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The government will have to work hard to safeguard peace and stability and promote rule of law in the country

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March—*The following is the translation of President U Thein Sein's speech through radio programmes to the entire people the length and breadth of the nation on 1-4-2013.*

My fellow citizens,

I would first like to wish you all good health in my monthly radio program to communicate with the citizens on some of the important issues.

First, I would like to touch on the issue of access to affordable mobile telephone SIM cards, which I know many of you are patiently waiting for. As I have promised you before and starting this April, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology will start selling mobile telephone SIM cards at an affordable price to the general public in accordance with the necessary rules and regulations.

In selling these mobile telephone SIM cards, they will be distributed equitably among the Regions and States after carefully considering such details as the demand and the preexisting infrastructural capacity to support additional phone lines. In addition, the infrastructural capacity will be increased and new mobile telephone towers built through partnership with local and international companies so as to enable the sale of a recurring supply of SIM cards every month. In this way, access to communication is reached all the way to the grassroots. At the same time, we will work to improve the existing auto telephone lines.

Second, I would like to touch on the issue of salary and benefits for civil servants. Regarding this issue, I have already communicated my intention to increase the salary and benefits for civil servants from time to time depending on national economy, revenue, and budget. In the proposal for the upcoming 2013-2014 annual budget, I have submitted a request of 385 billion Kyats to the Legislature for the increase of salary and pension for civil servants. Acknowledging to the hardships faced by the civil servants, the Legislature has approved this also. As a result, prior increase of 30,000 kyats in stipend will remain as before and monthly salary will increase by additional 20,000 kyats starting this April.

Third, I would call on all citizens to participate and provide support in the economic development of the country. Economic development goes hand in hand with improvements in the socio-economic conditions of citizens. Our country currently needs investment, technology, and human resources to promote job creation and industrial development. Since we cannot do it on our own yet, we have to invite foreign investment. To invite the right kind of investment, we have already developed policies that will protect national interest and social welfare. To help attract foreign investment, a new Foreign Direct Investment Law that meets international standards has recently been enacted. There have also been successes in the relaxation of economic sanctions. We were also able to secure 6 billion dollars of debt relief. We will also be able to secure low-interest long term loans from the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and Japan's Official Development Assistance in the near future. Economic development is intricately linked to Peace. However, if we are unable to promote peace, we will squander the opportunities and avenues available to advance economic development. Because of this, I would call on all citizens to participate and provide support in promoting peace and stability.

Fourth, we must raise the living standard of workers and farmers, the two fundamental societal groups. A large majority of the country's population lives in rural areas

(See page 8)

BIOGRAPHY OF H.E. Dr. Tony Tan Keng Yam President of the Republic of Singapore

Dr. Tony Tan Keng Yam was born in Singapore, on 7 February 1940. He received his early education in St. Patrick's School and St. Joseph's Institution. Dr. Tan graduated from the University of Singapore with a First Class Honours Degree in Physics in 1962, and went on to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he obtained a Master of Science degree. He later obtained a PhD in Applied Mathematics at the University of Adelaide.

Dr. Tan started his career as a lecturer with the Physics Department of the University of Singapore in 1964, after obtaining his Master of Science degree. He joined the University again as a lecturer with the Department of Mathematics after obtaining his doctorate in 1967. In 1969, he left the University to begin a career in banking with the Overseas-Chinese Banking Corporation (OCBC), where he rose to become General Manager. He left OCBC in 1979 to enter politics.

Dr. Tan was elected as a Member of Parliament in 1979 and was appointed Senior Minister of State in the Ministry of Education.

In June 1980, he was appointed Minister for Education and concurrently, the Vice-Chancellor of the National University of Singapore. A year later, he was appointed Minister for Trade and Industry. From October 1983 to January 1985, Dr. Tan served as the Minister for Finance and concurrently as the Minister for Trade and Industry. From January 1985 to December 1991, he served as the Minister for Education.

In December 1991, Dr. Tan stepped down from the Cabinet to return to the private sector as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of OCBC.

Dr. Tan rejoined the Cabinet in August 1995 and was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence. In August 2003, Dr. Tan was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Co-ordinating Minister for Security and Defence.

Dr. Tan retired from the Cabinet in September 2005 and was appointed Deputy Chairman and Executive Director of the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation Private Limited (GIC), Chairman of the National Research Foundation and Deputy Chairman of the Research, Innovation and Enterprise Council, and Chairman of Singapore Press Holdings Limited (SPH).

(See page 8)

BIOGRAPHY of Mrs. Mary Tan

Mrs. Mary Tan (maiden name Mary Chee Bee Kiang), the wife of Singapore's President Dr. Tony Tan Keng Yam, was born in Singapore on 5 December 1940. She graduated from the then University of Singapore in 1962 with a Bachelor of Arts degree and in 1963 with a diploma in educa-tion. She was a Secondary School teacher before committing herself to be homemaker. She has three sons and one daughter and five grandchildren.

Mrs. Tan enjoys reading, gardening and attending plays and cultural shows.

Yangon Mega Expo 2013 launched

YANGON, 31 March— Dagon Exhibition Limited organized the Yangon Mega Expo 2013 with the sponsorship of Job Seekers Journal at Myanmar Convention Centre on Mindhamma Road in Mayangon Township yesterday morning.

Booths on real estate salerooms, home decorations, construction materials, modern furniture, sanitation and kitchen utensils, quality paints, industrial materials, electronics and electrical equipment, mobile phone accessories, computer and parts, foodstuffs, health services, tourism services, education service schools, business and monetary service and banking services, car showrooms, fuel and lubricants, car batteries and tyres, car decorations and job hunting are being displayed at the expo.

Film Director Maung Tin Oo organizes Heart of Art Performance & Art Creation Group for new faces contest 2013. First prize winner can enjoy K 1 million, the second K 700,000 and the third K 500,000. The expo will be held from 30 March to 2 April from 9 am to 6 pm daily.—*NLM*

LOCAL NEWS

Facilities for disabled persons handed over

YEKYI, 31 March — Shwe Min Thar Foundation presented facilities for disabled persons in Yekyi, Ngathaingchaung and Athoat Townships at a hall in Yekyi Township of Pathein District in Ayeyawady Region on 27 March.

Ayeyawady Region Minister for Forestry and Mining U Soe Myint spoke on the occasion, and Chairman of the foundation U Myat Thu elaborated purpose of donation and aim of opening a branch of the foundation in Yekyi.

Next, four wheelchairs, 12 crutches and one walking stick for the blind were handed over to disabled persons.

Kyemon

Fuel station fire in Taunggyi

TAUNGGYI, 31 March — A fire broke out while a fuel bowser was filling fuel oil at Win Mitta fuel station, two miles from Taunggyi-Hopong motorway, in Kangyi ward in Taunggyi at about 4.40 pm on 28 March.

The fire was due to a static electricity caused from filling fuel oil at the fuel station. The Shan State Chief Minister, ministers, the commander of Eastern Command and party, the district commissioner and township/ward administrators and fire crews rushed there and managed to bring the fire under control in cooperation with local people. The fire died down at about 6 pm. Building of Win Mitta fuel station owned by U Chan Nyein and fuel barrels of 103 fuel station owned by U Sai Myo Khin were gutted in the fire. No causalities were reported but loss of property in the fire amounted to K 6 million. No (1) police station filed a lawsuit against Han Win Kyaw, 23, fuel station worker, for his negligence of fire.

Kyemon

Indonesia emerges as champion of Pre-SEA Games Cycling Competition in Myanmar

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March — The final day's events of Invitational Cycling Contest ahead of 2013 XXVII Sea Games, jointly-organized by the Ministry of Sport and Myanmar Cycling Federation, took place at Mount Pleasant cycling ground on 28 March.

Indonesian cycling team emerged as a champion of the competition with three gold, three silver and one bronze, followed by Thailand with three gold, two silver and three bronze. But Myanmar, the host team, bagged only one bronze.

In women's down hill event with the participation of seven participants, Thai cyclist won gold medal while Indonesian cyclist and another Thai cyclist bagged silver and bronze medals respectively. Myanmar cyclists Thuza, Hnin Ei Naing and Aye Myat Thandar only stood fifth, sixth and seventh places.

In men's down hill event with the participation of 13 participants, Thailand stood first followed by Indonesia and Singapore. Among five Myanmar participants, Htet Myat Aung stood fifth in the event. In the evening, men's and women's BMX events followed. Two Indonesian bicyclists finished runners-up behind Thailand in the women's BMX event. Winner of the men's BMX event emerged from Indonesian cycling team, but silver and bronze medals went to Thailand.

Kyemon

Holidaymakers flock together to Chaungtha beach

YANGON, 31 March — As the country enters its hottest months of the year, local visitors thronged beach resorts which are being packed with those who are seeking shade for recreation. So Ngwehsaung and Chaungtha beaches are crowded with holidaymakers.

As Chaungtha beach, 30-mile from Pathein of Ayeyawady Region, is accessible by smooth and speedy road transport, holidaymakers came in flocks there to enjoy their two-day holiday on 26 and 27 March.

Kyemon

Operation against smuggled vehicles gaining momentum in Mawlamyine

MAWLAMYINE, 31 March — Actions are being taken against smuggling of illegal vehicles that failed to pay customs duty from a neighboring country into 10 townships in Mon State by the police.

According to a tip-off given by a duty-conscious person, Police Inspector Khine Than, Police Insepctor Myint Naing and party of Mawlamyine district police commander office seized three illegal vehicles together with three drivers near Attayan bridge at about 9 am on 27 March. The seized three vehicles are worth 9 million.

Kyaikmayaw police station opened a case under import/export law No (8). With the aim of avoiding unwanted situation, the police is launching the operation against these smuggled vehicles as they were violating traffic rules and being involved in road accidents while they were on the roads in Mawlamyine and other townships with fake number plates.

Kyemon

Young Mawlamyine man dies of drowning

MAWLAMYINE, 31 March — A death of young man by drowning occurred at a private-owned New Sky swimming pool in Thanlwin Garden in Mawlamyine at bout 4.30 pm on 24 March.

Soe Lin Aung, 16, died of drowning while he was swimming in the pool together with his friends. Mawlamyine Township police station opened a case and investigation is ongoing.

Kyemon

Myanmar palmist and globetrotters

Recent photo shows one of three foreign visitors consulting a palmist under a shady tree on a road beside Maha Bandoola Park that links Sule Pagoda Road in Yangon, Myanmar's commercial city, which is always packed with globetrotters. — KYEMON

Medical equipment donation for hospitals in Yangon Region

YANGON, 31 March — A ceremony to donate medical equipment to Yangon Region Government by the Rotary Club of Essendon in Australia was held at the meeting hall of the Region Government Office, here, on 25 March. First, Mr. Simon Cookson of the Rotary Club of Essendon explained purpose of donation and handed over 45 kinds of medical equipment to Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe who presented a certificate of honour to him.

Next, the chief minister spoke words of thanks, saying that the medical equipment will be of great benefit to every patient concerned as today's donation are very useful in medical treatment. He called on officials concerned of respective township/station hospitals to use it systematically and to keep a constant maintenance on it.

Kyemon

Russian authorities can't beat back democracy: Gorbachev

Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev attends a presentation of his new book in Moscow on 13 Nov 2012.— Reuters

Moscow, 31 March— The last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev said on Saturday Russia will face unrest unless society is made more democratic despite President Vladimir Putin's success in cracking down on dissent.

Gorbachev, whose perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness) reforms in the 1980s failed to avert the collapse of the Soviet Union, has sympathized with protests, mainly by the rising urban middle class, against alleged ballot fraud and political corruption.

"The authorities have managed to beat down the wave of protest for a while, but the problems have not disappeared. If everything remains as before, they will escalate," Gorbachev was quoted by the *RIA* news agency as saying in a lecture.

"This means that we face a new attempt by Russian society to move to real democracy and it will be of historic significance."

The warning by Gorbachev, active in public life at the age of 82 and co-publisher of the *independent Novaya Gazeta* newspaper, came as Putin, who won a third presidential term a year ago, seeks to consolidate power.

Rather than engaging in dialogue with opponents, Putin has sought to marginalize them, while ratcheting up foreign policy rhetoric to create an atmosphere of a nation under siege.

In the past week, officials searched offices of foreign non-governmental organizations, Putin ordered snap military exercises in the Black Sea and he created a 'hero of labour' honour reminiscent of a Soviet command economy.—*Reuters*

Two Afghan children killed in NATO airstrike in Ghazni Province

Ghazni, (Afghanistan), 31 March—Two Afghan children were killed and seven civilians were wounded in a NATO airstrike earlier Saturday in the eastern Province of Ghazni, which also claimed the lives of 12 Taleban insurgents, authorities said.

"The helicopters with the NATO-led coalition forces launched an attack against Taleban position along a road in Espand-de area outside provincial capital Ghazni city this morning," Deputy Provincial Governor Mohammad Ali Ahmadi told *Xinhua*.

But the bombing also claimed the lives of two children and wounded seven others aboard two vehicles parked near the site, besides killing several insurgents, he said without providing more details.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai on 19 February issued an order banning local security forces from calling coalition's warplanes to carry out airstrike after a coalition airstrike called in by local forces killed 10 civilians including five children in eastern Kunar Province early last month.

Afghan police stand near destroyed vehicles as they investigate at the site of an air strike in the southeastern town of Ghazni on 30 March 2013.—Reuters

The deaths of Afghan civilians in NATO-led troops' operations against Taleban have long been a contentious issue between the Afghan government and US and NATO forces in the country.

