

President attends consecration ceremony of Laykyun Marn Aung Pagoda in Sagaing

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Feb — President U Thein Sein and wife Daw Khin Khin Win attended consecration ceremony of Laykyun Marn Aung pagoda in Sagaing, on Sunday, together with officials.

Sacred diamond orb and pennant-shape vane were carried from Mandalay Karaweik Hotel to Laykyun Marn Aung pagoda along Ayeyawady River, with locals paying homage to the religious objects on the bank.

President and his wife handed over the donated diamond orb, the pennant-shape vane and relics to senior Buddhist monks to share merits.

The pagoda was consecrated after the relics were enshrined into the pagoda. The historic Laykyun Marn Aung pagoda with 122-foot height was built by Taningyan King of Inwa dynasty at Thawtarpan village in Sagaing Township in SE 2268 or 1085 ME.

The pagoda was damaged by the earthquake in 6th Waxing Day, 1376 ME.

The management of



President U Thein Sein conveys diamond orb for Laykyun Marn Aung Pagoda in Sagaing.—MNA

Sitagu International Buddhist Academy in Sagaing Township donated K30 million and Paing Company and Gantgawmying

Company donated K5 million each for the families of fallen soldiers in Laukai conflict and Chief of the General Staff (Army,

Navy and Air) General Hla Htay Win accepted the donated cash.

Also present at the ceremony were Union

ministers, the chief ministers of Sagaing and Mandalay regions, senior military officers and officials.

MNA

China asks Myanmar Rice Federation to add more companies to approved rice exporters list

YANGON, 22 Feb — China has asked the Myanmar Rice Federation to add more exporters to

a list of nine companies chosen for legal rice exports to China, according to Dr. Soe Tun, joint sec-

retary of the federation.

Firms interested in rice export to China are invited to register at the

federation, he added.

Nine such rice companies were selected last month: Myanmar Agribusiness Public Corporation Limited, First Rice and Paddy Trading Company Limited, Myanmar Rice Mill Company Limited, Golden Land East Asia Development Limited of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Mandalay Rice Dealers' Companies founded by Mandalay region traders, a company formed by Bayintnaung brokers, Ayeyar-Pathein Rice & Paddy Trading Company Limited, Rakhine Rice and Paddy Development Company Limited and SPRDC founded by Muse traders.

(See page 3)

YCDC relaxes its grip on granting permits for building construction

YANGON, 22 Feb — YCDC has authorized its township offices to grant permits for construction of buildings in the respective township's municipal areas.

YCDC now grants permits to applicants within 40 to 60 days if they provide sufficient documents, according to the Engineering Department (Buildings).

With the granting of permits in 2014 for construction of more than 6,900 buildings, including high-rise buildings, modern housing complexes and buildings with offices, 2014 has become a record year within the last 13 years, an official of the department said.

YCDC has already announced that buildings that

were constructed in contravention of the building regulations of the Yangon City Development Committee would be demolished.

It exposed 2,021 cases of buildings that contravened the building regulations of the 2013-City of Yangon Development Law, according to its press release in July last year.

Under the Section-68 of that law, those who erect buildings in contravention of YCDC orders may face either a minimum fine of K10,000 to a maximum fine of K500,000 per day as from the day they are found guilty of contravening it to the time the building is completed or a prison sentence of up to one year, or both.

GNLM



Workers uploading sacks of rice in Yangon. Chinese firms offer to buy white rice with 25%, 35%, 100% broken from Myanmar, MRF says.

PHOTO CREDIT TO BLOGS.FT.COM

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Replica tooth relic conveyed from Pathein to Myanaung for public obeisance

MYANAUNG, 22 Feb — A replica of sacred tooth relic was conveyed from Htoogyi to Myanaung, Ayeyawady Region, on 21 February for public obeisance.

The replica was kept in Kanyinngu Village and then conveyed again to Inbin of Myanaung for spending a night.

On 22 February, the replica arrived in Myanaung for enabling the people to pay homage to it.

The conveyance of the replica tooth relic was supervised by township authorities.

The replica took relic was conveyed from the Gandakuti chamber on the



hill of Shwemuhtaw Pagoda in Pathein.—Win Bo (Township IPRD)

Literary talks, songs presentation reflect images of Mandalay City



MANDALAY, 22 Feb — A literary talk was given at Yadanabon Hall of Myanmar Medical Association (Mandalay) on 21 February afternoon.

Writer Hsu Hnget, winner of national literary award, gave talks on change of images in Mandalay City.

Myoma Band presented songs reflecting images

of Mandalay's history to the audiences.

"I recalled significant changes of images in Mandalay which Myanmar kings ruled in Yadanabon monarchical era. Vocalists of Myoma Band presented favorite songs of both Mandalarians and all Myanmar people after the talks," said the writer.—Tin Maung (Mandalay)

English proficiency course for immigration officers concludes

MANDALAY, 22 Feb —Immigration staff are to pursue English language so as to give better services to not only local people but foreigners, Mandalay Region Minister for Security and Border Affairs Col Aung Kyaw Moe said at the concluding ceremony of English Proficiency Course at Basic Education High School No 16 in Mandalay on 21 February.

Chief Executive Officer U Win Pe Maung of Amarapura Associates Group made a speech and trainee U Than Tun Aung spoke words of thanks.

Officials presented completion certificates to three trainees.

Director of Mandalay Region Immigration and National Registration De-

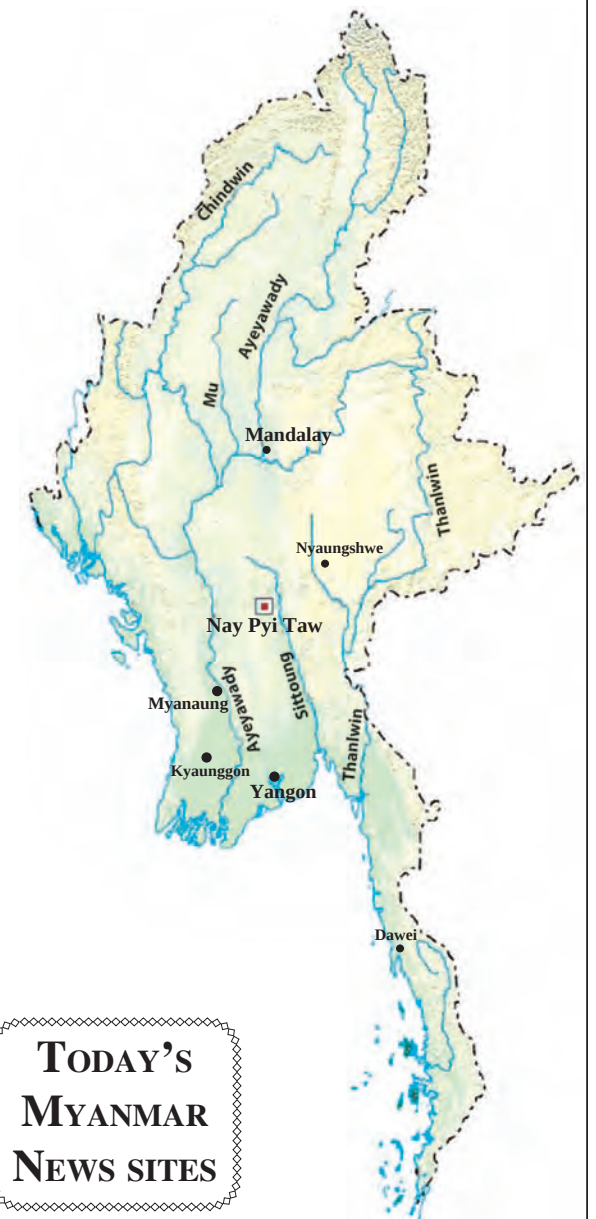
partment U Thaung Zaw presented gifts to trainers.

