



President U Thein Sein meets Thai Chief of Defense Forces and party

PAGE 3



Royal Thai Army chief calls on C-in-C of Defence Services

PAGE 3

ANALYSIS

Concrete results of the reform process

PAGE 8

NEW UPPER HOUSE

Amyotha Hluttaw elects new speaker, deputy speaker

THE Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) was convened in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, electing U Mann Win Khaing Than as the speaker of the Upper House and U Aye Tha Aung as deputy speaker.

U Mann Win Khaing Than is from Kayin State Constituency-8, while U Aye Tha Aung is from Rakhine State Constituency-6.

Following his swearing in as the speaker, U Mann Win Khaing Than extended greetings, calling on to work together with trust and in a friendly manner, without racism, attachments religious faiths and attachments to personality cults, for peace, the rule of law and national reconciliation.

In his speech, the newly elected speaker also stressed the importance of making laws for peace, rule of law and national reconciliation in building a federal, democratic nation.

He also encouraged MPs to

work with loyalty in writing a new history for the country while seizing opportunities for building a federal, democratic country.

Among the 224 MPs the Amyotha Hluttaw, 135 are members of the National League for Democracy; 56 are appointees of the Tatmadaw; 11 are from the Union Solidarity and Development Party; 10 are from Arakan National Party; three are from the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy; two are from the Zomi Congress for Democracy; and one each from the National Unity Party, the Pa-o National Organisation and the Mon National Party.

A total of 223 MPs attended the first session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw; one MP was on leave.

The meeting ended at 11am. The second meeting of the Amyotha Hluttaw is scheduled for today.—GNLM



U Mann Win Khaing Than (Left) and U Aye Tha Aung (Right) swear in as the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw. PHOTO: MNA

The attendance of MPs at Amyotha Hluttaw on 3-2-2016



NLD
USDP
ANP
SNLD
ZCD
TNP
NUP
PNO
MNP
IC
DSPC

Clarification

NLD	- National League for Democracy
USDP	- Union Solidarity and Development Party
ANP	- Arakan National Party
SNLD	- Shan Nationalities League for Democracy
ZCD	- Zomi Congress for Democracy
TNP	- Ta'ang (Palaung) National Party
NUP	- National Unity Party
PNO	- Pa-O National Organization
MNP	- Mon National Party
IC	- Independent Candidate
DSPC	- Defence Services Personnel Candidates

Clarification

Elected MPs for Amyotha Hluttaw	- 168	NLD - 135 = 60.27 %	NUP - 1 = 0.45 %
Defence Services Personnel Candidates	- 56	USDP - 11 = 4.91 %	PNO - 1 = 0.45 %
Total number of Amyotha Hluttaw	- 224	ANP - 10 = 4.46 %	MNP - 1 = 0.45 %
Attendees	- 223	SNLD - 3 = 1.34 %	IC - 2 = 0.89 %
MP on leave (Independent Candidate)	- 1	ZCD - 2 = 0.89 %	DSPC - 56 = 25 %
		TNP - 2 = 0.89 %	

Okkala Golf Course in Yangon has been upgraded and is open!

Special Offer! 50% discount on Green Fees at corners on weekdays as from 1st February, 2016.

OKKALA GOLF RESORT

Ph: 09-30998334, 0930998335

Thura U Shwe Mann explains parliamentary procedures to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker



Thura U Shwe Mann hands over parliamentary procedures to incoming Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U Mann Win Khaing Than. PHOTO: MNA

THURA U Shwe Mann who served as First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker congratulated Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw Mann Win Khaing Than who is going to serve as the Speaker of the Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, elaborating on parliamentary procedures at the office of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Also present were Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, chair of National League for Democracy, U Aye Tha Aung who was elected as Deputy Amyotha Hluttaw, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker and officials of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speakers Office.

Next, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker observed the Parliament Library and Archive, Training Centre, e-Library room and other sections at Zabuthiri Hall.— *Myanmar News Agency*

President sends message of felicitations to Sri Lanka PM

ON the occasion of the 68th Anniversary of Independence Day of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka which falls on 4th February 2016, U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.—*Myanmar News Agency*

President sends message of felicitations to Sri Lanka counterpart

ON the occasion of the Anniversary of Independence Day of the Democratic Socialist of Sri Lanka which falls on 4th February 2016, U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.—*Myanmar News Agency*

FM sends message of felicitations to Sri Lanka counterpart

ON the occasion of the 68th Anniversary of Independence Day of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka which falls on 4th February 2016, U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Mangala Samaraweera, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.—*Myanmar News Agency*

NLD chair meets correspondents



Chairperson of National League for Democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi talks to journalists during her meeting with the media in her office at the parliament in Naypyitaw, February 3, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

NATIONAL League for Democracy Chairman Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met local and foreign correspondents

at Parliament yesterday afternoon, briefing them on the systematic manner of media coverage and the appointments of the

speakers and deputy speakers for both the Pyithu Hluttaw and the Amyotha Hluttaw.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Myanmar handicrafts industry needs technology to take products to global market

THE Myanmar Handicraft Association yesterday warned that Myanmar handicrafts are likely to disappear if they have no access to the global market, heavily relying on local markets only.

It is required to take our handicraft products to the global handicraft market, said U Thar Du, chairman of the association, highlighting the importance of

creation without hampering tradition in the handicraft industry.

“The handicraft industry needs technology,” added the chairman.

Production of handicrafts that meet international standards calls for the government’s assistance to the industry, said Executive Director U Aye Ko (Artist) of New Zero Art Space.

It will be hard to get clay for

pottery if farmlands are used for other purposes, said the executive director, adding that bamboo has become rare here. According to the association, Myanmar handicraft Association has conducted various programs to help crafter develop skills and study new technologies in cooperation with the British Council and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. —*Ko Moe*

Appointment of Ambassador agreed on

THE Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the appointment of H.E. Mr. Mohsen Mohammadi as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar with residence in Bangkok in succession to H.E. Mr. Hossein Kamallan.

Mr. Mohsen Mohammadi was born on 23rd October 1961 in Tehran, Iran. He received a Bachelor’s Degree majoring in Political Relations from the Faculty of International Relations of the Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1990. He can speak English, Turkish, Arabic, French and Russia.

Mr. Mohsen Mohammadi was a political expert at the Directory for West Asia of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran from 1991 to 1993. He also served as a political expert at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tashkand from 1993

to 1997. He also served as a political expert at the Directory for Common Wealth and Caucuses from 1997 to 1998 and as Deputy Director for Common Wealth and Caucuses from 1998 to 2001. He also served as Deputy Head of Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Helsinki from 2001 to 2004. He then served as a political expert at West Europe Directory of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran from 2004 to 2006, and at the Directory of Disarmament and International Security from 2006 to 2008. He then served as a legal and international expert at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Berlin from 2008 to 2011. He then served as an expert at the National Authority for Disarmament Conventions from 2011 to 2013. He has been appointed as Director of Second Directory for Common Wealth and Caucuses since 2013. He is married and has two children.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Homeless people apply for cheap housing

SCORES of homeless people thronged to the Yangon Region government office yesterday to apply to rent flats in the Mahabandoola Housing Estate, said an officer from the regional government office.

“A great multitude came on the day of the opening of applications to rent flat—we estimate over a thousand. Some came just to make inquiries, whereas some came to apply but did not have all of the necessary documentation,” said the officer.

“I got the message from the newspaper. Although forms can be submitted in hand-writing, I typed in the form as prescribed by the township General Administration Office. When I applied for a flat previously, I wasn’t chosen. Now, I’ve come here again with full hope,” said applicant U Tun Shwe, who now resides in Yankin Township. Those selected to rent flats in the Mahabandoola Housing Estate will be charged K30,000 per month.—*Zaw Gyi (Panita)*

President U Thein Sein meets Thai Chief of Defense Forces and party

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein received Chief of Defense Forces of Thailand General Sommai Kaotira and party at the Credentials Hall of the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

They held discussions on boosting bilateral relations and friendship between the two armed forces.

Also present at the call were Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Union Ministers Lt-Gen Ko Ko, Lt-Gen Sein Win, Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, U Wunna Maung Lwin and U Ye Htut and Ambassador of Thailand to Myanmar Mr. Pisanu Suvanajata as well as other officials.— *Myanmar News Agency*



Chief of Defense Forces of Thailand General Sommai Kaotira and party call on President U Thein Sein at the Credentials Hall of the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Royal Thai Army chief calls on C-in-C of Defence Services

MYANMAR and Thailand maintain a friendly relationship and mutual trust between the two armed forces, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing told Chief of the Defence Services of the Royal Thai Army Gen-

eral Sommai Kaotira in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Their discussions focused on the promotion of cooperation and legal protection to Myanmar migrant workers. In the evening, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing hosted a dinner in honour of the

visiting army chief.

During his visit to Nay Pyi Taw, General Sommai Kaotira visited the National Museum, the Upatathanti Pagoda, the Grand Treasures gem and silk house and the The Rich Gem jewelry shop.—*Myawady*



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and Chief of the Defence Services of the Royal Thai Army General Sommai Kaotira inspect the Guard of Honour in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MYAWADY

Impartial health care provided in Rakhine

THE Ministry of Health renders health care services without discrimination on grounds of race and religion, its deputy minister told officials in Sittway's hospital in Rakhine State on 30 January.

After inspecting treatments, availability of medicines and renovations to the hospital, Dr Win Myint conversed with patients and spoke words of comfort and encouragement.

Speaking to the medical staff, the deputy minister called for provision of health care on the humanitarian basis with no discrimination and continuous upgrading of their capacity.

He also visited the hospital in Buthitaung township. On Monday he observed children being vaccinated at a rural health centre in Sittway, where he spoke words of encouragement to health staff, civil society organisations and residents.

The deputy minister also visited an emergency health care centre in Thetkalpyin village, where he inspected in-patients and the delivery ward.

The Ministry of Health provides health care to local residents in Rakhine State, including Bengalis.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Deputy Minister Dr Win Myint oversees health care services in Rakhine State. PHOTO: MNA

MAT aids migrant workers in Thailand

THE Myanmar Association in Thailand (MAT) has helped solve problem for over 80 workers who have reported being abused by their employer at a furniture factory in the northern Thailand.

"The employer did not pay us even our 15-day wages, and they have also taken away our passports, work permits and bank cards. They're just bullying us. Therefore, we all decided to quit this job. But now, all things are going well, and we are now okay on account of the MAT. Moreover, we got back all our passports. We would like to mention our gratitude and sincere heart-felt

thanks for their help," said Ko Tin Tun, the leader of the employees.

"Many of workers in this factory are upset because they made one Myanmar woman from the furniture shop a housemaid. Moreover, citizens of Thailand came out to take the photo of our car when we went to their industrial zone, and they scratched our car when we went to report the problems of MoU workers at the factory around two months ago. In fact, the Thai labour ministry should take prompt action as soon as we report on abuses to them," said Ko Lwan Thu, an executive of the MAT.—*Soe Win (SP)*

MNHRC's statement on removal of squatters in Yangon, Mandalay available on website

THE Myanmar National Human Rights Commission yesterday released a statement dated 3-2-2016 on the removal of squatters from Mingaladon Pyinabin Industrial Zone, Yuzana

Garden City in Yangon Region and Nyaung Ni village in Mandalay Region.

The statement is available on the commission's website www.mnhrc.org.mm.—*MNA*

Human traffickers charged with forced marriages

A WOMAN has been charged for forcing a 30-year-old female to marry a Chinese man on 31 January, according to the Lashio police station.

Nwe Nwe Win took the victim on a visit to a Chinese province on 8 January where she persuaded her into getting married to a Chinese man. Her refusal was met with a death threat.

The victim contacted a friend in Wa region. Being informed of the case on 22 January, Chinese police came to the house to locate the individuals. Nwe Nwe Win and her companion Zaw Gyi tried to escape arrest but Nwe Nwe Win was captured. Local police are still after Zaw Gyi.