"(Saturday) in the morning the ANSF (Afghan National Security Forces) and Coalition Forces conducted a successful attack on a group of armed Taleban extremists in Espand-de village in eastern Ghazni city," said a statement issued by coalition here earlier in the day. It said no civilian was killed in the operation.

It said the insurgents were preparing to attack the ANSF, adding the coalition conducted an airstrike killing 12 terrorists.

Xinhua

Hitachi, TEPCO to cooperate in exporting power system

Tokyo, 31 March— Hitachi Ltd and Tokyo Electric Power Co will cooperate in exporting an electric power system by jointly establishing a consulting firm for electricity transmission and distribution on Monday, sources close to the issue said on Sunday.

By providing technologies and management know-how to overseas power companies through the joint firm, the two companies aim to receive more orders for power generation equipment, according to the sources.

The new firm will be capitalized at around 50 million yen, of which Hitachi invests 85 percent and TEPCO 15 percent.

It aims to secure around 150 million yen in sales in fiscal 2013 from April by targeting firms in North America and Britain.

Kyodo News

Obama congratulates Kenyatta on election as Kenya's President

Washington, 31 March— US President Barack Obama on Saturday offered congratulations to Uhuru Kenyatta on his election as president of Kenya, urging Kenyan people to peacefully accept the results of the election.

"On behalf of the President and the people of the United States, we congratulate Uhuru Kenyatta on his election as President of Kenya.

We also congratulate the people of Kenya on the peaceful conduct of the election and commend Raila Odinga for accepting the Supreme Court's decision," the White House said in a statement.

Kenya's Supreme Court on Saturday upheld Kenyatta as the duly elected president of Kenya after reaching an unanimous decision that the 4 March elections were free and fair.

The ruling came after Prime Minister Raila Odinga, Kenyatta's rival, filed a petition at the Court disputing Kenyatta's victory.

Kenyatta won 50.07 percent of the ballots, against 43.4 percent by Odinga, to avoid a run-off with his leading challenger.

"We urge all Kenyans to peacefully accept the results of the election. The electoral process and the peaceful adjudication of disputes in the Kenyan legal system are testaments to the progress Kenya has made in strengthening its democratic institutions, and the desire of the Kenyan people to move their country forward," the White House said.

The United States called for Kenyans to come together to fully implement the political, institutional, and accountability reforms envisioned in the Kenyan constitution, the statement said.

The White House applauded the relationship between the United States and Kenya as strong partners for the past 50 years.

"Our relationship is based on a shared commitment to democracy, security, and opportunity. The United States remains committed to our long-standing partnership with the Kenyan people," it said.

Xinhua

Death toll rises to 20 in Tanzania's building collapse accident

Dar es Salaam, 31 March—The number of people killed after a 16-storey building collapsed in Dar es Salaam has risen to 20, police confirmed on Saturday.

The Dar es Salaam special zone commander Suleiman Kova said 17 bodies were recovered from the rubble of the fateful building between Friday night and Saturday afternoon as rescue work to search for survivals continued. The building, which was under construction, situated at the junction of Indira Gandhi Street and Morogoro Road in the central business district of Tanzania's commercial capital, Dar es Salaam, collapsed at 8:30 am on Friday.

Kova said more bodies were likely to be pulled out of the debris as rescuers from various institutions, including the Tanzania People's Defence Forces, police and the Tanzania Red Cross Society, are working round the clock.

He said the victims included constructors of the building, beggars who used to stay near the building, and children who were playing and passers-by. Local TV station reported that many young children attending a Muslim school near the building were still unaccounted for.

Paramedics assist a construction worker who was rescued from a collapsed building in the Kariakoo District of central Dar es Salaam on 29 March 2013.—Reuters

Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete visited the scene of the accident for the second time since Friday and ordered police to hunt down owners and contractors of the building and prosecute them. Shortly after Kikwete's visit, Kova announced that four people, including the owner of the construction company and a consultant engineer, surrendered themselves to police.—*Xinhua*

Japan stops providing tsunami info to nations along Indian Ocean

Tokyo, 31 March— The Japan Meteorological Agency stopped providing tsunami warning information to nations facing the Indian Ocean as of 9 am Sunday Japan time, as a newly built international tsunami warning system is now in operation.

Japan began the information service in March 2005 in the wake of the 2004 earthquake in the Indian Ocean off Sumatra that trigged a tsunami killing more than 200,000 people. Since then, the agency has issued tsunami information on 52 occasions, targeting 26 countries including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran and Kenya.

The agency will continue providing tsunami information to 11 countries in the northwest Pacific region, including China, the Philippines and Russia.

Kyodo News

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Airtel gives a miss to 4G spectrum bid in Sri Lanka

BANGKOK, 31 March—Bharti Airtel Lanka, part of Indian telecom giant Bharti Airtel, did not participate in the 4G spectrum sale held Colombo on Thursday.

The Director General of Sri Lnaka's Telecommuni-cations Regulatory Commission, Anusha Palpita, said that only three of the island's five mobile operators took part in the competitive bids.

Malaysia's Dialog Axiata was the successful bidder, Palpita said. Mobitel and Etisalat were other two participants in the sealed-bid process. The Lankan government had set the floor price for bids at 800 million Lankan rupees. Airtel Lanka, the last entrant to the growing mobile telephone market, was not available for comment.

A spokesperson of parent company Bharti Airtel in New Delhi declined to comment. "We raised a sum of rupees 3.28 billion from the sale of LTE mobile spectrum. This sum was higher than expected," Palpita said.

"LTE deployment will usher the country into a new era of advanced wireless services including fast high capacity mobile broadband with wide spread coverage", Palpita added.

Sri Lanka's current number of mobile phones far exceeds its 20 million population the data shows.

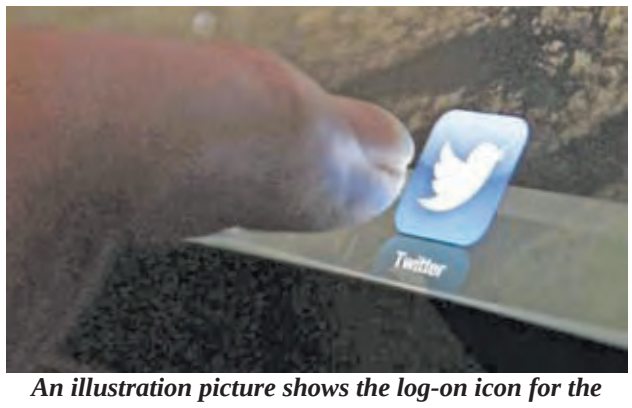
Bharti Airtel offers 4G services in six Indian cities, including Kolkata, Bangalore and Chandigarh.—*PTI*

Windows Phone 8 finally gets Temple Run, bunch of other gaming titles

SAN FRANCISCO, 31 March—Temple Run, the popular "endless running" game, has finally come to Windows Phone 8 Microsoft made the announcement via a blog post.

As belated as the game's entry is on the platform, it is not without controversy. Temple Run for Windows Phone is being criticised for its hardware and software requirements, namely, 1GB RAM and Windows Phone 8, which means that only a handful of phones—HTC 8X and Nokia Lumia 820 as well as Lumia 920—can play the game. Users running an older version of Windows Phone, or having lesser RAM on their phone are complaining about being left out.

The launch of original Temple Run on Windows Phone 8 comes at a time when Imangi Studios has released multiple successors to the game on various platforms. Biggest success on those has been Temple Run 2, that became the fastest growing mobile game of all times, when it clocked over 50 million downloads in just 13 days. Other variants of the game include Temple Run: Brave and the recently launched Temple Run: Oz.—*PTI*



An illustration picture shows the log-on icon for the Website Twitter on an Ipad in Bordeaux, Southwestern France, on 30 Jan, 2013.—REUTERS

Saudi Arabia may try to end anonymity for Twitter users

RIYADH, 31 March—Saudi Arabia may try to end anonymity for Twitter users in the country by limiting access to the site to people who register their identification documents, the *Arab News daily* reported on Saturday. Last week, local media reported the government had asked telecom companies to look at ways they could monitor, or block, free internet phone services such as Skype.

Twitter is highly popular with Saudis and has stirred broad debate on subjects ranging from religion to politics in a country where such public discussion had been considered at best unseemly and sometimes illegal. Early this month, the security spokesman for Saudi Arabia's Interior Ministry described social networking, particularly Twitter, as a tool used by militants to stir social unrest. The country's Grand Mufti, Saudi Arabia's top cleric, last week described users of the microblogging site as "clowns" wasting time with frivolous and even harmful discussions, local newspapers reported.

Reuters

Japan's NEC in talks to sell mobile phone unit to Lenovo

A man looks at NEC Corp's computer displayed at an electronics store in Tokyo on 24 Oct, 2012.—REUTERS

TOKYO, 31 March—Japan's NEC Corp is in talks to sell its struggling mobile phone unit to its personal computer venture partner Lenovo Group Ltd, a source familiar with the discussions said, confirming media reports of the negotiations. NEC is also in talks with potential domestic buyers, the source said on condition that he wasn't identified. NEC has until now said its mobile business is an important part of its overall operations. But after two years of losses the company is shedding assets to bolster profitability. "Amid the rapidly changing market we are considering a number of ways to bolster the competitiveness of our mobile phone business, but nothing has been decided," NEC said in a statement through the Tokyo Stock Exchange on Friday in response to the media reports.

Lenovo officials could not be immediately reached for comment. Japanese phone makers have struggled to gain traction overseas in markets dominated by Samsung Electronics Co Ltd and Apple Inc where they are also being challenged by upcoming Chinese makers. In Japan, the two foreign giants are whittling down their share of cell phone sales. Last October, NEC cut its mobile phone sales target for the year ending March to 4.3 million from a previous estimate of 5 million units. Lenovo, the world's No 2 maker of PCs, is cranking up overseas expansion in smartphones after solid growth in China.

Japan's biggest cell phone maker, Sony Corp, is vying with China's Huawei Technology Co and ZTE Corp to be No 3 in the global smartphone market. NEC also plans to sell its mobile services subsidiary NEC Mobiling Ltd for as much as $850 million, separate sources told *Reuters* this month.—*Reuters*

Proxy firms pile on pressure for better MetroPCS-T-Mobile deal

Signage for a T-Mobile store is pictured in downtown Los Angeles, California on 31 Aug, 2011.—REUTERS

NEW YORK, 31 March—Proxy advisor Glass Lewis on Friday became the second firm to suggest that MetroPCS Communications Inc shareholders vote against a proposed merger with T-Mobile USA, adding pressure on Deutsche Telekom AG to sweeten the deal.

The move by No 2 proxy firm Glass Lewis backs efforts by two key activist investors to block the deal, the day after leading proxy firm ISS said shareholders should vote against the deal with T-Mobile USA, the US business of Deutsche Telekom.

If the deal collapses, it would be a huge blow for Deutsche Telekom after being forced in 2011 to abandon its plan to sell T-Mobile USA to AT&T for $39 billion amid regulator opposition.

The failure of that 2011 plan cost T-Mobile USA some customers as the company focused away from its core business.

T-Mobile USA, the No 4 mobile provider in the United States, and its smaller rival MetroPCS want to pool their spectrum resources and networks in order to better compete with larger rivals Verizon Wireless, AT&T Inc and Sprint Nextel.

But Glass Lewis said the current deal undervalues MetroPCS's contribution to the combined company. Staying independent would help MetroPCS shareholders reap more value in the short term, the proxy firm said in a report. A 'no' vote by MetroPCS shareholders could also prompt a better offer, Glass Lewis said.—*Reuters*

Egypt launches first flight to Iran since 1979

CAIRO, 31 March—Egypt launched on Saturday the first passenger flight to Iran in more than three decades, state- run Ahram online reported.

The Teheran-bound flight, operated by the private carrier Air Memphis took off from Cairo Airport carrying eight Iranians including two diplomats, the report added.

On 28 February, Egyptian Tourism Minister Hisham Zazouz and head of Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization Mohammad Sharif Malekzadeh signed a Memorandum of Understanding in the Iranian capital of Teheran to promote tourism cooperation, a deal on operating non-stop flights between the two countries.

The ties between Egypt and Iran were cut off after Iran's Islamic Revolution and Egypt's peace treaty with Israel in 1979. The two sides started to get closer after the 2011 unrest that toppled Egypt's former leader Hosni Mubarak.

Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi visited Teheran last August to attend the Non-aligned Movements (NAM) conference, becoming the first Egyptian President to visit Iran in more than three decades.

Xinhua

Mclaren cars are on display during the 2013 New York International Auto Show in New York, on 29 March, 2013. The 2013 New York International Auto Show opened to the public on Friday.—XINHUA

BUSINESS & HEALTH

Housing controls prompt sales surge in China

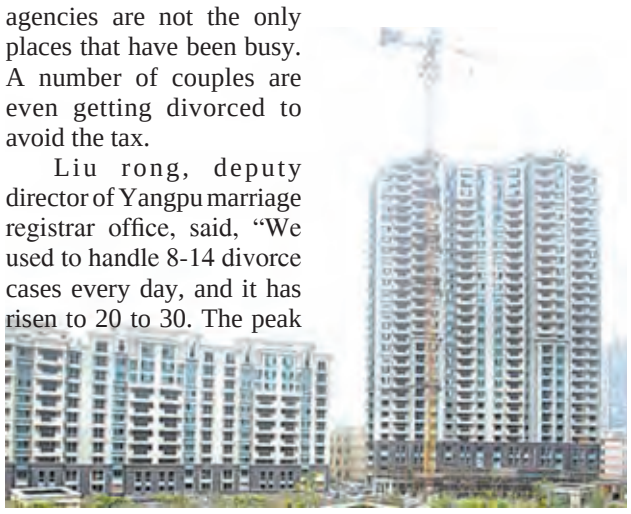
BEIJING, 31 March — A sales tax of up to 20 percent on second hand homes is set to be rolled out in the coming weeks. Local governments are expected to work out specific time-frames for the tax's introduction by the end of March. With more regulations in the pipeline, there's been rising panic among buyers and sellers, all looking to complete sales before the measures kick in.

