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President U Thein Sein receives Honorary Consul General from ROK

President U Thein Sein poses for documentary photo together with Mr. Won Bae Dahn, Honorary Consul General from Pusan, the Republic of Korea.—MNA

Nay Pyi Taw, 4 Feb—President U Thein Sein held talks with a delegation comprising heads of business organizations led by Mr. Won Bae Dahn, Honorary Consul General from Pusan, the Republic of Korea, at the hall of the Presidential Hall, here, on 2 pm on Wednesday.

They discussed cooperation in economic sector.

Also present at the call were union ministers U Wunna Maung Lwin, U Soe Thane, U Zeyar Aung, U Maung Myint and Dr Kan Zaw, deputy minister Dr Pwint Hsan, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry U Win Aung and officials.—*MNA*

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Yangon Photo Festival in February

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

Yangon, 4 Jan—Organized by Institut Français de Birmanie (IFB), the Yangon Photo Festival will be taken place from 13 to 21 February with the aim of establishing a new generation of Myanmar professional photographers and photo-journalists.

The theme of the 7th photo festival is 'I love you', with the organizer inviting enthusiasts to enjoy many kinds of love photos by more than 40 photographers. The Yangon Photo Festival team said, "Starting on Valentine's Day, we will celebrate romantic love with a collective exhibition at Junction Square, 'Love umbrellas', a photocall by Mayco Naing and other attractions". The Inner Light project will also be presented on 13 February.

"Following weeks of uplifting photography, juggling, dance & poetry workshops, children and teenagers of Myanmar will present the story of their lives," said Sangeeta Isvaran, dancer and social worker in charge of the project.

On the last day of the fair, winners of the best photo-essays awards of the year will be chosen by the judges led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. It is scheduled to present prizes worth a total 100 lakhs such as professional cameras and photo workshops in France to winners.

"This is one of the biggest photo festivals in Southeast Asia," said Christophe Loviny, artistic director and photography master class trainer, who has been training more than 250 photographers since 2009.

The fair covers 15 kinds of programmes, including exhibitions, screenings, lectures and live shows. The annual event is also aimed at introducing the best of international photography to Myanmar audiences and promoting skills of local photographers, he added.

GNLM

Rice growing technology for salt intrusion area puts farmers on right track to double-cropping goal, but shortage of agricultural machinery challenges poor farmers in Ayeyawady Delta

Access to agricultural machinery is a major challenge for farmers who are double-cropping rice in salt-intrusion areas, even though the growing method itself is simple.
Photo: Aye Min Soe

By *Aye Min Soe*

Yay Win Chauk Village (Ayeyawady Delta), 4 Feb— With the discovery of a new method for growing rice in the dry season in salt-intrusion areas, rays of hope for local farmers to escape the poverty trap are

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Pyithu Hluttaw

Ministries concerned striving for construction of industrial zones meeting international standards

NAY PYI TAW, 4 Feb— Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) continued for the 12th day at its hall, here, on Wednesday.

U Tin Maung Oo of Shwepyitha Constituency asked whether or not ministries concerned will solve standardization of industrial zones and disputes of land plots at the zones. Deputy Minister for Industry U Myo Aung replied that ministries concerned are striving for construction of industrial zones meeting international standards. These ministries solve the problems on land plots for land ownership and squatters. In some regions and states, respective industrial zone management committees of region and state governments and industrial zone management committees inspect land plots where no industry is operated for returning them to the government.

U Khin Maung Shwe of Tamu Constituency asked whether there is a plan to sink well and carry out water supply to Tamu and construction of local asphalt road. Deputy Minister at the President Office U Aung Thein replied that K316.20 million of border region fund has been allotted for placing asphalt on a four-mile long local roads in Tamu in 2015-16 fiscal year. He added that Sagaing Region Development Affairs Committee has a plan to repair a public lake near Myoma Sasana Yeiktha in Tamu by spending K2 million in 2015-16 fiscal year.

U Nyan Swe Win of Kyaukkyi Constituency submitted a proposal calling for allowing rights of political pension under the law. Deputy Minister at the President Office U Aung Thein explained it needs to draw a new political pension law enacted as Pyithu Hluttaw Law No 4 in 1980 as it is not conformity with the present time. The Hluttaw approved the proposal.

MNA

Amyotha Hluttaw

Amyotha Hluttaw approves motion to encourage yam cultivation

NAY PYI TAW, 4 Feb — Amyotha Hlutaw session on Wednesday discussed the motion calling for the union government to take systematic measures for yam cultivation in suitable areas submitted by Representative U Har Shein Bway.

The motion was seconded by Representative U Paw Lyan Lwin. He said that it is necessary for the government to arrange loans for yam cultivation at low interest rates while the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Cooperatives are required to set up yam purchasing centres in villages.

Representative U Salai Khweyan supported the motion, saying that yam can be a new product item that will raise the income of the country if yam researches are conducted and the cultivation is expanded. He also called for the government to provide financial and technical assistance to yam farmers.

Representative U Nyunt Tin said it is necessary to form an organization of yam farmers for successful cultivation of yam.

Concerning the motion, Union Minister for Commerce U Win Myint said that the country exported 3,525 tons of yam worth US$ 6.489 million up to 16 January in 2014-15 fiscal year, adding that helping yam farmers will contribute to raising the living standards of yam farmers and increased export earnings of the country. He continued to say that a body has been formed and the ministry has urged authorities to set up yam cultivation zones. In conclusion, he said that systematic storage and processing techniques will help raise the prices of yam in the market.

The session approved the motion and accepted another motion for discussions urging the government to establish libraries in basic education schools.

Representative U Moe Myint raised a question at the session on construction and maintenance of school buildings in No. 1 Basic Education High School in Myeik. Deputy Minister for Education Dr Zaw Min Aung said the government has allotted K 64.8 million for construction of a building in 2015-15 fiscal year and arrangements will be made to allot more fund for maintenance of a school building.—*MNA*

Pyithu Hluttaw committee discusses interfaith marriage bill

Deputy Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw U Nanda Kyaw Swa speaking at finalization of bills.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 4 Feb— Pyithu Hluttaw Bill Committee discussed bills on the interfaith marriage, the religious conversion, the population control healthcare and the practice of monogamy.

At the meeting held at Hluttaw Builing, Deputy Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw U Nanda Kyaw Swa delivered opening speech, urging to finalize the four bills into law.

The participants at the meeting contributed their suggestions for respective bill, followed by conclusion remarks of U Nanda Kyaw Swa.

The meeting was also attended by U T Khun Myat, Chairman of Pyithu Hluttaw Bill Committee, U Maung Maung Swe, Chairman of Social Development Committee, and secretaries and members of committees, and discussed public suggestions on these bills.

MNA

Opening and closing ceremonies of Fourth National Sports Festival to be broadcast live

YANGON, 4 Feb — Opening and closing ceremonies of the Fourth National Sports Festival will be broadcast live on MRTV-4, Myanmar Radio and Sky Net channels on February 21 and 28 from Wunna Theikdi Stadium, Nay Pyi Taw.

The grand sports event will be resumed after 10-year interruption.

This festival will feature seven sports events such as boxing, martial arts and Chinlone, in addition to seven sports events of the disabled.

The medals for different sports events are 435 gold and 345 silver medals. Moreover, seminal-final and quarter-final football matches will be broadcast live on MRTV. —*GNLM*

P&G launches 2nd clean water donation campaign in Myanmar

By *Khaing Thanda Lwin*

YANGON, 4 Feb — Procter and Gamble (P&G), one of the world's largest consumer goods companies, and its partner organizations Monday launched their 'second year of 10 merits of donating clean water campaign' across Myanmar, aiming to promote public health.

"P&G will donate five million liters to the people living in remote areas and those in some townships in Yangon Region," said an official of the company.

During the period from February to April, P&G in partnership with the Population Service International (PSI), a global health organization, will distribute water purification packets to those areas, which can purify 10 liters of water in a short space of time.

Studies show the use of P&G packets can reduce diarrheal illness in the developing world by up to 90 percent. The clean water provided has helped save an estimated 45,000 lives globally, the company said.

According to the WHO, diarrhea is the second leading killer of children under 5 years of age in Myanmar. Nearly 90 percent of death has been attributed to unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene.

According to his experience, Dr Han Win Htat of PSI said, "We have to face a challenge in explaining the facts about the use of water purifiers to village people."

Customers will have a chance to participate in the donation by purchasing the P&G products. It means buying one package equals a donation of two liters of water or one day's worth of clean drinking water, the organizer said.

Famous Myanmar film maker U Aung Ko Latt, said, "I encourage everyone to contribute and help with our goal to provide clean drinking water to children and families of Myanmar."

Over the past decade, P&G has provided nearly 6 billion liters of potable drinking water to remote communities around the world. The company donated 10 million liters to Myanmar families through World Vision (Myanmar) in 2014, according to the organizer.—*GNLM*

Officials from P&G Co, PSI, famous supermarkets are tasting P&G water purification system at opening ceremony of water donation campaign in Myanmar.—PHOTO: KHAING THANDA LWIN

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw speaker receives Singaporean Emeritus Senior Minister, US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary

NAY PYI TAW, 4 Feb— Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann received Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore and party at the hall of Hluttaw Complex, here, on Wednesday.

The speaker also held talks with Mr Scot Marciel, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State, the United States of America, and party at the same venue.

Also present at the calls were chairmen and member of Pyithu Hluttaw committees and commission and officials of the Pyithu Hluttaw Office, Singaporean Ambassador Mr Robert Chua and US Ambassador Mr Derek Mitchell.—*MNA*

Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann cordially greets Mr Scot Marciel, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, US Department of State.—MNA

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives emeritus senior minister of Singapore

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore. MYAWADY

NAY PYI TAW, 4 Feb— The Tatmadaw is cooperating with the government for stability, the rule of law and ceasefire with ethnic armed groups, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing told Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore at the Zeyathiri Beikman in Nay Pyi Taw on Wednesday.

The senior general said he wished all the best on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Independence Day of Singapore and the diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Also present at the meeting were Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services and Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win, senior officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief and Ambassador of Singapore to Myanmar Mr Robert Chua.

At the meeting, the senior general said that Tatmadaw has been doing its best for the democratic path which was chosen by the people and cooperating with the president, adding that the 2008 state constitution was drafted for the multi-party democracy system by people from various walks of life. It is necessary to amend in accordance with the law if necessary, and military businesses, which are being operated for the welfare of personnel, retirees and their families and for economic development of the country, will be transformed into public companies at an opportune time, the senior said.

Mr Goh Chok Tong said that he understand the important role played by the Tatmadaw in democratic transition and maintaining stability and the rule of law before adding that representation of defence services personnel in the Hluttaw contributes to the political stability as the people have little experience in democracy but this should be reduced later when the country becomes stable. The senior minister said relations between the two armed forces.—*Myawady*

Supreme Court of the Union meets judges at different levels

NAY PYI TAW, 4 Feb— Independent jurisdiction under the law plays a key role in judicial pillar without bias and any interference, Chief Justice of the Union U Tun Tun Oo said at the coordination meeting of the Office of the Supreme Court of the Union, region and state high courts and district courts, here, Wednesday.

He said that information officers are assigned at Supreme Court of the Union and region and state high courts for release of information to media under the ethics.

