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NEW HOMES READY

New settlements for flood, landslide victims available in Chin State

MORE than six months after floods and landslides in Haka and Tiddim of Chin State, new settlements are being handed over to the disaster victims by the regional government following rehabilitation efforts carried out by the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry.

The ministry built 458 houses—417 in Haka Township and 41 in Tiddim Township where some locals lost property due to flooding and landslides caused by heavy rains in July of last year.

According to the ministry, each house is fitted with two bed rooms and has a floor area of 640 square feet which can be occupied by more than five family members. Each home cost K4.4 million.

The ministry handed over the new settlements for the disaster victims to the Chin State government on 30 January. The regional government is currently accommodating people at the new homes.

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New homes in Haka are ready to welcome new dwellers. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

VP U Nyan Tun leaves for US to attend US-ASEAN Special Summit

ON behalf of the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, U Nyan Tun, Vice-President, left Nay Pyi Taw today for the United States of America to attend the US-ASEAN Special Summit.

The summit is scheduled to be held in Sunnylands, California, from 15 to 16 February, 2016.—Myanmar News Agency



Panglong Union Monument.

Upgraded Panglong Monument Garden opens

THE Shan State government organised the 69th Anniversary Union Day celebration in conjunction with a ceremony to mark the completion of the upgrading of the Panglong Union Monument Garden at the lawn of the garden in Loilem of Shan State (South) yesterday.

The ceremony was attended by Shan State Chief Minister Sao Aung Myat and officials, members of Shan literature and culture groups, local people and students.

During the celebration, the Chief Minister read out the Union Day message by President U Thein Sein.

Next, the Chief Minister and officials formally opened the upgraded Panglong Union Monument Garden.

They observed the monument background portraying images of General Aung San and 23 dignitaries who signed the Panglong Pact in the garden.—Moe Lwin Oo (Loilem)

Manshwesettaw pagoda festival to open today



Visitors swim in the Mann Creek flowing near Manshwesettaw Pagoda. PHOTO: KHIN THAN OO (PHAN KHAR MYAY)

THE Manshwesettaw pagoda festival will be opened today (5th Waxing of Ta Bo Dwe) on an elaborate scale in Saku township, Minbuu District, Magway Region.

There will be a total of five opening ceremonies — the opening ceremony of the entry moat; opening ceremony of the lower Settawya (footprint at the foot of the hill); the opening ceremony of

upper Settawya (footprint of the right foot); the opening ceremony of the Sasanabeikman building and libation pouring ceremony, said a member of the Pagoda Board of Trustees.—*Tin Htun Oo (Minbuu)*

BRT line looks to set up more bus-stops

MORE bus-stops for the BRT line will be set up at the request of passengers, according to an official from the Yangon Bus Line Public Company.

We are considering moving to set up more bus-stops for our service as passengers asked for this to be done, said Dr Maung Aung of the bus service company.

The first two lines of the bus

rapid transit system in Yangon began operations on 7 February.

There will be five more bus-stops on its routes but the exact locations are not set yet, said the official.

The flow of BRT buses will be improved when flyers being built in Yangon are put into service, he added.

BRT service gives each passenger comfort while travelling,

said U Min Tun, a passenger from Insein Township, expressing his view of the service but pointed out that bus-stops are far from each other.

According to the company, more buses are to be added to the present fleet comprising 18 buses at the end of this month. A total of 65 buses are expected to be in operation this April.—*Ko Moe*

Royal wooden boat in Mingun attracts growing tourist crowds

THE number of visitors coming to see the royal boat excavated near Phaungtawthi Port on the Ayeyawady River is reportedly rising day by day in Mingun, Sagaing Region.

That boat, carved out of a single tree, was found on 29 January 2015 and excavated by a group led by U Nandimadipati, patron of the Word Buddhist Academy. It was stored in the Parda Nathan Settawya Pagoda compound in Mingun.

“Although we informed the Mandalay archaeology research department, they could not take part in the excavation, so I formed a group to dig the boat at a cost of K5 million (US\$4,065) from the pagoda fund,” said by U Nandimardipati.

The boat was carved from a tree measuring 78 feet long, 8.4

feet wide and 3 feet deep. The anchor of the boat is also made of wood.

“After digging up the big, wooden boat, archaeology researchers came and inspected it. They confirmed that it was a boat used by the royal family during the reign of King Mindon. Some foreigners have been heard saying they have never seen such a big wooden boat carved from a tree in the world,” said Saya U Nyo Tun of the Innwa Naungyan missionary group.

The royal boat was kept in the compound of the Parda Nathan Settawya pagoda near the Mingun Bell—the third largest in the world—which also attracts large numbers of local and foreign tourists.—*Myitmakha News Agency*



Royal wooden boat in Mingun. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

New Rehabilitation centre to be opened in July

THE new Myitkyina rehabilitation centre is slated to be opened in July of this year. The building is being constructed with the assistance of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), said Mr. Xavier who is in charge of the rehabilitation centre branch office (Myitkyina).

The centre is two acres wide and can accommodate 56 patients at a cost of 1.7 million Swiss Francs. It consists of a basketball field and 26 buildings. The construction was undertaken by the Manaw Ayeya Construction Limited. The company can manufacture around 250 artificial limbs.

Around 70 % of the construction is now completed and

the company will hand over the building to Ministry of Health upon total completion.

Previously, the disabled had to receive treatment at the Leprosy Hospital in Yeynatha, Madaya Township in Mandalay Region.

There were a total of 160 disabled patients undergoing treatment from 2013 to December, 2015 and the hospital manufactured 181 prosthetic legs for free. The hospital will also provide artificial limbs for 20 disabled people on 15 February.

The purpose of opening the rehabilitation center in Myitkyina is to restore quality of life to people with disabilities attributed to land mines and other causes.—*Shwe Lin Pyae Sone*

Police help tourist in trouble

A FEMALE tourist was found in Chanayethasan township, Mandalay Region, on Wednesday, asking for help with her visit to India, police said.

Police found Ms Adele Hannah Groom, 32, asking for donations by holding a placard that read “Can you help me get to India? Thank you.” The British tourist was in need of some money to apply for a visa to India. She was reported to be staying in Garden Hotel in the township, with tourism police providing all the assistance she needed, taking her to the British Embassy in Yangon.—*Police Information Centre*



A policeman assists Ms Adele Hannah Groom in Mandalay. PHOTO: MYANMAR POLICE FORCE

President hosts Union Day commemorative reception and dinner

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein and wife Daw Khin Khin Win hosted a reception and dinner to commemorate the 69th Anniversary Union Day at the square of City Hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday evening.

First, the President and wife extended cordial greetings to parliamentarians, chairs of political parties, region/state ethnic affairs ministers and delegates to the Union Day celebration.

The event was attended by Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham and wife Daw Nan Shwe Hmon, Vice-President U Nyan Tun and wife Daw Khin Aye Myint, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than and wife Nant Kyin Kyi, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint and wife Daw Cho Cho, Chief Justice of the Union U Tun Tun Oo, Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services Senior General Min

Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla, Chairman of the State Constitutional Tribunal U Mya Thein, Union Election Commission Chairman U Tin Aye, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services and Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win and wife, the Deputy Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker and wife, the Deputy Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker and wife, Union ministers, senior military officers, chairs of parliamentary committees, deputy ministers, departmental heads and guests.

Artists from the Ministry of Culture and cultural dance troupes of regions and states entertained dignitaries with a variety of traditional dances following the dinner.

Next, the President and his wife cordially greeted members of the national races cultural troupes.—*Myanmar News Agency*



President U Thein Sein greets ethnic delegates at dinner to mark 69th Anniversary Union Day. PHOTO: MNA

Flag hoisting and saluting ceremony held



The State Flag is hoisted in the early morning at a ceremony to celebrate 69th Union Day in Nay Pyi Taw on 12 February. PHOTO: MNA

A STATE flag hoisting and saluting ceremony was held in commemoration of the 69th Anniversary Union Day at the square of Nay Pyi Taw City Hall yesterday morning.

First, departmental staff, members of social organisations, national races and guests took designated places before the start of the Union Day celebration.

Next, a state flag hoisting team accompanied by members of national races hoisted the flag of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to full mast.

Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham, who is also the chairman of the central committee on the holding of the 69th Anniversary Union Day celebration took the salute of the Guard of Honour.

Afterwards, the Vice-President and those present saluted the state flag while the national anthem was played by the Guard of Honour. The ceremony came to an end following the Vice-President reading out messages sent by President Agga Maha Thayay Sithu Agga Maha Thiri Thudhamma U Thein Sein on the occasion of the 69th Anniversary Union Day celebration.

Also present at the Union Day celebration were the Union ministers, the chairman of Union Civil Service Board, senior military officers from the Commander-in-Chief (Army), Union Supreme Court judges, the commander of Nay Pyi Taw Command, deputy ministers and other officials.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Aviation academy awards full scholarships to 10 trainees

THE Myanmar Aviation Academy has awarded scholarships worth US\$65,000 each to 10 trainees from the academy's third and fourth batches. The academy was established by the Htoo Foundation.

A total of 36 trainees were accepted in to the two batches this year, 10 of whom will have their fees covered.

"The training course fee is \$65,000. Those who were awarded scholarships will have their training, food and accommodations covered," said U Kyi Win, chairperson of the MMA.

In general, trainees can pay for the MMA's 20-month programme in three instalments.

"Among the candidates who have been granted scholarships, some are descendants of farmers

who are interested in aviation and show high potential but cannot afford the programme financially. The programme can be paid for in three instalments of \$22,000. As such, trainees who pay in instalments will be charged an additional \$1,000," said by U Htun Myint, the CEO of MMA.

Among the first batch of 24 trainees, ten were awarded full scholarships, but no scholarships were offered to the second batch.

MMA is the first civilian aviation training course in Myanmar. It was established in Patheingyi, Ayeyawady Region. Trainees' educations will include theoretical and practical studies at the Yangon Aviation Academy headquarters as well as at MMA.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

New settlements for flood, landslide victims available in Chin State

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In western Chin State, landslides and flash floods caused severe damage; leaving more than 1,000 homes damaged or destroyed, affecting 7,670 people and killing five.

The nationwide death toll from landslides and floods between June and late August reached 120. Most of these deaths occurred in Rakhine State, where 56 people were killed, followed by 23 in Sagaing and 12 in Mandalay Region, according to data from the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Children from families relocated to new homes are playing.

Watercolour painters celebrate lives of Yangon residents



A watercolour painting depicting the lifestyle of Yangonites. PHOTO: KHIN ZALI

YANGON'S Gallery 65 will showcase watercolour works by local artists depicting the lives of the city's residents at an exhibition from 14 to 17 February. The gallery is located on Yawmingyi Street in Dagon Township.

"Watercolour 2016" will feature 36 paintings by three artists—Myint Naing, Aung Hsint and Khin Maung Zaw.

The subject matter of the exhibition will include still lives, natural landscapes of Myanmar

and depictions of the lifestyles of Yangon residents.

Khin Maung Zaw said: "We plan to invite international watercolourists to exhibit their works at our next event, which is scheduled to take place next year."—Khin Zali

Yangon festival aims to support street children

THE non-profit organization Junior Dream will organise a fundraising market festival in conjunction with a musical concert in mid-February with the aim of supporting street children and young people around Yangon.