Another busy day at the Changning District Real Estate Trading Centre, buyers and sellers are rushing to close deals before Shanghai's property market control policy is announced. The State Council's general guideline called for a 20% tax on any profits made since the seller originally purchased the property.

Shanghai resident Mrs Wu said, "I am so exhausted. It is like a shopping spree, and the trading centre has become a supermarket."

Shanghai resident Chen Jianjun said, "Everyone is afraid. We don't know whether the buyer or seller will have to pay the tax until more details come out." And this uncertainty has kept real estate agent Li Dong in a spin for the past month. Li Dong, Manager of real estate agency, said, "We have had a surge of closing deals since late February. People are rushing to sell and buy. Usually it takes two weeks to a month from listing the property on the market to closing the deal. But it only took four, five hours for us to get a deal done yesterday." Trading centres and property agencies are not the only places that have been busy. A number of couples are even getting divorced to avoid the tax.

Liu rong, deputy director of Yangpu marriage registrar office, said, "We used to handle 8-14 divorce cases every day, and it has risen to 20 to 30. The peak number was 60 cases a day. The divorced couples looked very sullen in the past, but now they just do it casually; holding hands in to get divorced, and holding hands out after."



CCTV reporter Lin Nan said, "It's not just Shanghai. The rest of China has also seen a surge in the housing market over the last few weeks, because of uncertainty about the upcoming policy. And markets are expected to stay hot until more details are finally disclosed this week."

Xinhua

Baby formula scare highlights supervision loopholes

SHANGHAI, 31 March— The latest baby formula scare in China highlights the loopholes in the country's food safety supervision system while dealing another blow to consumers' confidence in the country's dairy products.

Baby formula products with Hero Nutradefence labels have been taken off store shelves in many cities, including Shanghai, Beijing and Chengdu, and have been removed from major online shopping sites over the past two days, after a media report exposed safety problems with the brand.

The Shanghai food safety office has launched an investigation into the Shanghai branch of the Xile Li'er Import and Export Co, located in Suzhou, east China's Jiangsu Province, an authorized dealer of major Swiss baby formula maker Hero Group.

Xile Li'er is suspected of smuggling baby formula powder made only for the European market by Hero Group and repackaging it as Nutradefense baby formula, for which the company had a legal import certificate, according to the administrative committee of the Suzhou Industrial Park. Meanwhile, of the 17 batches of baby formula products with the Nutradefence label that have been tested by food safety authorities, at least seven have failed to meet protein standards, it said.

Xinhua

Contraceptive pills cause 20 deaths annually in France: Survey

Contraceptive pills cause 20 deaths annually in France.

PARIS, 31 March—A survey conducted by French health watchdog showed that the use of contraceptive pills causes 2,529 accidents and 20 deaths per year in the country, National Agency for the Safety of Drugs and Health Products (ANSM) said on Tuesday.

The ANSM's undated study estimated that the contraceptive pills are tied to blood clots, and 1,751 accidents as well as 14 of 20 deaths were caused by the third and fourth generation pills while the rest six deaths were leaded by the first and second generation pills.

The deaths of the pills users are related to an occurrence of pilmonary embolism, which is the most serious form of thromboembolic, the survey indicated.

"The risk of venous thromboembolism applies to the population as a whole, but the risk is low," the health agency said.

France is a country where the use of contraception pills is among the highest in the world, as up to 60 percent of women users. In 2011, nearly 4.27 millions of women used contraceptive pills.

However, after the health ministry decided to regulate more strictly the prescriptions of these contraceptive pills, the sales of the third and fourth generation of pills fell sharply to 34 percent in February 2013 compared to that in February 2012, while the use of the second generation was up 26.5 percent.—*Xinhua*

Banks score major win in private Libor suits

NEW YORK, 31 March —The world's biggest banks won a major victory on Friday when a US judge dismissed a "substantial portion" of the claims in private lawsuits accusing them of rigging global benchmark interest rates.

The 16 banks had faced claims totaling billions of dollars in the case, which had been considered the biggest legal threat that they faced aside from investigations being pursued by regulators in the United States, Europe and Britain.

The banks include: Bank of America Corp (BAC.N), Citigroup Inc (C.N), Credit Suisse Group AG (CSGN.VX), Deutsche Bank AG (DBKGn.DE), HSBC Holdings PLC (HSBA.L), JPMorgan Chase & Co (JPM.N), Royal Bank of Canada (RY.TO), Royal Bank of Scotland and WestLB AG WDLG.UL.

They had been accused by a diverse body of private plaintiffs, ranging from bondholders to the city of Baltimore, of conspiring to manipulate the London Interbank Offered Rate (Libor), a key benchmark at the heart of more than $550 trillion in financial products.

Customers are seen outside of a Bank of America in Tucson, Arizona on 21 Jan, 2011.—REUTERS

In a significant setback for the plaintiffs, US District Judge Naomi Reice Buchwald in Manhattan granted the banks' motion to dismiss federal antitrust claims and partially dismissed the plaintiffs' claims of commodities manipulation. She also dismissed racketeering and state-law claims.

Buchwald did allow a portion of the lawsuit to continue that claims the banks' alleged manipulation of Libor harmed traders who bet on interest rates. Small movements in those rates can mean sizable gains or losses for those gambling on which way the rates move.

The ruling comes at a time when the banking industry is facing legal and regulatory challenges on multiple fronts, including how they originated and sold mortgage loans, as well as questions of whether some have become so big they pose a systemic risk to the global financial system.

While the door was left open for private litigants to refile lawsuits, Buchwald's decision may make it more likely that banks will talk settlement with a significant win in their pocket. The decision also could cast doubt on some of the highest analyst projections about potential Libor damages, and quell some concerns that the banks have not reserved enough for litigation expenses.

Reuters

Chinese herbs may reduce hot flashes

NEW YORK, 31 March —Women taking a Chinese herbal formula experienced less than half the number of menopausal hot flashes they had before the treatment, according to a new study from Hong Kong. Among women taking an herbal mix called Er-xian decoction (EXD), the frequency of daily hot flashes dropped by 62 percent, compared to a 52-percent drop seen among women taking a placebo.

"It's a modest effect, but not a zero effect," said Katherine Newton, a researcher who has studied herbal menopause therapies at the Group Health Research Institute in Seattle.

Newton, who was not involved in the research, said she'd want to see more, long-term studies demonstrating that these herbs are safe before she would recommend them to women, but that the current study makes EXD look promising as an alternative menopause treatment.

Hormone replacement therapy is considered the most effective therapy for menopause-related symptoms, but potential health risks from hormones have women looking for alternatives, said Yao Tong, a professor at the University of Hong Kong and one of the authors of the new study.

Er-xian decoction (EXD) contains compounds extracted from the roots, stems or leaves of six Chinese herbs, processed into granules then packaged in

sachets to be made into a tea. Although previous studies have found that EXD can help reduce hot flashes, they were not high quality experiments, the researchers write in the medical journal Menopause: *The Journal of The North American Menopause Society*.

To get a more reliable assessment of how well EXD works, they asked 101 women in their 40s and 50s, who were at or near menopause and experiencing symptoms, to drink an herbal formula twice a day for 12 weeks.

"Menopausal flushing is notoriously responsive to fluctuations and placebo responses in clinical trials, yet they have rigorously demonstrated an improvement in favor of active treatment" with Er-xian decoction, said Dr Alan Bensoussan, the director of the Centre for Complementary Medicine Research at the University of Western Sydney, in an email to *Reuters Health*.

Among women who drank the fake remedy, hot flash severity went from three to 2.3 on a four-point scale.—*Reuters*

WORLD

Central African Republic leader, facing isolation, says no reprisals

BANGUI, 31 March—Central African Republic's new leader Michel Djotodia, facing international isolation after seizing power, said on Saturday he would not take reprisals against rivals and called on those who fled abroad to return.

The United States said on Saturday it did not recognize Djotodia, who toppled President Francois Bozize on 24 March after leading thousands of his Seleka rebels into the mineral-rich nation's capital Bangui, triggering days of looting.

"I make a patriotic and brotherly appeal for our countrymen, who have chosen the path of exile, to return," the former civil servant turned self-declared president told several thousand cheering supporters near the presidential palace.

Central African Republic's new President Michel Djotodia (L) speaks to Prime Minister Nicolas Tiangaye at a rally in support of Djotodia in downtown Bangui on 30 March, 2013.—REUTERS

"There will be no witch hunt, because we must establish tolerance, dialogue and forgiveness," he said.

Though violence in the riverside capital has ebbed, Djotodia said looters would face justice and called for international help, particularly from former colonial master France.

But the takeover has been condemned internationally. The African Union suspended Central African Republic and imposed sanctions on Seleka leaders, including Djotodia, this week.

France and the United States say the rebels should adhere to a power-sharing deal signed in Gabon's capital Libreville in January that mapped out a transition to elections in 2016 in which Bozize was forbidden from running.

Djotodia has pledged to act in the spirit of the agreement and said on Friday he would step down in 2016.

But Washington on Saturday said Nicolas Tiangaye, named prime minister under the Libreville agreement, was now the only legal head of government.

Reuters

Maduro calls Venezuela opposition "heirs of Hitler"

CARACAS, 31 March—Venezuela's acting President Nicolas Maduro on Saturday called the country's opposition "heirs of Hitler," accusing them of persecuting Cuban doctors working in the South American country the way Jews were persecuted in Nazi Germany.

His barbs added to weeks of insults in the run-up to the 14 April presidential elections triggered by the death of socialist leader Hugo Chavez this month. Polls show Maduro with a double-digit lead over opposition rival Henrique Capriles.

"The campaign against Cuba is just like the campaign against the Jews in Hitler's Germany," Maduro said during a rally in Chavez's home state of Barinas. "The heirs of Hitler are leading a campaign in Venezuela against the people of Cuba."

Chavez, ten years ago, began bringing Cuban doctors to Venezuela to provide free health care in slums and rural villages, and maintained close ties with the communist-run island's leadership throughout his 14 years in office.

Opposition critics say Maduro and other senior government figures are receiving guidance directly from Cuban President Raul Castro, as well as allowing Cuban advisers to wield influence in Venezuela's military and intelligence services.

Some extremists have called the Cuban doctors part of a plan to turn Venezuela into a Communist state, though nearly all opposition leaders say the programme is positive and vow to maintain it.

Maduro is benefiting from an outpouring of emotion after Chavez' death and as well from the legacy of Chavez's wildly popular social welfare campaigns known as "missions" that include the Cuban doctors programme.—*Reuters*

One dead, one injured in Toronto shopping centre shooting

TORONTO, 31 March—A shooting outside a shopping centre in Canada's largest city Toronto killed one person and injured another Saturday night, leaving thousands of shoppers lining up to be checked by police before leaving the mall.

Several shots were fired in the parking lot of Yorkdale Shopping Centre in northern Toronto shortly after 8:00 pm (2400 GMT), according to Toronto police spokeswoman Wendy Drummond, who told local media that it was a very large crime scene, which took a considerable number of officers to protect.

It was reported that a man was shot to the head and dead at scene while a women was wounded and taken to the hospital in serious but stable condition.

Every person trying to leave the mall was questioned by the officers, who took down their names, birthdays and driving license numbers.

With police blocking off all exits and checking people, thousands of shoppers had to line up in their cars to leave the parking area and the traffic was moving very slowly. Police said more than one gunman might possibly be involved in the shooting incident but right now they were not sure of the number of suspects.—*Xinhua*

Hashimoto says LDP, New Komeito must not win upper house majority

OSAKA, 31 March—Toru Hashimoto, co-head of the opposition Japan Restoration Party, said on Saturday that efforts must be made to prevent the ruling coalition from securing a majority in the upper house election in the summer.

"It would be a watershed if we could keep the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito party from winning a majority in the House of Councillors race," Hashimoto said at the party's first general meeting in the city of Osaka.

"If the two ruling parties secure a majority (in the upper house), it will decrease the sense of tension in national politics," effectively giving them control of the national political arena, added Hashimoto, who is also Osaka mayor. The ruling parties already hold a majority in the more powerful House of Representatives.

The other co-head, Shintaro Ishihara, was absent from the convention, having just been discharged after a month in the hospital on Friday.

He later held a Press conference in Tokyo and expressed his hope that Hashimoto will run in this summer's House of Councillors election.

Ishihara said Hashimoto may have things left undone as the Osaka mayor but that his candidacy would help the party gain strength in the upper house.

At the Press conference, Ishihara also said he was hospitalized for a mild brain infarction but denied any intention to step down as co-leader of the party or as a House of Representatives member.

"I feel the sensation in my left fingertips has become weak, but there is almost no" aftereffect from the illness, said the 80-year-old former Tokyo governor and prizewinning writer. He added he wrote two short novels while staying in hospital.