The Supreme Court of the Union heard 1,209 criminal cases and 2,039 civil cases in from 1 January to 31 December 2014 and is hearing 298 criminal cases and 849 civil cases. Region and state courts heard 6,405 criminal cases and 3,743 civil cases and are hearing 2,771 criminal cases and 2,377 civil cases. Likewise, district courts heard 13,663 criminal cases and 10,934 civil cases and are hearing 3,950 criminal cases and 9,118 civil cases. Township courts heard 461,327 criminal cases and 23,122 civil cases and are hearing 32,573 criminal cases and 16,091 civil cases.

Likewise, he explained judicial affairs of courts for children, development courts and vehicle courts. The supreme court of the union amended the judgments of region and state courts over 394 cases of 2,615.

He stressed the need for judges of various courts to make decisions based on truth over the cases.

It was attended by judges of the supreme court of the union, chief justices of the regions and states.

MNA

Chief Justice of the Union U Tun Tun Oo highlights role of judicial pillar without bias and any interference.—MNA

UEC Chairman meets Argentine Ambassador, US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary

NAY PYI TAW, 4 Feb— Chairman of the Union Election Commission U Tin Aye held talks with Argentine Ambassador Ms Ana Maria Ramirez at the office of the commission, here, on Wednesday.

The UEC Chairman explained political process of Myanmar and holding elections, electoral system, voting system, implementation of the strategic plan since 2013 for holding the 2015 general elections, compilation of basic voter list, plans to conduct voter education work and invitation for international monitoring groups and chiefs of embassies in Myanmar.

The ambassador discussed election system and electoral process in Argentina and voting system. They focused on electoral processes in two countries.

The chairman also received Mr Scot Marciel, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State, the United States of America, US Ambassador Mr Derek Mitchell and Deputy Secretary/Deputy Consul Mr Jeffrey Warner at his office the same day.

The chairman explained strategic plan of the commission, seeking suggestions from political parties and CSOs for amending the rules, plans to conduct voter education and voter training and invitation for international observers. The US guests discussed cooperation in holding a transparent election, assistance of international organizations for electoral process and invitation of international observers.

MNA

Japanese Government grants US$ 819,465 for five projects in Myitkyina Tsp

YANGON, 4 Feb — The Japanese Government, under its Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) Scheme, has extended US$819,465 for five humanitarian assistance programmes.

The programme shares US$120,952 to the Project for Community Bridge Construction of Kyar Yar Patty Village in Myitkyina Township, Kachin State; US$104,518 to the Project for Construction of Sitapu Kindergarten in Myitkyina Township, US$352,969 to

The Project for Construction of No.1 Basic Education High School in Myitkyina Township, US$122,657 to the Project for Construction of Examination Building for Radiological Department in Myitkyina General Hospital, and US$118,369 to the Project for Construction of Shan Village Post Primary Education School in Myitkyina Township.

The handover and opening ceremonies of the above five projects took place in Myitkyina Township on 30 January 2015. Mr. Tateshi HIGUCHI, Ambassador of Japan to Myanmar, Daw Bauk Ja, Kachin State Minister for Social Affair, U Ah Lay Par, Kachin State Minister for Development Affairs, township administrator, teachers and students, respective committee chairman and members of the construction projects and local residents were in attendance.

GGP/GNLM

TODAY'S MYANMAR NEWS SITES

Irrigation Department issues compensation to farmers for loss of farmlands

NYAUNGLEBIN, 4 Feb — A ceremony to present compensation to loss of farmlands to local farmers was held at the hall of Nyaunglebin Township General Administration Department, Bago Region, on 3 February.

Assistant Director of Irrigation Department U Zaw Win explained the purpose of issuing compensations for loss of farmlands.

Dredging of water canals of Yenwe Dam passes 453.84 acres of farmlands in 15 village-tracts in the township.

Irrigation Department delivered K1.2 million per acre of better farmland and K1 million per ordinary farmland. So, deputy commissioner U Ye Htut, Assistant Director U Zaw Win of Irrigation, Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Ye Myint, Region Hluttaw representatives U Soe Paing and U Saw Lin Aung presented K505 million to 713 farmers from 15 village-tracts.

Nay Pin (Nyuanglebin)

Natogyi Township DAC upgrades urban roads in fiscal year

NATOGYI, 4 Feb — Chairman of Natogyi Township Development Affairs Committee U Than Htaik Aung and officials inspected progress of upgrading a 400 feet long Anawrahta road in Ward 5 of Natogyi, Mandalay, Region, on 1 February.

They also viewed stockpiling of construction materials for asphalting 1,200 feet long Adipati Road in Ward 3, Natogyi. The engineer reported on progress in collection of construction tasks.

The chairman and officials looked into placing of asphalt concrete on over 400 feet long Aung San Street in Ward 1. Natogyi Township Development Affairs Committee undertakes upgrading of four local roads in the urban area and plans to repair one rural road in the fiscal year, the chairman of the Township DAC told media.

Khin Zar Mon Myint (Law)

Champions emerge in Horizon Open

YANGON, 4 Feb — The final matches of the 7th Horizon Open Table Tennis Championship 2015 took place at Horizon International School (Shukhinthar Campus) in Thakayta Township, here, on 1 February evening.

Officials presented first prizes to Yin Wai Khaing of Dagon Basic Education High School No 1 in the U-12 women's event, Lu Maw Oo (ILBC) in the men's U-12 event, Hmu Theint Theint (Yangon Academy) in the women's U-15 event, Swan Pyae Tun of Dagon BEHS No 1 in the men's U-15 event, Soe Min Oo of Dagon BEHS No 1 in men's U-18 event, Mar Mar Soe of MICB in the women's open class, Aung Win in the men's 3rd class open, Min Naing Oo in the men's 2nd class, Thet Ko Ko Latt in the men's 1st class, Hla Myo Khaing in the men's U-45 and open event, and Soe Min Oo and Kyi Myint in men's doubles event respectively.

GNLM

Merits shared for pagoda Buddha Pujaniya

TATKON, 4 Feb — The Buddha Pujaniya of ancient Pyaing-in Pagoda was held in Byaing-in Village, Tatkon Township.

A ceremony to share merits for 9th Maha Pathana treatise recitation and Buddha Pujaniya was held at the precinct of the pagoda on 3 February.

Ovadacariya Sayadaw of the pagoda Kyaungthit monastery abbot U Ketu administered the eight precepts. Chairman of the Upahtamaka Committee U Ye Win supplicated on renovation of the pagoda.

Owner of Myanmar biscuit factory U Zin Win-Daw Khin Than Htay of Yangon donated K6.5 million to the fund for construction of Pyilone Chantha Dhammayon and wellwishers, cash and kind to the fund. So far, wellwishers have donated K11.82 million to the fund for construction of the Dhammayon.

Tin Soe Lwin (IPRD)

Inter-village bridge under construction in Myanaung Township

MYANAUNG, 4 Feb — Yedwingon concrete bridge across Ma Mya creek is under construction to link Asel and Yedwingon villages in Myanaung Township, Ayeyawady Region, on 1 February.

The bridge will be 90 feet long, 10 feet wide and 12 feet high.

Ayeyawady Region Hluttaw representative U Aung Win Swe and Township Administrator U Min Min Tun inspected progress of the bridge.

Local authorities reported on construction of the bridge. The township administrator instructed officials to construct the bridge meeting the set standard.

The authorities allotted over K 3.8 million and locals K6.1 million for construction of the inter-village bridge.—*Win Bo (Township IPRD)*

Educative talks mark World Wetlands Day in Inlay Lake Sanctuary area

NYAUNGSHWE, 4 Feb — In commemoration of the 2015 World Wetlands Day, an educative talk was given at the hall of Basic Education High School in Mongthauk Village, Nyaungshwe Township, Shan State, on 2 February.

Administrator of Inlay Lake sanctuary U Sein Tun explained that wetlands help prevent floods and inundation, clean bad solutions from the water, contribute to cultural value of the buildings, and create relaxation resorts and habitations of wildlife.

Hailing the World Wetlands Day, local people and volunteers totalling over 250 carried out sanitation around Mongthauk BEHS and Mongthauk market and along the road from Mongthauk Village to Inlay Lake.

Myanmar joined the Ramsa Convention on 17 March 2005 to implement wetland conservation programmes.

Myanmar has established 38 sanctuaries including 10 wetlands. Inlay Lake sanctuary is one of the wetland area.

Nay Myo Thurein

Inter-ward Sepak Takraw tourney wraps up

MANDALAY, 4 Feb — Electric Club (B) beat Electric (A) 2-0 in the final match of the Aungmyethazan Township Sepak Takraw Tournament on 2 February as a gesture of hailing the 2015 Union Day.

Altogether 20 teams participated in the tournament.

Deputy Director U Wai Zin of Mandalay Region Sports and Physical Education Department, Staff Officer U Kyaw Zeyar and officials presented championship trophy and cash award to Electric (B), second to Electric (A), third to Paing Paing club and fourth to Chin Chitthu club.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

DBE-2 officials explain rules for 2015 matriculation examination

MANDALAY, 4 Feb — A meeting on clarification on rules for examination supervisors and candidates at the 2015 matriculation examination was held at No 14 Basic Education High School in Mandalay on 2 February, attended by Director-General U Tin Myo Kyi of No 2 Basic Education Department.

Directors and deputy directors of No 2 Basic Education Department explained duty and functions for exam supervisors, procedures, rules and regulations, disciplines for examinees and penalties. It was attended by 595 exam supervisors.

The matriculation examination in 2015 will be held at 656 exam centres.—*Tin Maung (Mandalay)*

Taipei plane cartwheels into river after take-off, killing at least 23

TAIPEI, (China), 4 Feb — A TransAsia Airways (6702.TW) plane with 58 passengers and crew on board cartwheeled into a river shortly after taking off from a downtown Taipei airport on Wednesday, killing at least 23 people and leaving two dozen missing, officials said.

Miraculously, 15 people survived the crash after the plane lurched between buildings, clipped an overpass with its port-side wing and crashed upside down in the shallow water.

Dramatic pictures taken by a motorist and posted on Twitter showed the plane cartwheeling over the motorway soon after the turboprop *ATR 72-600* aircraft took off in apparently clear weather on a domestic flight for the island of Kinmen.

"I've never seen anything like this," a volunteer rescuer surnamed Chen said of the most recent in a series of disasters to hit Asian carriers in the past 12 months.

Television footage showed survivors wearing life jackets wading and swimming clear of wreckage. Others, including a young child, were taken to shore in inflatable boats.

Emergency rescue officials crowded around the partially submerged fuselage of flight GE235, lying on its side in the river, trying to help those on board.

Taipei's civil aviation regulator raised the death toll to 23, with 15 injured and 20 missing.

China said 31 of its tourists were onboard.

The plane missed apartment buildings by metres, though it was not clear if that was luck or whether the pilot was aiming for the river. Footage showed a van skidding to a halt on the damaged overpass after barely missing the plane's wing, with small pieces of the aircraft scattered along the road.

*Rescuers carry out rescue operations after a TransAsia plane crashed into a river in New Taipei City, on 4 Feb, 2015.—*REUTERS

The chief executive of TransAsia, Peter Chen, bowed deeply at a televised news conference as he apologized to passengers and crew. TransAsia's shares closed down 6.9 percent in heavy trade, its biggest percentage decline since late 2011. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said his government had offered Taiwan any help necessary following the crash.

The last communication from one of the aircraft's pilots was "Mayday Mayday engine flameout", according to an air traffic control recording on liveatc.net. A flameout occurs when the fuel supply to the engine is interrupted or when there is faulty combustion, resulting in an engine failure. Twin-engined aircraft, however, are usually able to keep flying even when one engine has failed.