The 12-14 February festival is being at People's Square and People's Park in Yangon and will feature a wide range of entertainment programmes performed by local celebrities, including Maykhala and Chan Chan.

All proceeds from the events will go to street kids in the Yangon area, with Junior Dream planning to use the funds to provide a wide range of assistances, including healthcare, food, clothing, education, employment and other social aid for street children between two and 20 years of age.

A total of 85 children and young people have been placed

on Junior Dream's lists of top priorities, said member Eindaray Naynwe, adding that those children were discovered by the organisation when it conducted a survey in eight townships in Yangon last year.

Homeless children with or without parents are usually found at railway stations, jetties and under bridges.

Junior Dream, a 20-member team, was established in late 2014 to help street kids and youths through holistic development projects, which are funded by donations from the public. The team, which includes a band, usually raises funds through concerts.

"A difficult challenge is trust-building between the children and the team. Now, we have their trust. They call our phones when they need healthcare and other services," said Eindaray Naynwe.—*Thi Thi Min*

Crime News

Marijuana seized in Hlaingthayar

AN anti-drug squad in Hlaingthayar seized marijuana in a house owned by one Thein Tun Aung on Musai road, ward-16, Hlaingthayar township on Wednesday. Acting on a tip-off, members of police arrested Ma San San Tin, 39, Good alias Ko Ko Oo, 24, and Sithu Phyto, 24, with 4.1 kilograms of marijuana and drug paraphernalia.

Police have filed charges against the suspects under the Anti-Narcotic law.—*Myanmar Police Force*



Good (a) Ko Ko Oo, Sithu Phyto and Ma San San Tin. PHOTO: MPF

2,900 Yabba pills seized in Pyigyidagun



Zaw Sai Oo and Aye Thandar Tun. PHOTO: MPF

AN anti-drug squad seized 2,900 yabba pills (a synthetic-amphetamine based narcotic) from one Zaw Sai Oo and accomplice Aye Thandar Tun who was staying at the Wai Wai motel on Thayarwaddy Mingyi road, Pyigyidagun township on Tuesday.

Similarly, members of the police discovered Yabba at a house on Thida road, Dagon Myothit (South) on Monday. Acting on a tip-off, the police searched a house owned by one Kyaw Win Myint and found 858 yabba pills. Local police have filed charges against them under the Anti-Narcotic Law.—*Myanmar Police Force*

Yabba pills and ammunition seized in Yangon

A LOCAL anti-drug squad seized ammunition from a car in U Tun Myat road, Natmaut ward, Tamwe, Yagon on Tuesday. Acting on a tip-off, members of the police arrested one Aung Myat Kyaw alias Nyi Nyi Soe.

Police also confiscated Yabba pills from a house in South Okkalarpa town-

ship, Yangon. According to an investigation, the police searched a house owned by one Wai Thar Tun alias Myo Zaw and found over 330,000 yabba pills. Police found ammunition in Badan village, Hlaingthayar township. Police have filed charges against the suspects under the Anti-Narcotic Law.—*Ko Ye*



Aung Myat Kyaw alias Nyi Nyi Soe and Wai Thar Tun alias Myo Zaw. PHOTO: KO YE

LOCAL Business

Mining companies struggling to pay govt royalties

MINING entrepreneurs are currently facing problems paying royalties to Myanmar Enterprise No 2 on sales of produced manganese dioxide as they haven't been able to sell any for export, according to the Eastern Shan State Mining Entrepreneurs Association.

"We are not in a position whereby we can sell manganese dioxide from our mining activities as we don't have any foreign buyers. The world market of minerals is falling. Right now we're in a spot of difficulty as the Myanmar Enterprise No 2 is requesting us to cough up the money owed to them so that can show their share to the new government," said U Tin Nway, secretary of the Eastern Shan State Mining Entrepreneurs Association.



A jade mining in Hpakant.
PHOTO: THAUNG NYUNT

It is known that iron and steel, as well as other alloy materials are used in the production of manganese dioxide.

Companies involved in regional mining enterprises must, as well as finding their own mining location, carry out mining excavation completely under their

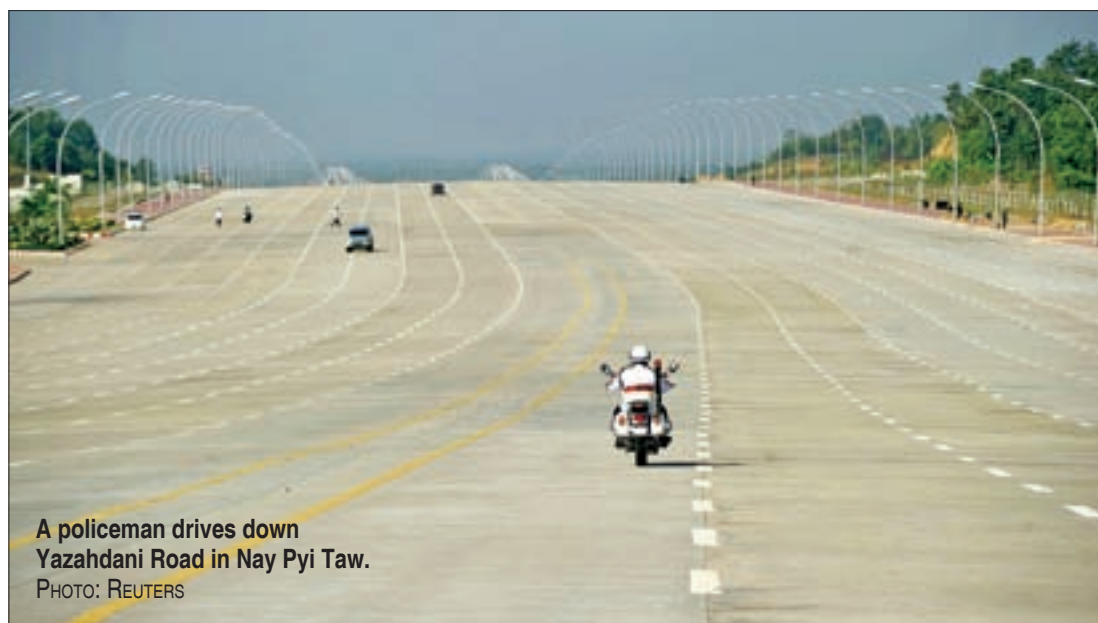
own budget. As a result, they are facing difficulties as they are unable to sell their mined minerals and metals.

Thirty percent of money received from the sales of manganese dioxide production must be paid to the Mining Enterprise No 2 while a further two percent for

fiscal tax and a three percent fee for being a joint venture with the government must be paid to the Ministry of Mines.

There are eight companies involved in mining production of manganese dioxide in eastern Shan State. In the 2010-11 fiscal year an approximate amount

of 100,000 tons of the chemical compound was sold, while this dropped drastically during the last fiscal year of 2014-15 to just 3,000 tonnes, according to the records of the Eastern Shan State Mining Entrepreneurs Association.—*Myitmakha News Agency*



A policeman drives down Yazahdani Road in Nay Pyi Taw.
PHOTO: REUTERS

KECC eyes high-quality highways around Myanmar

THE Korea Engineering Consultant Corporation (KECC) is considering the prospect of building high-quality highways around Myanmar, according to the Myanmar Construction Entrepreneurs Association (MCEA).

KECC and MCEA will discuss the prospect on 15 February.

"KECC is currently interested in building high-quality highways in Myanmar. We have

been planning to hold a meeting with the Ministry of Construction and KECC," said U Tin Aung Myint, associate secretary of MCEA.

On 16 February, KECC and the Union Minister of Construction will meet to discuss potential highway upgrade projects.

"We will know detailed information after the discussion on which roads will likely be upgraded when we meet with the Minister. Only the Yan-

gon-Mandalay highway is currently regarded as high-quality. If we could upgrade the other highways, more foreign investments might enter Myanmar," said U Tin Aung Myint.

KECC has been conducting surveys to upgrade highways in Myanmar since 2015.

Currently China, Japan, Thailand and Singapore have the highest investments in Myanmar's infrastructure sector.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Yay Betel Farmers pleased with returns

AS betel is the main seasonal crop produced in Yay Township, Mon State, the betel growers who have invested in betel cultivations are making handsome profits, it has been learned.

"At retail sale, we are selling a single betel for K27 to K29. Likewise, we are selling dry betel for K4,100 per viss (approx. 1.6 kilo-

grams). The fact is we gain higher prices from the betel market than from rubber cultivation", a local people said. "Betel products from Yay Township are exported to India - Kalembo and Tamu. We are also selling betel in Mandalay and Madaya as well from Mandalay to Mattatya region", he added.—*Nay Myo Htunt*

Fish supplied to Sanpya Fish Market declining

FISH supplied to the Kyimhinde Baho San Phyat Fish Market in Yangon continues to decline year by year.

"The main reason for the scarcity of fish and lobsters is poor preservation of our natural rivers and the haphazard weather", said a fish distribution agent.

"We had to buy foodstuffs for K70 to K85 per pound in late 2015. The price has jumped to between K125 and K130 per pound in this year. In fact, we couldn't

feed our fish sufficiently. As a result the fish are too small to fetch a good price, not being up to the standard and size when we go to market", said U Win, a fish breeder from Twante Township.

According to the records of the Fish Brokers' Committee, various kinds of fish and shrimp totaling over 90 million viss were supplied to Yangon in 2013, around 86 million viss in 2014 and only 75 million viss in 2015.—*A Wei Daw Pho Thaw*

Taiwan court orders asset freeze on developers of quake-hit building

TAINAN — A Taiwan court granted yesterday an injunction to freeze part of the assets of nine people involved in the construction of an apartment complex that collapsed in southern Taiwan when a powerful earthquake struck 6 February, killing at least 96 people and injuring hundreds.

Tainan Mayor William Lai told reporters the Tainan District Court ordered the freeze of assets worth NT\$30 million (about US\$908,000) belonging to each of the nine who had a part in building the Weiguan Jinlong complex, located in Tainan's Yongkang District.

The ruling came after the city filed an emergency petition on behalf of residents of the complex for a preliminary injunction to freeze the nine people's assets to prevent their disposal or transfer.

The injunction is a means to preserve the status quo of their assets until the final hearing. As the move is preliminary, the number of claimants and amount of assets to be frozen could increase, Lai said.

Earlier, a ceremony was held in Tainan to remember the people who died in the quake.



Heavy machinery removes rubble at the site of a collapsed high-rise condominium building in Tainan, southern Taiwan, on 12 February 2016, six days after a massive earthquake struck the city, killing at least 96 people and injuring hundreds. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Friday was the seventh day since the magnitude 6.4 quake hit in the predawn hours. Taiwanese believe that the soul of the deceased will return to their home on the seventh day of their death.

President Ma Ying-jeou, accompanied by Premier Simon Chang, paid respects at the ceremony and visited survivors at hospitals.

President-elect Tsai Ing-wen, who also paid respects at the ceremony, wrote on her Facebook page that she hopes the deceased would rest in peace and the survivors would recover from their grief.

On Friday, rescuers pulled 34 more bodies from the rubble of the Weiguan Jinlong apartment complex, raising the death toll at the structure to 93. Two

victims died elsewhere.

A dog was also rescued alive from the rubble. Another dog was pulled alive from the wreckage on Wednesday.

In addition to this apartment complex, which had 16 floors above ground and one basement floor, the quake toppled a number of other buildings in Tainan, a city of some 1.9 million people. Some structures were left tilting noticeably.