Ishihara returned to national politics for the first time in 17 years by winning a parliamentary seat in the lower house election in December.—*Kyodo News*

Venezuela's acting President and Presidential candidate Nicolas Maduro speaks to supporters during a campaign rally in the state of Barinas on 30 March, 2013 in this picture provided by Miraflores Palace.—REUTERS

French icon La Tour Eiffel reopens to public after bomb alert lifted

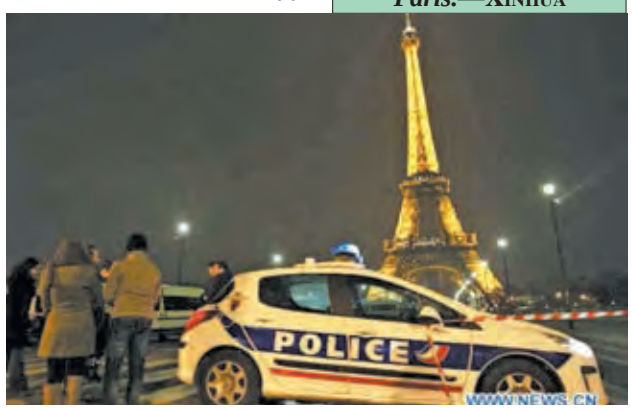
PARIS, 31 March—Paris' iconic tower, La Tour Eiffel, reopened to the public on Saturday night following the lift of a bomb alert.

At 19:30 local time, around 1,500 people were evacuated from the famous monument, after authorities received an anonymous call of bomb attempt made from a phone booth near suburb of Paris.

The anti-terrorism unit searched the tower for possible explosives for a few hours, and then the alert was lifted and visitors were allowed to access the site again. Bomb threats targeting monuments and public places occur occasionally in the French capital, but all alerts are "treated very seriously," the police said.

Xinhua

A police car is seen near the cordoned off Eiffel Tower in Paris on 30 March, 2013. Local police evacuated around 1,500 people from Paris' icon tower, La Tour Eiffel, on Saturday evening after receiving an anonymous call of bomb attempt from a phone booth near a suburb of Paris.—XINHUA



Sudanese rebel group releases 31 kidnapped Darfuris

CAIRO, 31 March—Sudanese rebels have released 31 Darfuris who they had kidnapped a week ago on their way to a conference for people displaced by the region's decade-long war, the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) said on Saturday.

Conflict has raged in Darfur since 2003 when mainly non-Arab rebels took up arms against the Arab-led government, accusing it of politically and economically marginalizing the region.

Violence has subsided from its peak in 2003 and 2004, but a surge has forced more than 130,000 people to flee their homes since the start of the year, according to the United Nations.

Last week, the international peacekeeping mission UNAMID said an armed group had kidnapped 31 Darfuris who the peacekeepers had been escorting in three buses. The abductors took them to an unknown location.

On Saturday, the ICRC said a faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), one of the main Darfur rebel groups, had released the men and handed them over to the Red Cross, according to a statement.

The SLA was not available for comment, and no more details were available about the incident that happened in a border area between Central Darfur State and South Darfur State.

Reuters

Cyprus brings about worldwide unprecedented bank recapitalization

NICOSIA, 31 March—Cyprus' banking authorities have brought about a worldwide unprecedented recapitalization of the eastern Mediterranean island's crippled banking system by using depositors' money and forcing the merger of the two largest banks.

Under an arrangement in force since Friday morning but officially announced in the Official Gazette on Saturday, big depositors in the largest lender, will take a much bigger loss than originally expected and may ultimately reach 60 percent.

Regulations published in the Official Gazette aiming at restoring the capital sufficiency of Bank of Cyprus state that depositors of over 100,000 euros in the Bank of Cyprus will have their money initially slashed by 37.5 percent and will get category A shares in compensation, meaning that they will become the new holders of the bank's equity.

The equity of old shareholders will be downgraded to the last category D, meaning that they will have no voting rights and will receive no dividends or other compensation and will be last in line to get any money in case the bank is liquidated. A further 22.5 percent of big deposits will be blocked for 90 days to cover recapitalization as needs arise, with bank A shares being issued for the additional amount needed.

The remaining 40 percent will not be subject to any haircut demanded by the Eurogroup in exchange for a 10 billion bailout for Cyprus, but will be blocked until the recapitalization is made final. One small consolation for big depositors is that any debts to the bank will be repaid out of their deposit account prior to the haircut, but lawyers and auditors said details on how this will be done are still hazy.

Women withdraw money from ATMs at a branch of the Bank of Cyprus at Eleftheria square in Nicosia on 30 March, 2013—REUTERS

In a closely related move, Central Bank Governor Panicos Demetriades issued a decree transferring the operations of Cyprus Popular Bank, known also as Laiki, to Bank of Cyprus.

Deposits below 100,000 euros and all other assets in Laiki, but also all debts of the bank above 100,000 euros, including a 9.2-billion-debt to the Central Bank resulting from emergency liquidity assistance it received mostly over the last 12 months, will be transfered into the Bank of Cyprus.

Xinhua

Spanish island El Hierro moved by geological movement

MADRID, 31 March—The Spanish island of El Hierro has begun to move to the east and part of it have risen 11 centimetres in height as a result of the recent seismic activity it has experienced, a local media report said on Saturday.

Located at the west end of the Canary Islands, which are situated off the west coast of Africa, El Hierro on Friday suffered its strongest earthquake since the eruption of an underwater volcano off its coast in the summer of 2011, the National Centre for Volcanology or Canary Islands Volcanological Institute (INVOLCAN) was quoted as saying.

The quake, which took place off the west of the island with a population of just over 10,000 inhabitants, measured 4.7 on Richter scale and has had the effect of moving the island slightly to the east as a result of the pressure of magma building up under the earth's crust.

Further, the INVOLCAN have informed that the recent activity has caused the ground to rise by 11 centimeters at Punta de Orchilla on the west end of the island.

Friday's quake is the strongest of a series of quakes which have shaken the island in recent days. The latest outburst of activity began on 18 March with the strongest quake registering at 4.7 on Richter scale, while 54 separate tremors were registered off the coast, the majority of them at a depth of between 12 and 15 kilometres.—*Xinhua*

People are seen beside the remain of a tank in Shalamcheh, a battlefiled of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, in Iran's southwestern province of Khuzestan, on 30 March, 2013. —XINHUA

Xi encourages Chinese doctors to help further improve Africa's health care services

BRAZZAVILLE, 31 March—Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday encouraged his country's medical volunteers in Africa to make more contributions to the improvement of local health care services.

Xi made the remarks when addressing a Chinese medical team here at the newly-built China-Congo Friendship Hospital, which he and Congolese President Denis Sassou-Nguesso had just inaugurated.

China's medical aid for Africa is a demanding but honourable undertaking, said Xi, while thanking the volunteers for the outstanding services they have provided for the local residents and the high honour they have earned for their country.

He noted that Chinese medical teams have braved the harsh natural conditions and other difficulties and made important contributions to China-Africa friendship.

Hailing the noble work of these teams as an embodiment of the Chinese national ethos, Xi encouraged them to continue to uphold the spirit of internationalism and humanitarianism, carry on the lofty cause and help further consolidate China's friendly ties with the Republic of the Congo and the whole Africa.

Chinese President Xi Jinping (L, front) and Denis Sassou Nguesso (R, front), the President of the Republic of Congo, attend the completion ceremony of the China-Republic of Congo Friendship Hospital project in Brazzaville, capital of the Republic of Congo, on 30 March 2013. —XINHUA

For his part, Sassou-Nguesso lauded the selflessness and excellence of the Chinese medical volunteers and thanked China for the benefits they have brought to the Congolese people.

Xi's wife, Peng Liyuan, witnessed the inauguration of the hospital, which was constructed with Chinese support. Among other participants in the ceremony were leaders of both chambers of the Congolese parliament, all Congolese government ministers and more than 30 foreign diplomats.

Xinhua

Italy's President assigns facilitators for solving political impasse

ROME, 31 March—Italian President Giorgio Napolitano on Saturday charged 10 authoritative experts and political figures with the task to help solve the political impasse stemmed from last month's inconclusive general elections. The figures included the former President of Italy's Constitutional Court, Valerio Onida, the head of national statistics institute Istat Enrico Giovannini, as well as leading politicians belonging to the main forces in parliament.

Giovanni Pitruzzella, the chairman of Italy's Competition Authority, Salvatore Rossi, a member of the Central Bank's governing board, and Enzo Moavero Milanesi, Minister for European Affairs of the outgoing technocratic government of Prime Minister Mario Monti, were also among what observers called "the facilitators."

Napolitano's decision came following intensive but fruitless meetings with parties on Friday to try to reach consensus after Pier Luigi Bersani, whose centre-left coalition was the most voted in the 24-25 February general elections, failed to persuade the other forces to support a centre-left led government.

Earlier on Saturday, Napolitano said two groups with "political-institutional and socio-economic" nature would start working on Tuesday on a sort of programmatic report while helping him find consensus on a new government.

The 87-year-old President clarified he would remain in office until his term expires on 15 May, ruling out speculations of early resignation that would allow his successor to call for fresh general voting, as Italy's president is not allowed to dissolve parliament in the final months of his mandate.

He said Monti's cabinet would stay in office until "more favourable conditions" were created to "unblock a stiff situation." In this lapse of time, the selected wisemen would help proposing and making measures approved by parliament to tackle deepening recession and rising unemployment.

Xinhua

Residents have their free meal at the 24th annual free Easter meal event in Vancouver, Canada, on 30 March, 2013. About 3,000 low income residents from Vancouver enjoy their free meals offered by Union Gospel Mission to share the joy during the Easter. —XINHUA

The New Light of Myanmar

PERSPECTIVES

Monday, 1 April, 2013

Violence against women

The United Nations General Assembly defines "violence against women" as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." The 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women noted that this violence could be perpetrated by assailants of either gender, family members and even the "State" itself.

Worldwide governments and organizations are actively working to combat violence against women through a variety of programmes. A UN resolution designated 25 November as International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Violence against women - particularly intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women - are major public health problems and violations of women's rights.

Some of the risk factors include lower levels of education, exposure to child maltreatment, witnessing family violence, antisocial personality disorder, harmful use of alcohol, having multiple partners or suspected by their partners of infidelity, and attitudes that are accepting of violence and gender inequality.

As one can see, violence against women is not just prevalent in a single country, but it is rather a global phenomenon. It is vital that we do not just ignore these atrocities, but rather find an effective way to address the issue head on.

Mostly Myanmar people have respect for women, and mothers traditionally are the principal decision-makers of the domestic affairs of a household. And there is less gender discrimination. Girls enjoy every right like boys on equal terms.

We believe that a healthy home is a happy home. No woman should ever have to live in destitution and humiliation. Women have the right to live with respect and dignity even in the sunset years of their lives.

NATIONAL

The government will have…

(from page 1)

and is working as menial laborers in the agricultural sector. As the agricultural sector improves, the people will have full access to the basic needs, especially food, clothing and shelter. Therefore, I would like to urge farmers to strive towards improving crop yield, increasing the value of the land by making necessary improvements to the land, employing scientific farming methods and introducing mechanized farming. We understand that another fundamental need for farmers is capital. We have tried to help farmers to have access to loans they need by establishing credit unions, credit associations, and cooperative banks. Furthermore, we will also obtain foreign aid and loans in order to accomplish the aforementioned tasks effectively.

Fifth, we will have to work hard to safeguard peace and stability and promote rule of law in the country. Our people wish to have peace and stability and rule of law in the country. The country has experienced economic backwardness due to the absence of peace and stability.

My administration has made it possible for the general public to participate in the process of achieving political stability in the country. We have granted amnesty to many prisoners in stages. In addition, we have established the review committee for prisoners in order to grant more amnesty if they are wrongly detained. Our effort to end the six-decade long ethnic armed conflicts has yielded significant positive results.

However, some of our citizens, instead of solving the problems they encountered lawfully, resorted to violent and unlawful means that involve terrorist acts, murder and arson. Such actions have denigrated the image of the country in the eyes of the international community. Whenever such problems occur, we might not be able to solve them internally anymore; they could become regional or international problems. This could seriously hurt the country's reputation and cost many development opportunities. In some cases, some citizens, instead of solving the problems peacefully, instigated others to worsen them. If our young democracy experienced such violent political storms frequently, its democratic development would be seriously hampered. Therefore, I would like to request all citizens, both Sangha and Laity, to assist the government in promoting peace and stability, the rule of law and democracy. I am firmly committed to using the powers vested in me by the Constitution and existing laws to protect and defend life, liberty, and property of all citizens.

Sixth, March 27th of this year marks the 68th anniversary of the Armed Forces Day. The Tatmadaw, which was established by General Aung San and the thirty comrades, is an institution with great historical tradition that was triumphant in the independence movement with the support of the people. Likewise, it is an institution that was able to preserve independence and protect the nation against foreign and domestic threats. During this time of democratic transition, the Tatmadaw is also playing an important role by cooperating with the people. The Tatmadaw will use its good institutional traditions and attributes gained from its experience as strengths in this transition process.

Lastly, I would like to wish my fellow citizens all the enjoyment in the Thingyan festival that falls on the second week of April. I also wish you all happy new year.

May all citizens be safe, healthy and prosperous.

Deputy Minister for Information U Ye Htut gives award to an outstanding staff at NPE anniversary ceremony. **(News on page 16)**

MNA

BIOGRAPHY OF H.E. Dr. Tony Tan Keng Yam..