Altogether 30 officers from the department attended the three-month course.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)



TODAY'S
MYANMAR
NEWS SITES



Zabuthiri Township opens six concrete streets

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Feb — Gangaw Road and 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Gangaw streets were commissioned into service in Thabyegon Ward, Zabuthiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, on 21 February.

Director (Engineer) U Aung Moe of Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee reported on construction of the concrete streets in the township and maintenance of the facilities for durability.

Nay Pyi Taw Council member U Myo Nyunt, Amyotha

Hluttaw MP U Khin Maung Htay and Committee member U Kyaw Myint formally opened the new concrete road and strolled along the repaved street.

Six roads in total length are 4,700 feet and 12 feet wide. The concrete streets will contribute to socioeconomic development of the local people.

The council member and officials viewed vaccination of measles and rubella to children under five years in Aungzabu Ward and Thabyegon Ward.

Shwe Kokko

NATIONAL

President U Thein Sein sends message of felicitations to Brunei Darussalam

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Feb — On the occasion of the 31st Anniversary of the National Day of Brunei Darussalam which falls on 23 February 2015, U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has sent a message of felicitations to His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Muizzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam.—MNA

Union FM sends felicitations to Brunei Darussalam

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Feb — On the occasion of the 31st Anniversary of the National Day of Brunei Darussalam which falls on 23 February 2015, 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 Royal Highness Prince Haji Mohamed Bolkiah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Brunei Darussalam.—MNA



President U Thein Sein sprinkles scented water on diamond orb before hoisting it atop Laykyun Marn Aung Pagoda in Sagaing. (News on page 1)—MNA

Military columns capture temporary bases of Kokang insurgents

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Feb — Government ground troops launched attacks in tandem with air strikes against Kokang insurgents stationed on hills in the vicinity of 18th-Mile junction on the

Laukkai-Kongyan road on Saturday and Sunday, with the army capturing temporary bases, militarily-strategic hills where the rebels had stationed to cut off main access roads, officials said.

Transportation has returned to normal as the main sections of the road have come under the control of the army. Five engagements broke out in two days, killing four army members and wounding 21 including officers. The wounded military personnel are now receiving medical treatment at military hospitals.

The army seized three bodies, seven small arms, ammunitions and narcotic drugs. A reporter and three civilians were wounded, following an attack by Kokang insurgents on a car flying a red cross flag on its way to Kunlong from Laukkai on Saturday evening. The government troops rushed to the scene and rescued the wounded and took them to hospital in Kunlong. The military columns are in hot pursuit of the retreating insurgents.

Myawady

A map shows clashes between government's troops and Kokang insurgents in Laukkai region



China asks Myanmar . . .

(from page 1)

The selection of companies to legalize the rice trade between the two countries came days after a memorandum of understanding on 100,000 tonnes of rice export to China was signed during a visit of Myanmar's rice delegation to China last

month. The delegation had a discussion with China's general administration of quality supervision, inspection and quarantine (AQSIQ) on matters including standards set for rice exports to China, said the MRF.

Despite having more than 100 companies that

are interested to partake in the legal rice exports, only nine companies were named at the request of Chinese authorities who wanted to trade with less than ten, a MRF official said at a press briefing last month, with the federation announcing the number of firms to begin legal rice trading with China.

Earlier this month in

Yangon, the federation inked a MoU with COFCO, China's largest state-run grain-trading company, on purchase of planned tonnage of rice from Myanmar at price in the market during a 12-month period following the completion of China's AQSIQ process. According to the MoU, the federation will act as a facilitator of rice

trading between buyers and sellers. The MRF expects to legally export rice to China at the end of April.

There will be a business matching with Chinese firms that want to buy rice from Myanmar in Yangon next month, said the MRF joint secretary. Over the last couple of years, China has been a major market for

rice exported from Myanmar through informal border channels, according to a World Bank report.

If the legal rice exports to China come into reality, it will be of great benefit to Myanmar rice traders, enabling them to boost market share in the country's existing rice trade market.

GNLM

Workshop for media on election reporting held in Yangon

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

YANGON, 22 Feb—The Ministry of Information in partnership with International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) Sunday organized a workshop for the media on election reporting here, according to the ministry.

Elections and the role of media, ethics in reporting, interview for story, gathering information from the sources, newsroom management and fundamentals for covering an election, are the main topics of the workshop.

During the one-day workshop, Daw Khin May Zaw, lead trainer of ICFJ, shared her experiences on election reporting, including conversion of the results of polls into stories, voter education and evaluate the fairness of the electoral process.

The workshop also focused on the importance of social networks and digital media and their advantages and disadvantages.

"The media is responsible for providing citizens

with sufficient information on voting procedures," said the trainer.

She also discussed conducting an effective interview with a political candidate or party leader, reporting on vote counting and talking directly to voters to get their opinions on political parties, candidates and issues.

Around 100 reporters and editors from local broadcast and print media as well as news agencies actively participated in the workshop.

GNLM



Attendees at workshop for the media on election reporting seen in group discussions.

PHOTO: KHAING THANDA LWIN

Easy Bike Show attracts Mandalarians

MANDALAY, 22 Feb — The Easy Bike Show, organized by Mingalar Mandalay, was held at Mandalay Housing on 73rd street between Thazin and Ngushwewah streets in Chanmyathazi Township on 19 and 20 February.

Enthusiasts visited the show where various types of motorcycles made in Japan, Thailand, China and India were displayed.

Famous vocalists presented songs, and models demonstrated use of motorcycles at the show.