Three former executives of a company that constructed the Weiguan Jinlong complex have been detained on suspicion of professional negligence resulting in death.

Prosecutors suspect that shoddy construction work may be behind the collapse, as empty tin cans were found packed inside the concrete walls of the 23-year-old building.

Rescuers continued their operations at the complex, with around 30 people remaining unaccounted for.

The quake left more than 550 people injured. Rescue officials said more than 200 people were rescued from the complex, and about 90 people are still being treated at hospitals.—Kyodo News

Nepal eases fuel rationing as availability improves

KATHMANDU — Fuel stations across Nepal began refilling vehicles Friday as state-run distribution monopoly relaxed most measures taken over the past four months to save fuel for emergency services amid an unofficial blockade by India.

Mukunda Ghimire, spokesman of Nepal Oil Corp that imports all its fuel from India, said supplies of gasoline and diesel have significantly improved since last Friday when frustrated local traders cleared the Birgunj-Raxaul trading route that handles most trade between the two countries.

Ethnic Madhesi protesters had blocked the route since late September when Nepal adopted a new Constitution, which has since been amended to address some of their grievances.

"From today, two-wheelers can get 5 liters of fuel and four-wheelers can get 15 liters of fuel from any refilling station every day," Ghimire told Kyodo News. "The limitation on volume will also be scrapped after a week," he added.

Nepal had taken a variety of measures to deal with crippling fuel shortages. Refilling of private vehicles was initially banned to ensure emergency services could keep running, but it was later allowed under a quota system.

Nepal relies on India to supply all of its daily fuel requirements of some 1.1 million liters of gasoline and 2.6 million liters of diesel.

Meanwhile, Nepal Oil is still struggling to regularise cooking gas distribution.

"The lengthy shortage has multiplied the demand of cooking gas several-folds. It will take between one to two months for cooking gas distribution to become regular," Ghimire said.

Nepal promulgated its new constitution on 20 September, angering ethnic Madhesis, who are dwellers of the country's southern flatlands called Madhes and have close cultural, linguistic and family ties with Indians across the border.

The Madhesis said the charter discriminated against them by denying them proper representation and by putting chunks of Madhes in hill provinces under a seven-province federal model.

India threw its weight behind the Madhesis and squeezed supplies to Nepal from all trading routes, although Madhesis were obstructing only the Birgunj-Raxaul route. In late December, Nepal decided to make two constitutional amendments to address the Madhesis' demands. India welcomed this and normalised supplies from all routes except Birgunj-Raxaul.—Kyodo News

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Chief Executive Officer -

Nakagawa Kiyoshi
gnlmdaily@gmail.com

Chief Editor - Khin Maung Aye
khinmaungaye@hotmail.com

Deputy Chief Editor - Aye Min Soe
koayeminsoe2006@gmail.com

Chief Reporter
Ye Myint, uyemyint76@gmail.com,

Consultant Editors
Jacob Goldberg
jgold.news@gmail.com
Alec Wilmot
alec.wilmot.gnlm@gmail.com

Editors
Ye Htut Tin
mryehtuttin@gmail.com
Kyaw Thura, kthura.spk@gmail.com,

International news
Tun Tun Naing
tunyunaing@gmail.com

Reporters
Khaing Thanda Lwin
juniorlwin25@gmail.com
Tun Aung Kyaw
tunaungkyaw.31@gmail.com

Translators
Hay Mar Tin Win
haymarfat@gmail.com

Proof reader

Nwe Nwe Tun
Computer Team
Tun Zaw, Thein Ngwe,
Zaw Zaw Aung,
Ye Naing Soe, Nyi Zaw Moe,
Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win,
Sanda Hnin, Zu Zin Hnin

Circulation & Advertising
San Lwin (+95) (01) 8604532

Ads and subscription enquiries:
adv.gnlm@gmail.com

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South Korea, US to discuss missile defence; South cuts power to Kaesong park

SEOUL — South Korea will begin talks with Washington as early as next week on deploying an advanced US missile defence system following North Korea's rocket launch, an official said yesterday, as Seoul cut power to a factory park run jointly with the North.

The discussions would focus on placing one Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) unit with the US military in South Korea after the North's launch last weekend, a South Korean defence official told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

Seoul and Washington said the test violated UN Security Council resolutions.

South Korea on Wednesday suspended operations at the Kaesong industrial zone as punishment for the rocket launch and a nuclear test last month. The zone, located just inside North Korea, had operated for more than a decade.

The North called the move "a declaration of war" on Thursday and expelled the South's workers. Kaesong was the last venue for regular interaction between the divided Koreans.

The 280 South Koreans who had remained in Kaesong rushed to leave the industrial park on Thursday evening, completing the pullout at 11:05pm (1405 GMT), the South's Unification Ministry, which handles relations with the North, said.

A few minutes before mid-

night, the South shut off the supply of electricity into Kaesong that powered the factory zone, the ministry said early yesterday. It also cut the water supply.

The United States, Japan and South Korea are seeking tougher sanctions against the North following the nuclear test and rocket launch.

Isolated North Korea regularly dismisses the South as a puppet of the United States and just as regularly accuses both of acts of war against it.

US military officials have said the THAAD system was needed in South Korea, but Seoul had been reluctant to openly dis-

cuss its deployment as it tried to balance its alliance with the United States and ties with China, its biggest trade partner.

South Korea and the United States said that if THAAD was deployed to South Korea, it would be focused only on the North.

China and Russia have expressed concern about the potential deployment of a system that operates a radar that could penetrate deep into their territories.

THAAD, built by Lockheed Martin Corp (LMT.N), is designed to intercept and destroy ballistic missiles inside or just outside the atmosphere during their final phase of flight.—Reuters



A South Korean security guard stands guard on an empty road which leads to the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) at the South's CIQ (Customs, Immigration and Quarantine), just south of the demilitarised zone separating the two Koreas, in Paju, South Korea, on 11 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

Australian Cabinet minister resigns over unofficial China trip



Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull. PHOTO: REUTERS

SYDNEY — Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull accepted the resignation yesterday of a Cabinet minister who admitted he had attended a contract signing between China's Minmetals Corp and an Australian company with which he had financial links.

The move ends a tumultuous week for Turnbull's conservative government after two other ministers quit a day earlier in unrelated circumstances, paving the way for a Cabinet reshuffle months before a general election is due.

Turnbull said a government investigation found that Human

Services Minister Stuart Robert had attended a meeting between unlisted Australian miner Nimrod Resources Ltd and Minmetals [CHMIN.UL] during an unofficial trip to Beijing in 2014.

Turnbull said in a statement Stuart had offered his resignation after becoming aware that he held shares in another company, Metallum Holdings Pty Ltd, which had an unspecified interest in Nimrod Resources.

"Mr Robert recognised that this connection would create the impression that at the time he went to Beijing he had something personally to gain from the Nim-

rod Resources project," he said.

Turnbull's government has been dogged by scandals since he became leader after a party-room coup in September, distracting him from efforts to unite his after the ouster of former leader Tony Abbott. Two other ministers lost their jobs in unrelated scandals in December.

A senior Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade official told a Senate hearing on Thursday the department was not aware of Robert's trip and that Chinese officials at the meeting believed he was there in an official capacity.—Reuters

Thai deputy premiers to visit Russia for trade, military cooperation

BANGKOK — Thailand's deputy premiers are scheduled to visit Russia in a bid to promote bilateral trade and military cooperation later this month.

Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Gen Prawit Wongsuwan and Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak will leave for Moscow and meet with high-level Russian officials, deputy government spokesman Virachon Sukhonthapatipak said yesterday.

Prawit will discuss topics pertaining to Thai-Russian security and military cooperation while Somkid will hold a dialogue on bilateral trade and investment as well as economic cooperation in the areas of agriculture, fishery and energy, among others, according to the spokesman.

He declined to give details or elaborate as to whether Prawit and Somkid might possibly meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin or Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev during their visit to the Russian capital later this month.

During Thursday's meeting with visiting Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev, Thai Premier Prayut Chan-o-cha repeated his invitation for Putin to visit Bangkok some time next year.

Prayut, who will participate in an ASEAN-United States summit in California next week, is scheduled to attend an ASEAN-Russia summit in Moscow in May.—Xinhua

Beijing offers support for Hong Kong after New Year violence

BEIJING — China's central government firmly supports Hong Kong authorities and police in safeguarding public order and punishing those who break the law, the foreign ministry has said in Beijing's first reaction to a riot in Hong Kong earlier this week.

Sixty-four people have been arrested in connection with the violence on Monday, the first day of the Lunar New Year holiday. Protesters hurled bricks at police and set fire to rubbish bins in Mong Kok, a tough, working-class neighbourhood just across the harbour from the heart of the Asian financial centre.

China's foreign ministry said in a statement late on Thursday that Hong Kong was a society governed by the rule of law.

"The Chinese central government believes and firmly supports the Hong Kong government and the police in safeguarding social security, protecting Hong Kong residents and their property, and punishing illegal and criminal activities in accordance with the law," the statement said.

Police fired two warning shots into the air, almost unheard of in the former British colony that reverted to Chinese rule in 1997 and is considered one of Asia's safest cities. More than 130 people were wounded in the clashes.

The violence has compounded a sense of unease since an "Occupy Central" pro-democracy movement in late 2014 that saw thousands of protesters block major roads, including in Mong Kok, to demand Beijing's Communist

leaders allow full democracy in the city.

Thirty-seven people were charged on Thursday with participating in a "riot". Three more appeared in court on Friday, including a 15-year-old.

Outside the courthouse, several supporters of the defendants scuffled with a small group of men who held up banners denouncing Monday's violence.

Hong Kong's Justice Secretary Rimsky Yuen said the riot charge, rarely used in Hong Kong, was levelled because of what he

called the seriousness of the incident. He also said it was a "big test" of the rule of law in the financial hub.

"I think everyone would agree that unlawful violence would not be the appropriate way to express one's political demands and one's political motives," Yuen told reporters.

He said authorities would consider pressing more charges in coming weeks after examining more evidence.

At least one of those charged in connection with the riot be-

longs to a group called Hong Kong Indigenous, one of a cluster of outspoken groups calling for greater Hong Kong autonomy and even independence from China, the group said.

China's Foreign Ministry said the riot was "plotted mainly by a local radical separatist organisation".

"The violence quickly subsided as the Hong Kong police took effective measures in a professional manner with restraint and in accordance with the law," the statement said.—Reuters



Riot police move forward to charge at protesters during a clash at Mongkok District in Hong Kong, China, on 9 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

Odd-even car rationing experiment to be back in India's Delhi

NEW DELHI — After a successful first round, the Delhi government has announced a second round of car rationing experiment, aimed at curbing pollution and traffic congestion.

The second phase of the odd-even car scheme would run from 15 to 30 April, when private cars with even and odd numbered plates will only be allowed to ply

on Delhi's roads on alternate days.

"The scheme will be implemented from 15 to 30 April. VIPs, women and two-wheelers will continue to be kept out of the ambit of the scheme," Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal told the media Thursday.

The chief minister said the government would make a decision later on whether the odd-

even scheme would be repeated every month, stressing, "If Delhi's people support us, it can be implemented."

"The biggest argument in favour of implementing the scheme every month for 15 days is that one individual will not face trouble for more than seven days due to the nature of the scheme," he said.