(from page 1)

In July 2011, Dr. Tan stepped down from his positions at the GIC and SPH to contest in the Presidential Election. He was elected on 27 August 2011, and sworn in as the seventh President of the Republic of Singapore on 1 September 2011.

Dr. Tan married Mrs. Mary Tan in 1964. They have four children (three sons and one daughter) and five grandchildren.

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Finance and Revenue
Union Minister Office
Order No. 544/2013
Nay Pyi Taw, 6th Waning of Tabaung, 1374 ME
(1 April, 2013)

Subject: Increasing salary rate, pension rate and wages of civil servants

1. Civil servants play a key role in serving the public by the government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar which puts the interest of the State and people at the fore. So, the government decided to increase salary rate of the civil servants to facilitate their civil services, help them address their daily needs and improve their living standards.
2. Salary rates of civil servants at the posts designated by organizational structures of government departments and organizations are increased as follows:-

No.	Current salary rate	No.	Increased salary rate
1.	35000-1000-40000	1.	55000-1000-60000
2.	41000-1000-46000	2.	61000-1000-66000
3.	47000-1000-52000	3.	67000-1000-72000
4.	53000-1000-58000	4.	73000-1000-78000
5.	59000-1000-64000	5.	79000-1000-84000
6.	65000-1000-70000	6.	85000-1000-90000
7.	100000-2000-110000	7.	120000-2000-130000
8.	120000-2000-130000	8.	140000-2000-150000
9.	140000-2000-150000	9.	160000-2000-170000
10.	160000-2000-170000	10.	180000-2000-190000
11.	180000-2000-190000	11.	200000-2000-210000
12.	210000-2000-220000	12.	230000-2000-240000

Notice: Increment is allowed only once two years.

3. Increment period will go on as in the old salary rate when the salary rate increased. The period of increment is not affected by the pay rise.
4. Currently provided allowance will continue to be provided.

Pension

5. Alongside pay rise for active service personnel, retirees will also enjoy the rise on the increased K 20000 as calculated by the pension rules. If there is a need to coordinate the pension rate, one shall coordinate with the pension department.

Daily wage

6. The working period per day for daily wage earners at government organizations is eight hours and daily wage is increased from K 1100 to 1700. The daily allowance of K 1000 will continue to be provided.

Salary rates of staff of Tatmadaw (Army, Navy and Air)

7. Approval shall be sought from the Defence Council of the Ministry of Defence as regards rules and regulations of salary and allowance rates as well as pension rate and cash for Tatmadaw.

Entitlements for staff serving abroad

8. Foreign affairs staff and other similar staff serving abroad shall enjoy the current salary rate in foreign currency. When they are assigned to posts in Myanmar, they will enjoy the new salary rate according to their ranks.
9. Entitlements in this order take affect in April, 2013.

LOCAL NEWS

MCDC gets 2% of stamp duty, 5% of income tax

MANDALAY, 31 March—Mandalay Region Internal Revenue Department handed over two per cent of stamp duty and five per cent of income tax to Mandalay City Development Committee at its office on 20 March afternoon.

Region Minister for Finance and Revenue U Phone Zaw Han, Head of Region Internal Revenue Department U Win Myint, MCDC member-1 U Myint Thein and party attended the ceremony. The heads of Region IRD and township IRD handed over K 492.786 million from stamp duty and K 56.494 million from income tax to MCDC member-1 U Myint Thein and Head of MCDC Revenue Department U Aung Soe.

Myanma Alinn

Crabs whose weight is under 100 grams released into sea

MYEIK, 31 March—Led by Deputy Head of Taninthayi Region Fisheries Department Dr Nyunt Wai, Head of Township Fisheries Department U Thein Naing, the head of Township General Administration Department, departmental officials, members of non-governmental organizations and War Veterans Organization totalling 50 released over 30000 crabs whose weight is under 100 grams into the sea near the bridge which is located at the entrance to Kyunsu Township on 16 March.

Myanma Alinn

Ottarathiri Township upgrades earthen road to asphalt one

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March—Swedaw-1 asphalt road was commissioned into service in Shwenatha Ward of Ottarathiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area on 20 March, attended by members of Nay Pyi Taw Council U Kan Chun and Dr Than Aung, members of Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee, township administrator and departmental officials, members of social organizations and townselders totalling about 400.

Director (Engineer) U Aung Moe of Nay Pyi Taw Council Committee explained construction of the asphalt road.

Nay Pyi Taw Council member Dr Than Aung, Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee member U Kyaw Myint and Ottarathiri Township Administrator U Ye Myat Tint formally opened the asphalt road.

They then strolled along the road.

The newly-opened asphalt road, 2400 feet long and 12 feet wide, was constructed at a cost of K 42.86 million for smooth transport of the local people.—*Myanma Alinn*

Cultivation of summer Palethwe hybrid paddy demonstrated

MUSE, 31 March—A ceremony to demonstrate use of good agriculture pattern was held on 1.90 acres of 50-acre summer paddy field of farmer U Sai Yi Aung for 2012-2013 in Namlaung Village of Muse Township in Shan State on 13 March.

The place of monsoon paddy was put under Palethwe hybrid paddy.

Head of District Agriculture Department Daw Nan Lwin Lwin Sein and Head of Township Department U Min Min Aung explained advantages of Palethwe hybrid paddy, nurturing and cultivation methods. The demonstration was attended by Deputy Commissioner of the district U Moe Hein and district level officials, Township Administrator U Mya Han and farmers from the villages.

Myanma Alinn

Air tickets for promotion of Myanma Airways 14 March-13 April

MANDALAY, 31 March—A promotion period for Mandalay-Yangon route was designated by Myanma Airways from 13 February to 13 March.

As a special programme, one more promotion period is set from 14 March to 13 April. Air ticket is fixed at K 45000 per passenger. Tickets are available at Myanma Airways (Mandalay Branch) from 8.30 am to 4 pm daily without holiday.

Myanma Airways (Mandalay Branch) sell tickets for flights from Mandalay to Nay Pyi Taw, Myitkyina, Bhamo, Hkamti, Homalin, Kalay, Kengtung and Tachilek. For further information, anyone may contact 02-36221 and 36222 and 09-2022989.

Myanma Alinn

Nissan plans to establish car parts factory in Myanmar

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March—Thanks to transparent reforms and promotion of international relationship of Myanmar, businessmen in foreign countries are interested in putting investment in Myanmar. Of them, Nissan Car Company of Japan is focusing on assembling and manufacturing car parts in Myanmar.

After opening spare parts and service centre in Myanmar in 2011, Nissan plans to establish the car parts factory.

Japan Economic Federation and Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) signed an agreement in February this year to be able to cooperate in enhancement of trade, investment and technology in Myanmar.

At present, Japan is the 12th Myanmar's trade partners.

In 2015, Japan is expected to be included in the list of five largest trade partner countries of Myanmar.—*Myanma Alinn*

Van blazed at air compressor shop

NATOGYI, 31 March—A short circuit caused outbreak of fire at the air compressor shop beside Myingyan-Mandalay road in Ward 4 of Natogyi on 8 April.

While the white Superroof van was substituted with new tyre, the short circuit set the car on fire. The local people put out the fire. In blazing the engine of car, the people drew out the driver from the car.—*Myanma Alinn*

Cash assistance for war veterans in Hline Township

HLINE, 31 March—In honour of the 68th Anniversary Armed Forces Day, Hline Township War Veterans Organizing Committee held the ceremony to present K 2.55 million as cash assistance to older veterans of above 85 years and honour the veterans at its office on 24 March.

Chairman of the committee Major Tin Myint (Retd) made a speech and presented K 6000 each to 351 members through WOII Thein Lwin (Retd). Captain Htay Hlaing Oo (Retd), member of the Township Organizing Committee, presented cash assistance to Mawgun award winners and Vice-Chairman of the township committee Major Maung Maung (Retd) to older veterans of above 85 years old.—*Myanma Alinn*

Old lamp-posts replaced with concrete ones

PATHEIN, 31 March—Under the instruction of Ayeyawady Region Engineer (Deputy Chief Engineer) U Ko Ko Naing, Pathein District Electrical Engineer U Aung Soe Moe and Township Electrical Engineer U Thet Tint Zaw led 20 workers and electricians in carrying out continuous supply of electricity to Pathein Township, maintenance of 400-volt power lines, and safety of electricity.

On 15 March, the electricians substituted old lamp-posts with concrete ones on YekyiU 4th, 3rd, 2nd and 1st roads and eight streets in Ward 12 of Pathein.

The local people also participated in erection of the new lamp-posts joining hands with electricians and engineers.

Myanma Alinn

Thai coaches give training at SPEI (Mdy)

MANDALAY, 31 March—Under the arrangement of Myanmar Olympic Committee and Ministry of Sports, coaches from Thailand arrived at Sports and Physical Education Institute (Mandalay) on 21 March.

The coaches give training to the trainees in Futsal, football, badminton, table tennis, tennis, cycling, swimming, boxing, golf and volleyball events.

Myanma Alinn

WORLD

Kenyatta won Kenya's Presidency fairly: Supreme Court

A general view shows the proceedings at the Supreme Court in Kenya's capital Nairobi on 30 March, 2013.
REUTERS

NAIROBI, 31 March—Kenya's Supreme Court upheld Uhuru Kenyatta's Presidential election victory on Saturday and his defeated rival accepted the ruling, helping douse tensions after tribal violence blighted the election five years ago.

The decision cleared the way for Kenya's richest man to take the top job in east Africa's biggest economy, but left Western powers with the headache of dealing with a leader charged with crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court.

After the judgment, police fired shots in the air and tear gas at hundreds of stone-throwing youths in the western city of Kisumu, a stronghold of defeated candidate Raila Odinga, who had challenged Kenyatta's win. Protesters looted shops and burned tires in the city that was a flashpoint five years ago.

An official at Kenya's Red Cross said two people were killed from gunshots, and 11 others were wounded. But the violence was less severe than after the 2007 election.

And shortly after the court ruling, Odinga delivered a televised statement accepting the court's unanimous decision.

"The court has now spoken," Odinga said. "I wish the president-elect, honourable Uhuru Kenyatta, and his team well." Western donors, worried about a nation seen as a vital ally in the regional battle against militant, also congratulated Kenyatta. But they have said his indictment in the Hague will complicate their relations.

There was no immediate sign of major flare-ups in other areas of Kenya blighted by violence after the disputed ballot in 2007 that triggered bloodshed and killed more than 1,200 people.

During a 10-minute session to read the ruling, Chief Justice Willy Mutunga said the six-member court had reached the unanimous decision that Kenyatta and his running mate for deputy president, William Ruto, had been "validly elected".

"It is now for the Kenyan people, their leaders, civil society, the private sector and the media to discharge (their duty), to ensure that the unity, peace, sovereignty and prosperity of the nation is preserved," he said.—*Reuters*

28 dead, 13 injured in NE China colliery gas blast

CHANGCHUN, 31 March—Twenty-eight people were confirmed dead and 13 others injured in a coal-mine gas blast late Friday in northeast China's Jilin Province, authorities said on Saturday.

Forty-one workers were trapped after the accident happened around 10:40 pm at Babao Coal Mine in Jiangyuan District in the city of Baishan, said a spokesman with the provincial work safety and supervision bureau.

The injuries of the 13 were not life threatening, said the spokesman.

Wang Rulin, Party chief of the province, and governor Bayanqolu rushed to the scene to guide the rescue and also visited the injured workers who were receiving treatment at hospital. Fu Jianhua, deputy chief of the state administration of work safety, also rushed to the scene immediately after the accident.

Rescue work has been finished, and the cause of the accident is under investigation, according to the spokesman.

The mine is a state-owned colliery under the Tonghua Mining (Group) Co, Ltd.

Reuters

Photo taken on 30 March, 2013 shows the exterior where a gas blast happened at Babao Coal Mine in Jiangyuan District in the city of Baishan, northeast China's Jilin Province. Twenty-eight people were confirmed dead and 13 others injured during the colliery gas blast which happened around 10:40 pm (1440 GMT) on 29 March. The injuries of the 13 were not life threatening, said a spokesman with the provincial work safety and supervision bureau. Rescue work has been finished, and the cause of the accident is under investigation.—XINHUA

Iranian senior official arrives in Cairo for talks on Syria

CAIRO, 31 March—Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian arrived in Cairo on Saturday for talks on the Syrian issue, official news agency *MENA* reported.

The Iranian official is expected to hold talks in Cairo with the United Nations-Arab League envoy to Syria Lakhdar Brahimi on the Syrian crisis.

He is also scheduled to meet with a number of Egyptian officials to exchange views on a number of regional issues, especially the situation in Syria.

Abdollahian's visit coincides with the first flight launched from Cairo to Teheran in 34 years as ties have started to resume between the two countries since 2011 upheaval that toppled former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Ties between Egypt and Iran were cut off after Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979.

Both ruled by Islamist-oriented administrations, Egypt and Iran started to slightly normalize relations despite a number of challenges, including different positions on the Syrian issue, different ideological perception of religion between Egypt's Sunnis and Iran's Shiites, and Iran's tension with a number of Gulf states with which Egypt shares major interests.

Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi visited Teheran last August to attend the Nonaligned Movements (NAM) summit, becoming the first Egyptian president to visit Iran in decades.

In February, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became the first Iranian president to visit Egypt in over 34 years by attending the summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Cairo.