The plane was powered by two Pratt & Whitney PW127M engines. Pratt & Whitney is part of United Technologies (UTX-.N). The head of Taipei's civil aviation authority, Lin Tyh-ming, said the aircraft last underwent maintenance on 26 January. The pilot had 4,916 hours of flying hours under his belt and the co-pilot had 6,922 hours, he said.

Taipei's downtown Songshan airport, the smaller of the city's two airports, provides mostly domestic flights but also connections to Japan, China and South Korea. A statement from China's Taiwan Affairs Office said 31 of those on board were tourists from the southeastern city of Xiamen, which lies close to Taipei's Kinmen island.

Reuters

Japan, US, SE Asia vow to promote Mekong development

TOKYO, 4 Feb — Japan, the United States and other donors have agreed with five Southeast Asian countries along the Mekong River to promote sustainable development in the region as part of efforts to establish a more integrated ASEAN Economic Community this year, the Japanese government said on Wednesday.

The parties, which also include Australia, the European Union, South Korea, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, reached the agreement during a two-day meeting through Tuesday in Laos of the so-called "Friends of the Lower Mekong," the first such gathering by the FLM grouping on a working level.

"Representatives agreed to support sustainable development in the Mekong region, including in the areas of smart agriculture, water management, energy efficiency and environmental standards," according to a summary of the meeting released on Wednesday by the Japanese Foreign Ministry. The delegates also "agreed on the importance of an integrated regional power grid to support equitable, basin-scale nexus tradeoffs and the need to assist Mekong countries in harmonizing technical and performance standards," the summary said.

The five Mekong countries — Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam — make up the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations with Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore.

Speaking at the meeting, chief Japanese delegate Shigeki Takizaki affirmed the importance of ensuring close Japan-US cooperation, as well as increased tie-ups between the Japan-Mekong cooperative framework and the FLM initiative, in development of the Mekong region.

"We are putting particular emphasis on areas such as women's empowerment and the environment," Takizaki, deputy director general of the Southeast and Southwest Asian Affairs Department at the Foreign Ministry, was quoted as saying by a ministry official.

"We would like to step up our country's cooperation toward the Mekong region in the run-up to a Japan-Mekong summit slated for July in Tokyo," he said.

A US delegation led by Thomas Shannon, counselor of the State Department, said Washington will help promote the use of alternative energy and low-emission technologies in the Mekong region, and that it will contribute $500,000 in support of a Mekong River Commission study on the impacts of hydropower on the community and environment, according to the State Department.

During a visit to Japan by US President Barack Obama in April last year, the Japanese and US governments agreed to help strengthen ASEAN connectivity, including in the Mekong region through closer collaboration between Japan-Mekong summit meetings and Washington's "Lower Mekong Initiative."—*Kyodo News*

Thai PM maintains general election to take place in 2016

Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha

BANGKOK, 4 Feb — Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha said on Wednesday that a general election planned for early 2016 to return Thailand to democracy would go ahead.

"If everything goes according to our plan at the start of next year there will be a new general election," Prayuth told reporters in Bangkok.

"As far as I have heard from all sides, the roadmap we have planned is moving forward as scheduled."

Prayuth led a military coup in May following months of political unrest, including street violence that left nearly 30 people dead. He has outlined a year of reforms that are partly aimed at ending the political influence of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Reuters

Bangladeshi ex-PM Khaleda Zia sued over arson attack on public bus

DHAKA, 4 Feb — Scores of Bangladeshi opposition leaders and activists including ex-Prime Minister Khaleda Zia have been sued over Tuesday's deadly arson attack in eastern Bangladesh during the countrywide non-stop blockade, local police said on Wednesday.

According to a police official who preferred to be unnamed, two lawsuits were filed in Comilla district, some 92 km east of capital Dhaka, on Tuesday night against 56 named and dozens of other unnamed people.

The police official from Comilla also told *Xinhua* that Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher, a leader of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami party, has been named the prime accused in the cases. At least seven passengers were burnt to death and 16 others either injured or burnt early on Tuesday as miscreants hurled a bomb at a bus in Bangladesh's eastern Comilla District.

"BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party) Chairperson Khaleda Zia is named as an instigator in both cases as the arson attack was carried out in line with her instruction," said the police official.

A BNP spokesperson was not immediately available for comment.

Khaleda Zia's opposition alliance including key Jamaat-e-Islami party has been observing the non-stop blockade across the country since 5 January, demanding fresh elections under a non-party caretaker government system.

Xinhua

Gas leak leaves five dead in east China plant

FUZHOU, 4 Feb — A poisonous gas leak left five workers dead in a wastewater treatment station of a thermal plant in Yong'an City in east China's Fujian Province on Wednesday.

The accident happened around 10 am when two workers were fixing the blowoff valve of a wastewater pool in a plant owned by the Fujian Fuwei Co Ltd. Leaked hydrogen sulfide from the bottom of the pool poisoned the two workers and another three who were sent to rescue them, the local publicity department said. The five workers died in hospital.

The cause of the accident is under investigation.—*Xinhua*

Jordan executes two Iraqi militants in response to pilot's death

AMMAN, 4 Feb — Jordan hanged two Iraqis on Wednesday, including a female militant, hours after Islamic State released a video appearing to show a captured Jordanian pilot being burnt alive, a security source and state television said.

Islamic State militants had demanded the release of the woman, Sajida al-Rishawi, in exchange for a Japanese hostage who was later killed.

Jordan has promised an "earth-shaking response" to the killing of its pilot, Muath al-Kasaesbeh.

Authorities also executed a senior al-Qaeda prisoner, an Iraqi man who was sentenced to death in 2008 for militancy.

Relatives of Islamic State captive Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kasaesbeh hold pictures of him as they join students during a rally calling for his release, at Jordan University in Amman on 3 Feb, 2015.—REUTERS

The fate of Kasaesbeh, a member of a large tribe that forms the backbone of support for the country's Hashemite monarchy, has gripped Jordan for weeks and some Jordanians have criticized King Abdullah for embroiling them in the US-led war that they say will provoke a militant backlash.

The prisoners were executed in Swaqa prison, a large facility 70 km (45 miles) south of the capital, Amman, just before dawn, a security source who was familiar with the case said.

"They were both calm and showed no emotions and just prayed," the source added without elaborating.

Rishawi, in her mid-forties, was sentenced to death for her role in a 2005 suicide bomb attack that killed 60 people. It was the worst Islamist suicide attack in Jordan's history.

Scores of Jordanians, infuriated by Kasaesbeh's killing, gathered at midnight in a main square in the capital calling for revenge and her quick execution. Holding placards showing images of the pilot, several youths chanted "Death, Death to Daesh," using a pejorative Arabic acronym for Islamic State.

Jordan said on Tuesday the pilot had been killed a month ago. Disclosing that information appeared to be an attempt to counter domestic criticism that the government could have done more to strike a deal with Islamic State to save him.

In Karak, Kasaesbeh's hometown in southern Jordan, dozens of protesters had attacked a government building late on Tuesday, blaming the authorities for failing to do enough to save him. Tribal elders calmed the crowd down.

The second executed militant was Ziyad Karboli, an Iraqi al-Qaeda operative, convicted for killing a Jordanian, said the security source, who declined to be identified.

Reuters

Abe slams "despicable" killing of Jordanian pilot by Islamic State

TOKYO, 4 Feb — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Wednesday expressed his outrage at the "inhumane and despicable" killing of a captured Jordanian pilot by Islamic State, as he vowed to step up efforts with the international community to fight terrorism.

"I'm infuriated by this inhumane and despicable act of terrorism, and resolutely condemn this impermissible and outrageous act," Abe said in a statement.

The prime minister said he is left "speechless" when he thinks of the grief of the pilot's family, adding that Japan stands side by side with Jordan in these times of difficulty.

Islamic State extremists released an online video on Tuesday that appears to show Jordanian military pilot Muath al-Kasaesbeh being burned alive in a cage.

The pilot was captured after his fighter plane crashed while engaged in a bombing mission against Islamic State in northern Syria in December, according to the Jordanian military and other sources.

Abe said Japan will fulfill its responsibility in the international fight against terrorism and boost its "humanitarian" aid.

Japan sought cooperation from Jordan in trying to resolve a hostage crisis that saw two Japanese men — 42-year-old Haruna Yukawa and 47-year-old Kenji Goto — killed by Islamic State militants.

Speaking at a session of the lower house Budget Committee, Abe said the government will enhance intelligence gathering and analysis as part of Tokyo's antiterrorism measures.

"It's extremely regrettable that it ended up like this," Abe told the session, referring to the killings of the two hostages. "Of course it (responsibility) lies with me as a leader."

The hostage-takers first demanded a $200 million ransom for the release of the Japanese hostages — the same amount Abe pledged in humanitarian assistance in January for countries battling Islamic State.

Later they switched to seeking the release of convicted Iraqi terrorist Sajida al-Rishawi from prison in Jordan in exchange for journalist Goto.

Jordan offered to release al-Rishawi but said any swap would be on hold until the pilot's safety was confirmed.

A Japanese government source revealed that the Islamic State group set a 48-hour deadline for the swap of Goto and al-Rishawi, although they did not mention it in an audio message on 24 January that accompanied a video showing that Yukawa had apparently been killed.

"It was part of the various information we had. It's not that we heard directly" from the group, the source said.

When asked about the deadline, however, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a Press conference, "I was not aware of it."

The hostage crisis prompted Japan to tighten security at major airports and other facilities. Some opposition lawmakers have expressed doubts about Abe's decision to announce the aid in his speech in Cairo.

Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida told the same parliamentary session that his ministry asked Goto to refrain from entering Syria three times between September and October last year over the phone and face to face.—*Kyodo News*

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe

Seven dead as commuter train hits car near New York City

MOUNT PLEASANT, (NY), 4 Feb — Seven people were killed and a dozen injured when a crowded New York commuter train struck a car stalled on the tracks near suburban White Plains during the rush hour on Tuesday evening, sparking an explosion and a fire, officials said.

Six people on the train died, as well as the driver of a Jeep Cherokee that got stuck on the tracks and was hit at about 6:30 pm, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo told a news conference after visiting what he said was a devastating scene.

A car sits crushed into the front of a Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Metro North Railroad commuter train near the town of Valhalla, New York on 3 Feb, 2015. —REUTERS

"This is a truly ugly and brutal sight," he told reporters. "The third rail of the track came up from the explosion and went right through the (rail) car, it's a devastatingly ugly situation."

The third rail, which carries 750 volts of direct current, tore through the floor of the first car of the train, charring the carriage and sending billows of smoke into the air. Damage to the other seven cars was minimal.

"It's actually amazing that not more people were hurt on that train," Cuomo said.

Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino told reporters 12 people were injured, 10 of them seriously. Eleven of the injured were taken to Westchester Medical Centre, he added.

Passengers described frightening scenes as the train was evacuated.

"The smoke was orange coming off the train, it was still on fire at that point. The front car was billowing heavy smoke out of the windows and doors," said Jared Woodard, an employee of BGC Financial in New York, who was on the train travelling home to Chappaqua.

Hundreds of passengers from the eight-car train were taken to a rock-climbing gym for shelter, authorities said. The average number of passengers on the train is 650 on a line that carries commuters through affluent New York City suburbs such as Westchester County, one of the richest in the United States.

Media reports said the driver of the car got out briefly to try to push it off the tracks, then got back in before it was hit by the train. Officials did not say why the car was stalled on the tracks.

