation. PLN is the only institution we rely on when it comes to increasing power supply capability,” Vice President Boediono said in his remarks at the signing ceremony here.

He expected that the SLA mechanism would work effectively and eventually help the country in attaining higher growth.

The SLA scheme obliges PLN to provide power supply that fits the standards already determined, and assure the completion of power infrastructure on schedule.

Besides that, through support and facilities discussed at the forum, PLN would be encouraged to efficiently manage the power subsidy, so that it can be minimized and rightly delivered to consumers who deserved to receive it.

Indonesian Finance Minister Agus Martowardojo expected that the SLA scheme would cut power subsidy which is estimated at 440 trillion rupiah (about 45.2 billion US dollars) within the next four years, or 110 trillion rupiah (about 11.2 billion US dollars) annually.

The subsidy reduction is expected to be within a range of 20 to 50 trillion rupiah (about 2.1 to 4.2 billion US dollars), the minister said.

Indonesia saw power subsidy swell up to 101 trillion rupiah (about 10.3 billion US dollars) last year from 65 trillion rupiah (6.6 billion US dollars) allocated in the first place due to the increasing oil prices in international market.

Ukrainian PM calls for truck ban on country’s highways

KIEV, 23 March—Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov said on Friday that the government is mulling a ban on big vehicles on country’s highways, as heavy-truck traffic is destroying the quality of Ukrainian roads.

A statement released Friday morning, Pentagon Press Secretary George Little said Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel was saddened to learn of Thursday’s tragedy earlier this week.

“Two of the Marines, including the shooter, were men, while the third was female. The shooter reportedly killed the other two and then himself,” he said.

The authorities at the Quantico Marine Corps Base in the US state of Virginia responded to the shooting incident, which took place on-base at about 11 pm Thursday, American Time.

US base shooting incident leaves three Marines dead

WASHINGTON, 23 March—Three active-duty Marines are dead in a shooting that has been linked to a “love triangle” involving the three, US media reported on Friday.

The authorities at the Quantico Marine Corps Base in the US state of Virginia responded to the shooting incident, which took place on-base at about 11 pm Thursday, American Time.

HK Airport wins green award

HONG KONG, 23 March—Hong Kong International Airport was awarded the Airport Carbon Accreditation “Optimization” certificate on Friday, which turned it to be the first and only airport in the Asia-Pacific to achieve the standard.

The certificate was awarded by the Airports Council International Asia-Pacific’s Regional Director Patti Chau to Airport Authority Chairman Marvin Cheung at a ceremony here. Officiating at the ceremony, Secretary for Transport & Housing Prof Anthony Cheung said the accreditation is an important milestone towards a sustainable future. “Environmental protection has always been an integral aspect of the airport’s development, and this is also one of the policy priorities of the new government,” he said.

In a statement released Friday morning, Pentagon Press Secretary George Little said Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel was saddened to learn of Thursday’s tragedy earlier this week.

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US new citizens take part in the Oath of Allegiance as America’s newest citizen during a special naturalization ceremony at the historic Federal Hall in New York, on 22 March, 2013. A total of 75 citizenship candidates who originate from 40 countries participated in the ceremony, held by US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). During the last decade, USCIS welcomed more than 6.6 million naturalized citizens into the fabric of the nation. In fiscal year 2012, approximately 763,681 individuals naturalized.—Xinhua

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“Two of the Marines, including the shooter, were men, while the third was female. The shooter reportedly killed the other two and then himself,” he said.

The authorities at the Quantico Marine Corps Base in the US state of Virginia responded to the shooting incident, which took place on-base at about 11 pm Thursday, American Time.

US new citizens take part in the Oath of Allegiance as America’s newest citizen during a special naturalization ceremony at the historic Federal Hall in New York, on 22 March, 2013. A total of 75 citizenship candidates who originate from 40 countries participated in the ceremony, held by US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). During the last decade, USCIS welcomed more than 6.6 million naturalized citizens into the fabric of the nation. In fiscal year 2012, approximately 763,681 individuals naturalized.—Xinhua

UKP4 is the only institution we rely on when it comes to increasing power supply capability,” Vice President Boediono said in his remarks at the signing ceremony here.

He expected that the SLA mechanism would work effectively and eventually help the country in attaining higher growth.

The SLA scheme obliges PLN to provide power supply that fits the standards already determined, and assure the completion of power infrastructure on schedule.

Besides that, through support and facilities discussed at the forum, PLN would be encouraged to efficiently manage the power subsidy, so that it can be minimized and rightly delivered to consumers who deserved to receive it.