The first phase of the odd-even trial took place from 1 to 15 January when a third of Delhi's three million private cars went off the roads.

Though the experiment succeeded in easing traffic congestion in a city where some 1,400 new cars hit the roads everyday, there is no clarity on whether it had helped curb pollution.—Xinhua

OPINION

No more clashes of wills

Kyaw Thura

AFTER six decades of a standstill worsened by serious deteriorations in education and the economy, the time has come for the government soon to be formed by the National League for Democracy (NLD) to pursue common goals together with other key players to such an extent that a political will is in place to shape our common future. At this juncture, action plans need to be precisely de-

lineated.

It will, however, be highly undesirable if these decision makers show disrespect to common consent and dismiss the very people who entrust them with the tasks to bring about peace, stability and development across the country. Frankly speaking, no government has a divine right to rule. The responsibility of a democratically elected government is just to run the country according to the will of the people.

Although economic growth and quality education can contribute to political stability and national development, it will be unwise of us to compromise our natural resources on sustainable development. Careful consideration should be given to the fact that any country where poverty, inequality, corruption and bribery are endemic is liable to collapse into violence and conflict at any moment. A glance at the world's

political history is sufficient to explain such instances.

On the whole, it is absolutely imperative that all the stakeholders come to the sense that a compromise agreement can work where an all-inclusive agreement is hard to reach. Thus, there is no time to waste in rounds of negotiations that would turn out to be none but another clash of wills.

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Fight Zika Smart

Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh

THE strongly suspected link between Zika virus and infants being born with unusually small heads and other neurological disorders has been declared by WHO a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. There is an urgent need to coordinate efforts at the global level to investigate and understand the relationship between these conditions better, just as there is a need to take all measures necessary to prevent Zika's spread. The implications for WHO's South-East Asia Region are many: the potential for the virus to spread – and to do so rapidly – is real. In addition, cases that could lead to alarming complications for pregnant women and their newborns may be going unnoticed. In a Region that comprises 26% of the world's population, the stakes are high.

The South-East Asia Region is vulnerable. Its large urban populations, tropical climate and often poor waste management have the potential to facilitate a Zika epidemic. And the Region is already home to the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that spreads the disease. Each monsoon the *Aedes aegypti* transmits dengue and chikungunya throughout South-East Asia resulting in illness and death – an endemic crisis that health authorities have been battling for decades. While Zika is said to have been detected in the Region as early as the 1950s, and sporadic cases have been reported in recent years in Thailand and the Maldives, its prevalence – and immunity against it – remains unknown.

Due to Zika's relatively mild symptoms, which appear

Clusters of birth defects are strongly suspected to be linked to the Zika virus. Managing risk means following smart public health practice.

in just one in every five people infected, disease surveillance has, historically, focused on detecting and treating known killers. Zika's temporal and spatial association with microcephaly and Guillain-Barre syndrome, coupled with its explosive spread across the Americas, changes the equation radically. Though the dangers of Zika for those who are not pregnant, or who are not planning on getting pregnant, are limited, increased circulation heightens the possibility a pregnant woman will become infected. While there is much that we don't know about the disease and its potential link with complications in newborns, until science charts a way out we must be vigilant. Managing the risk demands governments and their citizens follow smart public health practices that we know work.

Scaling-up existing mosquito control programs is essential. Breeding sites must be disrupted; larvae must be smothered; and adult mosquito populations must be eliminated. Doing this will diminish the *Aedes aegypti* population responsible for not only Zika transmission but dengue and chikungunya as well. This will also help control mosquitoes that spread potentially deadly diseases such as malaria, lymphatic filariasis and Japanese encephalitis. With the monsoon due to arrive in June, it is imperative that these measures are taken at the soonest. Governments must also increase surveillance for Zika, microcephaly, Guillain-Barre syndrome

and other neurological disorders. Increased surveillance will enhance the ability of authorities to act in the event of an epidemic, and will advance understanding of the suspected causal relationship between the conditions. Diagnostic tools within the Region – including laboratory testing – must be expanded, while health workers must be sensitized and encouraged to report suspected cases.

We must also take personal action. The best way to stop Zika transmission is for each of us to cover our skin and avoid mosquito bites. Though other possible means of infection have been suggested, transmission via mosquito-bite remains the primary threat. Key personal protective measures to take include wearing clothes that cover the arms and ankles, wearing insect repellent and sleeping under a mosquito net. Around the house, close doors, use window screens and ensure vessels for standing water – such as empty tires, flower pots and buckets – are emptied daily so that mosquitoes cannot breed in them. And be vigilant: *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes are aggressive day-biters, though they can also strike at night, meaning round-the-clock care is needed.

As part of these efforts, effective and responsible communication is vital. Governments must engage with and mobilize communities to support mosquito control programs, and must provide vulnerable groups real-time information on evolving risks. They must also ensure that responsible information is



provided to their populations regarding travel, and must desist from providing advice that could spread unnecessary alarm. Misinformation diminishes trust and instead sows fear. This can debilitate an emergency response. Communities, meanwhile, must engage openly with health authorities and seek clarification where needed. Facts must inform action, and are the greatest tool we have to secure our collective health.

In response to the strongly suspected link between Zika, microcephaly and other neurological disorders in newborns, WHO has mobilized its full organizational capacity and is supporting governments and

their citizens to take action. This includes mobilizing human and material resources, enhancing surveillance and laboratory capacity, and streamlining information flows as mandated by International Health Regulations. These practical measures are being complemented by WHO's spearheading of concentrated research efforts to determine the precise relationship, if any, between the Zika virus, microcephaly and other neurological disorders.

Until the science is in, prudence demands immediate and unswerving action. In the South-East Asia Region, we cannot afford to be complacent.

**Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director,
World Health Organization South-East Asia Region**

Moeyungyi Wildlife Sanctuary saw low tourist numbers last year



Moeyungyi Wildlife Sanctuary in Waw Township. PHOTO: YAMANYA

SITUATED about 70 miles north of Yangon by the Yangon-Man-dalay highway in Waw Township, Bago Region, the Moeyungyi Wildlife Sanctuary and Wetlands Resort received a low number of international tourists last year compared with 2014.

"It is a good place for bird watching," an observer said. "Myanmar has rich wildlife resources which include over 1,000 species of birds, 130 of which resided in the Moeyungyi Wetland."

"An increasing number of local people visited the wildlife sanctuary at the beginning of this year, more than foreign tourists," a spokesperson of a domestic tour company said. "Among local visitors to the sanctuary are

students, company staff and families."

Since 1988 the government has designated the 25,600-acre wide Moeyungyi Wetland a wildlife sanctuary, on which about 17 villages rely on for their daily survival.

Plans are underway to perform a survey on migratory birds coming to the wetlands in winter. The survey programme will be carried out by the ministry in cooperation with bird observers and experts to collect exactly the numbers and species migrating to the wetland each year.

Promoting the tourism industry is one of the government's priorities to reduce poverty by implementing community-based tourism service businesses across

the country.

Thanks to the sector-wide reforms of the current government, the country's tourism industry has developed over the last few years.

The country received one million visitors in 2012, over two million in 2013, over 3 million in 2014 and around 4.5 million in 2015. Among visitors last year the majority entered the country via border gates.

Although the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism expected that the number of visitors would reach up to 5 million during 2015 the country still received over 4 million tourists despite natural disasters breaking out during the monsoon season.—*Naing Lin Kyi*

Local engineers in Sagaing successfully produce natural fertiliser, methane gas through waste vegetables

A LOCAL chemical engineering industry in Butalin Township, Monywa, Sagaing Region can now successfully produce natural fertiliser and methane

gas by harnessing waste vegetables.

U Thant Zin Tun, founder of the Chindwin Chemical Engineering said "We can use meth-

ane gas as fuel for cooking and gasoline-powered engines."

"Waste vegetables are put into a vacuum catalyst funnel to produce gas fertiliser and liquid fertilisers. Then we get methane by excluding CO_2 and H_2O ," he added.

Waste vegetables normally contain hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon and oxygen. It will produce methane, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulphate after the reaction process is completed.

"To protect the environment and produce low-cost natural fertiliser we only produce methane gas after excluding carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulphate," U Thant Zin Tun said.

"The waste water remaining in the reaction flask will also be used as a toxin-free natural fertiliser," he added.—*Myo Win Tun (Monywa)*



Chindwin chemical engineering seen at an exhibition. PHOTO: MYO WIN TUN (MONYWA)

Aerial photography becomes popular in Myanmar

THE use of drones for aerial photography has grown increasingly popular in the photography industry in Myanmar's central dry zone, locals say.

Drones are widely used to take aerial shots of induction ceremonies of novice. Photographers normally photograph these events from at least 20 feet above the ground.

The region has seen an increase the number of entrepreneurs who have bought drones

for documentary photo services. The current selling price for a standard drone is between K700,000 (\$567) and K1 million (\$810), though some sell for as much as K2.5 million (US\$2,025). Drone photography services can be hired for between K100,000 (\$81) and K150,000 (\$121).

Authorities said they are now planning to regulate the use of drones with licence requirements.—*Htay Myint Maung*



Drones are now being used for aerial photography.

PHOTO: HTAY MYINT MAUNG

Leiktho Tsp to receive access to electricity

RESIDENTS of Leiktho Township in Hpa-an District, Kayin State, will soon get access to electricity after the installation of 33/11 KV 5MVA power sub-station, a project engineer said.

The Electricity Distribution Department has put more effort into building the power sub-station with funds of the Kayin State government.

"We recently completed the construction of the control building, and all works are expected to be finished in a few months," said Township Electric Engineer U Chit Ko Ko.

"We will distribute power not only to Leiktho Township but also to areas located within a two-mile radius of the township. We plan to supply electricity to nearby villages through solar systems this year," he said.

Since 1969, residents of the township have received low-voltage electricity through a 100KVA generator.

With funds from the regional government, the township electricity department recently replaced wooden lamp posts with the concrete ones across the township.—*Leiktho (IPRD)*

Clinton, Sanders clash over Obama as they vie for minority votes



Hillary Clinton speaks as Bernie Sanders listens. PHOTO: REUTERS

MILWAUKEE — Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders clashed sharply in a debate on Thursday over their support for President Barack Obama, with Sanders accusing Clinton of “a low blow” after she compared him to Republicans.

As the Democratic race moves to states with large minority populations, both candidates openly courted black and Hispanic votes during a debate that was far more restrained and cordial than last week’s contentious debate in New Hampshire.

In the sharpest exchange of the night, Clinton attacked Sanders for being too critical of Obama, who is extremely popular with the black voters who will play a big role in the outcome in South Carolina and other upcoming nominating contests.

“The kind of criticism that we’ve heard from Senator Sanders about our president, I expect from Republicans, I do not expect

from someone running for the Democratic nomination to succeed President Obama,” said Clinton, who served as secretary of state during Obama’s first term.

“Madam Secretary, that is a low blow,” said Sanders, a US senator from Vermont. Sanders said he had been an Obama ally in the Senate even if he did not always agree with him.

“Do senators have the right to disagree with the president?” Sanders said. Clinton, who has eagerly embraced Obama’s legacy, said Sanders had called Obama weak and a disappointment, and “that goes further than saying we have our disagreements.”

With Clinton looking to rebound after her crushing 22-point loss to Sanders in the New Hampshire primary on Tuesday, the two also differed over healthcare and Wall Street.