The train left Grand Central Terminal in midtown Manhattan at 5:44 pm and was headed north to Wassaic in southeast New York state.

Parts of the train line would stay closed on Wednesday morning, said the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), which was arranging for shuttle buses to fill the gap and warned of crowds and delays for thousands of commuters.

Westchester County is home to many bankers and corporate lawyers, boasts a median household income of roughly $82,000, and houses the headquarters of major companies, including IBM and PepsiCo Inc.

The Harlem Line is part of the Metro-North Railroad commuter rail service, which runs five lines.

Other Metro-North trains have been involved in accidents in recent years.

One derailed near the northern edge of New York city on 1 December, 2013, killing four and injuring 70. It was travelling nearly three times over the speed limit for the section of track where it crashed, investigators said.

Astorino made a distinction between that crash, which was the result of a train employee error, and Tuesday's accident. But he said the latest incident was still under investigation.

Earlier that year two Metro-North passenger trains collided between Fairfield and Bridgeport, Connecticut, injuring more than 70 people and halting services.—*Reuters*

PERSPECTIVES

Thursday, 5 February, 2015

Empowerment through employment

By *Aung Khin*

Securing employment is the most important fundamental for the empowerment of young people in their lives. Jobs can move them toward developing great expectations for their future. They hope good jobs and, if possible, high salaries.

Creation of job opportunities is crucial for the stability and development of a country. The future of a country largely relies on the contributions of youth. They are precious resources of a country. A tiny percentage of Myanmar young people are learning abroad. Most of them are possibly looking to work in foreign countries after they complete their education.

No young people from middle-class families want to fall into unemployment. When they could not find a safe and sound job, they unavoidably have to migrate domestically or go overseas, resulting in a brain drain for the country. Sufficient youth employment and empowerment programmes should be initiated in every corner of the country to develop aspirations for the new generation. Young people aged 10-24 years account for around 30 per cent of the country's population. If young people are confident of securing job when they become graduates, they will become more enthusiastic about going to school.

National strategies should be focused on promoting youth empowerment and leadership. Young people should be supported in their transition from school to work through the provision of employment promotion services such as internship opportunities and support to micro, small and medium-sized businesses.

Classroom teaching should be combined with relevant vocational training and skills-development opportunities for productive lives for future generations. It will help them create an effective bridge between the worlds of learning and of work. Therefore, employment opportunities for young people take a crucial role in helping them to build self-confidence and empowerment for their lives, as well as for the future of the country.

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Rice growing technology...

(from page 1)

shining in the Ayayawady Delta.

When they witnessed the success of rice-growing in dry season for the first time in their lives last year by selecting quality seeds through salt water testing, and planting them in fields irrigated with water from rivers when tidal salinization is low, local farmers in the delta now have hope of earning increased income from a second yearly paddy crop, and showing willingness to practice the SWSS (Salt Water Seed Selection) method in the dry season.

"The new method has brought prospects for more income to us because we can double crop," said U Thet Naing Tun, 41, one of five farmers in the village of Yay Win Chauk in the Ayeyawady Delta who has planted a second crop on 18 acres of land.

Yay Win Chauk, in the Ma Gu Village tract of Bogale Township, has 63 households, 35 of which farm, and 28 are landless. The village is one of the villages in the delta hard-hit by Cyclone Nargis six years ago. The storm destroyed Yay Win Chauk and left 43 per cent (or nearly half) of the village's residents dead.

Since then, they have been struggling, relying on rice-growing in the monsoon season only.

Even when they are paid after a good harvest, they have to repay money borrowed from private lenders for agricultural inputs at high interest rates, and then have to borrow again for the next crop, leaving them trapped in a cycle of debt.

"Rice growing in the dry season will work for us," said U Thet Naing Tun, saying that farmers in the delta have pinned high hopes on the second crop for extra money because the income from the first harvest is rarely more than enough to pay off their debts and agricultural loans.

After harvesting rice grown on a rain-fed 30 acres last year, U Thet Naing Tun put in a second crop of less than two acres last dry season. The two acres yielded about 50 baskets, with an acre for a profit of more than K50,000 per acre.

All farmers agreed the modern method is very simple to use, saying they have to select strong and healthy seeds using the SWSS technique and plant them in fields irrigated with water pumped from a river when the there is very little salt in the water.

"Local farmers have traditional knowledge about river salinity and understand when the salinization in the rivers is high or low. We just have to try to fill the gaps between their indigenous knowledge and the modern method," said U Myo Myint, a veteran agriculturalist working for Proximity Design providing farming advisory services with a participatory approach to local farmers.

Proximity Designs is supported by the multi-donor Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT), which works in Myanmar to alleviate poverty and hunger. "An agricultural method should be simple and can be absorbed by farmers," said the veteran agriculturalist who worked for the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation for more than 37 years.

"This strategy for double cropping in salt intrusion area is very scientific. For our achievement, we should say thank to those who did research in post 1980s and drew a map of the Ayeyawady Delta's salt intrusion areas," U Myo Myint added.

Since the 2013 monsoon, the Farm Advisory Services of Proximity Designs has successfully disseminated knowledge of several techniques that effectively reduce input while increasing farmers' yields and income in brackish and saltwater-intrusion areas.

In the 2013-14 farming season, the five farmers from Yay Win Chauk Village double-cropped 18 acres, planting the second crop in November and harvesting in January before a saltwater intrusion, earning more than K34,000 per acre.

In 2014-2015 farming season, 12 farmers have adopted the double-cropping techniques.

Most planted their second crop in December due to unexpectedly heavy rain in November and will harvest between February and March, according to Proximity Designs.

U Myo Myint is also ready to disseminate their technical know-how to other salt-intrusion and coastal areas, underlining his commitment to implement double-cropping where possible. Proximity Designs has estimated a farmer can earn more than K34,000 an acre from rice grown in the dry season.

***"An agricultural method should be simple and can be absorbed by farmers: U Myo Myint, a veteran agriculturalist.*—PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE**

"We should take care of the future of farmers, and should help them to be resilient or they will walk away from their land," he added, expressing a worry the current shortage of farm laborers in the country could grow.

The number of farmers who practice SWSS in the dry season has reached 17,150 so far, putting about 85,000 acres into dry-season cropping in the Ayeyarwady Delta, according Proximity's statistics.

To grow rice in dry season, farmers have to choose short-term or 100-day rice seeds so they can have time to prepare the land again and to irrigate in a timely fashion while salinity is low.

Farmers in other areas have also expressed a willingness to practice the new method for growing dry-season rice for the first time in their lives.

But challenges await.

To practice double-cropping, farmers need to work very efficiently in harvesting their first crop and getting the land ready for the second planting before the rivers become too salty.

"We cannot use draught cattle again in the dry-season because they worked for our first crop in rainy season and if we use them again in dry season again, they can die from over-work" said Kyaw Soe, one of the farmers in Yay Win Chauk Village. "We cannot afford to pay compensation for hired cattle if they die, and we have no harvester and only two power-tillers in our village."—*GNLM*

***Farmers in Ayeyarwady Delta have pinned high hopes on the second crop for extra money.* PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE**

Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann speaking at 68th Anniversary Mon National Day.—MNA

Mon National Day marked

NAY PYI TAW, 4 Feb— State dinner party for 68th Anniversary Mon National Day was held at Hotel Royal Ace, here, on Wednesday.

Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann delivered an address.

Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint also made a speech.

Mon State Minister Dr Min Nwe Soe read the message sent by Mon State Chief Minister U Ohn Myint. Pyidaungsu Hluttaw MP Daw Mi Myint Than read the message sent by Chairperson of Pyithu Hluttaw Rule of Law and Tranquility Committee Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

On behalf of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw representatives from All Mon Region Democracy Party, Amyotha Hluttaw representative Dr Banya Aung Moe extended greetings.

Chairman of Amyotha Hluttaw Rescue Committee Dr Khin Shwe spoke words of thanks. Those present were served with dinner.

Also present on the occasion were Deputy Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw U Nanda Kyaw Swa, Deputy Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Mya Nyein, Union ministers, deputy ministers and officials.—*MNA*

CBM Governor meets Chairman of OCBC Bank

NAY PYI TAW, 4 Feb— Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar U Kyaw Kyaw Maung received Chairman of OCBC Bank Mr Ooi Sang Kuang and party at the hall of the CBM, here, on 2 February.

They discussed plans of OCBC Bank to participate in monetary affairs in Myanmar and development of monetary sector.

MNA

Union FM receives Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of US Department of State

Union Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin holds talks with Mr Scot Marciel, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, US Department of State.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 4 Feb—U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs received a delegation led by Mr Scot Marciel, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State, the United States of America, at the ministry, here, on Wednesday.

They cordially discussed matters relating to non-proliferation, human rights and bilateral relations.—*MNA*

Education in Singapore: Pre-school Playgroup to Junior College

By *Sayar Mya*

I and my better half were on the comfortable seats of Myanmar Airways International aircraft 8M 231 flying from Yangon to Singapore on Monday 12 January 2015. The weather was fine on a day of soft cool winter.

I have noticed that MAI is changing fast and also rising rapidly in her overall services offered to the passengers. Flight attendants or cabin crew were sweet and smiling and also active and efficient. They are members of an aircrew employed by airlines primarily to ensure the safety and comfort of passengers aboard commercial flights. It was a pleasant flight.

The main purpose of our visit to Singapore for about one month is to have fun with our grandchildren from Campbelltown of New South Wales in Australia, as our son and family are visiting Singapore during the kids' school holidays. We are staying at the condominium of our daughter near world famous Singapore Botanical Gardens. She is working in that country.

Since my arrival in Singapore, I have written three English articles entitled (1) [Significant features of "Singapore Expo" and "John Little Mega Expo Sale" in Singapore: January 2015]; (2) [National University of Singapore: A University stands and shines top in Asia] and (3) [ICT in brief and pragmatic application of E-Governance in Singapore] in the Global New Light of Myanmar in January 2015.

The Bangkok Post on 1 February 2015 reported that Myanmar opened talks over a controversial education law Sunday as thousands of students headed to the commercial capital Yangon to demand reforms. Representatives from the government, parliament, the National Network for Education Reform (NNER) and student groups began discussing 11 points of the national education law. The discussion is expected to be a long and extended process before reaching to an agreement.

After reading the news on the dilemma and predicament of the educational law occurring back in my beloved country, I felt a strong urge to write an article on the topic **"Education in Singapore".**

It was Sunday 1 February.

I communicated some of my friends, who have school going offspring and residing in Singapore, over the telephone and acquired some information on education system of Singapore that they have had in their mind. Moreover, I did some research work through the Google search machine.

The most interesting fact was that the Ministry of Education of Singapore was allocated with Singapore dollar 11.6 billion as her national education budget for the fiscal year 2013. One US dollar is equals to 1.35 Singapore dollars at the prevailing rate.

Education in Singapore is managed by the Ministry of Education (MOE), which controls the development and administration of state schools receiving government funding. It also has an advisory and supervisory role in respect of private schools. For both private and state schools, there are variations in the extent of autonomy in their curriculum, scope of government aid and funding, tuition burden on the students, and admission policy.

It was also interesting to note that education spending usually makes up about 20 percent of the annual national budget, which subsidizes state education and government-assisted private education for Singaporean citizens and funds the **"Edusave Program".**

[Note: The **Edusave Scheme** was launched in 1993 with the aim of maximizing opportunities for Singaporean students in MOE-funded schools (e.g. government and government-aided schools, and government-funded independent and special education schools) by providing resources for school enrichment activities in support of their education].