*Maung Pyi Thu
(Mandalay)*



Thai Expo (Mandalay) promotes Myanmar-Thai friendship relations

MANDALAY, 22 Feb — Myanmar-Thai Friendship Association organized the Thai Expo (Mandalay) at Yadanabon Centre at the corner of 78th and 34th streets in Chanayethazan Township, Mandalay, from 20 to 28 February.

The opening ceremony was attended by executives of Mae Hong Son Province of Thailand and Mandalay Region Chambers of Com-

merce and Industry, and businessmen in Mandalay.

Tyres of vehicles, car parts, foodstuffs, cosmetics, textiles, shoes and slippers, fancy works, leather products, soaps, soft drinks and traditional medicines of Thailand are put on display at the hall, and Thai businessmen sell the products to customers at special prices.

*Thiha Ko Ko
(Mandalay)*

Readers association to conduct summer courses free of charge

MANDALAY, 22 Feb — Summer free training courses will be conducted for youths in West Thiri Marlar Ward, Aungmyethazan Township as of 9 March.

Zartiman youth readers association will open the Buddhist culture course, English grammar course, Mathematics, basic arts and journalism for children at Thitsaya Dhammayon at the corner of 26th and 92nd streets.

“The courses will be conducted with the aim of enabling children to effi-

ciently use the summer holidays and developing human resources,” said an official of the association.

The association will provide stationery, teaching aid and uniforms to the attendees.

“Arrangements have been made for those trainees to read so as to raise reading skills,” he added.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Director of Asian Business Development lectures stock market in Myanmar

MANDALAY, 22 Feb — With the assistance of Ministry of Commerce, Republic of the Union of Myanmar Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Japan International Cooperation Agency, Myanmar-Japan Human Resources Development Centre conducted the capital market and stock market course at the office of Mandalay Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry at Yadanabon Centre in Chanayethazan Township on 20 February.

Members of the chambers, young entrepreneurs and students of University of Economics were in attendance.

Chairman of the

chambers U Aung Than made a speech and an official explained conducting the training course.

Director Akifumi Nakanishi of Asian Business Development gave lectures on capital market in ASEAN countries and stock market in Myanmar.

*Thiha Ko Ko
(Mandalay)*



Shan State Fisheries Department shares funds to eight villages

NYAUNGSHWE, 22 Feb — Shan State Fisheries Department held a ceremony to allot capital fund to villages of Green Emerald Project in the state and open the financial rules course at Nyaungshwe fishery station on 20 February.

Shan State Minister for Agriculture and livestock

Breeding U Sai Hsa Lu made an opening address. Head of Shan State Fisheries Department U Tin Tun Aung explained a capital fund for implementing the green emerald project.

The project will be implemented in eight villages

in Inlay region, Nyaungshwe Township. The department provided K30 million as capital investment each for eight villages.

The department gave a financial rules course to those who will implement the project.

Nay Myo Thurein



Dawei University shares findings in research works

DAWEI, 22 Feb — In commemoration of the 15th birthday of Dawei University, a research paper reading session was held at its main hall in Dawei, Taninthayi Region, on 20 February.

Pro-Rector Dr Ba Han

made a speech on the occasion.

Resource persons read 10 research papers and replied to queries raised by attendees.

Chief Minister of Taninthayi Region U Myat Ko and ministers, Advo-

cate-General of the region U Soe Myint and faculty members were in attendance.

The university publishes research journals on its findings yearly.

*Po Shwe Thun
(Dawei)*

AMD conducts agricultural machinery driving course

KYAUNGON, 22 Feb — The agricultural machinery driving course was opened at No 9 Tractor Station in Kyaunggon, Ayeyawady Region, on 19 February, with an address by Township Administrator U Kyaw Aung Hsan.

Head of Township Agricultural Mechanization Department U Nay Moe Kyi explained the purpose of

giving the training to local people and aims of the State to transform manual to mechanized farming.

Altogether 31 trainees from 11 village-tracts are attending the 12-day course.—David



REGIONAL



Tourists wear masks in Jaipur, India, on 21 Feb, 2015. India seems to be reeling under the impact of swine flu, which has claimed nearly 600 lives so far this year.—XINHUA

Korea publishes pamphlets to promote claim to isles disputed with Japan

SEOUL, 22 Feb — South Korea has published thousands of new brochures to promote its claim to a pair of islands disputed by Japan, for distribution at diplomatic missions and international schools next month, *Yonhap News Agency* reported on Sunday, citing the Education Ministry.

About 15,000 copies of the brochure, published in Korean and English and titled “The East Sea and Dokdo Islets Seen in Maps and Photos,” will be distributed next month at schools run by the South Korean embassies abroad and at private international schools for children of Korean parents.

According to the ministry, they will be the first publicity material that extensively describes the history of the small outcroppings, which lie in waters between the two countries, for audiences abroad, though a simpler version had previously been circulated.

The release of the news comes on the same day as dozens of South Korean civic group members protested in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul to denounce an annual ceremony held in the Japanese prefecture of Shimane to stress Japan’s claim to the South Korean-controlled islets, which are known to Japanese as

Takeshima.

The ceremony, to which the Japanese government sent a Cabinet Office parliamentary secretary as its representative, has been held by the prefectural government since 2006 after it designated on 22 February as “Takeshima Day” in 2005.

The protesters called for Tokyo to cancel the designation, end the annual event and stop attempting to distort history through textbooks. One man threw “a plastic bottle filled with filth” at the embassy, *Yonhap* reported, adding that he was taken away by the police.

North Korea also weighed in on the issue Sunday, with its official Korean Central News Agency saying Japan’s sending of an official to the ceremony in Shimane, reveals “its wild ambition to grab the islets,” which it said “are part of the inviolable territory of Korea recognized by history and international law.”

“The impudent and undisguised moves of Japan to seize Tok islets are a repetition of the Japanese imperialists’ past moves for aggression. It is the ulterior design of Japan to reinstate Korea with Tok islets as a springboard,” it said, using the North Korean name for the disputed territory.

Kyodo News

Bangladesh raids militant training camp in remote area of Chittagong

DHAKA, 22 Feb — Bangladesh special forces raided a training camp in the southeastern Chittagong district operated by an Islamist militant network that was planning to carry out attacks in the country, senior officials said.

In their raid on the camp in Banshkhali, a remote, hilly area covered in forest, the elite Rapid Action Battalion arrested five people and found firearms, ammunition and other training material, Lieutenant Colonel Miftah Uddin said. The operation to raid the camp was launched after police arrested 25 students on 19 February at their madrasa, a school teaching Islamic theology and law, in the town of Hathazari in Chittagong, he said.

Uddin said the detained students had given information on the camp during their interrogation and that people from across Bangladesh went there to receive arms training.