What's more, Egyptian Tourism Minister Hesham Zazou and head of Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization Mohammad Sharif Malekzadeh signed a memorandum of understanding in Teheran late February to promote tourism cooperation and nonstop flights between the two countries.

Xinhua

Jordan's king swears in new gov't

AMMAN, 31 March—Jordan's King Abdullah II on Saturday swore in a new cabinet led by Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour.

Ministers of interior, finance, planning and international cooperation, energy, and education were all replaced in the new 19- minister government (including the prime minister), while Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh stayed.

Reem Abu Hassan, a female minister, will head the Ministry of Social Development, the state-run *Petra* news agency reported. On 9 March, Jordan's king accepted the resignation of Ensour, the then prime minister, but re-tasked him with forming a new government as there had been no suitable candidate for the assignment. Late last year, Ensour ended fuel subsidies, triggering nationwide protests.—*Xinhua*

Jordan's King Abdullah II arrives at the swearing-in ceremony for the new cabinet led by Prime Minister Abdullah Ensourat at the Royal Palace in Amman on 30 March, 2013.—XINHUA

Abbas approves PNA budget with 1.4 bln USD shortfall

RAMALLAH, 31 March—President Mahmoud Abbas approved on Saturday the Palestinian National Authority (PNA)'s 2013 budget of 3.8 billion US dollars, which suffers a shortfall of 1.4 billion dollars, said an official.

The PNA hopes foreign aid would cover the shortage, Hassan Al- Awri, the legal adviser of Abbas, said in a statement.

Palestinian parliamentary blocs criticized the budget approval, as it was not discussed under the dome of the parliament which has been disabled due to the rift between Abbas' Fatah party and Islamic Hamas movement, which dominates the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). The Palestinians attribute their budget deficit to the massive decline in foreign aid after peace talks with Israel stalled in 2010. Earlier this month, US President Barack Obama visited the region and unblocked 500 million dollars in aid to the Palestinians who said they would engage in the exploratory, US- sponsored discussions to resume direct negotiations with the Israelis.

Xinhua

Two dead in apartment fire in Paris suburbs

PARIS, 31 March—Two people were killed after a building in Aubervilliers, a commune in the northeastern suburbs of Paris, caught fire on Saturday evening at around 22:00 local time, local media reported citing sources from the fire brigade.

Five other people were seriously injured and have been sent to nearby hospitals, local broadcaster Europe1 reported. Another nine people suffered from minor injuries.

Some 200 fire fighters are on the site and the fire was brought under control at around 23:30 local time.

Xinhua

REGIONAL

*He Li (ast L), team leader of Chinese People's Armed Police team receives the first prize of the 5th Warrior Competition in Amman, Jordan on 28 March, 2013. Chinese People's Armed Police team on Thursday won the first prize of fifth Warriors contest "international special forces contest at King Abdullah Special Operation Training Centre (KASOTC) in Amman. The competition with wide participation of 33 teams from 18 countries was held from 24 March to 28 March.—*Xinhua

Indonesian flag carrier airline firm earns int'l awards

Jakarta, 31 March— Indonesia's state-run airline firm Garuda Indonesia earned two awards for its service excellence awarded by two international consulting agencies, local media reported on Saturday.

Garuda earned "2012 Domestic Airline of the Year" as 93.3 percent of 28,000 consumers in Indonesia responded of satisfied flying with the airline throughout last year in a survey carried out by an Australia-based Roy Morgan Research.

The award was handed over on Thursday night to Garuda Indonesia President Director Emirsyah Satar here. "The consumers' assessment for Garuda's service excellence was far higher than their assessments for the other airlines operating in Indonesia,"Roy Morgan International Director Ira Soekirman was quoted by the tempo online as saying in the handing over ceremony.

The nation's flag carrier airline also received another award titled "ASEAN Premium Airline of the Year"on the same day, awarded by Frost & Sullivan, a US-based international business research and consulting agency.

The award was resulted from the agency's research on airline firms providing regular and full service flights that transport at least 20 million passengers per year, airports and plane maintenance service firms. Learning from the survey results, the agency assessed that Garuda Indonesia has demonstrated significant improvements in various operation aspects throughout last year. It made the agency give the award in airline category.

Garuda earned "The Best International Airline" award mid last year, awarded by Roy Morgan. It brushed aside Singapore Airlines, Air New Zealand, Emirates and Cathay Pacific airlines to earn the title. The award was resulted from a survey on airlines serving flights to Australia.

Xinhua

School blast leaves seven kids injured in Pakistan's Karachi

Islamabad, 31 March —Seven children were injured in hand grenade attack at a school in Pakistan's southern port city of Karachi on Saturday morning, local media reported.

Samaa TV said that the incident happened at about 11:20 am (local time) when some unknown gunmen hurled hand grenade at a school located in Baldia Town area of Karachi, and fled to an unidentified location.

Police said that the school's owner was associated with a political party and the attack was launched on the basis of political differences.

The injured kids were shifted to a nearby hospital where three of them were said to be in critical condition.

No group took credit for the attack yet.

The police cordoned off the area and kicked off a search operation.—*Xinhua*

New Zealand mobilephone company CEO and wife onboard crashed light plane

Wellington, 31 March —The chief executive of New Zealand mobile phone company 2degrees and his wife were onboard the light aircraft that plunged into the sea near New Zealand North Island region of Waikato on Saturday.

Eric and Kathy Hertz have been missing since the twin-engined aircraft disappeared off the radar at 12:20 pm near Raglan, Radio New Zealand reported.

Rescuers called off a search for the pair on Saturday evening but will resume at first light on Sunday.

Eric and Kathy Hertz were travelling from Ardmore to Timaru when the plane's engine failed and lost contact with Airways New Zealand.

Oil and the wreckage was located 20 km from the entrance to Kawhia Harbour, near Waikato on the west coast of the North Island.

A statement on 2degrees' website said the pair are unlikely to have survived.

Rescue Coordination Centre spokesperson Steve Rendle said they would have been found by now, if they had survived the crash.

He said where the plane went down has been searched without success by a helicopter, an aircraft and a coastguard vessel.

"(We have) intensively searched that area. Unfortunately there has been no sign of the two people that had been on board, so we' ve handed the matter to the police," he added.—*Xinhua*

Japan, Mongolia to promote further bilateral ties

Ulan Bator, 31 March— Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe agreed with Zandaakhuu Enkhbold, chairman of the Mongolian parliament, on Sunday to do more to promote the bilateral relationship.

During their meeting in Ulan Bator, Abe said, "I expect inter-parliamentary exchanges between the countries to develop further."

Abe arrived in the Mongolian capital the previous day for talks with President Tsakhia Elbegdorj and Prime Minister Norov Altankhuyag.

The top leaders agreed to strengthen cooperation on developing the fast-growing country's rich mineral resources and dealing with Asia's security affairs, at a time of growing Chinese influence in the region.

Abe will return home later Sunday.

Kyodo News

*Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (R) and Mongolian Prime Minister Norov Altankhuyag (L) attend a ceremony welcoming Abe's visit to Mongolia in Ulan Bator on 30 March, 2013.—*Kyodo News

Nine killed in heavy rains in northern India

New Delhi, 31 March— At least nine people were killed by lightning during heavy rains on Friday in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, local media reported on Saturday.

Nine others have been seriously injured in the lightning strikes in the state's Chandauli, Ghazipur, Sambhal and Meerut and Ghazipur Districts, according to Indo-*Asian News Service.*

Uttar Pradesh has witnessed a sudden change of weather in the last two days with a brief spell of rain and dust storms.—*Xinhua*

Premier underlines developing modern agriculture, scale farming

Beijing, 31 March— Premier Li Keqiang has stressed the importance of developing modern agriculture and scale farming in his recent research tour to the Yangtze River Delta region.

While visiting a family farm in Changshu, east China's Jiangsu Province, Li was pleased to see local farmers have seen a boost in grain output and income as they merged their fragmented land through transfers to develop scale farming, which allowed the use of advanced technologies.

"To develop modern agriculture through the forms of joint partnership, family farms and farmer cooperatives is the big direction for China," Li said.

Li's remarks came amid China's growing efforts to speed up the transfer of rural land to improve efficiency and promote large-scale commercial farming.

Most rural land is owned collectively by a village, and farmers get contractual rights over some plots. The central government said in its "No.1 document" for 2013, which has always focused on rural issues, it would guide the orderly transfers of contractual rights of rural lands, and encourage land contracts to flow to large-scale landholders, family farms or farmer' cooperatives to develop scale management.

The large-scale farming will improve land and labor efficiency and provide a firm support to the country's new type of urbanization, Li said, adding farmers' interests should be protected in the process.

Xinhua

*Photo taken on 28 March, 2013 shows Chinese Premier Li Keqiang (C), also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, visits the Tianniang family farm in Changshu City, east China's Jiangsu Province. Li had a research tour to Jiangsu and Shanghai from 27 March to 29 March.—*Xinhua

GENERAL

Afghan president leaves for Qatar for state visit

KABUL, 31 March— Afghan President Hamid Karzai left for Qatar on Saturday for a state visit during which he would discuss with the Qatari leaders the opening of a Taleban office to conduct negotiations.

The Taleban insurgent group, fighting Afghan and the NATO-led forces stationed in the country, had in the past rejected the government's offers for talks, saying there will be no dialogue in the presence of foreign forces in the country.

"President Hamid Karzai, leading a high level delegation, left this noon for Qatari capital Doha on a two-day state visit at the invitation of the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifah Al-Thani," tsaid a statement issued by Presidential Palace here.

During his visit to the Persian Gulf state, the President is scheduled to hold meetings with the Amir of Qatar as well as other senior Qatari officials to discuss ways to enhance the level of bilateral cooperation and on Afghanistan's peace process, it added.

He is accompanied by Foreign Minister Zulmai Rasoul, National Security Advisor Rangin Dadfar Spanta, Presidential Advisor on International Affairs Marufi, Chairman of the High Peace Council Salauddin Rabbani, Head of the Council's Secretariat Mohammad Masoom Stanikzai, Chief of Staff to the president Abdul Karim Khuram and the presidential Spokesman Aimal Faizi, according to the statement. —*Xinhua*

Photo taken at Tokyo's Haneda airport on 29 March, 2013, shows a Japan Airlines Co Boeing 777 Aircraft painted with illustrations of Mickey Mouse to mark the 30th anniversary of the opening of Tokyo Disney Resort. KYODO NEWS

Five killed in South African helicopter crash

JOHANNESBURG, 31 March—A South African Air Force (SAAF) helicopter crashed on Saturday night, leaving five people dead, the South African Press Association reported on Sunday.

The tragedy occurred as the *A109* helicopter was on a routine patrol over the Kruger National Park in the northeastern province of Limpopo at around 7:00 pmlocal time on Saturday, the SAAF was quoted as saying.

"It was part of the anti-poaching operation," the SAAF said.

The Kruger park is the largest reserve in South Africa, where live many endangered animals of rhino. However, some of the rhinos would be targeted and killed by poachers every month due to the rampant smuggling of horns.

Poachers mostly operate at or near moon, and the park has to request the air force to use helicopters to combat them.

"The *A109* helicopter lost its control, killing five people on board," added the SAAF.

The cause of the fatal air accident was not clear, and the SAAF was investigating it.

The twin-turbine helicopter, developed by Italy in the 1970s, is capable of carrying out multiple aerial missions with eight people on board. South Africa's Department of Defence and Military Veterans and the SAAF expressed their heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased.

Xinhua

Complete blackout hits in Syrian capital

DAMASCUS, 31 March— Electricity completely went out in the Syrian capital of Damascus and its suburbs on Saturday, pro- government Sham FM radio reported.

The reason behind the blackout is not immediately known. This is not the first time that a large-scale blackout has hit Damascus.

In January 2012, rebels attacked a key power line near Damascus, causing a blackout in the capital and much of southern Syria.

Damascus' 2.5 million residents have grown used to frequent power outages amid an escalation of military showdowns in its suburbs that have inflicted a heavy toll on the country's infrastructure.— *Xinhua*

A contestant operates a fork lifter during a provincial logistics career skills contest in Nantong, east China's Jiangsu Province, on 30 March, 2013. Contestants from 13 cities in Jiangsu will compete over such logistics career skills as freight distribution, fork lifter operation and logistics document handling during the three-day contest launched on Saturday.— XINHUA

Yemeni PM meets delegation of China's health ministry

SANAA, 31 March— Yemeni Prime Minister Mohammed Salem Basindwa on Saturday met here with a visiting delegation of China's health ministry, expressing hopes that medical and health cooperation between the two countries would be further strengthened. During the meeting, Basindwa said China and Yemen had enjoyed five decades of medical and health cooperation, which showed China 's support to the Arab country.

The Chinese medical teams have been healing the wounded and saving lives across Yemen for 47 years, contributing to the improvement of the Yemeni people's livelihood, Basindwa said.

The Yemeni government welcomes the return of the Chinese medical personnel after they left the country due to the 2011 unrest and hopes that bilateral health cooperation will be strengthened in the future, he added.

Chinese Ambassador to Yemen Chang Hua, for his part, said China sent its first medical team to Yemen in 1966 and since then, more than 3,400 doctors and nurses had been working in the country and made contribution to the Yemeni people's health improvement.

China values its traditional friendship with Yemen and hopes to deepen bilateral cooperation in a variety of fields, he added.