In 2000 the **"Compulsory Education Act"** codified [arrangement of laws or rules into a systematic code] compulsory education for children of primary school age with exception to those with disabilities. The Act made it a criminal offence for parents to fail to enroll their children in school and ensure their regular attendance. Exemptions are allowed for homeschooling or full-time religious institutions. However, the parents must apply for exemption from the Ministry of Education and meet a minimum benchmark.

The main language of instruction in Singapore is English. It was officially designated the first language within the local education system in 1987. English is the first language learned by half the children by the time they reach preschool age.

English becomes the primary medium of instruction by the time the children reach primary school. Although Malay, Mandarin and Tamil are also official languages, English is the language of instruction/teaching for nearly all subjects except the official **"Mother Tongue"** languages and the literatures of those languages. These literatures are generally not taught in English, although there is provision for the use of English at the initial stages.

Certain schools, such as secondary schools under the **"Special Assistance Plan"** (SAP), encourage a richer use of the mother tongue and may occasionally teach subjects in Mandarin Chinese. A few schools have been experimenting with curricula that integrate language subjects with mathematics and the sciences, using both English and a second language.

Singapore's education system has been described as **"world-leading"** and in 2010 was among those picked out for commendation by the former British Tory education secretary Michael Gove.

(To be continued)

Sending arms to Kiev would be big gamble for US

*Members of the newly created Ukrainian interior ministry battalion "Saint Maria" pray during a ceremony before heading to military training, in front of St Sophia Cathedral, in Kiev on 3 Feb, 2015.—*REUTERS

MOSCOW/ KIEV, 4 Feb — By considering giving weapons to Kiev, the United States could be contemplating a risky venture which advocates say would help end the conflict in Ukraine but opponents warn might fan the flames of war.

A senior US administration official said on Monday no decision had been made on whether to send arms to help Ukrainian forces fight Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Considering such a move stems from frustration with Russian President Vladimir Putin's refusal to blink over Ukraine, despite Western sanctions and a financial crisis in Russia, and concern over a surge in violence in past weeks.

It also reflects a dilemma: What can the West do if sanctions don't work, or don't work quickly?

"A stronger Ukrainian military, with enhanced defensive capabilities, will increase the prospects for negotiation of a peaceful settlement," said a report by the Washington-based Atlantic Council, which suggested military aid should include light anti-armour missiles, drones and armoured Humvees.

Such words are welcome to Kiev's pro-Western leaders, whose forces have suffered battlefield setbacks and who accuse Russia of sending troops and weapons to back the rebels. Speaking in the northern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv on Tuesday, President Petro Poroshenko expressed confidence that Kiev's Western allies would rally to its help if need be.

"I do not have the slightest doubt that a decision about the possibility of supplying arms to Ukraine will be made by both the United States and our other partners because we must have the means to defend ourselves," he was quoted as saying by *Interfax* news agency.

Right now, Ukrainian troops holding a rail hub near the city of Donetsk are under pressure from separatists, whose artillery and missile attacks are commanded by Russian military specialists.

Russia denies the accusations of direct involvement. It says Washington has shown its true colours by backing what Moscow regards as Kiev's desire to end the crisis by crushing the rebels rather than though diplomacy.

Sending arms to Kiev might not even have much effect on the conflict, critics say, and could encourage a full-scale Russian onslaught on Ukraine's army that might increase the possibility of direct Western intervention.

"Sending weapons is fanning the flame of this conflict and also actually grist to the mill for the Ukrainian government, which is doing everything it can to drag the United States and West further into this dispute," said Otfried Nassauer, head of the Berlin Information Centre for Transatlantic Security.

Western governments have shown little appetite for the idea of sending in international peacekeepers, which would likely have to include Russians and would be unacceptable to Kiev.

And a line of thinking may be developing in the West that Putin may only respect force and will only blink if his bluff is called. By that token, he may change tack if Ukraine is provided with defensive means to turn the conflict into a prolonged struggle which Russia may regret.

On the eve of a visit to Kiev on Thursday by US Secretary of State John Kerry, the stakes are rising, with the rebels and Kiev's forces mobilizing more forces.— *Reuters*

Italy's newly elected president Sergio Mattarella (R) and Prime Minister Matteo Renzi pay their respects at the Unknown Soldier's monument in central Rome, on 3 Feb, 2015. — REUTERS

Italy's new president decries organized crime in first speech

ROME, 3 Feb — President Sergio Mattarella called on Italian lawmakers to make fighting organized crime and corruption a priority, using his first speech as head of state to highlight two of the country's most persistent economic and social scourges.

"Corruption has reached an unacceptable level," said Mattarella, 73, who spoke after having taken his oath of office before a flag-festooned parliament.

Matterella then hailed as "heroes" anti-mafia prosecutors magistrates Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, who were assassinated by Sicily's Cosa Nostra mafia in 1992 in two separate, bloody attacks.

Fighting entrenched corruption and organised crime are "absolute priorities," he said.

While many political figures in Italy have urged the nation to combat organised crime, Mattarella's words have particular significance: Mattarella is the first Sicilian to hold Italy's highest office. His brother Piersanti was shot dead in 1980 by Cosa Nostra.

Since the 1980s and 1990s, when the Sicilian Mafia was Italy's most powerful organized group, Italy has experienced a rise in other crime groups, notably the 'Ndrangheta and Camorra groups. These have developed big franchises by infiltrating business activity in northern Italy and elsewhere in Europe.— *Reuters*

Two French soldiers wounded in knife attack in Nice

NICE, (France), 4 Feb — Two French soldiers were wounded in a knife attack outside a Jewish cultural centre in the southern city of Nice on Tuesday, the interior ministry said.

One soldier guarding the centre was attacked by a man with a knife. Two other soldiers patrolling the area then intervened and one of them was also hurt. Both suffered slight wounds, one to the cheek and the other to the arm.

The attacker and a second man were arrested.

"It seems like a premeditated and quite violent act," said regional police chief Marcel Autier.

"The person responsible, who is in his thirties and from the Paris region, is known to police," Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said.

According to police, the man had been questioned by French security services after he travelled to Turkey on a one-way ticket in late January and was intercepted and flown back to Nice by Turkish authorities.

After militant Islamist attacks killed 17 people in Paris in January, French authorities introduced additional security measures including protection for Jewish institutions.

About 10,500 soldiers have been deployed across France in the operation.

Christian Estrosi, the mayor of Nice, told France Inter radio the attacker had just been stopped on a tram for travelling without a ticket.

"He paid his fine, but refused to show his identity papers. He got out suddenly near the soldiers and with a sharp knife struck the cheek of one and arm of another," he said.

Reuters

French soldiers stand guard outside a Jewish Community centre, where two French soldiers were attacked and wounded in a knife attack in Nice on 3 Feb, 2015.
REUTERS

UN's highest court absolves Croatia, Serbia of genocide

THE HAGUE, 4 Feb — The United Nations' highest court ruled on Tuesday that neither Croatia nor Serbia had committed genocide against each other's populations during the wars that accompanied the violent breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

Both sides said they hoped the ruling would mark a watershed in relations, long since improved but still sometimes frosty.

Peter Tomka, president of the International Court of Justice, said the forces of both countries had committed crimes during the conflict, but that the intent to commit genocide — by "destroying a population in whole or in part" — had not been proven against either country.

"This marks the end of one page on the past, and I'm convinced we will start a new page on the future, much brighter and better," Serbian Justice Minister Nikola Selakovic told reporters in the Hague.

Croatian Foreign Minister Vesna Pusic said she hoped the ruling would contribute to "closing this historic chapter and moving on to a better and safer period for people in this part of Europe."

The cases were part of the long legal fall-out from the break-up of Yugoslavia into seven states in wars that lasted for much of the 1990s and left more than 130,000 dead in Europe's worst conflagration since World War Two.

Croatia, which joined the European Union in 2013, filed its case against Belgrade in 1999 and Serbia — a candidate for EU membership — its counter-case against Zagreb only in 2010. "Croatia has not established that the only reasonable inference was the intent to destroy in whole or in part the (Croatian) group," Tomka said of Serbia's campaign to destroy towns and expel civilians in Slavonia and Dalmatia.— *Reuters*

Blood from Ebola survivors could help spur new disease treatments

CHICAGO, 4 Feb — After successfully treating four Ebola patients last year, Emory University in Atlanta is now leading a government-funded project that will use blood from survivors of the deadly virus to test a novel way of treating infectious disease.

Traditional vaccines boost the immune system's response to infections. The new project will inject people with genetic material, such as DNA or RNA, in hopes of spurring a person's own cells to make specific antibodies capable of fighting Ebola or other pathogens.

"The person's body is the factory," said Dr. James Crowe of Vanderbilt University, one of the collaborators on the project. "It's a cool idea."

Experts say the method, if proven to be safe and effective, would be faster and cheaper than conventional drug production and could potentially be used to treat illnesses such as seasonal flu or malaria.

Antibodies are typically grown in large vats of mammal cells or in some cases, tobacco plants, such as Mapp Biopharmaceutical's experimental Ebola treatment ZMapp.

Reuters

An office building of Swiss drugmaker Roche is seen in front of Mount Rigi in the central Swiss viillage of Rotkreuz on 28 Jan, 2015.—REUTERS

Roche says study of lymphoma drug shows significant benefit

ZURICH, 4 Feb — Swiss drugmaker Roche said on Wednesday a late-stage study of its treatment for slow-growing, or indolent, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma showed significant benefit and met its primary endpoint early.

The study showed that people lived significantly longer without disease worsening or death when treated with Gazyva — marketed as Gazyvaro in the European Union and Switzerland — plus bendamustine followed by Gazyva alone, the company said in a statement.

Data from the study will be submitted for presentation at an upcoming medical meeting and to the US Food and Drug Administration, European Medicines Agency and other health authorities for approval consideration, the company said.—*Reuters*

Greek debt swap plan gets cool euro zone reception

BRUSSELS / ROME, 4 Feb — Greek plans to swap government debt for bonds with interest payments linked to economic growth got a sceptical reception from euro zone officials on Tuesday as new Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras sought support for his proposals in Europe.

Finance minister Yanis Varoufakis on Monday floated the idea that Greek bonds held by the European Central Bank and part of the debt owed to euro zone governments — 53 billion euros of bilateral loans — could be swapped for either growth-linked, or perpetual bonds.

It was unclear if the idea entailed dropping demands for an official debt write-off or not. Varoufakis said Athens stood by its debt reduction demand but a source said the demand for a debt "haircut", or cut in repayments, was no longer there.

Either way, euro zone officials negotiating financial assistance for Greece gave the debt swap a cool reception.

"We need more details. But first reactions are rather sceptical," one euro zone official said. "There is a worry that it's just a new trick how to do a haircut."

Tsipras and Varoufakis have been touring European capitals in a diplomatic charm offensive since their election victory late last month.

In Rome, Prime Minister Matteo Renzi said he wanted to help Greece, but this didn't mean he would always agree with Tsipras' new government.

Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi (R) gives a tie as a present to his Greek counterpart Alexis Tsipras during a news conference at Chigi palace in Rome on 3 Feb, 2015.—REUTERS

"We want to give Greece a hand, which doesn't mean we'll always say it is right," Renzi said after meeting Tsipras.

For his part, Tsipras sought to reassure international partners that Athens did not want to create divisions in Europe with its call for a new debt accord and said he was open to listening to alternative proposals.