Indonesian Finance Minister Agus Martowardojo expected that the SLA scheme would cut power subsidy which is estimated at 440 trillion rupiah (about 45.2 billion US dollars) within the next four years, or 110 trillion rupiah (about 11.2 billion US dollars) annually.

The subsidy reduction is expected to be within a range of 20 to 50 trillion rupiah (about 2.1 to 4.2 billion US dollars), the minister said.

Indonesia saw power subsidy swell up to 101 trillion rupiah (about 10.3 billion US dollars) last year from 65 trillion rupiah (6.6 billion US dollars) allocated in the first place due to the increasing oil prices in international market.
Robert Pattinson gets 8 million pounds for ad campaign

LONDON, 23 March—Twilight hunk Robert Pattinson has acted out with four stunning models in a new advertising campaign for which he is said to have got a whopping 8 million pounds.

The 26-year-old indulges in some arty bed-hopping for a new Dior men’s clothing campaign which will be appearing everywhere from May, reported Sun Online.

He filmed his demanding gig just after his girlfriend Kristen Stewart cheated on him with married director Rupert Sanders.

“The advert is sexually explicit. It is pushing the boundaries of what you can get away with in advertising. Robert is topless for part of it and kissing one of the models.”

“There’s another scene where he takes part in a foursome in various states of undress, although it’s not clear whether those scenes will make the final cut,” a source said.

Dior are deliberately making an advert to ruffle some feathers.—PTI

Gwyneth Paltrow’s diet cleanse “changed” her marriage

NEW DELHI, 23 March—Gwyneth Paltrow’s diet change made her marriage a challenge.

The 40-year-old actress — who has children Apple, nine, and Moses, seven, with Coldplay frontman Chris Martin — undertook a dramatic cleanse a few years ago which saw her cut out wheat, dairy, sugar and processed foods, and says altering her eating habits made her a better person.

She explained to the new issue of Self magazine: “You feel er. [Before], I had a lot one else’s feelings own. I’d suck it up and then be alone in my closet together. You’re unless you’re hav-sations.—PTI

Priyanka Chopra upset over Barfi! National Award snub

MUMBAI, 23 March—Actress Priyanka Chopra, whose performance in Barfi! was appreciated by the audience, is upset that the film did not get a single National award.

The winners of the 60th National Film Awards were announced on Monday.

“I am feeling bad that Barfi! did not win National Award. But then it is up to the jury why they did not give the award,” Priyanka told reporters here at the launch of her first item song Bhabi Badmaash.

Barfi! was a love story between a speech and hearing impaired boy, played by Ranbir Kapoor, and an autistic girl, played by Priyanka.

Though the movie did not win a National Award, Priyanka is happy for her cousin Parineeti won a special mention for her performance in Ishaqzaade.—PTI

Lindsay Lohan’s former assistant skips questioning in witness tampering case

LONDON, 23 March—Lindsay Lohan’s former assistant failed to show up for a meeting with her prosecutors.

Gavin Doyle — who was with the 26-year-old actress when she crashed into a cement truck on the Pacific Coast Highway last June, to which she pleaded “no contest” after being charged for lying to police and trying to blame him — was due to be questioned on Tuesday (19.03.13) as part of an investigation into her lawyer Mark Heller for allegedly witness tampering before her trial on Monday (18.03.13).

A law enforcement source told RadarOnline.com: “Gavin was supposed to meet with Terry White on Tuesday morning to discuss allegations that Lindsay’s attorney, Mark Heller, wanted him to change his testimony at Lohan’s lying to the cops trial.

“It’s been alleged that Heller instructed Doyle to say photographers were chasing the car Lindsay was driving prior to their crash last year — that he grabbed the steering wheel, causing Lohan to smash into the cement dump truck. By not showing up for the meeting with White, Doyle isn’t doing himself any favours and this makes his behaviour seem very suspicious. ‘Terry White is now evaluating what his options are going forward. This will be handled, and at the very least, referred to the New York State Bar, where Heller has a legal license, for further investigation.’

Russell Brand: Marriage to Katy Perry was a drag

LONDON, 23 March—Funnyman Russell Brand says his marriage to ex-wife Katy Perry was shaky right from the beginning.

Brand, 37, had a lavish wedding in India and the TV presenter split from the pop star in December 2011 after 14 months of marriage, reported Sun online.