Among the weapons and other items recovered were three AK 22 semi-automatic rifles, seven pistols,

more than 750 rounds of ammunitions, boxing gloves and ropes. “All arrested persons hailed from different parts of the country, were engaged there as trainers and conducted training of fire arms handling, bomb manufacturing and militants attack to selected militants,” Uddin said. Lieutenant Colonel A K Azad, the director of RAB’s headquarters, said the militants operated a “strong network” and had a plan to attack Bangladesh, but he did not name the group.

Last month, Bangladeshi police arrested four suspected members of Islamic State in the capital, Dhaka, including a regional coordinator for the militant group who told police they had been trained in Pakistan.

“The trainers showed video films on militancy and encouraged the new militants with lectures and books,” Azad said. Young men from poor families and madrasa students had been exploited by the network, he said.

The camp was established under the veil of a cattle farm.—*Reuters*

Bangkok police detain at least three over street demonstration

BANGKOK, 22 Feb — Thai police plucked at least three people off the streets of the capital on Sunday, after they held a small gathering to “exchange views” with the country’s military junta. Thailand’s military has severely restricted public gatherings since seizing power in a coup last May.

Taking a hard line on dissent, it has detained more than 300 people, including activists, journalists and politicians.

The leader of a group of four people, Akkarakit Noonchan, was dragged away by plainclothes of-



Thai pro-democracy protester Akkarakit Noonchan (C) is detained by a police officer near Victory Monument in Bangkok on 22 Feb, 2015.—REUTERS

ficers shortly after the beginning of the event at Bangkok’s downtown Vic-

tory Monument, according to a *Reuters* witness.

Akkarakit told report-

ers the event by the group, calling itself Serichon Thailand 58, was not intended as a protest.

At least two other people were seen being detained. They had earlier displayed t-shirts depicting a bird with its beak and claws bound, as dozens of uniformed police stood by.

One person has been questioned by police, said Lieut Col Thepitak Saengla, the head of investigations at the nearby Phayathai police station. He did not give any further details.

Reuters



Adili Wuxor from China’s Xinjiang Acrobatic Troupe performs acrobatics on the aerial tightrope during a Spring Festival celebration called “River Hongbao” held in Singapore’s Float at the Marina Bay in Singapore, on 21 Feb, 2015.

XINHUA

Yonaguni holds referendum on hosting GSDF coastal surveillance unit

NAHA, (Japan), 22 Feb — The town of Yonaguni on a remote island in Okinawa Prefecture held a referendum on Sunday on whether it should host a coastal surveillance unit of the Ground Self-Defence Force to keep an eye on Chinese maritime

activities.

Sunday’s plebiscite is nonbinding but it urges local authorities to respect the vote result, which is expected to be known later in the night.

In light of China’s assertive behaviour in the East

China Sea, Japan’s Defence Ministry plans to beef up GSDF forces in the country’s southwestern islands, including the planned deployment of an around 150-member unit on Yonaguni Island by the end of March 2016 to monitor ships and aircraft

and detect any signs of abnormal activities.

Construction of a facility for the unit began last April on the island some 150 kilometres south of the Japanese-administered Senkaku Islands, which China claims and calls Diaoyu.

The referendum was called as some Yonaguni residents are concerned that a GSDF presence could make their island a target in the event an emergency situation develops between Japan and China.

Yonaguni Mayor Shu-

kichi Hokama is in favour of the planned deployment, saying it would increase tax revenues and pep up the local economy.

There are 1,284 people eligible to vote, including five foreign nationals and 97 minors.—*Kyodo News*

Japan, US eye Abe address to US Congress during upcoming visit

TOKYO, 22 Feb — The Japanese and US governments are planning for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to address the US Congress during a visit to the United States this spring, a Japanese government official said on Saturday.

That would be the first time a Japanese prime minister has addressed Congress since 1961, when then Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda spoke before the House of Representatives. Abe's grandfather, former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, also addressed the US Congress in 1957.

Final arrangements are underway for Abe to speak before a joint session of the Congress, something no Japanese prime minister has ever done, the official said on condition of anonymity. Abe, who plans to travel to the United States during Japan's holi-

day-studded Golden Week from late April through early May, is expected to say that Japan has consistently followed the path of peace since the end of World War II, based on its remorse for wartime wrongdoing, and to call for a future-oriented relationship between the two countries.

Abe is also likely to say deepening Japan-US economic ties by sealing a Trans Pacific Partnership free trade agreement would be beneficial to both countries. The possibility of then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi addressing a joint session of the Congress was discussed in 2006, but did not come to fruition as some US lawmakers wanted Koizumi to promise to stop visiting the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo.

According to the Japanese government official, US Deputy Secretary of

State Antony Blinken proposed, when he called on the premier at his office on 13 February during a trip to Japan, that Abe address Congress, and Abe agreed.

Abe also expressed hope to make a congressional speech during a meeting in Tokyo on Monday with a bipartisan group of US lawmakers led by Rep. Diana DeGette, a Democrat from Colorado. Tokyo and Washington are considering preparing for the summit between Abe and President Barack Obama a joint statement calling for a robust Japan-US alliance. In the document, Japan and the United States will vow to play leadership roles in grappling with issues of global interest. It will also refer to revised bilateral defense cooperation guidelines intended to enhance deterrence.

Kyodo News

Sydney siege report signals tighter immigration curbs



Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott

PERTH, 22 Feb — Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott foreshadowed tighter immigration controls on Sunday when he released the first report into a siege last December in Sydney's Lindt cafe, in which two hostages and the gunman were killed.

The legal system "had let the country down," Abbott said, almost ten weeks after Iranian refugee Man Haron Monis walked into the cafe to hold 18 hostages at gunpoint during a 17-hour siege and bring Australia's largest city to a standstill.

The joint federal and state government report found that all decisions authorities made in relation to Monis were reasonable under current laws, though it recommended changes to conditions for immigration, citizenship and bail. "Plainly, this monster should not have been in our community," Abbott said in Sydney.

"He shouldn't have been allowed into the country. He shouldn't have been out on bail. He shouldn't have been with a gun and he shouldn't have become radicalized."

Monis, who sought asylum in Australia within a month of arriving on a business visa in 1996, later received citizenship.

At the time of the siege, the self-styled sheikh, who tried to align himself with the Islamic State group, was on bail on a charge over the murder of his ex-wife. He was killed by heavily armed police who stormed the cafe after he killed a hostage. The New South Wales government adopted new bail laws after the siege. The review wants these laws stiffened to take into account an accused person's links to terrorist outfits or violent extremism. Monis, convicted in 2012 of sending hate mail to the families of Australian soldiers killed in Afghanistan, was well-known to police and security authorities.