Even so, the restrained exchange on Thursday was unlikely to change the trajectory of a race that has intensified dramatically

over two weeks.

Clinton accused Sanders of misleading Americans on his healthcare. She said his proposal for a single-payer, Medicare-for-all healthcare plan would mean dismantling the programme known as Obamacare and triggering another intense political struggle.

“Based on every analysis I can find by people who are sympathetic to the goal, the numbers don’t add up,” Clinton told Sanders. “That’s a promise that cannot be kept.” Sanders said he was simply moving to provide what most industrialised countries have — healthcare coverage for all.

“We’re not going to dismantle anything,” Sanders said. “In my view healthcare is a right of all people, not a privilege, and I will fight for that.”

Sanders also repeated his accusation that Clinton is too beholden to the Wall Street interests she once represented as a US senator from New York, noting her Super PAC received \$15 million in donations from Wall Street.

“Let’s not insult the intelligence of the American people,” he said. “Why in God’s name does Wall Street make huge campaign contributions? I guess just for the fun of it, they want to throw money around.”

Clinton said the donations did not mean she was in Wall Street’s pocket, and noted that President Barack Obama had taken donations from Wall Street during his campaigns. “When it mattered, he stood up and took on Wall Street,” she said.—Reuters

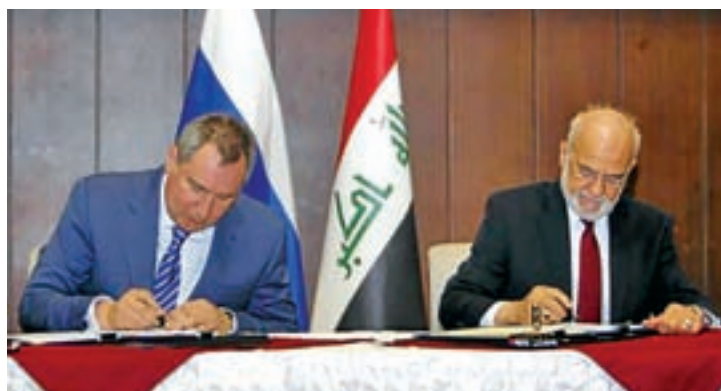
Russia boosts ties with Iraq in challenge to US influence

BAGHDAD — Russia is ready to sell civil airliners to Iraq and keep providing it with military aid to fight Islamic State, Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said on Thursday, accompanied on a trip to Baghdad by the biggest Russian delegation in years.

The mission by nearly 100 government and business officials was part of a drive by Moscow to strengthen commercial and security ties with Iraq, potentially eroding US influence in one of the world’s most critical regions.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari said discussions had revolved around providing military assistance to defeat Islamic State militants, also known as Daesh, who seized a third of Iraq in 2014 and want to redraw the map of the Middle East.

“We need international support from multiple sources, be it from within the international coalition or outside of it,” he said, referring to the US-led coalition which has launched thousands of airstrikes and provided training



Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari (R) and Russia’s Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin (L) sign documents in Baghdad, Iraq, on 11 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

and advice to Iraq’s military.

“We need support, training and intelligence-sharing,” he told reporters. “Intelligence plays an important role in the war on Daesh, and we’ve been coordinating for a while now with the Russian side to place this information in the hands of Iraqis.”

Russia has invested millions of dollars in Iraq’s energy sector and last year opened a command centre in Baghdad under an intel-

ligence-sharing agreement with Iraq, Iran and Syria aimed at combating Islamic State.

Rogozin said he had met with his country’s envoy to the command centre, thought to be a one-star general. He said through a translator that Moscow would continue providing Iraq with military equipment which had helped “raise the combat readiness of the Iraqi armed forces”, but provided few details.—Reuters

UN Secretary-General’s message on World Radio Day

13 February 2016

In times of crisis and emergency, radio can be a lifeline.

For people in shattered societies, or caught in catastrophe, or desperately seeking news, radio brings lifesaving information.

Radio can help in emergency response operations — and it can assist with rebuilding.

Through community radio, local people can raise their voices and be heard.

This year, as we start carrying out the Sustainable Development Goals, let us resolve to use radio for human progress.

In the lead-up to the World Humanitarian Summit this May, let us find ways for radio to do even more to help people in emergencies.

On this World Radio Day, let us resolve to prove that radio saves lives. — UNIC/Yangon

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pakistan arrests 97 al-Qaeda and other militants; foils planned jailbreak

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan has arrested 97 al-Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi militants, including three commanders, in the southern port city of Karachi, and foiled a planned attack that would have broken Daniel Pearl’s killer out of jail, the military said.

The LeJ’s Naeem Bokhari and Sabir Khan, as well as Farooq Bhatti, deputy chief of al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), were captured by Pakistani forces in recent raids, Lieutenant General Asim Bajwa told a press conference yesterday.

The 97 men had been involved in multiple major attacks on Pakistani air bases, a major airport and police installations, Bajwa said.

Several of those arrested, including Bokhari, were in the advanced stages of planning a jailbreak attempt on the Hyderabad Central Jail, Bajwa said.

Khalid Omar Sheikh, who kidnapped and killed the *Wall Street Journal*’s Daniel Pearl in 2002, is being held at that jail and was to be released during the raid, he said.—Reuters

No plans at this time for joint US-India navy patrols — State Department

WASHINGTON — There are currently no plans for joint naval patrols by the United States and India, the US State Department said on Thursday.

Reuters reported on Wednesday that the United States and India had held talks about conducting joint naval patrols, quoting a US defence official saying they could include the disputed South China Sea, a move that would likely anger China, which claims most of the waterway.

“The United States and India do have a shared vision of peace, stability and prosperity in Asia,” State Department spokesman Mark Toner told a daily briefing.

“At this time, there are no plans for any joint naval patrols,” he added. The two countries have increased military ties in recent years, holding naval exercises in the Indian Ocean along with Japan’s navy.

But the Indian navy has never carried out joint patrols with another country.—Reuters

Blic: Njemanze will accept to provide evidence to Serbia

BELGRADE — Nigerian doctor Philip Njemanze will accept to provide evidence to Serbia and testify about the human organ trafficking that involves former leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) Hasim Taci, the *Blic* daily reported on Friday.

I stick to every word that I said about Taci and Okorochoa (a billionaire and the governor of Imo State in Nigeria). I am ready to share the information and evidence concerning the human organ trafficking with any official institution, including the Serbian prosecution, he told the daily.

The Serbian War Crime Prosecutor’s Office filed a request to the relevant Nigerian authorities for conducting an interview with Njemanze, who stated that Taci, together with Rochas Okorochoa, was involved in the illegal trade in human organs of the abducted Serbs in Kosovo-Metohija. The prosecution has so far heard 160 witnesses.—Tanjug

Major powers agree to plan for 'cessation of hostilities' in Syria

MUNICH — Major powers agreed yesterday to a cessation of hostilities in Syria set to begin in a week and to provide rapid humanitarian access to besieged Syrian towns, but failed to secure a complete ceasefire or an end to Russian bombing.

Following a marathon meeting in Munich aimed at resurrecting peace talks that collapsed last week, the powers, including the United States, Russia and more than a dozen other nations, reaffirmed their commitment to a political transition when conditions on the ground improved.

At a news conference, US Secretary of State John Kerry acknowledged the Munich meeting produced commitments on paper only.

"What we need to see in the next few days are actions on the ground, in the field," he said, adding that "without a political transition, it is not possible to achieve peace."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told the news conference that Russia would not stop air attacks in Syria, saying the cessation of hostilities did not apply to Islamic State and al Nusrah, which is affiliated with al Qaeda. Islamic State militants control large parts of Syria and Iraq.

"Our airspace forces will continue working against these organisations," he said.

The United States and European allies say few Russian strikes have targeted those groups, with the vast majority



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov (L) and US Foreign Secretary John Kerry (2L) attend the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) meeting in Munich, Germany, on 11 February 2016, together with members of the Syrian opposition and other officials. PHOTO: REUTERS

hitting Western-backed opposition groups seeking to topple the government of President Bashar al-Assad government.

Lavrov said peace talks should resume in Geneva as soon as possible and that all Syrian opposition groups should participate. He added that halting hostilities would be a difficult task.

But British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond said ending fighting could only succeed if Russia stopped air strikes supporting Syrian government forces' advance against the opposition.

Diplomats cautioned that Russia had until now not demonstrated any interest in seeing Assad replaced and was pushing for a military victory.

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev on Thursday raised the spectre of an interminable conflict or even a world war if powers failed to negotiate an end to five years of fighting in

Syria, which has killed 250,000 people, caused a refugee crisis and empowered Islamic State militants.

Syria's main opposition group welcomed the plan by the world powers on Friday.

It cautioned, however, that the agreement must prove to be effective before it joins political talks with government representatives in Geneva.

Russia's intervention on the battlefield on behalf of Assad since last October has swung the momentum in the fight between the government and opposition forces. The latest advance over the past two weeks has seen government forces and allies rout rebels and come close to encircling Aleppo, a divided city half held by rebels for years.

The first peace talks in two years between belligerents in Syria fell apart last week before they began in the face of the advance by Assad's forces.

A senior French diplomat

said: "The Russians said they will continue bombing the terrorists. They are taking a political risk because they are accepting a negotiation in which they are committing to a cessation of hostilities. If in a week there is no change because of their bombing, then they will bear the responsibility."

Washington is leading its own air campaign against Islamic State militants in eastern Syria and northern Iraq, but has resisted calls to intervene in the main battlefields of Syria's civil war in the west of the country, where the government is mostly fighting against other insurgent groups.

The communique of the plan reached in Munich said the powers had established a ceasefire task force, under the auspices of the United Nations, co-chaired by Russia and the United States, and including members having government and opposition groups.

The communique added that sustained humanitarian aid would begin this week to various besieged areas of Syria.

"Humanitarian access to these most urgent areas will be a first step toward full, sustained, and unimpeded access throughout the country," the joint communique added.

The Assad government for years has repeatedly promised humanitarian access but has rarely lived up to its promises. Western-backed rebels have also been accused of that.—Reuters

Former Guantanamo inmate bailed in Morocco

RABAT — A Moroccan man who spent 13 years in Guantanamo Bay and then almost five months in detention after he was sent home, was released on bail on Thursday, his lawyer said.

US authorities freed Younes Abdurrahman Chekkouri from their naval base in Cuba without charge in September. But he was detained as soon as he landed back in Morocco, on charges, his family and lawyer said, of conspiring against national security.

"The judge accepted our request of granting him freedom until the end of the investigation," lawyer Khalil Al-Idrissi said.

Moroccan authorities have confirmed his detention but not commented on the charges or other details of the case.

A leaked 2008 US Defence Department document posted online by the anti-censorship group WikiLeaks said Chekkouri was captured by Pakistani forces in December 2001, transferred to US custody in January 2002 and sent to the Guantanamo facility in May 2002.—Reuters

US blacklists prominent Islamic State preacher, two others

WASHINGTON — The United States blacklisted three people on Thursday for working for Islamic State, including the militant group's most prominent ideologue and a senior oil official.

Turki al-Bin'ali was sanctioned for helping Islamic State recruit foreign fighters, the US Treasury said in a statement. Bin'ali, 31, was an early supporter of Islamic State and authored a frequently cited biography of the group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Experts said the preacher's writings helped lay the religious legal groundwork for Islamic State to declare a "caliphate," which it did in 2014 in parts of Syria and Iraq it controls.