“That marriage was shaky from the get-go, before I’d even got off the el-ephant. It was a drag, man. Let me tell you a thing about marriage. Marriage is a bond that can last up to 14 months. It is a sacred 14-month arrange-ment. Begins on an el-phant — ends in a newspa-per,” Brand said on a radio interview.

Brand was with Noel Gallagher to promote the Teenage Cancer Trust gigs which the rocker is curating.

Gallagher said Brand had once turned up at his London home on Valentine’s Day, carrying flowers for his wife Sara MacDonald, but was mocked by his sons Donovan and Sonny.

“However, after Russell walked through the door, Donovan insulted his footwear. I got very proud of that. ‘He said, ‘Why are you wearing ladies’ shoes?” Gallagher added.

PTI

The actress is happy that her cousin Parineeti Chopra got a special mention at the National Awards. PTI
Late goal hands China 1-0 victory over 10-man Iraq in Asian Cup qualifying

The win boosts China’s hopes of reaching the Asian Cup finals in Australia in 2015. “We are still alive in this group of death, it is an award to all of our players, who never gave up until the final whistle,” China coach Jose Camacho said after the match.

Camacho came into Friday’s match under tremendous pressure following a miserable run of results, and there were rumors that the former Real Madrid and Spain boss would be replaced by Chinese Super League champions Guangzhou Evergrande coach Marcello Lippi. “I will fight to the final minutes, but the decision will be made by the Chinese FA,” said the 57-year-old Spaniard.

Haas grabs Bay Hill lead, Woods and Rose in pursuit

Ocala, (Florida), 23 March—American Bill Haas carded a bogey-free six-under 66 to surge into the second-round clubhouse lead at the Arnold Palmer Invitational on Friday with Tiger Woods and overnight leader Justin Rose in hot pursuit.

Haas, playing the back nine first on another chilly day at Bay Hill, collected birdies at 12, 13 and 14 before adding an eagle at the par five 16th to reach the turn at four-under.

The 30-year-old dropped two more birdies on his inward stretch to reach nine-under 135 for the tournament, one shot clear of compatriot John Huh (69).

“Obviously, I feel good about shooting two good scores at this place,” Haas told reporters. “I didn’t know the media tent where it was, I’ve never been in here.”

“Never had that much great success here but I’ve always enjoyed coming. I had a nice week off last week, got some rest, got away from it, and just felt pretty good coming into it. Americans Ken Duke (68), JJ Henry (67) and Jimmy Walker (69) are in the clubhouse three off the pace on 138.

Rose, who held a two-shot overnight lead on Huh, was among the late starters and moved to nine under for the tournament after recording birdies on the second and sixth holes.

Tiger Woods, who can reclaim the world number one ranking from Rory McIlroy on Sunday with an eighth win at Bay Hill, moved to six under for the tournament after recording a birdie and eagle over his first six holes.—Reuters

Injured Walcott ruled out of World Cup qualifiers

London, 23 March—Arsenal striker Theo Walcott has been ruled out of England’s World Cup qualifiers against San Marino on Friday and Montenegro next week after picking up a groin and hip injury in training.

“(Walcott) sustained the problem in training with the national team on Thursday and will fly back on Saturday to be assessed by the Club’s medical staff,” Arsenal’s website said.

Earlier media reports indicated the 24-year-old was likely to be out for seven to 10 days, making him doubtful for Arsenal’s Premier League game against relegation-threatened Reading at the Emirates stadium on Sunday.

England are second in a tight Group H, two points behind leaders Montenegro and three ahead of Poland who have a game in hand.—Reuters

Ferguson fined and Nani banned following United exit

Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson has been fined 10,000 euros (8,500 pounds) and their Portuguese winger Nani suspended for one match by UEFA following their Champions League exit to Real Madrid earlier this month.

Ferguson failed to speak to the media after the last 16 second leg in which Nani was given a controversial red card as United lost 2-1 at Old Trafford to go out of the competition 3-2 on aggregate.

In a statement issued on Friday, UEFA said: “Manchester United FC midfield player Nani has been suspended for one match by UEFA’s Control and Disciplinary Body, following the red card he received at the UEFA Champions League round of 16 second leg against Real Madrid CF at Old Trafford on 3 March.

“Manchester United head coach Sir Alex Ferguson has been fined 10,000 euros for non-fulfillment of the post-match media obligations at the same match.”

Nani was sent off in the 56th minute with United winning 1-0 and looking as if they were going to win the match.—Reuters

Hamilton sees Mercedes progress in the long run

Mercedes Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton of Britain drives during the second practice session of the Malaysian F1 Grand Prix at Sepang International Circuit outside Kuala Lumpur, on 22 March, 2013.