He was the subject of counter terrorism discussions several times between 2008 and 2014, the report showed.

It also showed members of the public made 18 phone calls in the week before the siege to a national security hotline over his Facebook posts, but the threat assessment did not change. Agencies following up the calls found Monis was not an imminent threat and missed a threshold for prosecution. The report showed the balance between individual freedom and community protection needed to be reassessed, Abbott said.

"Monis was given the benefit of the doubt every time," he added. "He gamed the system." Abbott is expected to announce immigration and welfare curbs in a national security report due for release on Monday. There were 55 welfare recipients among 57 Australians identified last year as having traveled to the Middle East to fight with Islamic State militants.—Reuters

5-magnitude quake hits Xinjiang

BEIJING, 22 Feb — A 5-magnitude earthquake hit Shawan County, Tacheng Prefecture of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region at 2:42 pm on Sunday, the China Earthquake Networks Centre (CENC) reported.

The epicenter was monitored at 44.1 degrees north latitude and 85.7 degrees east longitude with a depth of four km, according to the CENC.—Xinhua

Kerry and Iran's Zarif to try narrow gaps in nuclear talks

GENEVA, 22 Feb — US Secretary of State John Kerry and his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif will try to narrow gaps in another round of nuclear talks in Geneva on Sunday as they press to meet a 31 March deadline for a political framework agreement.

The talks will be joined for the first time by US Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz, who agreed to attend after Iran's nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi said he would take part.

A close aide and the brother of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Hossein Fereydoon, will also be part



US Secretary of State John Kerry reacts during a media briefing at the US Embassy in London, on 21 Feb, 2015. —REUTERS

of the meetings, Iranian media reported.

Kerry was due to arrive in Geneva in the early afternoon, then immediately meet with the US dele-

gation, which has been in Geneva since Friday. After that he planned to meet Zarif and the Iranian delegation. The Secretary for State said on Saturday the

presence of Moniz reflected the highly technical nature of the current talks and in no way meant "that something is about to be decided."

However, Kerry said the sides were working with urgency to meet the 31 March target for a political agreement, which would give impetus for further talks.

"There is still a distance to travel," Kerry said in London where he met British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond.

The negotiations between Iran and "P5+1" powers — the United

States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China — have reached a sensitive stage with gaps remaining, mainly over Iranian uranium enrichment and the pace of removing sanctions.

Kerry said US President Barack Obama was not inclined to extend the talks again. The parties already missed a November 2014 target date.

Obama believed it was "imperative to be able to come to a fundamental political outline and agreement within the time space that we have left," Kerry said. "If that can't be done, it would be an indication

that fundamental choices are not being made that are essential to doing that," Kerry added, also emphasizing that Obama was prepared to halt the talks if he thought they were not being productive.

A recent UN report said that Iran had refrained from expanding tests of more efficient models of a machine used to refine uranium under a nuclear agreement with the six world powers. Development of advanced centrifuges is feared to lead to material potentially suitable for manufacture of nuclear bombs.

Reuters

Approval ratings of France's Hollande and Valls drop — Ifop poll

PARIS, 22 Feb — The approval ratings of French President Francois Hollande and Prime Minister Manuel Valls, whose Socialist government survived a no-confidence vote last week, dropped in February, an Ifop poll showed.

The proportion of those surveyed for *Le Journal du Dimanche* newspaper who said they were satisfied with Hollande declined to 24 percent from 29 percent in January, when he was praised for

his handling of the Islamist militant attacks in Paris. Those saying they were "very dissatisfied" with the president rose by 8 points to 37 percent, the poll published on Sunday showed.

However, Hollande's approval rating remains higher than at any time last year, when Ifop data showed it dropped to as low as 13 percent.

Pollster YouGov in November put his rating at 12 percent, the

worst score for a French president in modern-day polling. Valls' approval rating declined by 7 points in February to 46 percent from 53 percent in January, according to Ifop. This remains above the level for the last six months of 2014, however. Valls was appointed on 31 March.

The government survived a parliament no-confidence vote called by opposition conservatives on Thursday after it resorted to a

decree to bypass broad opposition to a flagship economic reform bill. The challenge was made after Valls on Tuesday resorted to the little-used mechanism to push through a package of economically liberal reforms opposed by the left — a tactic widely denounced as anti-democratic.

The Ifop survey was based on the views of 1,972 people gathered via phone and Internet between 12-21 February, Ifop said.—Reuters



French President Francois Hollande (L) and Prime Minister Manuel Valls walk together after the weekly cabinet meeting at the Elysee Palace in Paris on 22 Dec, 2014. —REUTERS

Ukraine, separatists swap dozens of prisoners

KIEV/DONETSK, 22 Feb — Ukrainian government forces and pro-Russian separatists have exchanged dozens of prisoners in east Ukraine, a Ukrainian Security Council aide confirmed on Sunday, a step towards implementing an internationally brokered peace deal.

Reuters reporters in the village of Zholobok, 20 km (12 miles) west of the rebel stronghold of Luhansk, saw more than 130 Ukrainian servicemen being released late on Saturday evening in exchange for 52 rebel fighters.

The exchange is one of the first moves to implement the peace deal reached on 12 February in the Belarusian capital Minsk after the

French, German, Russian and Ukrainian leaders met.

The Security Council's Markian Lubkivskyi, in a post on his Facebook page early on Sunday, published a list of the 139 released Ukrainian servicemen and said the government would do its utmost to free those remaining in rebel captivity.

Fighting has eased in many areas since a ceasefire came into effect a week ago, but the truce was badly shaken by the rebel capture on Wednesday of the strategic town of Debaltseve, forcing a retreat by thousands of Ukrainian troops.

The Ukrainian military said rebels had launched 12 separate attacks on government troop positions overnight, using artillery and

mortar fire.

The town of Pesky near Donetsk had seen the most intense fighting, while separatist groups had attempted to "storm" Ukrainian positions in Shyrokyne, east of the strategic port city of Mariupol on the Sea of Azov, it said on Facebook.

Kiev accuses separatists of building up forces and weapons in Ukraine's southeast and has said it is braced for the possibility of a rebel attack on Mariupol.

Nevertheless, rebel leaders said on Saturday they had signed a document detailing a plan for the withdrawal of heavy weapons, as required by the Minsk agreement, a sign they may be prepared to halt their advance, having achieved their



Members of pro-Russian separatists (L and C) walk after being exchanged for Ukrainian prisoners of war near the village of Zholobok in Luhansk region, eastern Ukraine on 21 Feb, 2015.—REUTERS

main military objective by seizing Debaltseve.