Continuing a European tour, Varoufakis has a meeting at the European Central Bank on Wednesday. German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble is also trying to arrange a time to see the Greek minister.

Talks with German officials may not be a meeting of minds. Chancellor Angela Merkel was said to have insisted that international monitoring of Greece's bailout programme would not be scrapped as the new government in Athens has demanded.

Euro zone officials said there was no appetite for a restructuring of Greek debt held by the euro zone, now 195 billion euros.

The European Central Bank and euro zone national central banks that form part of the ECB system hold roughly another 50 billion euros.

"Varoufakis is intelligent, but he is underestimating the problems, and the constitutional leeway of the ECB and euro zone governments," a second euro zone official said. Apart from legal issues, the proposed debt swap posed several practical problems.

"With the caveat that we are lacking the details we'd need to assess the idea properly, I don't see much appetite for it, and possibly considerable practical difficulties," a third euro zone official said.

"For starters, what would be the threshold growth rate used for the growth-linked bonds? Would you base it on forecasts — presumably not — or actual data? What if the figure is later revised up or down, as can happen?" the official said.

A German DIW think-tank paper supported growth-linked bonds because they would lower the likelihood of a Greek default, stabilise the debt ratio even if growth was weak, provide an incentive for reforms and, if growth took off, they would make more money for the euro zone lenders.—*Reuters*

Japan, US may hold another working-level TPP meeting later February

WASHINGTON, 4 Feb — Japan and the United States failed to narrow gaps over a Pacific free trade pact in a weeklong series of meetings that ended on Tuesday and may hold more working-level talks later February, Japanese officials said.

"I know our time is limited," Hiroshi Oe, Japan's deputy chief negotiator for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, told reporters, pledging more efforts to settle market access issues through consultation with his US counterpart, Acting Deputy Trade Representative Wendy Cutler.

Japanese and US trade negotiators on market access and automotive trade issues met amid growing speculation that the two economies could strike a deal in the near future to ensure conclusion of the 12-country initiative.

"We recognize Japan and the United States will have to close a deal on market access" before ministers from all 12 countries meet, Oe said.

Oe said he and Cutler will have to meet "at least once again" to discuss Japan's desire to retain exceptional tariffs on some agricultural produce under the TPP before the two governments hold ministerial talks.

Oe declined to give any time frame for a meeting between Japanese TPP minister Akira Amari and US Trade Representative Michael Froman.

Japan and the United States account for a combined 80 percent of the TPP members' economies, and their lingering differences are seen as having acted as a drag on the overall negotiations, which are nearly five years old.

Negotiation sources said Tokyo and Washington are trying to hold a ministerial meeting in late February at the earliest.

Takeo Mori, a senior Japanese official handling automotive trade issues, told reporters in a separate press briefing, "We were able to settle small issues mostly but could not do so on bigger matters."

The 10 other TPP negotiating countries are Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

Kyodo News

Thirteen suspected swine flu cases reported in Albania

TIRANA, 4 Feb — Thirteen suspected cases of swine flu were reported on Tuesday in the city of Fier in central Albania, according to Albanian broadcasting corporation (ABC) TV.

The chief of the emergency ward in the Regional Hospital of Fier, Novruz Caushaj said that the patients developed symptoms similar to swine flu and three of them have been taken to the capital city of Tirana for treatment. In the meantime, the other ten patients are treated with medicines used for swine flu. So far, no case of swine flu has been confirmed in Albania.

Arjan Bregu, chair of the Institute of Public Health, said on Monday that seasonal flu in Albania has reached epidemic level.—*Xinhua*

*Two Kashmiri men walk in the snow with umbrellas in Tangmarg, about 40 km north of Srinagar, the summer capital of Indian-controlled Kashmir on 3 Feb, 2015. Snowfall in upper reaches and plains of Indian-controlled Kashmir on Tuesday affected air, rail services and closed Srinagar-Jammu national highway, the only road link connecting Kashmir region with the rest of India.—*XINHUA

ICAO seen pressing for quick implementation of flight tracking

PARIS, 4 Feb — A United Nations agency may press on Tuesday for rapid adoption of new aircraft tracking proposals, weeks ahead of the anniversary of the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370, officials said.

The International Civil Aviation Organization is expected to tell a safety conference in Montreal that new guidelines should come in force as early as November 2016, marking an accelerated timetable in the often laborious process of aviation regulation.

After that, it would be up to each of its 191 member states to translate the proposals into national law, with the European Union already working on legislation to that effect.

ICAO is expected to send a letter to its member states in March with the aim of adopting the guidelines in November 2015 and then making them applicable as early as November 2016, said an official involved in crafting the responses to MH370 and the crash of an Air France jet in the Atlantic in 2009.

Member nations would then have to put the rules into effect or notify any differences to the Montreal-based agency.

The new guidelines call for a combination of regular tracking in normal flight and accelerated signals whenever an aircraft flying over oceans or deserted areas gets into trouble.

But with competition growing to supply tracking equipment, most nations support so-called "performance-based measures" that would define what regulators want to happen without deciding in advance what specific solutions to enforce.

"The idea is to impose tracking but not to say you must do it this way or that way," the official said.

ICAO was not immediately available for comment. A final decision on the timetable will depend on the outcome of a High-Level Safety Conference being held until 5 February. The EU is aiming to draw up its own legislation in March as the international aviation community tries to demonstrate progress in time for the 8 March anniversary of Flight MH370. The plane vanished from air traffic control screens off Malaysia's east coast less than an hour after taking off from Kuala Lumpur for Beijing.

Airlines generally support tracking but baulked recently at a stop-gap proposal to oblige carriers to fit existing systems within 12 months, saying the technology is still evolving.

Reuters

Extreme cold, ice reveal faults in US northeast mass transit

NEW YORK / BOSTON, 4 Feb — Wicked winter weather gripping the northeastern United States exposed weaknesses in mass transit systems from Boston to New York, with commuters stranded on icy train platforms amid delays stretching into Tuesday.

A day after a deadly snowstorm slammed the region, extreme delays crippled Boston's subways, including the most heavily traveled Red Line, which sees about 273,000 riders each day.

"A week of constant exposure to frigid temperatures, ice, and record snowfall has taken a major toll on the MBTA's vehicles and infrastructure," the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority said in a statement.

"We're incredibly late and we're incredibly annoyed," Jeremiah Graves, 31, said as he and a companion waited for a bus to get to work after no train showed up at the Harvard stop.

"The decision should have been made yesterday to shut down everything and have time to clean up for today," he said, referring to the second major storm in less than a week to pummel the Northeast. It was blamed for at least seven deaths, including some in the Midwest, where it struck first.

In New York City, icing on Monday was blamed for paralyzing the Number 7 subway line — which serves 500,000 riders a day — and doubling commuting times for some who scrambled to squeeze onto buses or taxis.

"7th ring of hell for frozen Queens riders," proclaimed a *Daily News* headline about the end-to-end shutdown for six hours, which began when workers tried to remove an umbrella burning on the electric third rail and wound up allowing ice to form on the third rail, which stalled a train and brought the line to a halt.

"Am I going to be stranded in Queens all day?" Helen Gutowski, 24, a performance artist, recalled worrying after the train went out of service, and she waited for a bus for two hours in the cold before she started walking the snowy streets to head home.—*Reuters*

*A woman shovels snow out a driveway in the Chicago suburb of Wilmette, Illinois on 2 Feb, 2015. —*REUTERS

*US Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) escorts the leader of Cuba's Ladies in White Berta Solar (R), to the Senate Foreign Relations' Western Hemisphere Subcommittee hearing on President Barack Obama's changes to Cuba policy in Washington on 3 Feb, 2015.—*REUTERS

US officials cautious as Cuba political detentions decline

WASHINGTON, 4 Feb — Political detentions have declined in Cuba since the 17 December US-Cuban rapprochement but it is unclear if this is a trend, a US human rights official told a congressional hearing on Tuesday.

"The nature of the Cuban regime has not changed and we have not claimed so," Assistant Secretary of State Tom Malinowski told US lawmakers' first hearing on Cuba since President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro said they would seek to normalise relations.

Malinowski said roughly 140 political opponents had been temporarily detained by the Havana government in January.

"From December to January we have actually seen a significant decrease but I don't want to say that one month represents a trend," he told a Senate subcommittee. "Even a single one of these detentions is too many. We're going to be watching this very carefully."

The Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation said on Monday Cuban police detained 178 opponents of the Castro regime in January, the lowest monthly total in more than four years.

The lead US negotiator in the Cuba-US talks, Roberta Jacobson, said a second round of talks to restore diplomatic relations would likely take place in February.

Some lawmakers offered blistering criticism of the policy shift. Democratic Senator Robert Menendez said Obama had "compromised bedrock principles" in exchange for little from Havana and pledged to oppose any efforts to ease the 50-year-long Cuban embargo. "It was a bad deal," he said.

Jacobson reassured lawmakers that the United States would not bow to Cuban demands to drop support for Cuban dissidents. While in Havana last month, Jacobson said improving human rights and democracy in Cuba was a cornerstone of the new policy.

"Can't imagine we will go to next stage with an agreement not to see democracy activists," Jacobson said.

The hearing was chaired by Republican Senator Marco Rubio, a Cuban-American who opposes normalizing relations with Cuba and is a likely 2016 presidential candidate. He argued that restoring ties would not improve the island's human rights record.

Congress is deeply divided over the shift in Cuba policy, with supporters and opponents divided among Democrats and Republicans.

Backers at the hearing said the change would improve US relations with other countries, especially in Latin America. Senator Barbara Boxer, the top Democrat on the subcommittee, brought statements from 46 foreign governments supporting Obama's policy.

Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV NEW ENERGY VOY NO (12/14)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV NEW ENERGY VOY NO (12/14) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 3.2.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claims Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

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MV THAI BINH 68 VOY NO (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV THAI BINH 68 VOY NO (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 5.2.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of S.P.W.3 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claims Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

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MV KULNATEE VOY NO (01/15)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV KULNATEE VOY NO (01/15) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 5.2.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of S.P.W(2) where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claims Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

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MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S KULNATEE CO

Phone No: 2301186

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV SINGAPORE BRIDGE VOY NO (088N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SINGAPORE BRIDGE VOY NO (088N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 5.2.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claims Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

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Damaged bus is seen on the site where a massive accident occurred near the Lehavim Junction, a section of Road 31 in Negev desert, southern Israel, on 3 Feb, 2015. At least eight people were killed and dozens more injured in a massive accident in southern Israel on Tuesday, emergency services said. Police spokesperson said the accident happened as a bus full of Arab Bedouins passengers from villages in southern Israel's Negev desert, collided with a truck that was carrying a tractor. —XINHUA

Cambodia's apex court upholds terrorism convictions for two Bangladeshis, one Nepalese

PHNOM PENH, 4 Feb — The Supreme Court of Cambodia on Wednesday upheld the verdict of a lower court to sentence two Bangladeshis and one Nepalese national — members of terror outfit al-Qaeda — to eight years in prison for a terrorist plot.

"The Supreme Court decides to uphold the decision of the Appeal Court against the three men on charges of having planned a terrorist plot against three foreign embassies in Phnom Penh in April 2010," said a verdict pronounced by Supreme Court's judge Khim Ponn.

The trio are Bangladeshi national Rafiqul Eslami, 46, a former owner of a restaurant in Phnom Penh, Miah Muhammed Huymayan Kabir, 66, also from Bangladesh, and a Nepalese man D P Paudel, 48.