“Lotus looks really quick and it’s not until after I analyse the laps that I can judge how good ours was,” said Hamilton, who was ninth in both sessions at Sepang.

Managing tyres appears to be the main dilemma facing most teams this season and after rapid degradation of their tyres cost Hamilton a chance of a podium in Australia, the Briton feels his team are learning how to get the most out of the Pirellis.

“In the first session, we did chew up the tyres a bit but that was mostly due to the set up of the car, which had a lot of oversteer,” he added.—Reuters
Britain's oldest wine merchant to sell Chinese wine

LONDON, 23 March—Britain's oldest wine merchant Berry Bros & Rudd (BBR) announced on Friday it has become the first major retailer in the country to sell Chinese wine. The 314-year-old wine merchant said it would sell four wines from leading Chinese winemaker Changyu alongside the finest offering from Bordeaux and Burgundy.

The four wines are 2008 Chateau Changyu Moser XV, Ningxia; Chateau Changyu Gold Label Ice Wine, Liaoning; Chateau Changyu Black Label Ice Wine, Liaoning; and Chateau Changyu Black Label Ice Wine, Liaoning, with the price ranging from 19 pounds (29 US dollars) to 65 pounds.

From this week, the four Chinese wine varieties will be for sale alongside the finest wines from around the world including Ch Petrus from Bordeaux and Domaine-conti from Burgundy in BBR stores and website, it said in a statement. A group of connoisseurs, including several famous experts, will taste the four wines. The ice wines are made from frozen grapes, which give the wines a fresh and pure flavour and an intense sweetness.

The BBR buying Director Mark Pardoe said, “China is already the eighth largest producer of wine in the world so it was only a matter of time before it entered the international market and its huge geographical size and range of climates mean that there must be regions capable of producing good wine.”

“Until now the country’s focus has been on its volume-driven domestic market, and other export efforts have based on external investment. Changyu’s strategy represents a change, with home-grown investment in partnership with international expertise, with a real will to get things done,” he said.

“We expect to taste wine of great quality from more Chinese producers,” said Pardoe. The BBR, a supplier to the Royal Family since the reign of King George III, now has shops in London and Basingstoke, as well as business in China’s Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan and duty free presence in Dubai.”

Striker-less Germany ease past Kazakhstan 3-0 to stay top

ASTANA, 23 March—Germany eased past lowly Kazakhstan 3-0 on Friday without deploying any strikers for the first time in a competitive match under coach Joachim Loew as they stayed top of their World Cup qualifying Group C.

Two goals in two minutes midway through the first half from midfielders Bastian Schweinsteiger and Mario Goetze, playing in a forward role, quickly put the Germans in control and dashed any faint hopes for the hosts.

Thomas Mueller grabbed Germany’s third goal in the 74th minute in a lacklustre second half after the second-bottom home side attempted a brief comeback and even hit the bar.

The result lifted leaders Germany to 13 points from five games, recovering from a 4-4 draw with Sweden in October when they had led 4-0. Despite a midnight kickoff to accommodate German viewers with a prime-time start back home and an artificial pitch, Germany did not need long to adapt.

Loew, whose 4-2-3-1 system had led Germany to two straight semi-finals in the past two major tournaments, opted for no forward in his 91st game in charge even before Thursday's injury to striker Mario Gomez.

The coach had only previously gone without a striker for a brief period in a friendly against France in February. Goetze made an instant impact up front, charging past three defenders in a 20-metre solo run only to have his close-range effort smothered by keeper Andrei Sidelnikov.

Reuters

Monday, 24 March, 2013

Ships collision causes oil spill near Shanghai

BEIJING, 23 March—Two foreign cargo ships collided off the coast of Shanghai on Tuesday, resulting in an oil leak that has spread across 0.3 square kilometers of water, according to a statement released Friday by the State Oceanic Administration (SOA).

The collision between a British cargo ship and a Panamanian one occurred early Tuesday morning, causing the British vessel to leak oil, the statement said. According to the statement, local maritime authorities in Shanghai are organizing forces to clean up the oil slick, while the SOA East China Sea Branch has vowed to continue monitoring the leakage and publicize the results in a timely manner.