In another incident, three people were charged with human

trafficking on 31 January. Phyoe Ei Ei Soe, Thida Khaing and Hnin Hnin Khaing persuaded a woman to work in China on a monthly salary of K100,000 (US\$78), but sold her into a forced marriage to a Chinese man in October last year. After two months of marriage, the victim ran away and contacted a local police station for help on 5 January 2016. She was kept for 22 days at the police station before being transferred to her country of origin.

Further investigation led to the arrest of Phyoe Ei Ei Soe, while the other two suspects are still on the run. Police in Myanmar and China are making mutual efforts to bring the two outlaws to justice.—*Min Naing (Anti-human trafficking)*

Crime News

Fugitive knife attackers arrested

THE Yangon Police Force yesterday arrested two more fugitives who are suspected of carrying out knife attacks on a man in Yangon on 23 December, one month after the arrests of two others at a village in Laymyathnar Township, Ayeyawady Region.

According to a police in-

vestigation after first arrests in Ayeyawady Region, in which Hla Myo Thu (aka Myo Thu, aka Pyaung Gyi) and Ye Lin Htaik (aka Ko Ye) were apprehended, the detainees admitted that they were given K1 million to attack U Tun Thit Oo in Kamayut Township with a knife by Tin

Myo Thein (aka Tin Myo Naing, aka Kyar Lat Wah), who lives in Hlaingthaya Township. Tin Myo Thein and Soe Htaik were arrested yesterday. Police said an investigation is ongoing, as are efforts to arrest the remaining suspects involved in the case.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Hla Myo Thu (a) Myo Thu (a) Pyaung Gyi, Ye Lin Htaik (a) Ko Ye, Tin Myo Thein (a) Tin Myo Khaing (a) Kyar Latt War, and Soe Htaik are seen together with evidences. PHOTO: MYANMAR POLICE FORCE



Moe Gyi (a) Yin Moe, Win Naing and Than Aye (a) Ngwe Thein.

PHOTO: MYANMAR POLICE FORCE

Police raid gambling centre in Yangon



Gamblers and owner of gambling centre in Mayangone Township are seen. PHOTO: MYANMAR POLICE FORCE

THE Yangon Policed Force raided a gambling centre in Mayangone Township, Yangon, and arrested the owner, shop assistants and gamblers on Tuesday.

The police seized tokens and coins used for gambling, along with K1,244,500 (US\$974), during the raid.

Police filed charges against owner Tha Kaw (aka Wang Wei-jun), seven shop assistants and 23 gamblers.

According to the investigation, the gambling centre hired people involved in organised crime for protection.—*Myanmar News Agency*

694 kilos of caffeine haul leads to arrests

AN anti-drug squad in Kyaing-lat discovered caffeine weighing 694 kilos in a Pajero Sport vehicle in Tarlay-Kyain-glat road, on 30 January. Two men from the Pajero vehicle run away while members of the police were checking the cars for security reasons. Police managed to capture one Kya Har at the scene. The local police are holding the man for charges while searching for the second suspect, Eik Nwun who managed to escape from the scene. Similarly, police squad in Hsenwi toll gate seized 5.08 lakh pills of Yabba in a Land Cruiser car driven by Tang Gun with Tu Lar on board. And, local police seized 1.584kilos of opium and 12,000 tablets of



Kya Har. PHOTO: THE MIRROR

stimulants in a Surf vehicle driven by Nay Tun.

Likewise, a police squad in Oriental Highway toll gate seized 0.108kilos of opium and

1,950pillars of Yabba from Sai Sar Aye on board a Toyota on 29 Janaury. The police station filed charges against them under the Anti-Narcotic Law.—*The Mirror*

Fire destroyed Light truck



PETROL leak caused the outbreak of fire near Shwedaung toll gate on 1st February. The case was that a Honda electric generator on board a light truck driven by U Moe Thu, 46, leaked petrol, which caused the outbreak of fire near milepost 45/6. The fire was put out by the firemen with three fire engines and with the assistance of neighbors. Local police have filed charges against the man.—*Myanmar Police Force*

Car accident kills three, injures four

A SUPER custom collided head on with a motorbike between mileposts 140/1 and 140/2 on Yangon-Mawlamyine road, Thaton township, Mon State, on Monday, leaving three dead and four injured.

The Super Custom vehicle was being driven by one Than Zaw Oo and crashed into a motorbike being driven by Aung Min Oo with Nay Myo on board.

The collision killed U Kyi Soe, 67, and motorbike driver

Aung Min Oo, 19, on the spot while Ma Thin Thin Ei succumbed to her injuries at the hospital while Nay Myo, Ma Phyu Nu Khine, U Maung Than, Ma Htoo Wai Kyaw were seriously injured and are now receiving medical care at Thaton general hospital.

Police from Theinzeik station are searching for the driver and have deemed him guilty of careless driving.—*Khon (Win Pa)*



Super Custom seen perching on a drainage.

PHOTO: KHON (WIN PA)

North Korea tells UN agencies it plans satellite launch

SEOUL/WASHINGTON — North Korea told UN agencies on Tuesday it plans to launch a satellite as early as next week, a move that could advance the country's long-range missile technology after its fourth nuclear test on 6 January.

News of the planned launch between 8 February and 25 February drew fresh US calls for tougher UN sanctions already under discussion in response to North Korea's nuclear test. State Department spokesman John Kirby said the United Nations needed to "send the North Koreans a swift, firm message."

Pyongyang has said it has a sovereign right to pursue a space programme by launching rockets, although the United States and other governments worry that such launches are missile tests in disguise.

"We have received information from DPRK regarding the launch of earth observation satellite 'Kwangmyongsong' between 8-25 February," a spokeswoman for the International Maritime Organisation, a UN agency, told Reuters by email.

The International Telecommunication Union, another UN agency, told Reuters North Korea had informed it on Tuesday of plans to launch a satellite with a

functional duration of four years, in a non-geostationary orbit.

It said the information provided by North Korea, whose official name is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, was incomplete, and that it was seeking more details.

US officials said last week that North Korea was believed to be making preparations for a test launch of a long-range rocket, after activity at its test site was observed by satellite.

The White House said on Tuesday that any satellite launch by North Korea would be viewed as "another destabilising provocation." US Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Russel, the senior US diplomat for East Asia, told reporters it "argues even more strongly" for tougher UN sanctions.

Russel said a launch, "using ballistic missile technology," would be an "egregious violation" of North Korea's international obligations.

He said it showed the need "to raise the cost to the leaders through the imposition of tough additional sanctions and of course by ensuring the thorough and rigorous enforcement of the existing sanctions."

Russel said negotiations were "active" at the United Nations and



Airbus Defence & Space and 38 North satellite imagery dated January 25, 2016 shows three objects at the base of the gantry tower that are either vehicles or equipment at Sohae Satellite Launching Station in North Korea in this image released on January 28, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

that the United States and North Korea's main ally China "share the view that there needs to be consequences to North Korea for its defiance and for its threatening behaviours."

"Our diplomats are in deep discussion in New York about how to tighten sanctions, how to respond to violations," he said.

Asked about China's cautious response to US calls for stronger and more effective sanctions on Pyongyang and Beijing's stress on

the need for dialogue, Russel said:

"Yet another violation by the DPRK of the UN Security Council resolution, coming on the heels of its nuclear test, would be an unmistakable slap in the face to those who argue that you just need to show patience and dialogue with the North Koreans, but not sanctions."

White House spokesman Josh Earnest said China had "unique influence over the North Korean regime" and added: "we ... certainly

are pleased to be able to work cooperatively and effectively with the Chinese to counter this threat."

Earlier on Tuesday, China's envoy for the North Korean nuclear issue arrived in the capital Pyongyang, the North's KCNA news agency reported.

North Korea last launched a long-range rocket in December 2012, sending an object it described as a communications satellite into orbit.

Western and Asian experts have said that launch was part of an effort to build an intercontinental ballistic missile.

North Korea has shown off two versions of a ballistic missile resembling a type that could reach the US West Coast, but there is no evidence the missiles have been tested.

Pyongyang is also seen to be working to miniaturise a nuclear warhead to mount on a missile, but many experts say it is some time away from perfecting such technology.

North Korea said it successfully tested a hydrogen bomb last month but this was met with scepticism by US and South Korean officials and nuclear experts. They said the blast was too small for it to have been a full-fledged hydrogen bomb.—Reuters

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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

Printed and published at the Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the Global New Light of Myanmar Daily under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.

Japan PM Abe - to 'strongly demand' North Korea to refrain from missile launch

TOKYO — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said yesterday he would work with the United States and others to "strongly demand" that North Korea refrain from its planned missile launch, which he called a provocative move that threatens the na-

tion's security.

North Korea told UN agencies on Tuesday it planned to launch a satellite as early as next week, a move that could advance the country's long-range missile technology after its fourth nuclear test on 6 January.—Reuters

China brings new opportunities to UNESCO: organisation chief

PARIS — Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Irina Bokova said here Monday China has brought her agency new opportunities and new strengths.

During a reception to mark the upcoming arrival of the Chinese New Year, which was organized by the Chinese delegation to UNESCO, Bokova thanked the Chinese government for its support to the United Nations cultural agency, especially for China's contribution in "advancing the empowerment of girls and women, pro-

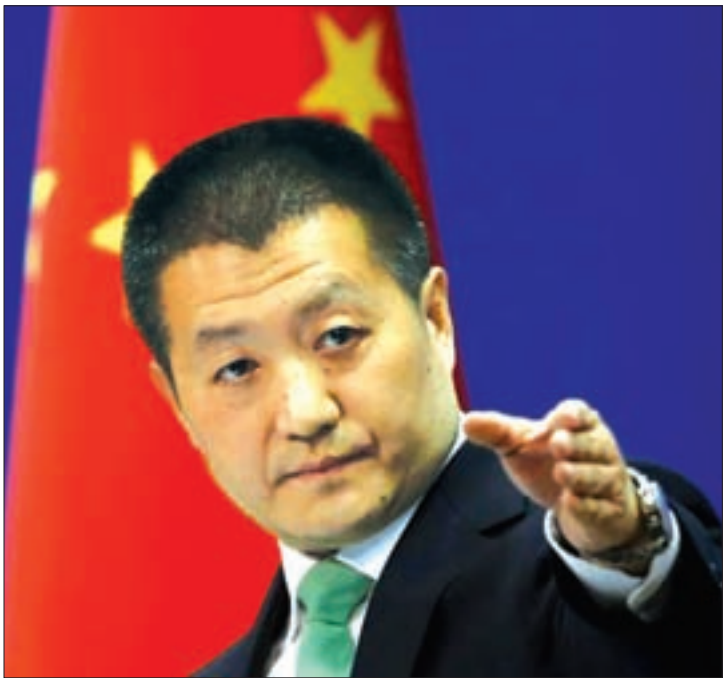
moting literacy in rural areas, and the establishment of a new prize for girls and women's education."

"Thanks to the leadership of China and many other member states, education, the sciences, culture, communication and information are integrated deeply into the new agenda, as enablers and drivers of sustainable development," Bokova said.

She also sent new year greetings to Chinese people.

More than 300 guests, including representatives from UNESCO member countries, attended the reception.—Xinhua

China says extremely concerned by North Korea satellite launch plan



Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang points out a reporter to receive a question at a regular news conference in Beijing, in October, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

BEIJING — China is extremely concerned by reports that North Korea plans to launch a satellite, the Foreign Ministry said yesterday.

Ministry spokesman Lu Kang made the remarks at a regular briefing, adding that China

called on North Korea to exercise restraint. Japan has placed its military on alert to shoot down any North Korean rocket if it threatens Japan. The launch could advance North Korea's long-range missile technology after its fourth nuclear test on 6 January.—Reuters

US says open to naval patrols with Philippines in waters disputed with China



The US Navy guided-missile destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur patrols in the Philippine Sea in 2013.
PHOTO: REUTERS

MANILA — The United States is open to the possibility of joint naval patrols with the Philippines in the South China Sea, a US diplomat said yesterday, stressing it would continue to exercise “freedom of navigation” in the disputed waters.