In 2011, they were convicted by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court on charges stemming from their signatures on a letter that threatened to attack American, Australian and British embassies in Phnom Penh in April, 2010. They had identified themselves in the letter as members of the al-Qaeda terrorist organization.

In April 2012, the Appeal Court upheld the terrorism convictions against them.—*Xinhua*

50 injured in riots in northern Guinea

CONAKRY, 4 Feb — Around 50 people were injured in riots in the town of Labé in northern Guinea when people protesting a shake-up in the civil service clashed with security forces, the government said on Wednesday.

Labé is a stronghold of opposition to President Alpha Condé, who came to power in 2010 as the country's first democratically elected leader after decades in which the country was ruled by authoritarian figures.

Around 24 members of the security forces and 25 civilians were hurt in the riots that started on Monday and vandals damaged public and private property, government spokesman Damantang Albert Camara said in a statement.

The riots were apparently triggered by a government move to shift civil servants entrenched in Labé to locations in other parts of the country.

"The Government believes that the violence, which included the destruction of private and public property in Labe, was out of proportion with the stated demands of the protesters," the statement said.

Youths burned tires and the police sent reinforcements to restore calm, said witnesses and a police source who declined to be identified.

Guinea is the world's biggest exporter of bauxite, the raw material used in aluminum production, and has rich deposits of gold. It is one of three West African countries battling to end an Ebola outbreak that has killed more than 8,500 people.

Reuters

WEATHER REPORT

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.
FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 5th February, 2015: Weather will be partly cloudy in Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady and Taninthayi Regions, Kachin, Rakhine and Mon States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.
STATE OF THE SEA: Strong easterly winds with moderate to rough sea are likely at times off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts. Surface wind speed in strong easterly wind may reach (30) mph. Seas will be moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters.
OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Continuation of slight decrease of night temperature in the Eastern Myanmar areas.

Beyonce launches vegan meal service

NEW YORK, 4 Feb — Pop star Beyonce has launched a vegan food delivery service. The mother-of-one launched 22 Days Nutrition, a "plant-based home delivery meal service with exercise physiologist" Marco Borges, reported the *New York Post*.

"I am so grateful that I took the challenge and credit Marco with leading by example. He is the most energetic person I know and it's all because of his decision to live a healthy lifestyle. He came up with a great programme to get people motivated to make better nutritional choices. All you have to do is try. If I can do it, anyone can," Beyonce said in a statement.

This comes after the 33-year-old singer tried veganism with Jay Z in 2013. The service offers three meal plans, where one can sign up to receive anywhere from one to three meals a day for 22 days delivered to the door each week.

A full three-meals-a-day package will cost a total of USD 629.79, including shipping of USD 19.95. According to the website, all of the meals are gluten-free, soy-free and organic. Each meal is "a perfect balance of protein, carbohydrates and fat with limited salt and sugar."—*PTI*

50 years on, new book from 'To Kill a Mockingbird' author

NEW YORK, 4 Feb — Pulitzer Prize-winning author Harper Lee will publish her second novel more than 50 years after the release of her classic "To Kill a Mockingbird," her publisher said on Tuesday.

"Go Set a Watchman," which is set in the 1950s and features lead characters from "To Kill a Mockingbird" some 20 years older, is scheduled to be published on 14 July by publisher Harper. The book was actually written in the 1950s, before "To Kill a Mockingbird," and Lee, 88, thought it had been lost.

"It features the character known as Scout as an adult woman and I thought it a pretty decent effort," Lee said in a statement issued by Harper. "My editor, who was taken by the flashbacks to Scout's childhood, persuaded me to write a novel from the point of view of the young Scout. I was a first-time writer so I did as I was told."

In "Go Set a Watchman," Scout returns from New York to visit her father, Atticus, in the fictional town of Maycomb, where she struggles with personal and political issues and tries to understand her father's view toward society as well as her own conflicted feelings about her hometown.

US President George W Bush laughs before awarding the Presidential Medal of Freedom to American novelist Harper Lee in the East Room of the White House, in this file photo taken on 5 Nov, 2007. REUTERS

Lee thought the text of the book had been lost and was surprised when her attorney, Tonja Carter, unearthed it.

"To Kill a Mockingbird," the story of race and growing up in Alabama in the 1930s, was based loosely on Lee's own experiences. It was published in 1960 just as the US civil rights movement was gaining momentum and became required reading in many American schools.

The book, which has sold an estimated 30 million copies, has resonated with readers across cultural lines.

"It's important for the issues that it raised about gender and race differences," said Thadious Davis, a University of Pennsylvania professor of English who specializes in African-American and Southern literature.

American novelist biographer Charles Shields said that "To Kill a Mockingbird" found success in part because "it poses the fundamental question of how do I get along with people who are different from me?" Shields said he first came across references to "Go Set a Watchman" while reading early correspondence between Lee and her literary agent while researching his acclaimed biography about Lee.

Reuters

Everything is going to be hilarious in Oscars: Neil Patrick Harris

LOS ANGELES, 4 Feb — Neil Patrick Harris has promised that the upcoming Oscars ceremony will be hilarious. The 41-year-old actor, who is hosting the ceremony this year, was a surprise guest at the Oscars Nominees Luncheon at the Beverly Hilton, reported E!Online.

"Some of you are good friends and some of you I just got a chance to meet for the first time but we are all going to be spending Oscar night together, where everything will be hilarious," he said.

And then he took a hypnosis spiral out from his jacket, pointed it to the 195 nominees and their guests and mock-hypnotised everyone. "Everything will be hilarious."

Calling the hosting gig a dream come true, the 'Gone Girl' actor said, "Thanks again for inviting me to the party today and the big dance on the 22nd. We're going to have a great deal of fun."—*PTI*

Whitney Houston's daughter in medically induced coma — friend

ATLANTA, 4 Feb — The daughter of the late pop star Whitney Houston and singer Bobby Brown was placed in a coma to stop brain swelling after she was found face down and unresponsive in a bathtub in her Georgia home on the weekend, family friend Kim Burrell told "Access Hollywood".

Bobbi Kristina Brown, 21, was transported to Emory University Hospital in Atlanta on Tuesday after three days at North Fulton Hospital in Roswell, CNN reported, citing unnamed sources close to the family.

North Fulton confirmed that Brown was no longer at their facility, but a spokeswoman for Emory declined to confirm that Brown was at their centre.

Brown was discovered in the bathtub on Saturday by her partner, Nick Gordon, and a friend.

Brown and Gordon referred to each other as husband and wife and told both traditional and social media that they were married. But Brown's father, Bobby Brown, said in a statement on Tuesday that the two were never legally married.

"To correct earlier reports, Bobbi Kristina is not and has never been married to Nick Gordon," a statement issued by Bobby Brown's attorney, Christopher Brown, said.

"We are currently investigating the events that led to the hospitalization of Bobbi Kristina," the statement said, adding that the family requested privacy.

Burrell, a gospel singer who was close to Houston, told the entertainment television programme on Monday that Brown's loved ones were hoping for the best after doctors put her in a medically induced coma.

"Her eyes did move a little bit," Burrell said in the interview. "We're hoping that it's just not a reflex. We're hoping that it's a conscious choice."

Police and hospital officials have not commented on Brown's condition or said what happened to her in the bathtub.

The circumstances are reminiscent of Houston's death nearly three years ago. The megastar pop singer and actress drowned in a hotel bathtub in Beverly Hills, California, on 11 February, 2012. Authorities said cocaine use and heart disease contributed to the six-time Grammy Award winner's death at age 48.

Houston won accolades for hit songs including "I Will Always Love You" and "I Wanna Dance With Somebody (Who Loves Me)."

She divorced Bobby Brown in 2007 after a stormy 15-year marriage during which both spouses struggled with substance abuse. Bobby Brown, also a Grammy Award winner, started his career as frontman for the R&B group New Edition.—*Reuters*

Whitney Houston & Bobbi Kristina Brown, daughter of the late pop star Whitney Houston

Australian farmers develop robots to weed crops

SYDNEY, 4 Feb — Australian farmers have developed robots that can weed crops. More than 60 of the world's leading robotics engineers and academics gathered at Sydney University on Wednesday for the first ever conference on agricultural robotics and revealed that their new inventions could revolutionize farming. Dr Robert Fitch, manager of systems planning at the Robotics Center (ACFR), told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) that he has developed a robot that can kill weeds.

"We set out to develop better ways to kill weeds, by developing small robot platforms, that are nimble and can slow down to stop and kill every weed, without causing soil compaction," he said.

"We could either pull the weed, laser it, microwave it or target it with weedkiller." "I see robots as a far bigger picture in agriculture, a new paradigm, where we can throw out all the things that have driven agricultural productivity, and ask 'How can we use these robots to do things differently?'"

Australian farmer Andrew Bate, who has also developed robots to weed crops, said the new technology could revolutionize farming all over the world.

"We actually see robots as being simple machines that do simple tasks well ... the robots are simple modular machines that can be quite small," Bate said.

"Instead of a large machine that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, we're talking about a number of machines that cost well under a hundred thousand dollars." —*Xinhua*

Beckham still weighing options for Miami football stadium

Don Garber (L), Major League Soccer (MLS) commissioner, exchanges working microphones with David Beckham as Beckham discusses matters related to the ownership position he has with a proposed MLS expansion team that could play in Miami, at a news conference in Miami, Florida on 5 Feb, 2014. REUTERS

MIAMI, 4 Feb — More than a year after David Beckham swooped into Miami, the retired English football star has not yet secured a spot for his planned Major League Soccer team, but he and his partners are still searching, a spokesman said on Tuesday. "The Miami Beckham United team is actively looking at four or five sites," Tadd Schwartz wrote in an emailed statement.

Beckham's group has remained mostly quiet since local officials last year rebuffed two attempts to secure land for a 25,000-seat bayfront arena in the city's downtown. A first push last year to build the stadium on an empty tract on a small island mostly occupied by the port of Miami was fought by a maritime group led by Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. A second effort to tuck it in between the NBA Miami Heat's basketball arena and the city's art museum also failed.

"You can't build a stadium overnight, so finding the right site, finding the right place in Miami is important for us. But it will all start coming together pretty quickly and everything will start happening pretty soon," Beckham told E! Online last month. Miami-Dade County lawmakers voted on Tuesday to allow the county to open negotiations with Florida International University for use of its stadium as a temporary home for Beckham's team in south Miami.

"Right now, our focus is on identifying the location for a purpose-built stadium that will be the team's permanent home," Schwartz wrote.—*Reuters*

Redknapp quits as Queens Park Rangers manager with wounded knee

Queens Park Rangers manager Harry Redknapp looks on before their English Premier League soccer match against Manchester United, at Loftus Road in London on 17 Jan, 2015. — REUTERS

LONDON, 4 Feb — Harry Redknapp resigned as manager of struggling Queens Park Rangers on Tuesday with the 67-year-old citing knee problems as his reason for stepping down.

The Premier League's oldest manager, Redknapp said impending surgery meant he could no longer give the job 100 percent.

Former QPR and England striker Les Ferdinand and Chris Ramsey are to take temporary charge.

Redknapp, who has enjoyed a colourful managerial career at West Ham United, Portsmouth, Southampton and Tottenham Hotspur, took over at QPR in November 2012.

After relegation, the London-born former West Ham player took QPR back up in his first full season in charge but they have toiled this season, losing all 11 away league matches — a Premier League record.