Another man sanctioned on Thursday was Faysal Ahmad Ali al-Zahrani, from Saudi Arabia, who the Treasury Department said is responsible for Islamic State's oil and gas activities in areas of northeastern Syria. Treasury said Zahrani for a time answered directly and transferred funds to top Islamic State financial official Abu Sayyaf, who was killed in a US Special Operations Forces raid last May. A US Treasury official said this week that US-led coalition air strikes targeting Islamic State's oil and cash storage sites, have helped force the group to cut its fighters' pay by up to 50 percent.

Husayn Juaythini, born in a refugee camp in Gaza, was also sanctioned and was trying to establish a foothold for Islamic State in Gaza, the Treasury said.—Reuters

Saudi warns UN, aid workers to leave rebel-held areas in Yemen

UNITED NATIONS — Saudi Arabia, which is leading air strikes against rebels in neighbouring Yemen, has warned the United Nations and international aid groups to protect staff by removing them from areas held by Yemen's Houthi rebels, according to a letter that was seen by Reuters on Thursday.

The short note sent by the Saudi Embassy in London yes-

terday said the intention was to "protect the international organisations and their employees," presumably from coalition air strikes.

The Saudi ambassador to the United Nations in New York, Abdallah Al-Mouallimi, told Reuters that Riyadh sent the letter because, "We're just concerned for the safety of the UN staff and their humanitarian agencies."

"We want them to go away from areas that are obvious targets," he said. Saudi Arabia leads a coalition of nine Arab countries that began a military campaign in March to prevent Iran-allied Houthi rebels from taking complete control of Yemen.

UN aid chief Stephen O'Brien acknowledged receipt of the note in a Sunday letter seen by Reuters and said the humanitarian community would continue to deliver aid across Yemen impartially on the basis of need.

He reminded Saudi Arabia of obligations under international humanitarian law to facilitate access for aid.

The Saudi mission to the United Nations responded on Monday that Riyadh would "do its utmost to continue to facilitate and support" humanitarian aid work in Yemen, while also repeating its request for UN and international aid workers to leave areas close to Houthi bases for military operations.

"The coalition's request is consistent with its obligations under international humani-

tarian law and, in no way, can be misinterpreted to indicate any hindrance to humanitarian access and the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Yemen," it said.

The UN Security Council is due to discuss the humanitarian situation in Yemen on Tuesday at the request of Russia, diplomats said.

The Houthis and their allies, forces loyal to former Yemen President Ali Abdullah Saleh, accuse the coalition of launching a war of aggression.

Nearly 6,000 people have been killed since the coalition entered the conflict last March, almost half of them civilians.

UN sanctions monitors said in a report last month that the Saudi-led coalition has targeted civilians with air strikes and some of the attacks could be a crimes against humanity.

The panel of experts documented 119 coalition sorties "relating to violations of international humanitarian law" and said that "many attacks involved multiple air strikes on multiple civilian objects."—Reuters



A Houthi militant sits amidst debris from the Yemeni Football Association building, which was damaged in a Saudi-led air strike, in Sanaa, in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro talks during the opening ceremony of a plant of PVC tubes in the state of Carabobo, in this handout picture provided by Miraflores Palace, on 11 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

Venezuela top court grants Maduro economic emergency powers, opposition cries foul

CARACAS — Venezuela's Supreme Court approved President Nicolas Maduro's "economic emergency" decree on Thursday, setting up a showdown after the Venezuelan Congress rejected the measure last month.

Maduro's decree includes wider executive powers to control the budget, companies and the currency

amid a severe economic crisis in the OPEC nation.

The new opposition-led National Assembly shot the measure down in late January, saying it offered no real solutions to the worsening recession, shortages, and inflation. However, in a decision published on its website, Venezuela's top court granted leftist Maduro those

executive powers, foreshadowing an institutional showdown. "Now the economic emergency decree has been activated," Maduro rejoiced on state television. "So in the next few days I will activate a series of measures that I had been working on. This really helps our work."

Venezuela's opposition accused what it described

as a subservient judiciary of undermining democracy.

"The Supreme Court cannot usurp the powers of the legislature," Juan Guaido, an opposition lawmaker from Vargas, said on Twitter. The opposition has vowed to find a legal way to remove Maduro, by resignation or referendum, by mid-2016.—Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV PANJA BHUM VOY NO (027N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PANJA BHUM VOY NO (027N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 13.2.2016 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 Claim's 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.

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S INTERASIA LINES**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV MCC MERGUI VOY NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MCC MERGUI VOY NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 13.2.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P 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 Claim's 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.

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT
(S'PORE) PTE LTD**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV PERLA VOY NO (006W)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PERLA VOY NO (006W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 13.2.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P 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 Claim's 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.

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S ORIENT OVERSEA
CONTAINER LINES**

Phone No: 2301185

Obama, Netanyahu may agree defence deal in Washington next month: envoy says

JERUSALEM — US President Barack Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu might meet in Washington next month and complete a deal on future defence aid to Israel that has been dogged by disagreement, the US ambassador to Israel said on Thursday. Current US defence aid to Israel, worth about \$3 billion (£2 billion) annually, expire in 2018. Disputes over the value of a so-called Memorandum of Understanding setting out grants over the ensuing decade prompted Israel to signal this week it might wait for the next US president in hope of better terms.

"We are now trying to consolidate a deal on the

coming 10 years — what military aid we will give — a very complicated effort, which takes into account both Israel's security needs and the budgetary limitations of the United States," US Ambassador Dan Shapiro told Israel's Channel 2 television.

"But I am optimistic that we will consolidate this agreement," he said, adding that he saw "a chance" of it being clinched in an Obama-Netanyahu meeting in Washington next month, though he noted the schedules of the leaders have yet to be set. Netanyahu is widely expected to attend the 20-22 March policy conference of the pro-Israel lobby AIPAC in Washington. Israeli

Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon may travel there in early March to advance the aid negotiations, Channel 2 said. One Israeli official said Netanyahu hopes for a new MOU worth \$4 billion annually, as well as hundreds of millions of dollars in additional congressional funding for specific defence projects. A US congressional source said the MOU discussions had focussed on a US offer of about \$3.7 billion annually. Netanyahu, who has a history of testy relations with Obama, might be hoping for more sympathetic treatment from the next administration, whether Democratic or Republican. But Shapiro suggested deferring the agreement may put logistical

strains on Israel's military, given the current MOU's imminent expiration.

"I think we have an excellent opportunity to set out the costs and amounts of the aid for the next 10 years and this will give the IDF (Israel Defence Forces) time to do the planning and decide what systems they will buy with the aid," he said.

The Israelis say they need a big increase in US defence aid to offset the windfall their arch-enemy, Iran, expects after international sanctions are lifted. That is happening in exchange for Iran's imposing limits on its nuclear programme as part of a July accord that Netanyahu opposed as inadequate.—Reuters

Drug cartel battle kills 49 in northeastern Mexican prison

MONTERREY, (Mexico) — A battle between the feared Zetas drug cartel and rivals at a prison left 49 people dead in the northeastern Mexican city of Monterrey, authorities said on Thursday, days ahead of a planned visit by Pope Francis to another jail in Mexico's far north.

The incident was one of the worst in a series of deadly riots in recent years to rock the country's overpopulated prisons, some of which are largely controlled by cartels.

Fighting broke out before midnight in two areas of the Topo Chico prison between supporters of a gang leader known as "Zeta 27" and another group, with prisoners using bottles and blades, Nuevo Leon state Governor Jaime Rodriguez said. "Topo Chico is a ... very old prison. A prison with very difficult security conditions," said Rodriguez, who described the state's prison system as a "time bomb" that needed to be defused. Rodriguez himself



Soldiers walk near the Topo Chico prison in Monterrey, Mexico, on 11 February.

PHOTO: REUTERS

survived two assassination attempts while opposing drug cartels as mayor of a suburb of Monterrey, Mexico's third most populous metropolitan area and home to many of the country's largest corporations.

A 2014 human rights report faulted Topo Chico for not preventing violent incidents. The prison has

long housed members of the Zetas, known for extreme violence. One Zetas leader was stabbed to death there in September. Authorities revised down their initial death toll from 52, out of a total of about 3,500 prisoners.

One victim died from gunfire, while the rest were killed from a combination of knives and other objects

like bottles and chairs. Flames licked the night sky after inmates set light to food storage areas. Milenio TV reported that inmates' relatives who had been within the prison's premises for conjugal visits had seen inmates with burns. Twelve people were injured, five seriously, the state government said.—Reuters

New York police have covertly tracked cell phones, group says

NEW YORK — New York City’s police have made extensive use of covert devices to track cell phones without obtaining warrants since 2008, a civil liberties group said on Thursday, revealing how frequently law enforcement in the largest US city has employed the technology.

The New York Civil Liberties Union released files that showed the New York Police Department used “cell site simulators” to track nearby cell phones more than a 1,000 times over the past eight years.

The American Civil Liberties Union has identified 60 local, state and federal agencies that have adopted the devices in recent years, but the group has said there are likely far more.

The extent of the devices has largely been shrouded in secrecy, as departments and private manufacturers such as Harris Corp have refused to disclose information about their use.

The documents released on Thursday were obtained by the NYCLU through a Freedom of Information Law request.

The NYPD does not have a written policy on using the surveillance devices and does not obtain warrants when doing so, according to the NYCLU.

Instead, the department seeks “pen register” orders, which have been used for decades to gather information on specific phone numbers. The orders are issued by judges but require a lower standard than the probable cause needed for warrants.

The NYPD’s practice is less stringent than the one adopted last year by the US Department of Justice, which calls for warrants except in emergency situations.

“We still have concerns that this military equipment is being used in a civilian context,” said Mariko Hirose, an NYCLU attorney. “At the very least, they should be using warrants and with a strict privacy policy that is written.”

The devices mimic cell towers and intercept signals from nearby phones to gather information. That data can include locations of calls, numbers that are called or texted and even the content of communications, the NYCLU said.

The simulators can also



A New York City Police Department (NYPD) check point is seen on Broadway in lower Manhattan in New York, on 20 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

sweep up information from nearby “bystander” phones.

J. Peter Donald, a NYPD spokesman, said the department “ensures we have established probable cause, consults with a district attorney, and applies for a court order” before using the devices. He added that the NYPD does not capture the content of communications or any data from bystander cell phones.

“Perhaps the NYCLU should fact check their press release before issuing it,” he said.

US Representative Jason Chaffetz of Utah, a Republican, has introduced a bill to require warrants for the use of cell site simulators.—Reuters

Central Europeans need to do more to help refugees: UN agency

PRAGUE — The United Nations agency for refugees called on central European countries to overcome public opposition and give more help to refugees from war-torn regions.

The UNHCR made its plea on Thursday, before a summit of the Visegrad group — Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia — opens in Prague on Monday. The group opposes European Union efforts to distribute asylum seekers across the EU and instead wants to emphasise securing the EU’s external borders.

“It is time for the leadership in Central Europe to set a strong example and commit to helping families fleeing war and human rights violations, irrespective of their nationality or religion,” the UNHCR’s regional representative for Central Europe, Montserrat Feixas Vih, said in a statement.

“Leaders in the region need to offer safety to people fleeing persecution. They cannot be bystanders during this unprecedented humanitarian situation.”