The delegation of China's health ministry arrived in Sanaa on Thursday for the resumption of the Chinese medical work in the country after a temporary departure. The Chinese medical personnel in Yemen will expand to 90 people this year and will be providing training courses along with medical services.

Xinhua

15 rescued, one missing after boat capsizes in S China

NANNING, 31 March— Fifteen tourists were rescued and one remains missing after a boat capsized at a scenic spot in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, local tourism authorities said.

Rescuers are searching a 64-year-old man from Taiwan who went missing on Saturday after the boat with 16 tourists aboard capsized in the Guanyan scenic area in Guilin, said the Guangxi Tourism Administration.

The rapid currents and improper operation of boatmen caused the capsizal, the administration said.

The tourists were organized by a local travel agency in Guilin.

Tourism authorities in Guilin have ordered scenic spots which were hit by heavy rains recently to halt hosting tourists.

Xinhua

Central China school attack suspect prosecuted

ZHENGZHOU, 31 March —The man who allegedly injured 23 students and an old woman in a knife attack in central China's Henan Province late last year has been prosecuted, a court said on Saturday.

Min Yongjun, 37, was prosecuted on Friday for the crimes of intentional homicide and endangering public security by dangerous means at the Xinyang City Intermediate People's Court, according to a written statement issued by the city's procuratorate.

On 14 Dec, 2012, Min is suspected to have stabbed an elderly woman in the village of Chenpeng, then broke into the village's elementary school,where he wounded 23 students. He was nabbed on the same day by teachers, villagers and police, and the procuratorate approved his arrest on 16 December, said the statement.

In January, results of an appraisal by the Wuhan Psychiatric Hospital in Hubei Province confirmed Min had a mental disorder.

The statement did not disclose the date for the court hearing.—*Xinhua*

Rescue workers conduct search and rescue work at the site where a large-scale landslide hit a mining area in Maizhokunggar County of Lhasa, southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, on 30 March, 2013. Rescuers have found bodies and are still searching for survivors more than 37 hours after a massive landslide buried 83 miners at the polymetal mine in Tibet.— XINHUA

ENTERTAINMENT

The actor said that he would consider tying the knot again, despite the "hullabaloo" from his first short-lived effort.
PTI

Russell Brand wants to have children

NEW DELHI, 31 March —Russell Brand, who was married to Katy Perry for just 14 months before they divorced last year—would love to engage in a "serious relationship" and start a family.

He also admitted that he would consider tying the knot again, despite the "hullabaloo" from his first short-lived effort.

He said: "I would like a serious relationship but I don't think I am sending the correct signals. I would like that. It's alright, the world of roaming promiscuity, but ultimately you want some babies. I would like a little one. I would possibly get married. Once you have done a marriage there is a lot of hullabaloo if it does not work out. I believe in romantic love."

While the long-haired lothario — who reclaimed *The Sun* newspaper's Russell Brand Sh****r of the Year award in 2012, despite the prize being retired in 2010 after he won it in 2006, 2007, 2008 - is now keen to settle down, he is proud of his womanising ways.

Speaking on the British chat show Alan Carr: Chatty Man, he added: "I reclaimed my Sh****r of the Year crown only last year. And when you think of all the new sh*****s now like young Harry Styles and Doctor Who it is quite an achievement. I have sh***ed them all out of the business. It is a like a Muhammad Ali comeback. I have taken them all out."

PTI

Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt says to go to jail without a fight

MUMBAI, 31 March—Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt said on Thursday that he will return to jail for his conviction linked to the 1993 Mumbai bombings, giving up a long-running legal battle for his freedom.

The high-earning actor has been on bail since 2007 when he appealed against an original sentence of six years for the illegal possession of weapons in a case linked to the attacks that killed 257 people.

Last week India's Supreme Court rejected his final appeal against his conviction but reduced his sentence to five years and ordered him to return to custody within four weeks.

Dutt, 53, said he would no longer fight and would not try to seek a pardon.

"Right now I am a shattered man, my family is shattered," an emotional Dutt told reporters in Mumbai, breaking down and hugging his sister, Priya, who sat beside him.

"I am not going for pardon, there is no debate about it .. The honourable Supreme Court has given me time to surrender and I will surrender at that time."

Dutt had already spent 18 months in prison before being released on bail so he is expected to serve another 3.5 years.

Dutt was the most high-profile of 100 people involved in the Mumbai bombings trial which ended with 12 people receiving the death penalty and 20 others given life sentences.

Reuters

Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt (R) embraces his sister Priya Dutt after breaking down during a news conference outside his residence in Mumbai on 28 March, 2013.—REUTERS

Harry Potter actor Richard Griffiths dies after surgery

LONDON, 31 March—British actor Richard Griffiths, best known for his roles in 'Withnail and I' and the Harry Potter films, has died at the age of 65 after complications following heart surgery, his agent said on Friday.

Griffiths spent almost four decades in radio, film, on television and on stage, and received some of his industry's top awards for his role in Alan Bennett's play "The History Boys".

The portly actor filled the screen as the lascivious Uncle Monty in the cult 1987 film 'Withnail and I'.

But younger fans will remember him for his portrayal of a much crueler avuncular figure — Harry Potter's red-faced and bullying uncle Vernon Dursley.

Daniel Radcliffe, who played the boy wizard and performed with Griffiths in the stage play "Equus", said the veteran performer had encouraged and coached him and helped him get over his nerves.

"Richard was by my side during two of the most important moments of my career ... any room he walked into was made twice as funny and twice as clever just by his presence. I am proud to say I knew him," Radcliffe said in a statement.

Griffiths' agent, Simon Beresford, described him as "a remarkable man and one of our greatest and best-loved actors". He said Griffiths died in hospital on Thursday.—*Reuters*

Richard Griffiths poses with his award for Best Performance by a Leading Actor in a Play for The History Boys at the 60th annual Tony Awards in New York in this file on 11 June, 2006 photo.
REUTERS

Trailblazing TV journalist Barbara Walters to retire in 2014

NEW YORK, 31 March—Pioneering journalist Barbara Walters plans to retire in May 2014 after more than five decades as one of the most prominent figures on US television, a source familiar with her plans said on Thursday.

Walters, 83, is expected to announce her retirement to viewers herself in the coming weeks, the source said.

"It was very much her decision. I think she will best explain it herself," the source told *Reuters*.

ABC News executives declined to comment.

Walters, the creator and host of *ABC*'s all-women talk show "The View," had suffered health issues recently, including fainting and hitting her head in January, and then was diagnosed with chicken pox, causing her to miss more than a month of work.

Walters is best known as one of the top interviewers on US television, counting an array of world leaders as subjects, including Cuba's Fidel Castro, Britain's Margaret Thatcher, Saddam Hussein of Iraq and every US president since Richard Nixon.

She got her start in television journalism in 1961 as a writer on NBC's "Today," a show that she would later co-anchor.

Reuters

Television personality Barbara Walters

French actress files complaint over Hollande liaison rumour

PARIS, 31 March—A French actress has filed a complaint with the Paris prosecutor for breach of privacy over Internet rumours alleging she has a relationship with President Francois Hollande, the prosecutor's office said on Thursday.

A spokesperson for the prosecutor's office told *Reuters* that actress Julie Gayet had filed a complaint against "persons unknown", a common formulation under French law, on 18 March over rumours circulating on Twitter and blog sites for some weeks.

A lawyer for Gayet did not immediately respond to phone calls and Hollande's office declined to comment.

Hollande and first lady Valerie Trierweiler are unmarried but have been in a relationship for several years. They met when she was working as a journalist for a French magazine.

Their relationship came under media scrutiny during Hollande's campaign for the May Presidential election and in the months afterwards as Trierweiler became an active tweeter and maintained a literary review column in *Paris Match* magazine.

Gayet, 40, has dozens of film credits to her name including a minor role in the 1993 Franco-Polish drama "Three Colours: Blue" and a leading role in "Select Hotel", for which she won two awards for her depiction of a young drug addict.

Reuters

French actress Julie Gayet

SPORTS

Williams sinks Sharapova for record sixth Miami title

Serena Williams of the US holds the trophy after her victory over Maria Sharapova of Russia in women's final at the Sony Open tennis tournament in Key Biscayne, Florida on 30 March, 2013.—Reuters

Miami, 31 March—World number one Serena Williams fought back from a set down to beat Maria Sharapova 4-6, 6-3, 6-0 and win the Sony Open for a record sixth time on Saturday as she continued her dominance over her closest rival.

With the win, Williams, who struggled with her serve in the first two sets, becomes only the fourth woman in the Open era to win the same WTA tournament six times, joining Martina Navratilova, Chris Evert and Steffi Graf.

"I finally have some record," Williams said. "Like it's really cool. I can't seem to catch up with Margaret Court or Steffi or anything. I'm really happy to have something right now, so it's exciting.

"Maria played really the best I have seen her play, and I think she was moving unbelievable and she was hitting winners from everywhere. .... How did I end up winning when I actually wasn't on top of my game?"

Second-ranked Sharapova has now lost to Williams in their last 11 meetings and has not beaten the American since her two victories in 2004.

To add to the pain, the match was Sharapova's fifth Miami final and her fifth defeat.

"I had my chances. There's no reason why I couldn't win the match today," said the Russian, who dismissed any suggestion of a psychological weakness against Williams.

"It was a step in the right direction and there's no doubt that we'll be playing many more times. There's no doubt I'll be able to beat her."

Sharapova, who won at Indian Wells earlier this month, took her great form into the opening set, almost breaking Williams in a marathon third game featuring some outstanding baseline rallies.

The Russian, playing sparkling all-round tennis, got her reward when she broke to go 3-2, with a powerful backhand shot that Williams could only return to the net.

Williams broke back straight away though, but a confident Sharapova took advantage of some over-hitting from the American to break in the ninth game and served out to win the set.

It looked as though Sharapova had a real chance to finally end her nine-year winless streak against the American but, as so often, Williams refound her game in the second.

"I was just making so many errors, and I just was like, 'Serena, are you really going to get to the final and not play up to your potential?" said Williams.

After some entertaining exchanges, a double-fault from Sharapova handed Williams a break point and the Russian's return to the net gave Williams a 5-3 lead and she held to force the third set.

The match turned decisively in Williams' favour when Sharapova produced two double-faults to go down 3-0 in the third set and the Russian never was able to claw back from that position.

"I was losing a little bit of pace on my ball which hurt me," said Sharapova. "Against a player like Serena, you can't really do that."

Williams, who has 15 Grand Slam singles titles, was happy to claim the record but was far from satisfied with her performance.

"One of the first things I said (after the match) is I need that tape so I can go home and study it and train and try to get better," she said.—*Reuters*

Maria Sharapova,

Juventus close in on title, Milan go second

Rome, 31 March—Juventus edged closer to a second successive Serie A title after winning 2-1 in a pulsating "derby of Italy" at old rivals Inter Milan on Saturday, while AC Milan moved up to second after beating Chievo Verona 1-0.

A superb long-range Fabio Quagliarella strike after three minutes and a tap in from Alessandro Matri on the hour were just enough for Juve to beat a determined Inter, who briefly levelled the scores on 54 minutes through Rodrigo Palacio.

"It was a game played at a great pace right from the start and it's an important win for us. Now we can think about Bayern," Matri told Sky Italia as he looked ahead to Tuesday's Champions League quarter-final first leg at Bayern Munich.

"We can't relax until we're mathematically certain of winning (the scudetto), but today we sent a signal out that we're still concentrated on the league."

The win puts the champions on 68 points with eight games left, 11 points clear of Milan, who beat Chievo thanks to Riccardo Montolivo's 25th-minute tap in after a Mario Balotelli free-kick rebounded to him.

Chievo finished a scrappy game played on a heavy pitch with ten men after defender Dario Dainelli was sent off for two bookings, the second in the 78th minute for a clumsy challenge on Balotelli as he raced towards goal.

Inter, who also had Esteban Cambiasso sent off in injury time for a rash tackle on Sebastian Giovinco, remain on 47 points and drop down to sixth after a 2-1 win against fellow European hopefuls Catania saw Lazio move above them into fifth place.—*Reuters*

Juventus' Fabio Quagliarella (R) celebrates with his team mate Alessandro Matri after scoring against Inter Milan during their Italian serie A soccer match at the San Siro stadium in Milan on 30 March, 2013.—Reuters

Golf-Thai Prayad canters to five-stroke lead at home

Chiangmai, 31 March—Thailand's Prayad Marksaeng maintained his tight grip on the Chiangmai Golf Classic with a six-under-par 66 in the penultimate round on Saturday to open up a five-shot lead at the top of the leaderboard.

The 47-year-old, who has led on all three days at the Alpine Golf Resort-Chiangmai, mixed six birdies and an eagle with two bogeys for a 54-hole total of 18-under-par 198.

Prayad's countryman Thongchai Jaidee and Australia's Matthew Stieger, who continued his bogey-free streak, were at 13-under 203 in the $750,000 event in Thailand.

Yang Yong-eun, the first Asian man to win a major, was among six players a shot further behind, while four-times major winner Ernie Els of South Africa carded a six-under-par 66 to move up to tied 15th place.

The smooth-swinging Prayad, whose round was highlighted by a chip-in eagle on the seventh hole, briefly lost his touch with two consecutive bogeys on the 15th and 16th hole but regained his composure with a birdie on the 17th.