The rebel press service

DAN said Ukrainian troops had been shelling parts of Donetsk, reporting that artillery fire could be heard in the city at around 0730 GMT.—Reuters

Norway's Muslims form protective human ring around synagogue

OSLO, 22 Feb — More than 1000 Muslims formed a human shield around Oslo's synagogue on Saturday, offering symbolic protection for the city's Jewish community and condemning an attack on a

synagogue in neighbouring Denmark last weekend.

Chanting "No to anti-Semitism, no to Islamophobia," Norway's Muslims formed what they called a ring of peace a week after Omar Abdel Hamid

El-Hussein, a Danish-born son of Palestinian immigrants, killed two people at a synagogue and an event promoting free speech in Copenhagen last weekend.

"Humanity is one and we are here to demonstrate that," Zeeshan Abdullah, one of the protest's organizers told a crowd of Muslim immigrants and ethnic Norwegians who filled the small street around Oslo's only functioning synagogue.

"There are many more peace mongers than warmongers," Abdullah said as organizers and Jewish community leaders stood side by side. "There's still hope for humanity, for peace and love, across religious differences and backgrounds."

Norway's Jewish community is one of Europe's

smallest, numbering around 1000, and the Muslim population, which has been growing steadily through immigration, is 150,000 to 200,000. Norway has a population of about 5.2 million.

The debate over immigration in the country came to the forefront in 2011 when Anders Behring Breivik killed 77 people and accused the government and the then-ruling Labour party of facilitating Muslim immigration and adulterating pure Norwegian blood.

Support for immigration has been rising steadily since those attacks, however, and an opinion poll late last year found that 77 percent of people thought immigrants made an important contribution to Norwegian society.—Reuters

Crimean leader praises peaceful unification with Russia



Crimea's leader Sergey Aksyonov

SIMFEROPOL, 22 Feb — Crimea's leader Sergey Aksyonov, in his first interview with Japanese media since Russia's annexation of Crimea, said the process of joining Russia was successful as it was achieved without military conflict and supported in a referendum last March to secede from Ukraine.

"We managed to protect the lives of our residents and infrastructure and to prevent going to war," Aksyonov said in an interview with Kyodo News in Simferopol, the Crimean capital.

Aksyonov condemned the Ukrainian government for not making efforts to hold talks and trying to settle by force conflicts with pro-Russian separatists in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions of eastern Ukraine.

Aksyonov admitted the economic sanctions imposed by the United

States, the European Union and Japan are affecting Crimea's mainstay tourism industry and logistics operations. But he said it was more important to obtain freedom by joining Russia.

Aksyonov also said the United States and Europe do not recognize the annexation of Crimea by Russia despite the legitimate public referendum in support because they want to "deal a blow" to the Russian administration of President Vladimir Putin.

In a separate interview, Crimean parliament speaker Vladimir Konstantinov too said the referendum was conducted in accordance with international standards.

Furthermore, Konstantinov said economic difficulties stemming from the annexation can be overcome by strengthening ties with Russia.

Kyodo News



Muslims join hands to form a human shield as they stand outside a synagogue in Oslo on 21 Feb, 2015.

REUTERS

Cuba frees Canadian businessman Tokmakjian after three years in jail

HAVANA, 22 Feb — Cuba has freed Canadian businessman Cy Tokmakjian after more than three years in jail, his company said on Saturday, resolving a case that had strained Cuban-Canadian relations and alarmed foreign investors.

Tokmakjian, founder of the Ontario-based company, was convicted of bribery and other charges and sentenced to 15 years in September in what the transportation company had called a "show trial" and a "travesty of justice."

Cuban prosecutors had outlined a pattern in which Tokmakjian wooed Cuban officials and their families with a series of gifts, helping the Tokmakjian Group do business estimated at \$80 million annually with Cuba until the company was shuttered and its founder arrested in September 2011.

Tokmakjian "was welcomed home by his family, friends, and thousands of employees," said the company statement, which also thanked the Canadian

government. A spokesman said the 74-year-old was released early Saturday.

The statement made no mention of two Canadian aides from the Tokmakjian Group, Claudio Vetere and Marco Puche, who were also convicted and sentenced to 12 and 8 years. They had been under house arrest pending trial and while their convictions were being appealed.

Fourteen Cubans including the former deputy sugar minister and the former director of the state



Canadian transport executive Cy Tokmakjian is shown in this undated handout photo from Tokmakjian's representative.

REUTERS

nickel company were also convicted and sentenced to terms ranging from 6 to 20 years.

Reuters

PERSPECTIVES

Monday, 23 February, 2015

Let's create an environment for the youth of today to strive for excellence

By Kyaw Thura

As is known to all, the future of a country depends largely on its young people, yet how to invest in them to realize their full potential turns out to be more important.

At a time when nations are striving to compete in the modern world, it is time for Myanmar to direct its focus on the huge untapped reservoir of talent in its young people.

If we regard the youth of today as leaders of the future of our country, we should make it sure that they possess skills critical to transforming the future. In addition, we should empower them to drive economic and social development through their intellectual might. In this sense, they should be regarded as the builders, creators and innovators of the future.

This will for sure remain a dream unless we make right investments in young people by encouraging them to participate in decision making and policy making that can have some effects on their lives.

On the one hand, a shattered dream that belongs to a young person is somewhat personal. On the other hands, a shared shattered dream of the

youth will amount to the death of the future of the country.

To avoid this ill consequence, we need to change the conventional view on the youth of today. The country should embrace their educational might in the belief that they can contribute to economic and social growth when given a chance.

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 wallace.tun@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.

The last old Myanmar capital city "Ratanapon" [Mandalay] Part I

Maha Saddhamma Jotika dhaja
Sithu Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

Strategic and urbanization reasons were motivating factors of King Mindon's move to the founding of a new capital city and hurriedly building of a new palace there. Amarapura was strategically too much exposed to naval attack by the British who now already annexed half of Myanmar kingdom. After the rich province of Pegu had fallen into the British hand as a result of the second Anglo-Myanmar war of 1852, the "British Burma" extended up to the town Prome [Pyay]. The hill ranges on the western bank of the Ayeyawady river, facing Pyay were arbitrarily demarcated by the British as the border line between the "British Burma" and Myanmar kingdom. The British set up Customs House and military posts to guard. Till today, these hill ranges were known as "A-kauk Taung Tan" in Myanmar [hill ranges of British Customs House and military posts].

Since early days, there were Buddhist monuments, monasteries, recluse, and meditation caves on these pleasant forest hill ranges. Later Myanmar pilgrims and traders embellished the hillsides facing the river with countless sculptures and carvings of high artistic quality, attracting the marvel and appreciation of visitors and tourists at home and abroad.