China claims most of the

South China Sea, through which more than \$5 trillion of world trade is shipped every year. Viet Nam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines and Taiwan have rival claims.

A US Navy destroyer sailed within 12 nautical miles of an island claimed by China in the

South China Sea on Saturday to counter efforts to limit freedom of navigation, the Pentagon said, prompting an angry reaction from Beijing.

Manila has asked the US to patrol the area together after China began test flights from Fiery Cross Reef, one of three artificial

islands where Beijing has built airfields.

“We do discuss that principle (joint patrols) with the Philippines and so I am not discarding that possibility,” US Ambassador to the Philippines Philip Goldberg told reporters.

“But we are not going to make announcements about that beforehand because it is our view that we have every right under international law to exercise freedom of navigation in the South China Sea and we will continue to do so.” The Philippine has challenged Beijing before the arbitration court in The Hague, a case Beijing has not recognised. Foreign and defence ministers from the United States and the Philippines met in Washington last month for the second time in more than three years to discuss trade and security, focusing on the South China Sea.

The United States has no South China Sea claim and says it takes no sides, though it has been highly critical of China’s assertiveness. It carried out a navy patrol near areas claimed by China, Taiwan, Viet Nam and the Philippines in October.—*Reuters*

Fiscal restraints likely to delay construction of 5th Thai-Lao Mekong bridge

VIENTIANE — Fiscal restraints are expected to delay construction of the fifth international bridge connecting Thailand and Laos originally slated for 2016, a source at Lao Ministry of Public Works and Transport confirmed to local media yesterday.

Construction of the cross-Mekong bridge linking the town of Pakxan in the Lao province of Bolikhamxay and Thailand’s neighbouring Bueng Kan Province is likely to be delayed to 2017 due to “quite difficult financial circumstances”, state-run media *Vientiane Times* reported an unnamed Lao ministry official as saying.

The bridge is part of a plan to improve road transport connections between Thailand and Laos and onward to Viet Nam’s province of Nge An to facilitate movements of people and goods in a bid to boost regional trade in the economically-expanding region. Low commodity prices have impacted on Lao budget in the form of reduced receipts from mining ventures as the country’s government moves increasingly towards hydroelectric power exports as a key source of national income and public revenue for poverty reduction and socio-economic development.—*Xinhua*

All 7 suspects of Zika virus in South Korea test negative

SEOUL — All seven South Koreans suspected of carrying Zika virus have been tested negative, the country’s disease management agency said yesterday.

The seven suspect cases have been confirmed negative for the virus after genetic screening test, according to the Korea Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC).

The country’s health authorities designated the Zika virus as one of legal infectious diseases on 29 January, an action which forces doctors to report on suspected cases. The Zika is known as a virus transmitted by mosquitoes. It is not active in winter, but South Koreans are advised to report on symptoms, including fever, pain of muscles and joints, rash and headache, after travelling to affected countries especially in Latin America. The virus is rarely fatal for normal adults but can cause birth defects, including abnormally small heads and brains called microcephaly, to newborn babies. Pregnant women, or those planning pregnancy, are being advised to take special caution.—*Xinhua*

Pakistan cuts flights after the death of 3 workers in clashes

ISLAMABAD — Aviation authorities in Pakistan said dozens of international and domestic flights were cancelled yesterday, a day after three workers of the state airlines were killed in clashes with the police in the southern port city of Karachi.

The protest against the government plan to privatize the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) turned violent when the police fired tear gas shells and used baton to disperse hundreds of protesters.

The protesters said their three colleagues died of bullets, however, the police denied firing and said they are investigating as to who had fired.

PIA pilots refused to fly aircraft yesterday as angry workers staged rallies in major cities including capital Islamabad, representatives of the protesting workers said.

The PIA workers closed the main office in Islamabad. Reports say main offices in other cities were also closed down by the protestors, suspending sale of the tickets.

The Civil Aviation Authority also confirmed cancel-



Employees of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) shout slogans as police use a water cannon on them during a protest near Jinnah International Airport in southern Pakistani port city of Karachi, on 2 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

lation of flights and said negotiations are underway with private airlines to accommodate those passengers who had confirmed reservations.

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) spokesman Pervez George told the media that the authorities have requested a leading airlines to include additional flights between major cities.

Section of the media reported that nearly 120 international and domestic flights were suspended as the pilots refused to work on

the second day of the strike. Hundreds of passengers suffered due to the cancellation of flights.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif says that the PIA saw millions of rupees losses due to the strike. He had warned the protesting workers that they could lose jobs if they did not end strike.

The government has invoked the Essential Services law that prohibits any union activities and strikes in the PIA, however, the workers ignored the order.—*Xinhua*

Indian Vice President leaves for Thailand

NEW DELHI — Indian Vice President Hamid Ansari yesterday left for Thailand after winding up a three-day tour of Brunei.

Sources said that Ansari is slated to meet Thai Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and hold a one-to-one meeting with Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha in capital Bangkok.

Ansari’s visit to Thailand will be the first by an Indian Vice President in the past 50 years.

During his three-day trip in Brunei, the vice president met Sultan Hassanal Bolkiabboth and the two countries inked three pacts on defence cooperation, health and sports, and youth affairs.—*Xinhua*

Virtual tie raises doubts: Can Hillary Clinton close the deal?



Former US President Bill Clinton applauds his wife, Democratic U.S. presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, as they appear with their daughter Chelsea (R) at Mrs. Clinton's caucus night rally in Des Moines, Iowa, on 1 February. PHOTO:REUTERS

DES MOINES, (Iowa) — Hillary Clinton's struggle in Iowa to fend off underdog Bernie Sanders, a self-described democratic socialist, reignited questions about her ability to close the deal with Democratic voters and turned up the pressure on her high-profile White House campaign.

The Democratic presidential front-runner, whose campaign ran off the rails in Iowa in 2008 against Barack Obama, was dealt another setback on Monday in the Midwestern state that begins the 2016 race for the presidency.

The former secretary of state, Clinton, 68, was pushed to a virtual tie with Sanders, a 74-year-old US senator from Vermont.

Next up is New Hampshire, which holds its primary on 9 February. Sanders has been leading in opinion polls there and has an advantage because it neighbors his home state. A Clinton loss would start to set off alarm bells with her supporters.

"She has had every possible structural and organisational advantage and Sanders fought her to a draw," said Dan Schnur, director of the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics at the University of Southern California.

"This is almost a moment by

moment rerun of 2008," Schnur said. "The difference is her competition is not as tough this time."

Clinton insisted at her post-caucus rally that she was the candidate who could unify her party and prevail against a Republican challenger in the 8 November election but the sense of disappointment was palpable.

Her subdued, six-minute speech contrasted with the ebullient tone of Sanders' 16-minute speech. With no clear victory to announce, Clinton's campaign scrapped a plan to have her daughter Chelsea and her husband, former President Bill Clinton, introduce her.

They stood alongside her instead, with Bill Clinton wearing his campaign logo badge upside-down. Aides removed the TelePrompter at the last minute, supporters at the Drake University rally told Reuters, in a further indication of last-minute changes in plans.

While the race in Iowa had tightened in recent weeks, her aides had appeared to draw some confidence from a Des Moines Register/Bloomberg politics poll over the weekend that showed Clinton with a three-percentage-point lead over Sanders among likely caucus-goers.

Into the early hours of Tues-

day morning, Clinton and Sanders remained separated by less than a single percentage point. The race was so tight that several precincts were forced to decide whether Clinton or Sanders got the winning votes — and one more delegate — by a coin toss, following the state Democratic Party's advice.

The MSNBC television network finally called the race for Clinton at nearly 3 a.m. CST (0900 GMT), and Clinton's Iowa state director Matt Paul issued a statement declaring victory with "no uncertainty."

Opinion polls show Clinton still faces an enthusiasm gap with Sanders and her Republican rivals, whose race attracted a record turnout in Iowa. Voters have persistent doubts about her honesty and trustworthiness after months of controversy over her use of a private email server for government work while secretary of state. Sanders, who launched his campaign nine months ago with a small, sparsely attended news conference on Capitol Hill, has excited liberal activists with an anti-establishment message that calls for eradicating income inequality, breaking up the big banks and providing free college tuition. —Reuters

Migrants set out on foot along Greek highway to Macedonia

POLIKASTRO, (Greece) — Hundreds of migrants set out on foot along a major north-south highway in Greece on Tuesday, heading north for Macedonia after being stranded for days by farmer and taxi driver protests on either side of the frontier.

At least 80 buses packed with migrants, many of them women and children fleeing the war in Syria, were backed up 10 km (6.2 miles) short of Greece's border with Macedonia, halted by police. Taxi drivers on the Macedo-

nian side have blocked the railway line between the two countries, protesting over the fact that police give priority first to trains and buses to take the migrants north to Serbia en route to western Europe.

On the Greek side, farmers intermittently blocked the border crossing with tractors, part of a protest over a planned pension reform by the Greek government to satisfy international creditors. The border was effectively closed for migrants but regular car traffic had been flowing with minor dis-

ruption. Then, with patience running out, hundreds of migrants disembarked from their stationary buses and blocked the road, sitting on the tarmac and chanting "Macedonia, Macedonia!"

One group set out on foot, according to a Reuters cameraman at the scene. Aid agencies and authorities had erected tents along the route to the border, but many male migrants slept outside on the ground, lighting camp fires against the winter morning chill. —Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Russia won't stop Syria strikes until 'terrorists' defeated

MUSCAT — Russia will not stop its air strikes on Syria until armed groups, such as al Qaeda's wing there, are defeated, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on yesterday.

"Russian strikes will not cease until we really defeat terrorist organisations like Jabhat al-Nusra. And I don't see why these air strikes should be stopped," he said at a news conference in Oman's capital Muscat.

On Tuesday, US Secretary of State John Kerry said Russia should stop bombing opposition forces in Syria now that UN-led peace talks aimed at ending the war have started. —Xinhua

Ukraine's Poroshenko sees increased risk of open war with Russia

BERLIN — The risk of open war between Russia and Ukraine is greater than it was a year ago and Russian President Vladimir Putin has begun an "information war" against Germany, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko told the German newspaper *Bild*.

Poroshenko, who met German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin on Monday, said Russia had implemented "not one single point" of the Minsk accord, which includes a ceasefire between Ukrainian troops and pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine.

Russia was building up its military presence on the border with Ukraine, he said.

"The danger of an open war is greater than last year," Poroshenko told *Bild*, in an interview published in its Wednesday edition. "Russia is investing a great deal in war preparations."

Merkel pressed Putin by phone on Tuesday to use his influence to ensure that a ceasefire is upheld in Ukraine and that monitors from the OSCE European security organisation are granted free access to conflict areas, her spokesman said. —Reuters

EP to debate resolution on Serbia ahead of Thursday vote

STRASBOURG — The European Parliament will at Wednesday's plenary session debate a resolution on Serbia urging a soonest possible opening of key negotiation chapters 23 and 24 in the country's EU accession talks.

The resolution welcomes the progress in the normalisation of Belgrade-Pristina relations in 2015, calling on authorities to ensure a full and timely implementation of agreements reached to date as one of the conditions for Serbia's EU accession.

MEPs are scheduled to vote on the proposed resolution on Thursday, with Serbian Minister for European Integration Jadranka Joksimitovic to attend the debate and the vote. —Tanjug

14 jailed for factory explosion killing 146 in China

NANJING — Courts in east China's Jiangsu Province yesterday sentenced 14 people to prison terms for various offenses related to an explosion at a factory in 2014 that left 146 dead.

Sentences ranged from three to seven and half years for the crimes of causing a major labour safety accident or dereliction of duty, said a publicity official of Suzhou City.

The owner and top managers of Kunshan Zhongrong Metal Products Co Ltd., local firefighting officers and supervisors, and officials in charge of work safety supervision and environmental protection in Kunshan City were among those jailed.

The 14 stood trial at five different courts in Suzhou, including Kunshan City People's Court and Zhangjiagang City People's Court, which announced the verdicts yesterday. Kunshan is under the administrative jurisdiction of Suzhou City. —Xinhua

China, Malaysia pledge law enforcement cooperation

BEIJING — Senior security official Meng Jianzhu met Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi yesterday, pledging to enhance law enforcement cooperation.