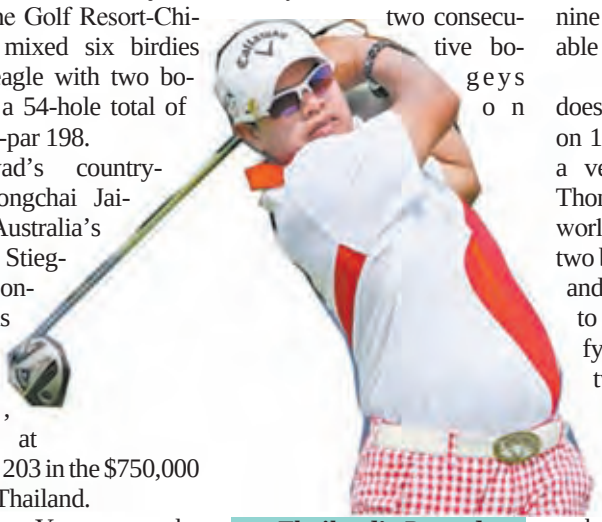
"I have a five-shot lead now and I will play steadily and not be aggressive," Prayad, chasing his seventh title on the Asian Tour, said.

"I think the pressure is on those chasing me. They need to have a good front nine or else they won't be able to catch up with me.

"I made mistakes but it doesn't matter. I was careless on 16 but I still think I have a very strong advantage." Thongchai, ranked 59 in the world, hit five birdies against two bogeys in the third round and needs a win on Sunday to have a chance of qualifying for the Masters in two weeks' time.

"I think the problem was my putting and reading the lines," the three-time Asian number one, said.

Reuters



Thailand's Prayad Marksaeng

Mercedes can challenge Red Bull: Lewis Hamilton

London, 31 March—Lewis Hamilton believes his Mercedes team is now Red Bull's closest challenger and will be capable of mounting a sustained bid for Formula One glory this year.

In the wake of last weekend's Malaysian Grand Prix in which champions Red Bull were split by Sebastian Vettel's decision to ignore team orders and pass team-mate Mark Webber to win, the 2008 champion has pointed to the potential of his outfit.

In the same race, Hamilton's team-mate and friend Nico Rosberg was asked to finish fourth behind him and obeyed.

Hamilton said: "We are the second best team... To be that close—I was competing with the Red Bulls at some stages in the race—and to be in that position is a great feeling."

He said that the result might have been different if Mercedes had not been forced to save fuel for most of the contest.

"Unfortunately, we didn't have enough fuel in the car, more so my side," he added.

"I was fuel-saving from lap 25 and it was very much an impossible task to challenge those up ahead.

"I was fuel saving at the end like you would not believe: I was coasting everywhere. I'm sure if we were all on the same fuel it would have been a different situation, so I'm confident about that."

Hamilton thinks the form shown by Mercedes is proof that the team is now in a position to win races.

"Definitely," he said. "I think this (Malaysia) proves that if we keep going in the direction we are heading, then there's a possibility that we could win a race at some stage this year."

While Hamilton was full of optimism, Rosberg was praised by the team's new motorsport boss Toto Wolff for setting aside his personal interests for the good of the team.

Reuters

Lewis Hamilton

GENERAL

12 militants killed in Afghan Ghazni Province

GHAZNI, (Afghanistan) 31 March—Up to 12 Taleban militants were killed on Saturday in a coalition airstrike in the eastern Afghan Province of Ghazni, authorities said.

"(Saturday) in the morning the ANSF (Afghan National Security Forces) and Coalition Forces conducted a successful attack on a group of armed Taleban extremists in Espand-de village in eastern Ghazni city," said a statement issued by coalition here.

It said the insurgents were preparing to attack the ANSF, adding the coalition conducted a airstrike killing 12 terrorists.

The statement also said no civilian was killed in the air attack in the province 100 km south of capital Kabul.

Meantime, a provincial health official, Baz Mohammad Himat, told *Xinhua* that a total of eight civilians have been admitted to a provincial capital hospital who sustained injuries in the airstrike in Espand-de area on Saturday morning.

The Taliban insurgent group, which has been waging an insurgency of more than one decade, has yet to make comments.

In addition, the Afghan army and police supported by the coalition forces have killed 14 Taleban insurgents, wounded four and arrested four others in Nangarhar, Laghman, Badakhshan, Kandahar and Helmand Provinces within the last 24 hours, the country's Interior Ministry said in a statement earlier Saturday.

Xinhua

A woman stands in front of a pond that is nearly empty in Shaoxin Village of Mile, southwest China's Yunnan Province, on 29 March, 2013. Persistent drought that sears Yunnan Province has reduced agricultural production in the city of Mile and its periphery. Some mountainous areas have even suffered from severe drinking water shortage and crop failure.—XINHUA

Minibus falls off cliff in C China, killing six

YICHANG, 31 March—Six people were killed and another two were seriously injured after a minibus they took fell off a cliff in central China's Hubei Province on Saturday evening, local authorities said.

The accident happened at about 6:20 pm in Shimen Village, Xingshan County, Yichang City, when the minibus plunged the 100-metre-deep cliff in heavy rain, according to the Yichang municipal firefighting department.

The six victims were female tea pickers. The driver and another tea picker were badly injured and are receiving treatment at a local hospital.

Xinhua

Own goal helps United move closer to title

Sunderland's John O'Shea (R) challenges Manchester United's Shinji Kagawa during their English Premier League soccer match in Sunderland, northern England on 30 March, 2013.—REUTERS

LONDON, 31 March—A Titus Bramble own goal helped Manchester United edge closer to their 20th league title when they won 1-0 at Sunderland on Saturday to stay 15 points clear of champions Manchester City with only eight Premier League games left to play.

City, whose manager Roberto Mancini conceded the title race was over on Thursday, beat Newcastle United 4-0 at the Etihad Stadium with goals from Carlos Tevez, David Silva, Vincent Kompany and Yaya Toure after they started the match 18 points behind United who kicked off earlier in the day.

United have 77 points from their 30 matches, with City in second on 62. The race for the other two Champions League places hotted up with Tottenham Hotspur winning 2-1 at Swansea City to leapfrog Chelsea into third place after they lost 2-1 at Southampton.

Spurs have 57 points, two ahead of Chelsea on 55 with Arsenal, who beat Reading 4-1, on 53.

Arsenal's win meant Reading, who had new manager Nigel Adkins in charge for the first time, dropped to the bottom of the table below Queens Park Rangers, who play Fulham on Monday, on goal difference.

Wigan Athletic beat Norwich City 1-0 to move out of the relegation zone, at least until Aston Villa, who are 18th, play Liverpool on Sunday.

The decisive goal in United's win at Sunderland came after 27 minutes when Robin van Persie ended a jinking run on the left with a shot that took a deflection off Bramble's thigh leaving Black Cats keeper Simon Mignolet stranded.

Reuters

China scraps import duties for advanced components

BEIJING, 31 March—China will drop import tariffs and import-related value-added taxes for a range of advanced components and raw materials for making sophisticated equipments, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) said on Friday.

Items that will enjoy tax exemption include signal system of high-speed railways, garbage sorting system, solar cells, integrated circuits and manufacturing equipments for flat-panel display, among others.

The new rules will take effect starting 1 April, 2013.

Importers of those components and raw materials should register with customs and taxation authorities for tariff exemption review during 1 April and 30 April. Authorities also created a separate list of technological equipment and materials that will be taxed starting from 1 April, 2013. The list included electric transmission and transformation equipments and concrete pump trucks.

Xinhua

A citizen rides in snow in Rushan City, east China's Shandong Province, on 30 March, 2013.—XINHUA

Public accessible to London Olympic park

LONDON, 31 March—The Olympic Park in London opened up to the public this weekend for the first time since the 2012 Games.

More than 23,000 tickets have been sold for the hour-long accompanied tours, organizers said, which offer a sneak preview before the Stratford site begins to open in July.

London Mayor Boris Johnson said: "We promised to give people opportunities to get back onto the park as soon as possible and it is no surprise that there is a huge appetite from Londoners for these fantastic tours offering a chance to see this exciting metamorphosis first hand."

Whole sections of the park are being rebuilt with new cafes, community centers and gardens added, as part of a 18-month scheme costing 292 million pounds (463 million dollars).

The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park reopens in part in July and will re-open fully from next year. Planners hope that within 20 years, the new district will be home to 8,000 people.

Xinhua

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Monday, 1 April, 2013

Union Minister U Hla Tun meets relocated villagers in Letpadaungtaung

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March—Chairman of the implementation committee on Letpadaungtaung copper mining project report Union Minister at the President Office U Hla Tun together with Union Ministers U Ohn Myint, U Win Tun, Dr Myint Aung, Sagaing Region Chief Minister U Tha Aye and officials met relocated villagers who moved from the copper mines area yesterday and fulfilled the requirements of the new villages.

The Union ministers and party met villagers of new Whethmay-Kantaw Village, calling for their cooperation with officials concerned to ensure regional stability. The Union ministers provided foodstuffs to villagers before visiting new Sete-Zidaw Village to attend to the requirements.

Confiscated land scrutiny group under the committee has finished the land surveying and has paid out compensation of over K 1681.4 million for 536 farmers up to 29 March. A total of 233 households within the project area have been relocated in new villages facilitated with water, electric power and roads. In addition, 1691 locals are employed in the project works.

MNA

President U Thein Sein's address on the air

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March—President U Thein Sein's address was aired through Myanma Radio, Mandalay FM, Pyinsawady FM, Shwe FM, Cherry FM, FM Bagan and Thazin radio stations, at 7.00 pm and 8.30 pm on 31 March.

The address will be aired again four times a day on 1st, 2nd and 3rd April at 7.00 am and 11.00 am, 6.00 pm and 8.00 pm respectively.

MNA

News and Periodicals Enterprise holds anniversary ceremony

***Outstanding staff and columnists pose for documentary photo with departmental heads at anniversary ceremony of News and Periodicals Enterprise.*—MNA**

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March— News and Periodicals Enterprise under the Ministry of Information marked its anniversary with a ceremony at the Nay Pyi Taw Press in Zeyathiri Township today.

It was attended by Deputy Minister for Information U Ye Htut, departmental heads, staff of the three dailies, the Myanmar News Agency, staff from sub-printing houses of the ministry and columnists.

During the ceremony, the deputy minister and departmental head presented prizes to the outstanding staff including who won public good service medals, outstanding awards for news photography, outstanding award for news story, outstanding awards for article in English, the best award for earning local and foreign currency, the best award for distribution and contributors and winners of the sports events to mark the anniversary.

The Managing Director of the NPE presented uniforms for the employees of the enterprise.

Myo Win Tun (Monywa) won the first outstanding news photography award; Ko Ko Soe Nyunt the second and Maung Maung (Kyaukme) the third. Tin Maung (Mandalay) won the first outstanding news story award; Yan Gyi Aung (MNA) the second and Ko Lwin (Swa) the third. Htet Khaing (Sangyoung) won the best news story award; Tin Win Lay (Kyimyindine) the second and Maung Maung Htwe (MNA) the third. Dr Khin Maung Nyunt won the first outstanding prize for article in English; U Ba Than the second and U Ba Sein the third. U Ko Ko Hlaing, U Maung Maung Aye and U Ye Tint who contributed articles to the International News Journal of the ministry were also honoured at the ceremony.—*MNA*

Union A&I Minister promises to fulfill seed demand in Bago Region

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March—Union Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation U Myint Hlaing and Bago Region Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Breeding U Tin Soe visited Palethwe hybrid paddy seeds production farm near Padauk Khin Village in Oatwin Township, Bago Region yesterday.

The Union minister in meeting with farmers announced the plan to establish 2000-acre Palethwe hybrid seeds production farm in Bago Region and promised to fulfill the seed demand of the region with local and foreign investment.

The Union minister then went to 200-acre modern mechanized cropland in Nyaungbintha in Pyu Township.

MNA

Order restored in Thayawady District

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March—State of Emergency was imposed in Minhla, Monyo, Okpo, Gyobingauk, Zigon, Nattalin Townships in Thayawady District in Bago Region following the rioting which started on 25 March, in order to restore law and order. Beginning 29 March, those townships were reported to have been brought under control thanks to tight security of personnel concerned and duty-conscious people.

Security forces and Tatmadawmen of local battalions have been clearing the debris in damaged sites as the townships have returned to normal condition. Perpetrators and instigators will be brought to justice, it is reported.

MNA

Hledan Overpass to ease traffic chaos

Byline & Photo: Tin Win Lay (Kyimyindine)

Hledan Junction, the point where Insein Road, Pyay Road, Hledan Street and University Avenue converge, has seen the most serious traffic congestion in urban Yangon over the past two decades.

Travellers and bus drivers have much expected to have an overpass at the junction to curb traffic woes as the increase in car ownership has also worsened the traffic problems.

However, to the wishes of people, an overpass is due to emerge soon at Hledan Junction. The construction of the overpass began on 11 March, 2012 and the facility will be put into service on coming 10 April, according to an official from Road/Bridge Construction Group of Yangon City Development Committee.

The overpass will be 2507 feet in length with 98 feet and eight inches wide motor road flanked by three feet wide pedestrians. It will be able to withstand 60 tones of load per vehicle and its clearance 18 feet, said a site engineer.

It has taken over a year to construct the overpass which is designed by T.Y.Lin Company of Singapore with building materials imported from Indonesia and South Korea.

Under the supervision of a Japanese technician, engineers and workers from Shwetaung Development Company constructed the overpass.

The inauguration of the overpass is much anticipated as it would help ease the traffic chaos Yangon is facing.

***Trs:* TKK**
Myanma Alinn:
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