The British war boats could come up easily to attack capital city Amarapura which was right on the eastern bank of the Ayeyawady

river. Mindon was right in moving to a more secure placelike Mandalay. Besides from the viewpoint of urbanization, Amarapura became an exhausted sprawling capital city with a growing city population of 19,719 living within its walls. That total figure consisted of (1) King, queens, royal family and relatives numbering 300 [2 percent of the population], (2) Buddhist monks 4,462 [22 percent], (3) king's servicemen, Myanmar and foreigner, 11,472 [58 percent] and commoners [Athei] 3,588 [18 percent]. Two percent who were the ruling class occupied one quarter of the space of the capital city. Monks resided in the monasteries surrounding the palace.

Urban planning included residential quarters, road construction, bridge building, bazaars, markets, trade centres, jetties, toll gates and customs houses, military and guard outposts, leper houses, hospitals and cemeteries. But lighting and fire for cooking were still backward. Either candle or crude earth oil were used at night and charcoal or firewood was used for cooking, causing frequent outbreak of fire.

Mindon thus chose Mandalay area which covers a vast expanse of even land surrounded by hill ranges and individual offshoots of Shan Plateau to the north, north-east and south east, crisscrossed by aquatic bodies of different forms – falls, brooks, springs, streams, lakes and canals and besides, the mighty Ayeyawady

flows on the west.

As princes, Mindon and his younger brother Kanaung travelled widely in the peripheries of Amarapura reaching out to Mandalay and beyond. They visited hills around Mandalay such as Yetkanzin hill, Sagyin marble hills, Mei U Taung hill, Yan Kin hill, Yey Tagung Taung hill and Mandalay hill of which Mandalay hill was their favourite because of its location, natural environment and a breath-taking pleasant panoramic view atop it.

There was an old Myanmar folk song by an unknown composer which bears an oracle of the sacredness and auspiciousness of Mandalay hill. It runs as follows:—

The above old song

အသက်ကလေးရယ်တဲ့ရှည်စေလို
မြန်နွာရေညိုသန်းတဲ့ မနီးတောင်ရိပ်ခို၊
ခေါင်းလောင်းသံတချို့ချို့နဲ့
ရွှေပတိုစည်သံဟိန်းတယ်
ဘေးရန်ကငြိမ်း။

For your life's longevity,
Shelter under Mandalay Hill's serenity
Caressed by cool clear water
Emerald Lake Nandar.
Resounding sounds of bells so sweet,
Vibrating echo of Golden Bahosi Drum's beats,
Driving out all dangers to retreat.

conjures up the physical, mythical, spiritual and historical aspects of the hill. It is a hill of 776 feet high above the sea level, outcropping from a ground which is "even like the face of a big drum". Oval shape it takes is green with dry forest flora, a mile and a half furlong from north to south and only 6 furlongs from east to west. Mandalay hill sits right in the centre of nine minor hills around it – (1) Shwe Taung hill (gold hill), (2) Ngwe Taung hill (silver hill), (3) Patamya Taung hill (Ruby hill), (4) Sey-dan Taung hill (yellow orpiment hill), (5) Myin-thi-lar Taung hill (Realgar or red orpiment hill), (6)

Dut-ha Taung hill (copper sulphate crystal or blue vitriol hill), (7) Yey-hle Taung hill (spring or sprout hill), (8) Kyey Ni Taung hill (copper hill) and (9) Be-loo ma Taung hill (Ogress hill). Their names tell the minerals they have in store and the 9th hill suggests the legends associated with it and Mandalay Hill. Mya Nanda [Emerald Lake] mentioned in the folk song is one of the two water reservoirs which Prince Min Shin Saw, the elder son of King Alaung Sithu of Bagan dynasty dug to restore rain and flood water for the use of cultivation of fields and farms and domestic use of the farmers who inhabited there. The other reservoir is Aung Pin Lei [Auspicious inland sea]. These two big

as keeping Sabbath and meditation. Local people also frequented Mandalay hill for the same purpose. They call the hill "Mingalay Hill" [Yong King's Hill] which in course of time corrupts to Man-da-lay hill.

Another version of the name of this hill is founded in the stone inscriptions of Yadana Myitzu Pagoda which stands on the western outskirt of Mandalay. This pagoda was built by the forefathers of King Shwe Nan Kyaw Shin in 1501 A.D. In this inscription the hill is mentioned as "Man-da-ray" hill because the hill is very enchanting and it gives peace and tranquility to the visitors.

In Buddhist legends, we find different names of Mandalay hill in different

sojourned to the Mandalay hill. They sojourned on its summit. When Ashin Ananda saw Lord Buddha smile, he asked the Buddha why he smiled. Lord Buddha explained that the Mandalay hill was the abode of his previous seven lives – a lion, a stag, a quail, an iguana, a hunter, an elephant and a rooster. An ogress named Sanda Mukhi from the Bee-loo Ma Taung hill [ogress hill] the 9th surrounding hill, came to pay respect to the Buddha who preached dhamma to her. She felt so happy and peaceful after she heard the dhamma that she worshipped the Buddha. In a frenzy of devotional ardour, the ogress cut off her two breasts and placed them at the feet of the Buddha in offering. Whereupon the Buddha told her his divine prophesy that "in the 2460 of Buddha Era, this place [the site of Mandalay Palace city] which he pointed at with his forefinger of his right hand, which was evenly flat like the face of a drum would become a big capital city named "Ratanarpon" [The capital city of Gems] and there "as a descendant of the great Maha Thamada [the first king of the universe] shall thou be king of that capital city."

According to this divine prophesy of Lord Gotama Buddha, King Mindon was the re-incarnation of the ogress Sanda Mukhi. The hill, sacred, sublime fair in shape and formation, possesses all good and suitable qualities for the abode of kings. Because of Lord Buddha's Divine Prophesy a pagoda "Su Taung Pyi" [wish fulfilling] pagoda was built on its summit.

(See page 9)

Union Culture Minister visits pagoda construction in Toungoo



Union Minister for Culture U Aye Myint Kyu visits Khmer Bronze Statue in the precinct of Myasigone Pagoda in Toungoo.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Feb — Union Minister for Culture U Aye Myint Kyu visited construction of pagoda in Toungoo Township, Bago region, Saturday.

With photo records of enshrining relics, local dig-

nitaries and board trustee explained the transfer of relics from original pagoda formerly titled Mya Leinda into surrounding stupas of newly constructed one named as Mya Neinda.

The Union Minister

then arrived at Myasigone Pagoda and looked around cultural edifices in the compound of the pagoda, with inspecting security measures for ancient cultural heritages.

MNA



Solar Impulse-2 from Switzerland will arrive in Mandalay on 8 March 2015.—MNA

The last old Myanmar capital city . . .