Meng, head of the Commission for Political and Legal Affairs of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, called on the two sides to fight transnational crime together and protect the security and interests of their citizens.

Zahid said Malaysia is excited to work with China to maintain safety and stability in the region. —Xinhua

— OPINION —

Concrete results of the reform process

Kyaw Thura

SINCE its inception of Myanmar's new political system in 2011, the incumbent government placed an emphasis on the emergence of the market economy through reforms to the country's financial and tax policies. These efforts were all, ostensibly, aimed at bridging the gap between rich and poor in both rural and urban areas.

Priority has been given to crucial areas of socioeconomic development, including electrification and drinking water, agriculture and live-

stock, employment, tourism, trade and investment through the formulation of a 20-year national comprehensive development plan with the help of international organisations.

The national census taken in March 2014 was hailed as a great accomplishment because the country is in dire need of accurate statistics that will provide social, economic and demographic information on the entire population. This move has the potential to enable successive governments to speed up the on-going reforms through appropriate policies for development planning.

Concrete results in the reforms have earned the government more trust from the international community, resulting in the relaxation and suspension of some sanctions against the country. With economic sanctions lifted and the Foreign Investment Law enacted, the country saw foreign investment soar from US\$4.46 billion in 2011 to \$22.12 billion in 2015. As reported by the International Monetary Fund,

average annual earnings per capita in the country reached \$1,270 in 2015, up from \$800 in 2011.

According to official statistics, the government's revenue rose from \$774 million—3.2 percent of GDP—in the 2009-2010 fiscal year to \$4.9 billion—8.7 percent of GDP—in the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email khinmaungaye@hotmail@gmail.com with your name and title.

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

Everybody needs to Change

Khin Maung Myint

THE people had chosen the representatives, who they thought could lead the country on the right path to prosperity. The Second Pyithu Hlutaw is in session for the first time. The Amyothar and the Pyidaungsu Hlutaws will follow suit. In the coming few days, a new government will be ready to take office. A beginning of a new era has emerged. However, it would take sometimes to change the mindsets of our people that had taken root. Habits are hard to change, but with proper guidance it wouldn't be difficult.

If we really want to change, a change in the government only wouldn't be enough. The people of every walks of life need to change. First they must change their mindsets, especially their attitudes, mentalities, habits and outlooks. It is undeniable that over the decade, the moralities and the characters of the people had deteriorated. Being faced with poverty and hardships, it is no wonder the survival of the fittest mentality had taken root. Most people would resort to any means for their survival and later got greedier and wouldn't hesitate to do anything, legal or otherwise. These attitudes and mindsets should be changed, especially the government employees, as they are the ones who must run the administrative mechanisms and implement the objectives and plans laid down by the government. They constitute an indispensable force in the building of a nation. Thus they are required

to possess strong moralities and right mindsets, besides their qualifications and abilities.

While I was in the government service, I had come across some who were in positions of some authority became despicable authoritarians of their own making. The higher up the hierarchy, the more power and authority they craved and wielded them. As everyone of them was crazy for power and authority and when given the opportunity they became arrogant and irrational. During my entire career I had never said to my subordinates, "I am your officer so you must obey me without arguing". However, I had come across many who used to say that. Some people thought, just because he held a high position, he was the absolute authority.

I had served under one such person. At first he was quite meek and humble, but after he had tasted power and authority, he became arrogant. Once, I tried to reason with him and advised him not to be hasty in his decisions on a certain matter, but to wait and see how the other departments would handle that case. He arrogantly replied that though his rank may be the same as the others, he was different from them. His decision affected many employees. Some lost their jobs and some their seniorities. A few days later he realized his mistakes, but it was too late. One time he went even further and told me, as he held the highest position in the department, he would do as he liked, when I pointed out that his decision was not in line with the rules

and regulations.

These are just a few examples, there were many more, even worse than those. He should have learned a lesson after one blunder. I was even criticized by him, behind my back, as being "a bookish person", in Myanmar sense, meaning one who strictly adhered to the rules and regulations as to the letter. These are the words of those who ignored and by-passed every rules and regulations in the books. Later he ignored every procedures, even financial procedures and audit objections, and did everything his own way.

I do not mean to discredit anyone, but I'm citing these incidents as examples of the damage done to the civil service rules, regulations and procedures due to disregards by arrogant officials. As far as I had noticed, other former colonies of the British Empire like us, had maintained the old civil service structures introduced by the British. They are well tested and proven to be useful and would need only a few amendments to apply with the prevailing situations of the changing times. Take Singapore for instance. The late Mr. Lee Kuan Yew once commented that there was no proper civil service mechanism in Myanmar, like the one they had. On first hearing his remark, I was not pleased at all.

However, I later realized he was dead right. I assume they are still applying the civil service rules, regulations and procedures introduced by the British, wherever applicable with minor amendments and are prospering. I totally agree with him. Every rule, regu-

lation and procedure were either replaced or abolished in our country. The worst of all was, even the amended or the substituted rules, regulations or procedures were ignored or disregarded. The excuse was, it is important to get things done no matter how.

We are accustomed to the phrase "The Japanese Officer mentality". No insult intended, nor I bear any animosity toward the Japanese people. During the Second World War, we were being subjected to the rigid and aggressive attitudes of the Japanese soldiers. They didn't accept any excuse. They used to say "I don't care if the water canteen is leaky, I want the water". I can't imagine why our people adopted that despicable attitude, while abandoning the tested and proven practices. I believe that other former British colonies including Singapore, are still preserving most of the old civil service practices.

From my personal point of view, for our country to move forward, priority should be to salvage our collapsed civil service mechanism. Without a proper or set civil service structure, we would be solving the problems on case by case basis without any set procedure. However, it would take plenty of time as every aspects of the present civil service need to be revised. The best approach would be to study one sample country in the region, preferably Singapore, and adopt what would be applicable to us. I do not mean we must copy everything.

Another ingrained mentality was, most of our superiors do not

tolerate any disagreement or accept the advice from the subordinates. During my career days, I used to argue if my superior was in the wrong. I did that with good intentions and faiths, for the good of the department or the organization. However, one senior officer once told me not to argue with the superiors because though I may be right, the superiors wouldn't like it. Unless the superiors learn to listen to what the subordinates had to say, they are bound to make mistakes in their decisions. Such things are unproductive and thus unacceptable.

The subordinates too should be dutiful and sincere in the execution of their duties. They should be honest, truthful and abstain from unlawful dealings that would tarnish the image of their organizations. Above all they should be loyal to the country. An organization flourishes on team work---the team work amongst all employees, from the highest to the lowest. A good leader must be a good listener. The voices from below, not flatteries but good and reasonable views and suggestions, must be listened to and accepted. That would assist very much in the decision-making.

In conclusion, I would like to urge all the government employees to change their mindsets, their attitudes, their mentalities and discard their old ways of thinking and accept the fact that they are public servants. Their duties are to serve the people and the country and not any individual who can make or break them. Let's change for the future of the country.

Myanmar's Suu Kyi must step up change through reforms

Marilia Cioni
AGI Agenzia
Giornalistica Italia

MYANMAR'S transition has kicked off and now Aung San Suu Kyi must accelerate it with her leadership, launching new civil, institutional and economic reforms, Sandra Zampa, the president of the Friends of Burma Parliamentary Association explained to news agency AGI. However, the international community will have to support it in this irreversible course of events. On Monday, Feb. 1, Myanmar's new parliament, elected in the Nov 8 elections, will be instated, opening

a new phase for the country, under the rule of the party led by Aung San Suu Kyi, which has gained a large parliamentary majority. The Nobel prize laureate cannot be appointed president, because of her marriage with a British citizen, but will become vice president and will certainly play a central role in guiding Myanmar through the democratic transition. Ms Sandra Zampa explained: "Thanks to the momentum for political change given by the Nov. 8 election, the transition will be accelerated although it will take time before the country can become democratic. After the instatement of the new government, the democratic process, initiated with the national reconciliation, will

have to come into force, stabilising the role of the army and guaranteeing fundamental liberties. Probably also the Constitution drafted by the military in 2008 will have to be amended to enable Aung San Suu Kyi to be elected president and to put an end to ethnic conflicts. It will take time before the transition is finalised." Aung San Suu Kyi has recently proposed the establishment of a federal state to settle internal ethnic conflicts and achieve "national reconciliation" although the road still appears uphill and some fear that her leadership might be overshadowed.

In this respect, Ms Zampa said: "The road towards national reconciliation could be less ardu-

ous than expected. The incumbent government and the military have acknowledged her victory. Aung San Suu Kyi immediately convened them to launch her idea of a national reconciliation. It is the democratic and non-violent approach that she's had during all her life that makes her credible."

The leader of the National League for Democracy recently called for a ceasefire in the areas of ethnic conflict as a prerequisite for the country's democratic development. Ms Zampa continued: "Nothing is easy for her after more than 50 years of dictatorship, but now she and her party have been called to lead the country and this makes a difference. Her leadership

is extremely strong and she won't allow difficulties to weaken it." The challenges that face the Nobel prize laureate and all of Myanmar are many and not only concern civil rights but also numerous economic reforms, which were shyly introduced by the outgoing government. She added: "Aung San Suu Kyi's government will predictably undertake, as promised, to radically change the country, stricken by poverty and an oppressive dictatorship. Political, economic and social reforms will be a priority on Aung San Suu Kyi's agenda and her country will become a major player in Asia and throughout the world, as expected."

Migrants risk being "sold" as Thai shrimp industry cleans supply chain - activist

Author: Alisa Tang

BANGKOK — Migrant workers in Thai shrimp peeling sheds rife with labour violations are being laid off with no compensation, putting them at risk of being "sold" to other employers as seafood companies scramble to clean up their supply chains, an activist said.

Thailand's large seafood industry - with annual exports to the European Union alone estimated at \$641 million to \$813 million - has come under a barrage of bad publicity, with NGO and media reports detailing slavery, human trafficking and other labour violations both on land and at sea.

The government and industry have introduced a slew of measures in response to the criticism.

The Thai Frozen Food Association (TFFA) - an industry group of major exporting companies - announced last month its members would bring shrimp peeling in-house "to reduce the risk of any illegal labour practices in the Thai shrimp supply chain".

TFFA President Poj Aramwattananont dismissed activists' concerns and the "crazy news causing problems" for the industry.

Poj said TFFA had worked out agreements with workers at about 50 of the peeling sheds used by its members, but still had to re-

solve issues with eight others.

"We have been working on resolving this problem since the beginning of this year. The workers at the sheds have been taken care of, given new jobs and compensated," Poj said by telephone on Thursday.

Seafood giant Thai Union Group announced this week it was hiring 1,200 workers previously employed at external shrimp peeling sheds to work in its factories.

But activists say many migrants in the peeling sheds are being laid off with no warning or compensation, while many are still in debt to brokers and employers.

"It's unacceptable the way they've handled it. We heard from the workers that they got absolutely no compensation. They just got moved to another workplace, and this is very risky behaviour," activist Andy Hall told the Thomson Reuters Foundation on Thursday.

Compensation Obligatory

By law, employers must compensate laid-off workers who have been employed four months or longer with one month's salary, or up to a year's wages for those employed six years or longer.

"These workers are in debt bondage, and if the shrimp shed closes, and they're indebted to brokers and employers, then they can be sold on," Hall said.

The U.S. State Department



Tae (C), a 13-year-old girl from Myanmar, peels shrimp at a factory in Samut Sakhon, nearly 40 km (25 miles) south of Bangkok in 2007. PHOTO: REUTERS

downgraded Thailand in 2014 to its "tier 3" of worst offenders for human trafficking, while the European Union gave it a "yellow card" in April for failing to clamp down on problems in its fishing industry.

An EU delegation is visiting Thailand this week to assess the country's progress in battling illegal and unregulated fishing.

The London-based Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) welcomed the TFFA's move to stop

using shrimp peeling sheds, but urged companies to offer in-house employment to workers in the subcontracted sheds.