Hungary saw significant numbers of refugees pass through its territory en route to Austria, Germany and Sweden in the last year, until it built a fence on its southern borders with Serbia and Croatia.

Other Visegrad countries have only seen a trickle of migrants coming through, but they have also taken a strict stance against accepting any significant numbers of migrants.

Leaders of the Visegrad group, Bulgaria and Macedonia will discuss responses to the wave of migrants at the Monday meeting, held before an EU summit on 18-19 February.

A senior Hungarian official said on Thursday Hungary expected renewed pressure on its border when refugee numbers pick up again, which is expected in the spring.

Prime Minister Viktor Orban’s chief of staff, Janos Lazar, also said Hungary was making preparations to erect a fence on its border with Romania if needed to keep out migrants.—Reuters

G-20 to mull policy coordination to address volatile market: Aso

TOKYO — The Group of 20 developed and emerging economies will consider facilitating policy cooperation to cope with recent volatility in the financial markets, Japanese Finance Minister Taro Aso said yesterday.

“We would like to study policy cooperation at the G-20 meeting later this month in Shanghai, based on the recent situation in the financial markets,” Aso told reporters.

His remarks came after the US dollar briefly slipped to a roughly 15-month low of 110.99 yen on Thursday in London after Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen signaled in congressional testimony a slowing in the pace of credit tightening.

Aso said there have been wild swings in the currency market, and rapid market movements are undesirable as agreed by the Group of Seven industrialized nations, as well as the G-20.

The finance minister declined to comment over speculation about currency intervention by Japan.

“We will monitor the developments in the currency market carefully and will respond appropriately when necessary,” Aso added.

He said there are moves to avoid risks globally but Japan’s economic fundamentals are solid, arguing market sentiment appears to be “too pessimistic.”

Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda echoed his view, telling parliament that the sharp appreciation in the yen seems to be an “excessive risk-averse move, from the perspective of the economic fundamentals.”

The BOJ chief explained the central bank has decided to introduce a negative interest rate to respond to such risks as uncertainty in the Chinese economy.

Yields of government bonds fell sharply after the BOJ’s decision late last month.

“The intended effects of the policy have taken place,” Kuroda told a House of Representative committee. “The effects will spread to the real economy and prices.”

Asked about public concern about the turbulence in the government bond and stock markets, Kuroda said the BOJ’s latest decision is unlikely to have an adverse impact on people’s lives, adding he intends to offer sufficient explanation over its negative interest rate policy.—Kyodo News

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF ENERGY
MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE
(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)
(2 / 2016)

Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in United States Dollars and Myanmar Kyats.

Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Remark
(1)	IFB-074(15-16)	600 Series Well Head Equipment & Accessories (2) Sets	US\$
(2)	IFB-075(15-16)	900 Series Well Head Equipment & Accessories (1) Set	US\$
(3)	IFB-076(15-16)	1500 Series Well Head Equipment & Accessories (4) Sets	US\$
(4)	IFB-077(15-16)	Mud Agitator Unit with (15KW) Motor (4) Sets	US\$
(5)	IFB-078(15-16)	Spares for GM 8V-71 Engine Ex Cementing Unit (21) Items	US\$
(6)	IFB-079(15-16)	Assorted Sizes of Butterfly Valves(12)Items	US\$
(7)	IFB-080(15-16)	Spares for Drawwork and Catwork(28)Items	US\$
(8)	IFB-081(15-16)	Adaptors, Flanges and Gate Valves(24)Items	US\$
(9)	IFB-082(15-16)	Rig Floor Handling Accessories (41) Items	US\$
(10)	IFB-083(15-16)	Fire Fighting Truck (5000 L) (1) Unit	US\$
(11)	IFB-084(15-16)	Low Bed Trailer (50 Ton) (2) Nos	US\$
(12)	DMP/L-013(15-16)	Generator (18KVA) with Diesel Engine (1) Set	KS
(13)	DMP/L-014(15-16)	95mm ² Cable, 1 Core, Aerial Bundle Cable, AL / XLPE (3500) Meters	KS
(14)	DMP/L-015(15-16)	10 HP Induction Motor Complete with Motor Starter (10) Sets	KS

Tender Closing Date & Time - 9-3-2016, 16:30 Hr
Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 10th February, 2016 at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise
Ph. +95 67-411097/411206



Lady Gaga poses as she arrives for the Saint Laurent fall collection fashion show at the Hollywood Palladium in Los Angeles, California on 10 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

Hollywood stars stud Saint Laurent's awards-season LA show

LOS ANGELES — French design house Saint Laurent drew A-list celebrities to its catwalk fixture in Los Angeles on Wednesday, presenting its autumn 2016 creations just as the city hosts major film and music award ceremonies.

Lady Gaga, Justin Bieber and Hollywood stars Sylvester Stallone and Jane Fonda sat in the front row as creative director Hedi Slimane unveiled Saint Laurent's fall 2016 menswear and part of its womenswear in a show the luxury label called "a tribute to the strong music scene

in Los Angeles".

Stella McCartney, who like Saint Laurent unveils her main collections in Paris, presented her pre-fall line last month in Los Angeles, where the fashion spotlight centres on who is wearing what on the red carpets rolled out during awards season.

Other brands to showcase collections there last year included Tom Ford and Burberry.

Wednesday's Saint Laurent show, which also drew big music names such as Sam Smith and Lenny Kravitz, comes just a few days before this year's Grammy

Awards. With the Golden Globe Awards just gone, the season ends with the Oscars on 28 February.

In a nod to the 1970s and 1980s, the men strutted down the catwalk in slim suits, fringed or studded leather jackets — some waist-length, fedora hats, caps and gold shoes.

The women showed off heavily embroidered designs — sequined or crystal encrusted — as well as velvet or metallic-like fabrics. From tiger-print coats to leopard-patterned tops and dresses, animal prints featured

heavily on the clothes, some of which also had furry collars and cuffs.

For women, trousers were wide-legged and calf-length, culotte-like, while dresses were synched at the waist with big belts.

While heavy in metallics, Slimane's colour palette also included royal red, black, dabs of white and moss green.

Saint Laurent has said the second part of its fall 2016 womenswear will be presented at Paris Fashion Week next month. — *Reuters*

Harrison Ford's broken leg on Star Wars set lands firm in court

LONDON — A production company that was involved in making "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" will face criminal charges over an incident during filming in which Harrison Ford broke his leg, Britain's Health and Safety Executive said on Thursday.

The actor was injured when he was struck by a heavy hydraulic metal door on the set of the Millennium Falcon, his character Han Solo's famous spaceship, on 12 June 2014 at Pinewood Studios, northwest of London.

"By law, employers must take reasonable steps to protect workers. This is as true on a film set as a factory floor," the state agency, which enforces health and safety regulations, said in a statement.

"We have investigated thoroughly and believe that we have sufficient evidence to bring the case to court."

The firm, Foodles Productions (UK) Ltd, could not immediately be reached for comment. The agency said that under British law it was responsible for managing the risks created during filming. Ford, who was 71 at the time, was airlifted to a hospital in Oxford after the incident and later underwent surgery on his left leg. — *Reuters*

Kanye West's new album and fashion show draw 20 million viewers

LOS ANGELES — More than 20 million viewers watched rapper and fashion designer Kanye West put his own twist on a New York Fashion Week runway show on Thursday as he debuted a new album and clothing collection at famed music venue Madison Square Garden.

West, his reality star wife Kim Kardashian and her family, including former NBA basketball player Lamar Odom, entered the Manhattan venue to cheers from the audience.

It is the first time Odom, the estranged husband of Khloe Kardashian, has been seen in public since he fell into a coma after using cocaine at a brothel last October and was hospitalised.

The show was streamed for free online via subscription music streaming service Tidal, garnering around 20 million viewers according to the platform. Tidal, which touts hi-fidelity streaming, is co-owned by a group of music's top artists including West, Jay Z, Rihanna and Beyonce.

As West played new tracks for his upcoming "The Life of Pablo" album, dozens of models were unveiled standing on raised platforms



Kanye West dances during his Yeezy Season 3 Collection presentation and listening party for the 'The Life of Pablo' album during New York Fashion Week on 11 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

in the centre of the arena, wearing the new Yeezy Season 3 that West designed for sports brand Adidas.

The collection, launched on the first day of the city's fashion week, featured West's penchant for neutral tones but included bright pops of pink, red and orange across the collection of leotards, tops, leggings and parkas worn by a diverse group of models.

West also announced an upcoming video game called "Only Once," which he said was about his late mother Donda West's journey

to the gates of heaven.

The show quickly became a top social media trend, as fans tweeted about the collection and the music.

One particular explicit lyric regarding Taylor Swift on new track "Famous" garnered a strong response from fans as West rapped that he had made the pop star famous, referring to the their infamous 2009 MTV Video Music Awards incident where West interrupted Swift's acceptance speech on stage. — *Reuters*

Meryl Streep sparks uproar over 'We're all Africans' remarks

BERLIN/NEW YORK — Meryl Streep, the most admired actress of her generation, fueled Hollywood's diversity controversy on Thursday when she said that all of humanity originated in Africa.

The three-time Oscar winner, who is in Berlin heading up her first international film jury, made the comment at a news conference when she was asked if she was familiar with world cinema, particularly films from Africa and the Middle East.

She said she had recently seen the Jordanian film "Theeb," about a Bedouin boy on a hazardous mission in the desert, and also "Timbuktu," about Islamist militants taking over the fabled Malian city.

"The thing that I notice is that there is a core of humanity that travels right through every culture," she said. "And after all, we're all from Africa originally, you know. We're all Berliners; we're all Africans, really."

The comments from Streep, who has been Oscar-nominated a record 19 times, made headlines around the world and swiftly became one of the top trends on Twitter.

They followed an uproar over the all-white Oscar acting nominee selection for a second straight year, which forced the movie industry to confront how blacks, Asians and Latinos are represented in front of and behind the camera in Hollywood.

Some commentators on Thursday expressed disappointment.

"You'd think Meryl Streep would be smarter than to say 'We're all Africans, really' in any context, but alas," said @Jamil Smith.

Others said Streep's remarks were misinterpreted.

"Watch the whole interview before jumping on Meryl Streep," tweeted @evansArmour. "Her quote was taken out of context." — *Reuters*

Over 2,600 Australians fall victim to online romance fraudsters in 2015

CANBERRA — Days out from the most romantic date on the western world's calendar, Valentine's Day, Australia's consumer watchdog has revealed that 2,620 Australians fell victim to online romance scams in 2015.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) yesterday released figures showing Australians were collectively swindled out of 16 million US dollars by scammers posing as would-be lovers last year.

However, ACCC's deputy chair Delia Rickard believes that number may only represent one-tenth of Australia's true financial losses to the morally-corrupt trade, with most victims too embarrassed to report — or admit — they had been set-up by a con artist.

"We hear people who borrow against their house and end up losing their home, people who access their super, people who

borrow from friends and family and never able to pay them back, leading to a huge breakdown in relations," Rickard told Fairfax Media.

"They are left devastated, all alone broke, usually in debt," Rickard said.

According to the data, women (43.5 per cent) were more likely to be caught up in the romantic scams than men (39 per cent), while 17 per cent of those surveyed did not disclose their gender.

The majority of victims were middle aged, between 45 to 55 years old.

The ACCC has its own taskforce designed to protect those the organisation classes "potential victims" of romantic scams. The taskforce, known as the Scam Disruption Project, has sent 6,000 warning letters to these repeat victims, telling them to reconsider sending money to scamming hubs like Nigeria.