Redknapp's hopes of strengthening his squad were dashed by a quiet transfer window and whoever takes charge will have the job of steering QPR out of the relegation zone.

They are second from bottom with 19 points from 23 games.

"Sadly I need immediate surgery on my knee which is going to stop me from doing my job in the coming weeks," Redknapp said. "It means I won't be able to be out on the training pitch every day and if I can't give 100 percent I feel it's better for someone else to take over the reins."

Reuters

Injured Froch relinquishes IBF super-middleweight belt

Carl Froch of Britain celebrates with the championship belt after defeating compatriot George Groves in their WBA and IBF Super Middleweight World Championship title fight at Wembley Arena in London on 31 May, 2014.—REUTERS

LONDON, 4 Feb — Carl Froch has relinquished his IBF super-middleweight belt as the Briton recovers from the elbow injury that forced him to miss out on a fight with Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.

Froch, who also holds the WBA version of the title, had hoped to fight Chavez in Las Vegas next month.

Fellow Briton James DeGale, the mandatory challenger for the IBF belt, could now get a world title shot. "It's been a frustrating couple of weeks with terms agreed for the Chavez fight only for me to be unable to proceed in camp due to injury," four-times world champion Froch, 37, said in a statement issued by his promoters Matchroom Sport.

"I know what it's like to wait for a shot and I didn't want to hold James up in fighting for a world title. James is a great fighter and I hope he can go out and win that title and who knows we may even meet later in the year."—*Reuters*

mitv Myanmar International

(5-2-2015 07:00 am~ 6-2-2015 07:00 am) MST

* Local News
* A Novitiation Ceremony in a Rural Township
* World News
* The Pride of Myanmar "Traditional Handicraft"
* Local News
* Culture Show: Abdication of King Thibaw
* World News
* Director: Maung Myo Min (Yin Twin Byit)
* Local News
* Mya Setkyar Pure Silk Fabric From Inle Lake
* World News
* Writer
* Local News
* A Worth Studying Site For Ancient Myanmar Heritages
* World News
* Myanmar Masterclass "Aung Thiha"
* Local News
* Mosaic Painting (Precious Stones & Gems)
* World News
* A Day In Bagan
* Local News
* Cultural Shows: Theatrical Art
* World News
* Inspiration
* Local News
* A Simple and Peaceful Life
* World News
* Craft Blacksmithing
* Local News
* Moving Meditation: Aikido
* World News
* We'll leave after 12 Passengers are on Board...

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(5-2-2015, Thursday)

6:00 am
- Paritta By Venerable Mingun Sayadaw

7:00 am
- News/ Weather Report

7:35 am
- Weekly Entertainment

8:30 am
- Head Line News

9:35 am
- Documentary (ASEAN)

10:00 am
- News /International News

11:35 am
- Science and Technology Programme

12:00 noon
- News / International News / Weather Report

12:35 pm
Hluttaw Image

2:00 pm
- 68th Anniversary Union Day Programme

3:00 pm
- News/Interbational News (Package)

4:35 pm
- University of Distance Education (TV Lectures) — First Year (Myanmar)

5:35 pm
- People's Talks

5:50 pm
- (100) Birthday Anniversary Bogyoke Aung San

7:00 pm
- News

7:30 pm
- Head Line News

8:00 pm
- News / International News / Weather Report

9:00 pm
- News
- Hluttaw Image
- Clever
- Talk on Old Film

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(5-2-2015, Thursday)

6:00 am
- The Biography of Kyaungban Sayadaw Phayagyi

6:15 am
- Wut Hmone Music Troupe

6:30 am
- TV Drama Series

6:55 am
- TV Drama Series

7:20 am
- Fashion Show

7:35 am
- TV Drama Series

8:15 am
- TV Drama Series

9:00 am
- Musical Programme

9:15 am
- Pyi Thu Ni Ti

9:35 am
- 40th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship And Corporation (Singapore)

9:40 am
- Colours of ASEAN (Singapore)

9:45 am
- ASEAN Cultural Fair 2014 (Singapore Music Show)

9:55 am
- Musical Programme

10:10 am
- Myanmar Video

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Thursday, 5 February, 2015

United into fifth round as Cambridge hopes end

LONDON, 4 Feb — Manchester United reached the FA Cup fifth round and avoided any further embarrassment against stubborn fourth-tier side Cambridge United with a 3-0 replay win at Old Trafford on Tuesday that did little to excite their fans.

After drawing 0-0 at Cambridge, who were promoted from the minor leagues last season, United eventually made their superiority tell with goals from Juan Mata, Marcos Rojo and James Wilson, although it was a largely laboured display. Louis van Gaal's side, who almost fell behind in the first minute when Cambridge striker Tom Elliott hit the post, will next play third-tier Preston North End, who beat cup specialists Sheffield United 3-1 away in their fourth round replay.

Second-tier Fulham flirted with an upset against Premier League visitors Sunderland after taking a first-half lead, but were eventually beaten 3-1 after conceding three times in the last half-hour at Craven Cottage.

Cambridge, the lowest ranked team to reach the fourth round, were already big winners having guaranteed themselves a bumper payday of about one million pounds ($1.52 million) from gate receipts and TV money — a huge sum for a team at their level. The Cambridge chairman said their mighty windfall would be spent on building new toilets at their run-down Abbey Stadium. Any hopes they had of producing one of the biggest shocks in cup history, however, were flushed down the pan.

They had a great chance to stun their illustrious opponents after one minute when Elliott raced on to a poor ball from Daley Blind, but his curling effort struck the post and Cambridge's resistance quickly wilted.

United midfielder Marouane Fellaini headed an Angel Di Maria cross back towards Mata who poked it in off the bar after 25 minutes and Rojo scored his first for the club when he headed in a deft cross from Robin van Persie just past the half-hour. Substitute James Wilson fired in left-footed from the edge of the box to round off the win after 74 minutes in an efficient display where again the result trumped the performance. — *Reuters*

Manchester United's Wayne Rooney (L) walks with Cambridge United's Sullay Kaikai following their FA Cup fourth round soccer match at Old Trafford in Manchester, northern England on 3 Feb, 2015.
REUTERS

Japan players mourn Aguirre's sacking

Photo taken in August 2014 shows Javier Aguirre attending a Press conference in Tokyo to assume the post of Japan coach. The Japan Football Association announced on 3 Feb, 2015, that Aguirre has been sacked for his alleged involvement in a 2011 match-fixing scandal in Spain.—KYODO NEWS

TOKYO, 4 Feb — Japan national team players have expressed sadness at the departure of coach Javier Aguirre after just 10 games in charge of the former Asian champions.

Aguirre was sacked on Tuesday after the Japan Football Association confirmed that the criminal complaint for match-fixing, filed by Spanish prosecutors against the Mexican, had been accepted by the court.

In Tuesday's online edition, Spanish sports daily Marca reported that Aguirre's hearing has been set for 27 February in Valencia, where the match in question was held in May 2011 between Levante and Real Zaragoza, then coached by Aguirre.

"It was brief, but he trusted us and we fought together," said the Germany-based Japan captain Makoto Hasebe said. "I hope things turn for the better for him from here on."

"We're worrying and causing a lot of grief to our fans and that's what kills me. It's what I've been thinking about most."

Added Japan's most capped player, Gamba Osaka's Yasuhito Endo, "We're really not in a position to say anything, but we were just getting the hang of things as a team so it's too bad." While his team badly fell short at last month's Asian Cup, losing to the United Arab Emirates in the quarterfinals, Aguirre had been popular with the players in his short time with Japan. The two-time World Cup manager was direct and straightforward with the troops, whose respect he was starting to earn through his experience and demeanor.

But Aguirre's reign came to an abrupt end at just 140 days — the shortest ever by a Japan national coach. "What I remember about him most is that he used to have a good time at the training sessions," defender Atsuto Uchida said. "Since I've been playing for Japan, I don't know of any other coach who had as much fun at training and he used to run the sessions well." "The manager must be hurting the most. But I understand where the JFA is coming from as well."

Said Inter Milan fullback Yuto Nagatomo, "I'm very disappointed by the dismissal. We did everything we possibly could at the Asian Cup. He kept picking me and made me feel important to the team."

"I want to thank him for all that he did for us."

Kyodo News

Rose and Day ready to break US grip at Torrey Pines

LA JOLLA, (California), 4 Feb — As the two highest ranked players in the field, England's Justin Rose and Australian Jason Day are leading the charge on the American stranglehold of the PGA Tour's Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines.

Since its inception on the tour in 1952 just two international players have hoisted the trophy on the iconic coastal venue, a rare public course used for top tournament play.

South African Gary Player (1963) and Spain's Jose Maria Olazabal (2002) are the only non-American flags on the tournament honour role and Tiger Woods was victorious in the 2008 US Open also held at the venue.

And while seven-times event winner Woods and local boy Phil Mickelson will no doubt take the lions share of crowd support, world number five Rose and number eight Day are ready to spoil the party.

Britain's Justin Rose tees off on the 12th hole during the Abu Dhabi Golf championship on 6 Jan, 2015.
REUTERS

With the rough up on both the South and North courses where players alternate on the opening two days and greens particularly firm, conditions could mirror a mini US Open.

Rose is a former US Open winner having prevailed at Merion in 2013 while Day has two runner-ups and a T4 in his four US Open appearances.

"We are obviously due on this course," Day, who was runner up a year ago in the event to American Scott Stallings, said.

"I'm excited to get the week started because my preparation has been some of the best I've had in my career, almost like a major, and I hope to be ready to go one better than last year.

"Some players don't like tougher courses but I love the challenge and this place tests every aspect of your game."

Rose has failed to crack the top 20 in the past at the event but comes in having expelled some rust in the Middle East.

The 34-year-old finished T12 and T13 in back-to-back tournaments on the European Tour and while he is looking to peak in early April for the Masters in Augusta he is mindful of producing results in the meantime.—*Reuters*

'Lose-lose' if 2022 World Cup and Games clash: Bach

BEAVER CREEK, (Colorado), 4 Feb — It would be a lose-lose situation for the Olympics and soccer if FIFA moves the 2022 World Cup to January-February and overlaps with the Winter Games, IOC president Thomas Bach warned on Tuesday.

FIFA, soccer's world governing body, is considering whether to move the 2022 World Cup, scheduled to be played in Qatar in June and July, to a cooler time of the year and avoid the hottest months in the Middle East.

"Neither the World Cup nor the Olympic Winter Games would get the full attention they deserve," Bach told reporters before taking in the first race of the alpine ski world championships. "It would cause major problems with the broadcasters. It would cause major problems with the sponsors."

Temperatures in the Gulf can reach 50 Celsius (122 F) in June and July, the traditional staging dates for the World Cup.

Although the 2022 Winter Olympics host will not be finalized until next year, they are certain to be held in Asia, with only Beijing and Almaty, Kazakhstan, still in the running.

Bach has made it clear the International Olympic Committee will not be moving the 2022 Winter Games from its traditional February time slot to avoid a clash. FIFA is expected to make a final decision on the 2022 World Cup dates in March. But Bach said that he received a commitment from Federation Internationale de Football Association President Sepp Blatter that an overlap of the two events will not happen.

IOC president Thomas Bach (middle) speaks during a Press conference prior to the women's Super G in the FIS alpine skiing world championships at Raptor Racecourse. —REUTERS

"We have been talking with FIFA about this for quite a long time and we have the clear commitment of the FIFA president that this will not happen," said Bach. "This is in the mutual interest, it would be a lose-lose situation."

Reuters

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