"This shortening of the supply chain should provide a welcome improvement in transparency and should also end the culture of very poor working conditions when subcontracted out," ETI's food and farming expert Nick Kightley said in a statement.

Beyond peeling sheds, Thailand has problems on shrimp

farms and hatcheries, which are often located in remote areas, beyond the reach of civil society organisations, Hall said.

At a recent meeting with shrimp farm owners, he said he heard many shrimp farmers defending the confiscation of passports "to prevent them from getting their passports wet"; bans on workers leaving farms to stop theft; and long working hours to ensure shrimp are fed at the right times.—Reuters

Spirax Sarco and MES sign MoU



Officials exchange the documentary at the signing ceremony.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY SPIRAX SARCO

BRITISH based Spirax Sarco, the global leader and experts in steam system solutions, and the Myanmar Engineering Society (MES) have today entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the provision of world class industrial engineering training in the realm of steam and its application in Myanmar's energy and manufacturing sectors.

The course is provided via MES's Mechanical Engineering Division to graduating students and members with the aim of applying theoretical engineering

principles to real-life industrial applications. This will raise technical and engineering skills within Myanmar's manufacturing workforce, developing the engineering profession and supporting the industrialisation of the nation.

Steam is still the most efficient and cost effective way of transferring heat across the world's industry with applications in all areas of manufacturing from garment pressing to oil refining and is vital to electricity generation. Understanding the principles of steam will aid engineers and in-

dustry to operate more efficiently, reduce operating costs and improve product quality the growth and global competitiveness of the sector. By providing the training Spirax Sarco and the MES are equipping engineers to reduce energy and steam consumption by reducing carbon emissions, greenhouse gases and vapours, all helping drive Myanmar's industry towards sustainability and co-operation with the environment as the sector grows.

The signing of the MoU took place on Tuesday 2nd February at the Park Royal Hotel, Yangon. Spirax Sarco and the MES were joined by H.E. Andrew Patrick,

the British Ambassador, the MES President U Win Khaing, the board of MES, local and regional representatives of Spirax Sarco and over 100 guests from academia and industry.

The MoU was signed by the MES President U Win Khaing and Spirax Sarco's Country Manager Mr Dave Forte.

During the commemoration the first cohort of students who attended the primary course in December 2015 were awarded with their certificates.

Courses will run across 2016 in Yangon with the expansion to the Mandalay and Taunggyi later this year.—GNLM

Syrian army threatens to encircle Aleppo as talks falter



A man rides a motorcycle past damaged buildings in al-Myassar neighbourhood of Aleppo, Syria on 31 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

BEIRUT/AMMAN/GENEVA — A Syrian military offensive backed by heavy Russian air strikes threatened to cut critical rebel supply lines into the northern city of Aleppo on Tuesday, while the warring sides said peace talks had not started despite a UN statement they had.

UN envoy Staffan de Mistura announced the formal start on Monday of the first attempt in two years to negotiate an end to a war that has killed 250,000 people, caused a refugee crisis in the region and Europe and empowered Islamic State militants.

But both opposition and government representatives have since said the talks had not in fact begun and fighting on the ground raged on without constraint.

De Mistura acknowledged that a collapse of the Geneva talks was always possible. "If there is a failure this time after we tried twice at conferences in Geneva, for Syria there will be no more hope. We must absolutely try to ensure that there is no failure," he told Swiss television RTS.

The opposition cancelled a meeting with him on Tuesday afternoon, and issued a statement condemning "a massive acceleration of Russian and regime military aggression on Aleppo and Homs", calling it a threat to the political process.

Rebels described the assault north of Aleppo as the most intense yet. One commander said opposition-held areas of the di-

vided city were at risk of being encircled entirely by the government and allied militia, appealing to foreign states that back the rebels to send more weapons.

The main Syrian opposition council said after meeting de Mistura on Monday it had not, and would not negotiate unless the government stopped bombarding civilian areas, lifted blockades on besieged towns and released detainees. Conditions are dire in a number of areas under siege by both sides, with many close to starvation. However, the Syrian Red Crescent delivered 14 truckloads of aid to the town of al-Tal north of Damascus on Tuesday, in an area surrounded by forces allied to the government.—Reuters

Plane of Somalia's Daallo Airlines makes emergency landing after catching fire

MOGADISHU — A plane of Somalia's Daallo Airlines made an emergency landing Tuesday in the capital Mogadishu after it caught fire a few minutes after taking off, injuring two people, officials said.

The Daallo Airlines flight D3159 was en route to Djibouti from Somalia after suspected bomb blasted a hole through the side of the board or fuselage just five minutes after the aircraft took off from Mogadishu airport, Air Transport and Civil Aviation Minister Ali Ahmed Jama said.

Jama said the government has launched investigations into the explosion, confirming that two passengers were injured while one was still missing.

"An explosion happened inside the Airbus D3159 belonging to Daalo Airline company, two people were injured, one is missing, but security forces have launched investigations to establish the cause," Jama told journalists late on

Tuesday. However, witnesses said at least one person was blown out of the aircraft by the impact of the explosion. Jama said the plane which was at between 10,000-14,000 feet was forced to return to Mogadishu's airport after a bang was heard on board, sparking fire.

"The pilot requested us to land and we accepted and later extended assistance to passengers," Jama said, adding that investigations are under way to determine the cause.

Ali Abdi Wardhere who was one of the passengers on board said the injured people were rushed to the AMISOM hospital while one passenger went missing.

"I was sleeping when the incident was happening, but running people woke me up amid fear and shock. The pilot did his best and brought us back. All the passengers were rescued apart from two people who were injured," Wardhere told Xinhua.—Xinhua

Iraqi Kurdish leader calls for non-binding independence referendum



Iraq's Kurdistan region's President Massoud Barzani. PHOTO: REUTERS

ERBIL, (Iraq) — Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region should hold a non-binding referendum on independence, its president said on Tuesday, despite the numerous crises it is facing.

Massoud Barzani has previously called for a referendum but set no timetable for a proposed vote.

The chaos created by Islamic State's occupation of swathes of Iraq and Syria has given Kurds a chance to further their long-held dream of independence. But the region is currently struggling to avert an economic collapse.

"The time has come and the situation is now suitable for the Kurdish people to make a decision through a referendum on their fate," Barzani said in a statement on his website.

"That referendum does not mean proclaiming statehood, but rather to know the will and opinion of the Kurdish people about independence and for the Kurdish political leadership to execute the will of the people at the appropriate time and conditions." In recent years Iraq's Kurds have sought to maximise their autonomy, building their own pipeline to Turkey and exporting oil independently as relations with the federal government in Baghdad frayed over power and revenue sharing.

The global slump in oil prices however has compounded existing economic problems, bringing the region to the point of insolvency. Regional powers have historically opposed Kurdish aspirations for independence, especially neighbouring states with large Kurdish minorities of their own. The United States also says it wants the Kurds to remain part of Iraq.

"If the people of Kurdistan are waiting for someone else to present the right of self-determination as a gift, independence will never be obtained. That right exists and the people of Kurdistan must demand it and put it into motion," Barzani said. Some view such calls for independence as an attempt to divert attention from internal issues and rally Kurds behind Barzani, whose mandate as president expired last year, but remains in office.—Reuters

Canadian who says he fought Islamic State detained in Australia

SYDNEY — A Canadian who said he fought alongside Kurdish forces against Islamic State in Syria has been detained while trying to enter Australia and told he will be deported, his father said yesterday.

Richard Somerville said his son Robert, a Canadian veteran who previously fought in Afghanistan, was detained at Brisbane airport on Tuesday after he told immigration officials he had spent seven months fighting alongside the Syrian Kurdish militant group YPG last year.

"I haven't seen my son in 20

years," Richard Somerville, who lives in Queensland, told Reuters. "I was absolutely shocked when he called to say he was being detained."

Australian Border Force and Immigration Department officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

"The basis for the visa cancellation is at this stage unclear," Somerville's Melbourne-based lawyer, Jessie Smith, told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. "It may have political undertones and could be contestable." Australia introduced

sweeping security reforms in 2014 over concern at the number of its citizens heading to Iraq and Syria to fight. About 110 Australians are estimated to be involved in the conflict.

It is illegal for Australian citizens to support any armed group in Syria and fighters face life in prison upon return.

The Syrian Kurds have established control over wide areas of northern Syria since the country erupted into civil war in 2011, and the YPG has become a major partner in the US-led coalition against Islamic State.—Reuters

Sleep tight: genome secrets could help beat the bedbug's bite



Male and female adult bedbugs in comparison to apple seeds is shown in this handout photo provided by the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), in Washington, on 2 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

WASHINGTON — They emerge from their hiding places at night, driven to slake their thirst for human blood. Vampires? No. Bedbugs!

These tiny insects have staged a global resurgence in the past two decades after being nearly eradicated in many regions, but scientists on Tuesday unveiled a complete genetic map of the bedbug that could guide efforts to foil the resilient parasite.

"This is an enormous new tool for researchers interested in controlling this pest," said George Amato, director of the Sackler Institute for Comparative Genomics at the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

"Bed bugs are now very widespread in most major cities around the world, and they have increasingly become resistant to insecticides, making them harder to control," American Museum of Natural History entomologist Louis Sorkin said.

The scientists identified genes responsible for their insecticide resistance, genes involved in mitigating the traumatic effects of their brand of copulation and anti-coagulant genes useful for an insect that makes blood its exclusive source of nutrients and water. These genetic traits may present vulnerabilities that could be exploited with future insecticides. The genome also harbors numerous genes that originated in bacteria, including one that helps bedbugs metabolize vitamin B. This indicates antibiotics that target bacteria beneficial to bedbugs could be used to control the insects. During mating, male bedbugs stab a V-shaped area of a female's abdomen with their sickle-shaped genitalia. Females possess genes that control a protein that makes that part of their anatomy stronger and better able to withstand this rough sex.

Adult bed bugs measure roughly a quarter inch (5 mm) and

are reddish-brown. Their bites are not known to transmit disease but some people have very strong allergic reactions, Weill Cornell Medicine geneticist Christopher Mason said. "Bed bugs will hide in a variety of places throughout a home. Commonly, they will be on the seams of couches and beds or hidden within the frames of furniture. They have been found in electrical sockets, in drawers or where floors and walls meet," University of Cincinnati entomologist Joshua Benoit added. Bedbugs, found on every continent except Antarctica, have been biting people for thousands of years. Widespread insecticide use in homes after World War II eliminated them from many regions but bedbugs rebounded by developing pesticide resistance, thriving in heated homes and hitching rides in luggage in international travel. The research was published in the journal *Nature Communications*.—Reuters

US Red Cross asks blood donors to wait 28 days after visiting Zika areas

WASHINGTON — The American Red Cross appealed on Tuesday to prospective donors who have visited Zika outbreak zones to wait at least 28 days before giving blood, but said the risk of transmitting the virus through blood donations remained "extremely" low in the continental United States.

The "self-deferral" notice for blood donors should apply to those who have visited Mexico, the Caribbean, or Central or South America during the past four weeks, the Red Cross said in a statement.

The Washington-based nonprofit disaster relief agency also asked that donors who give blood and subsequently develop symptoms consistent with Zika within 14 days of donating to notify the Red Cross so the product can be quarantined.

Cases of the Zika virus, a mosquito-borne illness linked to a dangerous birth defect called microcephaly — marked by abnormally small head size — and to a serious autoimmune disorder called Guillain-Barre syndrome that can cause paralysis, has been reported in more than 30 countries and territories.

The most common symptoms of infection are flu-like, such as aches and fever. About 80 percent of people infected show no symptoms whatsoever, said Susan Stramer, a microbiologist for the Red Cross.

There is no blood test for the disease.

Still, "the risk of transmission through blood donation continues to be extremely low in the continental US," the Red Cross said in its statement.

Stramer said even in Hawaii, which is currently experiencing an outbreak of another

mosquito-borne tropical disease, dengue fever, the risk of contamination of the blood supply from Zika is low because there has been no known transmission within the islands.