Germany’s national team players celebrate a goal next to Kazakhstan’s goalkeeper Andrei Sidelnikov during their 2014 World Cup qualifying soccer match in Astana on 23 March, 2013.—REUTERS

Reuters

MYANMAR INTERNATIONAL

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Germany’s national team players celebrate a goal next to Kazakhstan’s goalkeeper Andrei Sidelnikov during their 2014 World Cup qualifying soccer match in Astana on 23 March, 2013.—REUTERS

Reuters
Pyithu Hlutaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann, wife and party leave for New Zealand

Yangon, 23 March—At the invitation of Speaker of Lower House of New Zealand Rt Hon David Carter, a Myanmar delegation led by Speaker of the Pyithu Hlutaw Thura U Shwe Mann and wife Daw Khin Lay Thet left here by air this morning.

They were seen off at Yangon International Airport by Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hlutaw U Nanda Kyaw Swa, Deputy Speaker of the Amyotha Hlutaw U Mya Nyein, Chief Minister of Yangon Region U Myint Swe and wife Daw Khin Lay Thet.

Thet Htay, Speaker of Yangon Region Hlutaw U Sein Tin Win, Deputy Speaker U Tin Aung, and those from Pyithu Hlutaw Committees and commissions.

The Pyithu Hlutaw Speaker and wife were accompanied by Chairman of Pyithu Hlutaw International Relations Committee U Hla Myint Oo, Chairman of Pyithu Hlutaw Agriculture, Livestock Breeding and Fishery Development Committee U Soe Naing, Chairman of Pyithu Hlutaw Investment and Industrial Development Committee U Thet Naing Myint, member of Pyithu Hlutaw Public Accounts Committee Dr Win Myint and officials. MNA

Union level Peace-making Work Committee, PNLO agree to start political dialogues

Nay Pyi Taw, 23 March—The Union level Peace-making Work Committee and Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO) held peace talks at national level at Myanmar Peace Center on Shweli Street here today, signing an agreement in ten major sectors.

Present at the talks were Vice-Chairman of Union level Peace-making Work Committee Union Minister U Aung Min, Union Ministers U Khin Maung Soe, U Win Tun and U Ohn Myint, Shan State Chief Minister U Sao Aung Myat, PNLO Chairman Col Khun Okka, general secretary U Khun Myint Tun, Col Khun Thurein and CEC members, representatives from the youth union, women affairs and labour affairs organizations.

The two sides reached an agreement in ten major sectors including relief, social affairs, anti-drug, and regional development, most important of all continued ceasefire. The two parties also agreed to continue political dialogues. MNA

Interfaith Friendship Organization issues statement on restoring of peace and stability

Nay Pyi Taw, 23 March—The Interfaith Friendship Organization issued a statement on its stance for situation of Meiktila on 20 March.

The following is the unofficial translation of the statement.

Interfaith Friendship Organization
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Request to followers of different religions and statement of religious leaders of Interfaith Friendship Organization

We the religious leaders of Interfaith Friendship Organization, issued this statement expressing our deepest sympathy for sufferers regarding the issue which began as a personal brawl on 20 March in Meiktila, Mandalay Region and then escalated into a sectarian violence.

1. First of all, we would like to request the members of the Sangha to help ease the tensions with benevolence and beg for your forgiveness if we have done anything wrong.

2. We would also like to urge the government organizations to lay effective security plans and provide security to people of the two communities, take actions as necessary under the law as soon as possible.

3. Followers of different religions including the four major religions in Myanmar are also requested to make sure each other adhere to law and maintain the community harmony with love and kindness and are to keep themselves away from unnecessary conflicts.

4. The media is also requested to report only appropriate and correct news and avoid circulating rumors that could lead to conflict.

5. Myanmar is on the right track toward greater development, however various forms of undesirable conflicts are posing threat to its progress and the public is requested not to take part in unlawful acts but to stop them in unity with a good sense of awareness.

U Shwe (Hinduism) Patron
U Sein Win Aung (Buddhism) Chairman
Nyiunt Maung Shein (Islam) Vice-Chairman
Dr Thu Nyan (Christianity) Secretary

63rd Anniversary World Meteorology Day observed

Yangon, 23 March—The Meteorology and Hydrology Department under the Ministry of Transport marked the 63rd Anniversary World Meteorology Day at the department, here, this morning. Director-General of Meteorology and Hydrology Department Dr Har Yin Naing Tiyan gave a speech and Deputy Director-General U Kyaw Moe Oo read a message sent by M Juraud, General Secretary of World Meteorological Organization.

In line with this year’s motto “Watching the Weather to Protect Life and Property”, the department is monitoring and issuing weather conditions day and night for the public. MNA