Rickard said the scammers create an intricate and compelling backstory to tug at the heartstrings of these victims before requesting money.

"Scammers are experts at preying on people's weaknesses and will spend months and even years grooming victims and lowering their defences," Rickard said.

"Inevitably, the fraudster will spin a tall tale about why they suddenly need your financial help, ranging from medical emergencies to failed business ventures to needing to rebook flights to visit you," she added.

One-third of Australia's reported romance scams in 2015 occurred over social media, in particular, Facebook.

"The ACCC is looking to work with social media platforms to keep romance scammers off their sites and to help users recognise when they are being scammed," she said.—Xinhua

Kendall Jenner sues skin care company for \$10m over advertisement



Model and television personality Kendall Jenner. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEW YORK — Kendall Jenner, the model and a star of reality TV show "Keeping Up with the Kardashians," is suing a skin care company for at least \$10 million, saying it used her photo in advertisements for acne laser treatment without permission.

In a complaint filed on Wednesday, lawyers for Jenner objected to Cutera Inc's adver-

tisements for its Laser Genesis treatment, which began appearing in New York City this month ahead of Fashion Week.

One print ad quoted the 20-year-old Jenner as having said that acne had "completely ruined" her self-esteem and that her now "nearly flawless skin" was the product of visits to a dermatologist for Laser Genesis treatment.

"Ms. Jenner's actual endorsement for a worldwide campaign such as this would command a fee well into eight figures," the complaint said.

"Setting aside the monetary value, however, it is Ms. Jenner's choice whether or not to commercially endorse another party's goods and services. Cutera took that choice away from her."

The complaint filed in Los Angeles federal court by Jenner and her Kendall Jenner Inc accused Cutera of trademark infringement, false endorsement and violating her right of publicity.—Reuters

Restored Jimi Hendrix apartment opens to public in London



Replica items, including a guitar, in the bedroom of the home where Jimi Hendrix and girlfriend Kathy Etchingham lived in 1968-69 London, on 8 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — The London apartment where Jimi Hendrix lived more than 45 years ago has opened to the public, restored to look just how the rock star used it.

Hendrix moved into the apartment on the upper floors of 23 Brook Street — next to the house composer George Frideric Handel lived in centuries earlier — in July 1968 after his girlfriend Kathy Etchingham saw it advertised in a newspaper.

Hendrix, who died in 1970 aged 27, wrote music, rehearsed and gave interviews there. He told Etchingham it was his "first real home of my own" and decorated the place himself with bright curtains, cushions and lots of ornaments.

In London's upmarket Mayfair neighbourhood, it has undergone a two-year, 2.4 million pound restoration and is now part of the "Handel & Hendrix in London" heritage site celebrating the two musicians.

With rugs on the floor, hangings on the walls, old records and newspapers on display as well as a guitar lying on a colourful bedspread, the apartment is a trip back in time for Etchingham.

"Well it's quite strange ... 45 years on to be sitting in the same room you were sitting in when you were 22 years old but it's very much as it was," she told Reuters during a visit to the apartment.

"I don't feel emotional about it, I just feel ... it's a job

well done and it's something that people wouldn't normally have got to see, they can now see it ... For me, this is like stepping back 45 years or more."

Hendrix lived in the apartment for several periods in 1968 and 1969. In March 1969 he went to New York while Etchingham stayed on at the apartment for a while. It later served as office space before the Handel House Trust took it over in 2000.

Handel lived next door for 36 years and wrote works, including "Messiah", there. He died at his home in 1759.

"Handel & Hendrix in London" features both homes as well as a show looking at Hendrix's London life in the late 1960s.—Reuters

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(13-2-2016, Saturday)

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| 6:00 pm | 8:20 pm |
| • Classical Songs | • Fashion (Music) |
| 6:20 pm | 8:35 pm |
| • Pyi Thu Ni Ti | • Dramatic Arts |
| 6:45 pm | 9:55 pm |
| • Myanmar Series | • Myanmar Ta Kung Phu Ta Kaung |
| 7:00 pm | 10:20 pm |
| • Cassette Drama | • Myanmar Video |

From 13.2.2016 (Saturday) 06:00 Pm
To 14.2.2016 (Sunday) 06:00 Pm

This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.

mitv Myanmar International

(13-2-2016 07:00am ~ 14-2-2016 7:00am) MST

Today Fresh

- | | | |
|-------|----|--|
| 07:03 | Am | News |
| 07:26 | Am | Great Shwedagon: The Ten Traditional Arts & Crafts |
| 07:47 | Am | A Way of Life: Aikido |
| 08:03 | Am | News |
| 08:26 | Am | The Long-Lasting Royal Tradition |
| 08:51 | Am | Inspiration |
| 09:03 | Am | News |
| 09:26 | Am | Myanmar Prehistory |
| 09:50 | Am | Kay Tu Mar Lar "The Family" |
| 10:03 | Am | News |
| 10:26 | Am | Human-Elephant Conflict, "Avoid Collision" |
| 10:42 | Am | A Historic Town: 9 Pagodas |
| 10:54 | Am | Paper Flower |

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm) - Friday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Pm ~ 07:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

Prime Time

- | | | |
|-------|----|--|
| 07:03 | Pm | News |
| 07:26 | Pm | My Travel In This Exceptional Place, Inle Lake |
| 07:47 | Pm | Today Myanmar: First Chapter of New History (Pyithu Hluttaw) |
| 08:03 | Pm | News |
| 08:26 | Pm | U Kyaw Thu: From Artist to Philanthropist (Part-I) |
| 08:46 | Pm | Myanmar Masterclass "Artist Win Pe Myint" |

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am) - Friday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) - Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

(For Detailed Schedule – www.myanmaritv.com/schedule)

Singaporean Mixed Martial Artist fights off armed attackers in Bangkok

ON the evening of 19 January, Singaporean mixed martial artist Nicholas Lee was attacked by two men in a botched robbery attempt. Lee, who competes for ONE Championship in the flyweight division, sustained small cuts to his lip and neck, but was able to fight the attackers off using his martial arts skills.

"I was walking to the 7-11 five minutes away from my apartment complex in Din Daeng, Bangkok," Lee said. "While I was on my phone texting, I heard a motorcycle pull up behind me. I could tell it was on the pavement instead of the road, so I got suspicious right away. As soon as I looked back, the first guy attempted to punch me, however I was able to knock him out within three strikes."

The second attacker was armed with a small knife and slashed at Lee's face. Lee was able to defend himself, but not before getting cut himself.

"Any closer or deeper and I think I would have lost my life," remarked Lee on the knife attack.

Heath Sims, Head Coach of the Evolve Fight Team at Evolve MMA, attributes Lee's quick thinking to his training. "The awareness and skills you learn from picking up martial arts can potentially save your life when you find yourself in a dangerous situation when confronted by a would-be attacker."

"Your first line of defence is awareness — recognising the signs of a dangerous situation before it happens is the most vital. If you have to use force to save your life, having martial arts skills will give you the edge you need to protect both yourself



ONE flyweight fighter Nicholas Lee from Singapore in the cage against Xiao Yang Liu at ONE: VALOR OF CHAMPIONS. PHOTO: REUTERS

and your love ones when such a threat arises," he adds.

Darren De Silva, Owner of Fight G Singapore, has another take. "While self defence training can save your life if it is in danger, it's probably wiser and safer to give in to a robber's demands otherwise."

"There's no point fighting merely for the sake of material possessions. There's nothing in your wallet that's irreplaceable

and worth risking serious injury or death over."

As for the city of Bangkok and the attack, Lee said that the city is mostly safe, but people should still be aware of the danger—not everyone is a trained martial artist.

"Who would have thought after staying here for a year and thinking that the city is very safe, that such an incident could happen to me", he said. "I hope

this can be a good reminder to not just people living in Bangkok, but around the world to always stay safe and be vigilant."

Following the attack and a vicious bout of dengue fever, Lee posted on Facebook about how difficult the first three weeks of 2016 have been for him. Despite the setbacks, he is alive and well, eagerly awaiting his next fight for ONE Championship.—Reuters

Wilshere, Cazorla will be back soon, says Arsenal boss

LONDON — Arsenal's long-term injury absentees Jack Wilshere and Santi Cazorla are only weeks away from returning to first-team action, manager Arsene Wenger said ahead of Sunday's top-of-the-table Premier League clash against leaders Leicester City.

Cazorla hurt his knee during Arsenal's 1-1 draw with Norwich City on 29 November, while fellow midfielder Wilshere is yet to feature this campaign, having broken his calf bone in pre-season and had surgery in September.

"They (Cazorla and Wilshere) are back running, they are on a fitness programme now so it means it is not a question of months anymore, it is a question of weeks for them to be back," Wenger told the club's website (www.arsenal.com).

Wenger also suggested striker Danny Welbeck, who has not featured for the Gunners since April 2015, could make his comeback from knee injury against Hull City in the FA Cup on 20 February.

"He is doing well, it is a bit early for him maybe but he is now back to full power in training. It is a big possibility (he could be involved against Hull next week)," the Frenchman said.—Reuters

Payet signs new five-year West Ham contract

LONDON — West Ham United's influential France international playmaker Dimitri Payet has signed a new long-term contract until 2021, the Premier League club said on Thursday.

Payet signed a 5-1/2 year deal with the east London outfit when he joined from Olympique de Marseille last year, but his performances this season have attracted interest from rival clubs, including some in the big-spending Chinese Super League.

Payet, who has played 15 times for France, has scored six league goals and provided five assists in 18 games for the Hammers this season as the club has mounted an increasingly credible challenge for a top-six finish.

West Ham manager Slaven Bilic said earlier on Thursday that Payet was very close to signing a new deal when he previewed Saturday's league clash at struggling Norwich City. The manager also spoke out in support of cheaper tickets for fans after a mass walk-out at Anfield last weekend resulted in Liverpool's owners backing down on plans to implement a significant increase in prices next season.—Reuters

Leicester must prove they can handle the pressure: Van Gaal

LONDON — Premier League leaders Leicester City can win the title but their players must prove they can cope with the pressure of expectation, says Manchester United manager Louis van Gaal.

"They are the favourites because they are five points away from the rest, but the moment that they have to win it is different," Van Gaal told Friday's *Independent* newspaper.

"They are more or less in that place now because they want to continue with this lead. Is it possible? Why not? Maybe their players can cope, but that you do not know and that is a question that both Leicester and Tottenham must answer."

Leicester are five points clear of Spurs and Arsenal with



PHOTO: REUTERS

the Manchester clubs, City and United, trailing the leaders by six and 12 points respectively. On Sunday, the Foxes visit Arsenal while Tottenham travel to Manchester City.

"It doesn't say anything about the personalities in these teams. I don't know them so I cannot judge. But there shall come a moment when they have to win," Van Gaal said

in the interview.

"At the moment, everything is okay and nice. But the (Leicester) manager (Claudio Ranieri) has spoken about being champion, so now it shall play in their heads. But a lot of players can cope with that," added the Dutchman.

Ranieri has acknowledged his team could be affected by the pressure but has urged his players to use their experience of being in a relegation dogfight last season to their advantage.

"Pressure, it could be a problem, but it is important we stay calm ... What they experienced last season may help because it was a big pressure for them," he said earlier this week.—Reuters