The travel-related donor self-deferral notice, the first measure of its kind taken by the Red Cross for a mosquito-borne disease, came a day after the American Association of Blood Banks, an accrediting organization, called for action, Stramer said. The Red Cross statement came as the first known case of Zika virus transmission in the United States was reported in Texas on Tuesday by local health officials, who said it likely was contracted through sex and not a mosquito bite. The World Health Organisation on Monday declared an international public health emergency over the virus. Stramer said both developments coincided with the self-deferral notice but did not prompt it.—Reuters



A health worker shows a "Spinosa" (Saccharopolyspora spinosa) tablet that the Health Ministry placed on deposits of natural water, to attack the reproduction of the aedes aegypti mosquito, in La Carpio slum near San Jose, Costa Rica on 2 February.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Prehistoric man enjoyed roasted tortoise appetisers: Israeli archaeologist

JERUSALEM — Prehistoric cave-dwellers enjoyed munching on tortoises roasted in their shells as an appetiser or side dish, Ran Barkai, an archaeologist at Tel Aviv University, said on Tuesday.

Barkai helped lead a research team who found 400,000-year-old tortoise shells and bones in a cave in Israel that showed hunter-gatherers butchered and cooked tortoises as part of a diet dominated by large animals and vegetation.

Burn marks were found on the shells discovered in the Qesem cave, as well as signs they were cracked open and cut marks indicating the animal was butchered using flint knives.

"Now we know they ate tor-

toises in a rather sophisticated way," Barkai said. "It would have been a supplement — an appetiser, dessert or a side dish - to the meat and fat from large animals."

Qesem cave was uncovered during road work in 2000 and was believed to be inhabited for about 200,000 years.

The site has offered scientists a rare insight into human evolution and accounted for many research papers.

Bones scattered throughout the cave have already suggested a calorie-rich prehistoric menu of horses, fallow deer and wild ox. A study last year, based on plaque found on teeth, showed the cave's inhabitants also ate plant-based material.—Reuters



Professor Avi Gopher (L) and Dr Ran Barkai, researchers from Tel Aviv University's Institute of Archaeology, stand at Qesem cave, an excavation site near the town of Rosh Ha'ayin, east of Tel Aviv, in 2010. PHOTO: REUTERS

Ebola and civil war trauma threaten Liberia's economic growth



A boy washes his hands as part of Ebola prevention methods, before school starts in Paynesville, Liberia, in 2015.

PHOTO: REUTERS

MONTERRADO, (Liberia) — Sitting in a dusty schoolyard in rural Liberia, mental health clinician Dickson Korfeh watches as pupils dance, sing and play games in their break, and focuses on those who do not take part.

He frowns as he studies their body language and behaviour for signs of grief and trauma, common in a nation haunted by a 14-year civil war and devastated by Ebola — and with one-tenth of the population suffering from mental illness.

“There is a sadness in schools as pupils have

lost family and friends to Ebola... some are suffering from depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),” the former nurse said.

“But children do not have the vocabulary to express their suffering, so we analyse the way they act, to look for clues.”

Korfeh is one of more than 150 newly trained mental health clinicians in a country that spends less than one percent of its health budget on mental health, a neglected and stigmatised part of a fragile and under-resourced health system.

The 1989-2003 civil war left almost half the population with symptoms of PTSD or depression and created a mental health crisis which was deepened by the Ebola epidemic, experts say.

“Both crises saw bodies pile up in the streets and people flee in panic,” said Janice Cooper of the Carter Centre. “This led to a lack of trust and social cohesion, which fuel trauma.”

Trauma not only harms communities, but also hinders economic growth, according to the World Bank, which hopes a focus on mental health will kickstart

Liberia's struggling economy.

It is working with the Carter Center on a \$3 million project to train health staff in psychosocial treatment, set up support groups, lead community reconciliation efforts and tackle stigma.

“Trauma can affect economic output if children struggle at school, people become less productive at work or withdraw from society,” said World Bank public health expert Carmen Carpio.

“Mental health issues cannot be seen in isolation.”—Reuters

Haiti opposition rejects president's plan for interim government

PORT-AU-PRINCE — Haiti's opposition on Tuesday rejected a proposal by outgoing President Michel Martelly to form a temporary government to organise elections, after a run-off presidential vote was cancelled last month amid violence and allegations of fraud.

Martelly, who heads Haiti's government, is due to leave office on Sunday. A 24 January run-off to choose his successor was cancelled after sometimes violent protests erupted against what the opposition said was fraud in the first round.

Under a proposal drawn up by Martelly and parliamentary leaders, Prime Minister Evans Paul would resign and be replaced by a candidate to be approved by parliament, government-allied lawmaker Gary Bodeau said. A source at Paul's office said on Monday the prime minister had drafted a resignation letter, and a source at the presidential palace said early on Tuesday that the letter had been received. However, an aide to Paul said later on Tuesday the letter was ultimately never sent, and that therefore his resignation had not been tendered. Lawmaker Bodeau said the eventual new prime minister would rule jointly with a council of ministers after Martelly, a former singer known as “Sweet Micky,” leaves

office and until new elections were organised by May.

But run-off candidate Jude Celestin's party and other opposition groups want an interim government to be organised by a Supreme Court judge.

“We reject the current initiative by Martelly and Parliament. It is a joke,” said Samuel Madistin, spokesman for a group of eight opposition parties.

Celestin refused to take part in the January vote, which he called “a farce.” The impoverished Caribbean nation has been trying since the 1980s to build a stable democracy in the wake of the decades-long rule of the Duvalier family. Senator Carl Murat Cantave, a government ally, said Martelly had proposed three possible interim prime ministers, including Paul, an option unlikely to be accepted by the opposition. Senator Andris Riche and businessman Reynold Deeb also were put forward, Cantave said.

“They are allies of Martelly and we don't want them. This initiative is null and void,” said Volcy Assad, from the Petit Desalin party that is organizing street protests. The opposition said elections cannot be organised under Martelly, or Paul, who was considered to be part of the president's administration.—Reuters

First US Zika virus transmission reported, attributed to sex

AUSTIN, (Texas) — The first known case of Zika virus transmission in the United States was reported in Texas on Tuesday by local health officials, who said it likely was contracted through sex and not a mosquito bite, a day after the World Health Organisation declared an international public health emergency.

The virus, linked to severe birth defects in thousands of babies in Brazil, is spreading rapidly in the Americas, and WHO officials on Tuesday expressed concern that it could hit Africa and Asia as well. Zika had been thought to be spread by the bite of mosquitoes of the Aedes genus, so sexual con-

tact as a mode of transmission would be a potentially alarming development.

The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed it was the first US Zika case in someone who had not traveled abroad in the current outbreak, said CDC Director Dr Tom Frieden on Twitter.

However, the CDC has not investigated how the virus was transmitted. After this case, the CDC advised men to consider using condoms after traveling to areas with the Zika virus. Pregnant women should avoid contact with semen from men exposed to the virus.

The Dallas County Department of health said

on Twitter that the person was infected through sexual contact with someone who had travelled to Venezuela. The person infected did not travel to the South American country, county health officials said. The Texas Department of State Health Services was slightly more cautious in its assessment, saying in a statement, “Case details are being evaluated, but the possibility of sexual transmission from an infected person to a non-infected person is likely in this case.”

County authorities said there were no reports of the virus being transmitted by mosquitoes in the Texas county.

Previously, internation-

al health officials had noted one US case of possible person-to-person sexual transmission. But the Pan American Health Organization said more evidence was needed to confirm sexual contact as a means of Zika transmission. The medical literature also has one case in which the virus was detected in semen. The virus has been reported in more than 30 countries and linked to microcephaly, in which babies have abnormally small heads and improperly developed brains.

The American Red Cross on Tuesday asked blood donors who have traveled to Zika virus outbreak areas such as Mexico,



An employee examines a tube with the label 'Zika virus' at Genekam Biotechnology AG in Duisburg, Germany, on 2 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

the Caribbean, or Central or South America to wait at least 28 days before donating. However, the risk of transmitting the virus

through blood donations remained “extremely” low in the continental United States, the disaster relief agency said.—Reuters

Trump: 'Tinge' of sadness over losing Iowa

MILFORD — Donald Trump, the New York businessman seeking the Republican US presidential nomination, said on Tuesday he felt "a tinge" of disappointment after losing to Texas Senator Ted Cruz in the Iowa caucuses.

Cruz bested Trump with 28 per cent of caucus-goers' pledges on Monday compared to Trump's 24 percent. Florida Senator Marco Rubio came in a close third with 23 per cent.

Asked by a reporter if he felt at all bad about the result, Trump said, "There's a tinge...I probably had a tinge because a poll came out that said I was five points ahead."

In the weeks before the

Iowa caucuses, Trump held leads in almost every statewide and national poll though his dominance in Iowa wobbled after Cruz won a key endorsement from a local evangelical Christian leader.

Trump also said there was a chance his decision to skip a Fox News debate among Republican candidates on Thursday might have hurt him in the caucuses.

Asked before a rally in Milford, New Hampshire on Tuesday evening if he planned to change his campaign strategy, Trump told a news conference he felt confident in his methods, but he was adding more town hall-style events.

But any humility was fleeting as Trump went on to say he beat Rubio by getting support from almost 3,000 Iowans — "That's a lot of people" — and that he had gotten a larger percentage of support than any other Republican candidate in history "except for that one number," he added, referring to Cruz's win.

He also said he had not tried very hard to win Iowa. "I didn't devote tremendous time to it," he said. "I didn't expect to do so well."

Trump fielded question after question from reporters about why he thought he lost and whether it made him anxious about primary elections in other states ahead of the 8 November presidential

election.

When he took the stage before more than a thousand people, Trump's swagger had returned. He criticised the media for focusing more on Rubio's third-place showing than his second, calling journalists "miserable people" and encouraging the crowd to boo them.

Fans interviewed before the rally said Trump's loss did not bother them.

"I think he's done pretty well from the start," said Eli Johnson, 33, from nearby Brookline, New Hampshire. "He did pretty well considering Cruz was praying with everyone at every rally (in Iowa) and they're a really religious state." — Reuters



Republican US presidential candidate Donald Trump makes a face at his caucus night rally in Des Moines, Iowa on 1 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

Security stepped up as TPP signing looms in New Zealand

WELLINGTON — Police were stepping up their presence in New Zealand's biggest city of Auckland Wednesday as critics prepared last ditch protests against the signing of the controversial Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal.

Ministers from the 12 participating countries will sign the deal at the city's central SkyCity convention center and casino at 11:30 am local time on Thursday.

Business and farming leaders have been voicing support for the world's biggest trade deal, which involves the major economies of Japan and the United States, along with Canada, Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Viet Nam.

However, doctors, education groups, environmental campaigners, public serv-

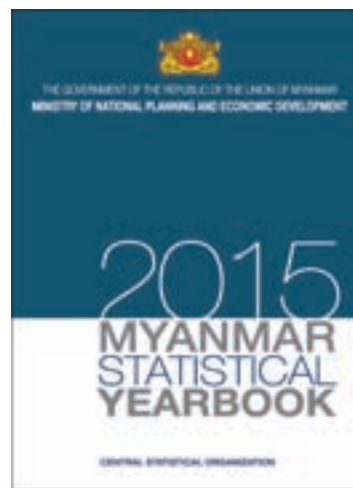
ants, indigenous Maori, and a host of other special interest groups have expressed renewed concern that aspects of the 6,000-page deal will undermine national sovereignty in the member states by giving undue power to corporations.

New Zealand Police have come under fire for approaching activists in the run-up to Thursday's event to ask what their movements will be on the day, a measure that critics say is intended to intimidate and undermines free speech. The anti-TPP group, It's Our Future, is anticipating thousands of people will turn out for a protest march in downtown Auckland and other New Zealand cities Thursday, saying polls show the majority of New Zealanders oppose the deal, which was negotiated in secret.

The New Zealand Med-

ical Association, representing doctors, repeated its call Thursday for an independent assessment of the TPP on the country's health system, while the New Zealand Nurses Organisation said the government had ignored concerns over how the agreement would affect healthcare. The New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (CTU) said the agreement would put working people at a further disadvantage, while giving more power to big business.

"There is much that can and should be done internationally to ensure that working people are valued more, but instead this agreement ensures that those that have power and money will have more power and money and those who don't will even have less," CTU economist Bill Rosenberg said in a statement. — Xinhua



Myanmar Statistical Yearbook 2015

has been published by Central Statistical Organization as international statistical bulletins with new graphic, content and design. It is mentioned the methodology sheets on statistical sources, a glossary and an analytical index. It can take the better response to the information scope and depth of user needs. It is available Hard copy as well as CD-Rom two-volume prices at the kyat (15,000/-), if you buy a single CD-Rom (10,000/-) will be sold out.

It is available for the purchase at Central Statistical Organization, Office No(32), NayPyiTaw, Myanmar, Central Statistical Organization, Yangon Branch No(1), ThitSar Road, Yankin Township, Yangon and SarPayBeikMan Store (NayPyiTaw, Yangon) will be purchased.

Acknowledgement for wedding reception

We would like to thank everyone who attended the wedding reception of **Dr Saw Thandar Tin (M.B.;B.S-YGN)**, daughter of Dr Kyi Soe (Director-General (Retd), D.S.A (14) and Capt Daw Su Su (Retd) (NTW 4) of Yangon Region to **Dr Zin Wai Naing (Ph.D (Medical Science), (U.N.S.W))**, son of U Lay Naing (Director, New Way Industries Ltd) and Daw Than Sein (Senior Assistant Teacher (Retd)) of Yangon Region, at Novotel Max Yangon Hotel on 28-1-2016, Thursday.

Special thanks go to: Prof Dr Ye Myint Kyaw, a specialist paediatrician, and wife Daw Khin Yi Mon who put garlands on the bride and the groom; Yangon Region Minister for Electric Power and Industries U Nyan Tun Oo and wife Daw Khin Saw Ohmar who put the wedding rings on the bride and groom, Vice President Tharay Sithu U Nyan Tun and wife, Retired Deputy Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U Nanda Kyaw Swa and wife, Retired Chairman of the social development committee of Pyithu Hluttaw U Maung Maung Swe and wife and Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Vice-Admiral Tin Aung Hsan and wife, who sent wedding gifts to the reception; to Maha Tharay Sithu Lt-Gen Ye Myint (Retd) and wife Daw Tin Lin Myint, Major-General Ket Sein (Retd) and wife, Major-General Chit Than (Retd) and wife, retired directors-general, deputy directors-general and directors and employees of the former Health Planning Department, relatives and dignitaries, senior military and civilian officers, friends from the Defence Services Academy's 14th Intake and Defence Services Nursing training school's 4th Intake; to Vocalist and Actress Yadanar Maing who showered the flowers and Khaing Mar Shin Thant who carried wedding flower basket; to Dr Su Lin Hlaing, Dr Su Sandar Aye and Dr May Thin Kyu who carried the wedding garlands and wedding rings; to Dr Chan Pyai Phyo Aung and Maung Thiha Soe, the best men, Ma May Thu and Dr May Myat Cho, the bridesmaids during the ceremony; to Tekkatho Ko Ko Zaw who acted as the master of the ceremonies, Yi Yi Thant and Music Band, U Tin Oo Lay, Chairman of Myanmar Music Asi-ayone, make-up artist Lin Lin (Taunggyi) and group, Lin Lin who made floral arrangements, U Soe Thein and Daw Baby from True Gems and Jewellery, U Kyaw Min, Daw Ohmanr Kyu and staff of the Yes I Do Myanmar for pre-wedding photo taking and video recording and those who attended the wedding reception.

Dr Zin Wai Naing + Dr Saw Thandar Tin, and parents of both sides

ADVERTISE WITH US!

- We are Myanmar's highest-circulating English language daily newspaper
- We offer competitive ad rates
- Your ad will be seen by a wide and influential readership

Email:
adv.gnlm@gmail.com,
Phone:
09 250107962,
09 251022355

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV YANGON STAR VOY NO (050 7JR)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV YANGON STAR VOY NO (050 7JR) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 4.2.2016 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 CMA CGM

Phone No: 2301185

Cosby seeks to block sex assault prosecution in Pennsylvania



Actor and comedian Bill Cosby (C) arrives for a preliminary hearing on sexual assault charges at the Montgomery County Courthouse in Norristown, Pennsylvania on 2 February, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

NORRISTOWN (Pa) — Comedian Bill Cosby on Tuesday sought to derail Pennsylvania prosecutors' effort to make him stand trial on sexual assault charges, contending that a deal reached over a decade ago gave him immunity from prosecution.

An entertainer who built a

career on family-friendly comedy, Cosby now faces accusations from more than 50 women that he sexually assaulted them, often after plying them with drugs and alcohol, in a series of attacks dating to the 1960s.

Prosecutors late last year charged Cosby, 78, with sexual-

ly assaulting Andrea Constand, a former basketball coach at his alma mater Temple University, just days before the statue of limitations to bring charges ran out.

Constand's allegations are the only ones to have resulted in criminal charges against Cosby, although he also faces a series of civil lawsuits related to alleged rapes. Cosby has long denied wrongdoing, and his lawyers have asked the judge to dismiss the Constand case.

Former Montgomery County District Attorney Bruce Castor testified on Tuesday that he decided in 2005 not to bring charges over the Constand allegations.

A 2005 press release in which Castor said Cosby would never be prosecuted was read out in court, with defense attorneys contending it represented a non-prosecution agreement. No other written record of that agreement has been presented by either side.—Reuters

Supermodel Cindy Crawford, turning 50, denies plans to retire



Cindy Crawford. PHOTO: REUTERS

LOS ANGELES — Supermodel Cindy Crawford on Monday denied reports that she planned to retire from modeling this month, saying she had made no final statements and that her "retirement" was a running joke in her family.

Crawford appeared to suggest in an interview with United Airlines magazine *Rhapsody*, published on Monday, that she would quit modeling when she turns 50 on 20 February.

But on Monday she wrote on her Instagram page that "not all headlines tell the whole story." "Every year, I tell my kids I'm retiring. It's a running joke in our family," she wrote. "And yet every year, opportunities pop up that really excite me. While it's true that I'm eager to

shift my focus a bit to concentrate on my businesses, friends and family — I'm not making any final statements."

"I have loved being part of the fashion industry for the past 30 years — and if that time has taught me anything, it's this: never say never," she added.

Crawford became one of the first and best-known supermodels in the 1980s and 1990s, appearing on runways for the likes of Chanel, Christian Dior and Valentino. She stepped back from full-time modeling some 15 years ago, but is currently the face of French fashion house Balmain's spring/summer 2016 fashion campaign along with fellow veteran supermodels Naomi Campbell and Claudia Schiffer.—Reuters

Vin Diesel is a warm person: Deepika Padukone

NEW DELHI — Deepika Padukone is off to shoot her debut Hollywood outing "XXX: The Return of Xander Cage" and the actress says she is going to enjoy the experience of working with superstar Vin Diesel. Deepika, 30, who recently met Diesel to discuss the film with him, said the "Fast & Furious" star is a generous person.

"I just happened to have four interactions with Vin Diesel. He is a warm person and very generous like the other co-stars I have worked with. I am hoping that it will be a fun experience. It's important to enjoy the experience and everything else will follow,"

she told reporters here on the sidelines of NDTV Indian of the Year award last evening. Her "Bajirao Mastani" co-star Ranveer Singh and Irrfan Khan, who worked with Deepika in "Piku", wished the actress luck for her Hollywood film.

"We are really proud of you. Since you are leaving tonight to shoot your big Hollywood blockbuster, we wish you all the best. May you conquer the new venture and make us proud like the way you always have," Ranveer said.

Terming his experience of shooting with Deepika one of the best ones, Irrfan said, "You have

every possible capability to conquer Hollywood with you looks and talent. I had one of the best experiences of shooting with you in 'Piku'. You just made the cranky role in Piku so endearing.." Deepika, who is considered one of the highly paid actresses in the industry, said it's good that pay disparity in Bollywood is getting addressed now.—PTI

Lady Gaga to perform 'multisensory' Bowie tribute at Grammys

LOS ANGELES — Lady Gaga will lead what organisers called an "experiential tribute" to late British singer David Bowie at the Grammy Awards this month.

The Recording Academy said Gaga would perform three or four of Bowie's songs in a "multisensory testament" to Bowie's creativity as a musician whose work constantly evolved over five decades.

Bowie's unexpected death at age 69 in January after a secret cancer diagnosis shocked fans around the world and came just two days after the release of a critically-acclaimed new album "Blackstar."

Gaga, a six-time Grammy winner, is also known for reinventing herself many times since she rose to fame in 2008. She had already been booked to perform at the Grammy Awards in Los Angeles on 15 February. "But when David passed — almost in a single moment — we knew we had to change direction," Grammy ceremony executive producer Ken Ehrlich said in a statement.

"We immediately spoke and agreed that she (Lady Gaga) should be the one to honor David. She's perfect for it," Ehrlich added.

Music producer Nile Rodgers, who worked on Bowie's 1983 album "Let's Dance," will be the musical director for the tribute.—Reuters

Adele: No permission given to political campaigns to use her music

LONDON — British singer Adele made clear on Monday that she has not given permission for anyone to use her music for political campaigns. Adele's spokesman issued a statement after Republican US presidential contender Donald Trump played Adele's 2011 hit song "Rolling in the Deep" at rallies in Iowa, and Mike Huckabee released a YouTube parody last week of her 2015 single "Hello."

"Adele has not given permission for her music to be used for any political campaigning," the singer's spokesman said in an email. The spokesman did not say whether Adele, whose new album

"25" was the biggest seller in the United States last year, was contemplating legal steps to prevent the unauthorized use of her music.

Adele is far from the only pop or rock star to have seen politicians co-opt their music for political purposes. Rock band R.E.M. lashed out in September at Trump for using its hit song, "It's the End of the World" at a rally, and Frankie Sullivan complained about the use of the band's 1982 hit "Eye of the Tiger," at a news conference in September featuring Kim Davis, a county clerk in Kentucky briefly jailed for refusing to issue gay marriage licenses.—Reuters



Singer Lady Gaga arrives at the 73rd Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California on 10 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

Asleep in Jesus

Ko Thu Wun alias Than Boo, 33

Grandson of late U Tun Min and Daw Aye Khin residing in Yangon, son of late U Ngwe Soe and Daw Win Win Min alias Daw Mie Mie Tun Min, beloved elder brother of Ma Hsu alias Gyan Gyan, beloved younger brother of Aung Ngwe Soe, Okkar Aye Min, Myat Htet Aung Min, beloved elder brother of Khine Moe Aung Min and May Wei Thi Aye Min, passed away at Vejthani Hospital in Bangkok at 8:05pm (Myanmar Standard Time) on 31 January 2016 (Sunday). Funeral service will be held at the Judson Baptist Church on Pyay Road at 9:00am on 5 February 2016 (Friday). Entombment will be made at Yeway Christian cemetery.

The buses will leave home at 8:15am.

Bereaved family

‘World’s Cutest Museum’ in Toyama attracts many visitors

TOYAMA (Japan) — A gallery touted as “The World’s Cutest Museum” in Toyama on the Sea of Japan coast has drawn more than 10,000 visitors since opening in March last year.

Art collector Seiki Asai opened the small museum in his hometown inside an old refurbished house, as he wanted to offer local residents a place to gather. The gallery exhibits paintings collected by Asai, a former pharmaceutical company executive, over four decades.

Special exhibitions have featured works by such eminent Japanese painters as Taikan Yokoyama, Kaii Higashiyama and Ikuo Hirayama.

Asai, 85, first planned to name the museum, whose floor space totals only about 220 square meters, “The World’s Smallest Museum,” but settled on the “Cutest,” as he suspected there may be smaller museums somewhere in the world.

Asai was born to a medicine selling family in the town of Mizuhashi, Toyama Prefecture, an area now called Toyama city that is historically famous for medicine sellers. He acquired a pharmacist license and worked as a researcher and salesman at a pharmaceutical company. During his 40s, he was promoted to an executive position and started collecting paintings.

“Whenever I looked at a painting, I was able to feel relaxed and forget my everyday concerns,” Asai recalled. He dreamed of building a museum one day.



Seiki Asai, who built “The World’s Cutest Museum.”
PHOTO : KYODO NEWS

Following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami disaster in the northeastern Japan region of Tohoku, Asai wondered if he could provide local residents a facility that would serve as an evacuation center in case of an emergency.

Due to a lack of funds, he gave up on the plan, but instead decided to create a museum offering residents and visitors a place to mingle and relax. To enable visitors and volunteer museum workers to rest and chat, he set up a sitting space inside the museum.

“I’m so delighted to see visitors enjoying this place, appreciating the paintings and drinking tea,” Asai said.

He said one thing that currently troubles him is that the name of the museum, in Japanese “Sekai Ichi Kawaii Bijutsukan,” could be too long.

“Maybe, I should change it to ‘Mizuhashi Museum,’” he said jokingly.—*Kyodo News*

US groundhog Punxsutawney Phil predicts early spring



Groundhog co-handler John Griffiths holds up groundhog Punxsutawney Phil after Phil’s annual weather prediction on Gobbler’s Knob on the 130th Groundhog Day in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

PUNXSUTAWNEY — Punxsutawney Phil, the Pennsylvania groundhog renowned for his ability to forecast the onset of spring, did not see his shadow after emerging from his burrow on Tuesday morning, predicting an early spring.

Phil’s prediction came at about 7:25 am and was met with cheers from a crowd of thousands who participated under a clear sky and 21-degree Fahrenheit (-6.1 Celsius) temperatures in the folk tradition that has been embraced by winter-weary Americans for more than a century.

According to legend, if Phil sees his shadow on Groundhog Day, 2 February, the cold weather will not loosen its grip on North America for six weeks. But if the morning is cloudy and no shadow appears, spring-like weather is supposedly around the corner.

The event, which typically brings out 30,000 revelers to the small, west-central Pennsylvania town, has become a television staple at the beginning of one of the coldest months of the year in the US Northeast. In addition to the celebrated rodent, the pageant features an entourage of city el-

ders in old-fashioned dress and top hats, presiding over the festivities. The organizer, the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club, is touting the 2016 event as “Phil’s 130th prognostication,” although technically it is not the same groundhog every year but one picked to represent the character.

Club spokeswoman Katie Donald said 1886 was the first year that the club trekked to Gobbler’s Knob in Punxsutawney and the groundhog delivered a weather forecast. Media coverage of the event started the following year, she said.

“We go by the first trek, 1886,” Donald said.

The event’s website, Groundhog.org, notes that “groundhogs are one of the few animals that really hibernate. Hibernation is not just a deep sleep. It is actually a deep coma.”

This year’s Phil, however, has not whiled away the winter underground like most of his species, also known as woodchucks.

Instead, Phil and his handlers from the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club Inner Circle made cameo appearances on 23 January at Pittsburgh’s Penn Brewery for

the unveiling of its “Punxsutawney Philsner” draft beer and at a Pittsburgh Penguins hockey game.

While he is still the most famous of the weather-forecasting groundhogs, Phil has had to compete a host of imitators in recent years. New York City, for example, has a groundhog of its own that has generated more than its share of controversy.

The 2009 groundhog bit the hand of then-Mayor Michael Bloomberg during the annual 2 February ceremony.

Five years after that, the groundhog was the injured party, when a groundhog named Charlotte fell hard to the ground after she wrwwwiggled out of the grasp of Mayor Bill de Blasio. The animal died of internal injuries a week later.

This year de Blasio will skip the event. Instead he is traveling to Iowa to campaign for Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton ahead of the state’s 1 February nominating caucuses. He will not return to New York until Tuesday evening, his office said, long after the groundhog is out of harm’s way.—*Reuters*

mitv

Myanmar International

10:26 Am Myanmar HR Conference (2015) (Part- IV)

10:49 Am MURAL PAINTING BAGAN

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm)-Wednesday 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 A Journey To Southern Shan State (Ep-1)

07:47 Pm Maha Myatmuni Buddha Image In Rakhine

08:03 Pm News

08:26 Pm Myanmar Delicate Artistic Handy Creations- Lac quareware Making

08:51 Pm Crocodile Keeper

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

(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am)-Wednesday 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)

(4-2-2016 07:00am ~ 5-2-2016 7:00am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03 Am News

07:26 Am Myanmar Social & Charitable Association (Ep-1)

07:51 Am Gardener: Rose Plantation

08:03 Am News

08:26 Am Discovering Tribes “Bwe”

08:52 Am Wet Markets of Yangon: Thirimingalar Market

09:03 Am News

09:26 Am Marketable Goods (Straw painting)

09:44 Am Ywar Thit’s Monhinkhar

10:03 Am News

MRTV

Entertainment Channel

(4-2-2016, Thursday)

6:00 pm

• The Mirror Image of The Muisical Olders

6:20 pm

• Pyi Thu Ni Ti

6:35 pm

• Nay ma Win Ah Hla Myar

7:05pm

• TV Drama Series

7:55 pm

• TV Drama Series

8:50 pm

• Pyi Thu Ni Ti

9:05 pm

• Dramatic Arts

9:45pm

• ASEAN Cultural Fair-2014

10:05pm

• Myanmar Video

From 4.2.2016 (Thursday) 06:00 Pm

To 5.2.2016 (Friday) 06:00 Pm

This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.

Vardy keeps Leicester in front, Man City grind out win

JAMIE Vardy sent a screaming reminder that leaders Leicester City are in the Premier league title race for the long haul with a sensational strike in a 2-0 win over Liverpool on Tuesday.

After an hour of deadlock at the King Power Stadium, Vardy took matters into his own hands, latching on to a long ball pumped down the right, looking up and launching an unstoppable 25-metre rocket over stranded goalkeeper Simon Mignolet.

The England striker then showed his poacher's instinct in scoring his side's second, his 18th league goal of the season, to keep Leicester three points clear of Manchester City, who made a meal of beating relegation-threatened Sunderland 1-0.

Sergio Aguero scored his 12th goal in his last 10 league matches to earn City the points a day after it was confirmed manager Manuel Pellegrini would be replaced by former Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola at the end of the season.

With 14 games of an en-

thralling season left, Leicester have 50 points with City on 47 ahead of their top-of-the-table blockbuster at the Etihad Stadium on Saturday.

North London rivals Tottenham Hotspur and Arsenal have 45.

Tottenham striker Harry Kane also struck twice, after Dele Alli's early opener, as Spurs crushed Norwich City 3-0 away to leapfrog Arsenal into third spot, fuelling the club's belief that a first title since 1961 is within reach.

Arsenal are stalling after a 0-0 home draw with Southampton left them without a league win in four games and without a goal in their last three, the first time since 2009.

Life is looking a little brighter for Manchester United manager Louis van Gaal after his side finally rediscovered a spark at Old Trafford.

They had not scored in the first half of their last 11 home matches, piling pressure on the Dutchman, but they turned on



Jamie Vardy scores the second goal for Leicester City against Liverpool during their Barclays Premier League at King Power Stadium on 2 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

the style against Stoke City with Jesse Lingard and Anthony Martial on target before halftime and Wayne Rooney completing a 3-0 win after the break with his 99th home league goal.

United remain in fifth place with 40 points.

As so often this season though, Vardy stole the limelight and left his manager Claudio Ranieri purring.

"Amazing. The first goal was unbelievable," the Italian said.

While Ranieri heaped praise on his players, Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp was left fuming after his side slipped 16 points behind them in eighth place.

"I'm not too fine with our game today," a downbeat Klopp said. "Today would have been a

good day to show we are ready for this. I need a few more seconds to calm down."

Man City were under the cosh for long periods at Sunderland but hung on for Pellegrini's 65th win in 100 Premier League matches in charge — a record bettered only by former Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho (73).

Pellegrini, still fighting for silverware on four fronts despite his imminent exit, praised his side's resolve.

"It is not our style to play with nine defenders but it was our third game in a week and it was impossible to have a high pace with all our injuries," he said.

Tottenham's teenage midfielder Alli needed only two minutes to put his side ahead at

Carrow Road, although he went off early in the second half feeling unwell.

Not that it took the shine off another clinical Spurs display as they won a fifth game in a row in all competitions.

Bottom club Aston Villa's hopes of avoiding relegation suffered another setback when they had Jordan Ayew sent off after 17 minutes for elbowing Aaron Cresswell before slipping to a predictable 2-0 defeat at sixth-placed West Ham United.

Bournemouth gained three vital points with a 2-1 victory at Crystal Palace, moving them seven points above the bottom three, while Swansea City are five points clear of the drop zone after drawing 1-1 at West Bromwich Albion.—Reuters

Prosecutors accuse Neymar, father in tax evasion scheme

SAO PAULO — Brazilian prosecutors filed a formal complaint against Neymar and his father on Tuesday for tax evasion and providing false information.

Two former presidents of Spanish club Barcelona, Alexandre Rosell Feliu and Josep Maria Bartomeu Floresta, were also accused by the Prosecution Service in Santos, Neymar's home town.

The prosecution's statement said: "They forged a series of documents between 2006 and 2013 with the intention of reducing the taxes owed to the inland revenue in Brazil.

"Neymar's conduct, along with the others accused, caused millions in losses to the public coffers."

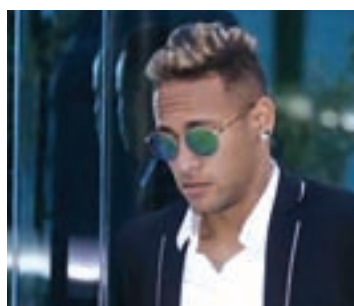
A judge must now decide whether the case goes forward.

The allegations refer to image rights contracts from 2006 when a teenaged Neymar was playing for Santos. Prosecutors allege further fraud occurred during negotiations to take him to Barcelona in 2011.

He eventually joined the Catalan side in 2013.

Prosecutors said the schemes involved three companies linked to the striker's family — Neymar Sport e Marketing, N&N Consultoria Esportiva e Empresarial and N&N Administracao de Bens, Participacoes e Investimentos.

Neymar defended himself in a post on his personal website on Monday and said the prosecution was "seeking the limelight". He invited Prosecutor Thiago Lacerda to visit the offices of NR Sports to see the company for himself.



Barcelona's Neymar. PHOTO: REUTERS

The prosecution has accused Neymar's father of designing schemes with the Spaniards as they negotiated his son's transfer.

"Between 2006 and 2013, the player's father was the principal mentor and mastermind of a series of contractual frauds involving Neymar's image rights, mainly through Neymar Sport e Marketing," the statement said.—Reuters

Record-breaking Suhr to miss world indoor championships

WASHINGTON — Olympic pole vault champion Jenn Suhr does not plan to compete in next month's IAAF indoor championships even though she has just broken her world indoor record, the American said on Tuesday.

A desire for more gold at the Rio Games and the stress of having to go through the US trials and the world indoor championships with just four days in between led Suhr and her coach to rule out the March 17-20 worlds in Portland, Oregon.

Plans did not change after Suhr boosted her world record to 5.03 metres (16 feet, 6 inches) on Saturday in Brockport, New York.

"Right now, it is still off the table," she said of the world indoor championships during a teleconference.

"I am not sure that is something I want to do in an Olympic year," she said of having to finish in the top two in the US championships on 12 March and then competing against the world's best on 17 March.

"That is just asking a lot," said Suhr, who will celebrate her 34th birthday on Friday.

Healthy and having fun after two years of up-and-down results, the Olympic gold medalist added a centimetre to her 2013 world indoor record with her third-attempt clearance at Saturday's college meeting.

"When I am ready to jump it doesn't matter where I jump," Suhr said.

And the record was not a surprise. "I knew from what was happening in practise, things were working out well," Suhr said.—Reuters