(from page 8)

Myanmar chronicles have recorded maintenance, renovations and embellishments carried out on the Mandalay hill by pious Myanmar kings. King Duttabaung of Sri Ksetra city kingdom who ascended the throne in 101 Buddhist Era, was in search of his exiled queen “Saw Mya Waddy”. When he came upon a spot not far from Mandalay, he saw a hill. He was so fascinated by its sublime beauty that he built on its summit “Su Taung Pyi” pagoda. He also built rest houses and stairways on the west

and south sides of the hill. King Anawrahta of Bagan [1044-1077 A.D.] on his return from a pilgrimage to the Sacred Tooth Relic of Gotama Buddha in Gandalayit [China], made a halt on Mandalay hill and built a pagoda on its summit. In 1472 A.D. King Thiha Thura of Inwa dynasty renovated Su Taung Pyi pagoda and built some rest houses and stairways. In 1805 A.D. the Crown Prince Maha Upa Raja, the father of King Bagyidaw [819-1837] renovated Su Taung Pyi pagoda and embellished it with gold and putting a new

hti [decorated umbrella] on it. A gilt devotional hall and ornately-carved roofed stairways were also built. King Bagyidaw repaired and renovated the monuments and pagodas on the hill. He also built four rest houses, one at each of the four sides of Su Taung Pyi pagoda. At the foot of the east stairway, a water tank was built to supply fresh water for the pilgrims.

When Mindon decided to found a new capital city on the site near the Mandalay hill, it was believed and hailed that the Divine Prophecy of Gotama Buddha had

Communications services inspected in Kayah and Shan states

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Feb — U Myat Hein, Union Minister for Communications and Information Technology, went on inspection tours of the Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications, the Pinlaung post office and the autoexchange office in Shan State on 18 February, officials said.

The union minister oversaw the installation of a network of fibre optic cables linking four towns in Kayah State with three towns in Shan State. On 18 and 19 February, he visited autoexchange offices, post offices, microwave stations and mobile telecommunications stations in Loikaw

in Kayah State and Hpekon in Shan State. He also inspected mobile towers being erected by two foreign mobile operators, Ooredoo and Telenor.

Currently, Myanmar has 6,135 mobile stations in 322 townships, with an average mobile density reaching 45.42%.—MNA



U Myat Hein, Union Minister for Communications and Information Technology inspects preparation for laying of fibre optic cables. MNA

Association for Protection of Race and Religion calls for more time to draft amendment bill for National Education Law

YANGON, 22 Feb — The Association for Protection of Race and Religion issued a statement on Sunday, calling for more time to draft the amendment bill and saying that some patriotic scholars pointed out that the amendment bill of the National Education Law include provisions that will cause worries for the fu-

ture of the country, dangerous loopholes, disastrous side-effects and tricks.

The statement also said that the association will give its advice to Hluttaws occasionally.

The association praised the student protestors as well as the government for agreements in four party-talks. However, on closer

examination at the National Education Law and the amendment bill, dangerous loopholes and disastrous side-effects were discovered in the amendment bill, according to the statement signed by chairman of the association Bhanddanta Tillokabhivamsa of Ywama Pariyatti Saththantak in Insein, Yangon.—MNA

MMPO denounces Kokang insurgent group

YANGON, 22 Feb — Myanmar Motion Picture Organization issued a statement on Sunday, saying that it is proud of defence services personnel who are fighting bravely for the sovereignty of Myanmar, who have lost their lives

and limbs and who were injured in Laukkai Area, Kokang Self-Administered Zone in Shan State.

In its statement, it association also said that it strongly denounced the Kokang insurgent group led by Phon Kya Shin and

other armed groups that threatened the sovereignty of the state and it strongly supported the Tatmadaw. In addition, the statement said that the association will play an assigned role for the country and the people.—MNA

come true. The legendary Ogress Sanda Mukhi was reborn a human prince who became King Mindon. On Friday, the 13th February 1857, the construction of a new palace was begun. King Mindon frequently came from Amarapura to the construction site to supervise the construction works personally. He found time to visit the Mandalay hill and carried out many development and embellishment works there. In May 1858, the construction of the new place was completed and in May 1859, the battlements

and the moat were finished.

King Mindon assigned to the Minister of Gunnery Lord of Mya Taung Myo to the making of a life size statue of a standing Buddha Gotama with the right hand raised and the forefinger pointing at the site of Mandalay palace down below, in the gesture of divine prophesy as well as a life size statue of Ashin Ananda in the manner of attendance and attention. The two statues were each carved out of a single big teak log, and sheltered in the exquisitely carved image house, with a

gilt wooden spire on its roof located on the south side of the hill. So these big teak statues were very much larger than life size. One of King Mindon's sons, Prince Salin was assigned to the building of a big gilt and glass mosaic devotional hall in the precincts of Su Taung Pyi pagoda. Unfortunately, in 1883, a big fire which broke out in the vicinity of Shwe Kyi Myint pagoda in downtown Mandalay, spread to Mandalay hill and destroyed buildings and statues of King Mindon's merit.

(To be continued)

US weighs slowing Afghan withdrawal to ensure 'progress sticks': Carter

KABUL, 22 Feb — The United States is considering slowing a planned withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan to ensure that “progress sticks” after more than a decade of war, new Defence Secretary Ash Carter said during an unannounced visit to Kabul on Saturday.

Under the current plan, the United States will halve the number of troops in Afghanistan to just over 5,000 this year, gradually winding down to a “normal” US embassy presence by the end of 2016.

That schedule could now change, at least in part, suggested Carter on his first trip abroad since swearing in as the Pentagon chief on Tuesday, as the United States also rethinks the future of its counter-terrorism mission in Afghanistan.

His remarks set the stage for talks next month when the Afghan president is expected in Washington.

“Our priority now is to make sure this progress sticks,” Carter said at a joint conference with President Ashraf Ghani, hours after landing in Kabul.

“That is why President (Barack) Obama is considering a number of options to reinforce our support for President Ghani’s security strategy, including possible changes to the timeline for our drawdown of US troops.”

Ghani said he expected to discuss US troop numbers with Obama “in the context of the larger partnership.”

US General John Campbell, who leads international forces in Afghanistan, suggested his focus for now was sustaining enough US trainers, advisors and counter-terrorism forces in Afghanistan during 2015 and 2016, not what happens later.

“Right now I think we’re comfortable looking



US Secretary of Defence Ash Carter (L) listens to remarks by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani (R) during a joint news conference at the Presidential Palace in Kabul on 21 Feb, 2015. —REUTERS

at ‘15 and ‘16,” Campbell told reporters travelling with Carter.

The current strategy has drawn sharp criticism from Republicans in Congress, who say that hard-won gains made against the Taliban could be lost in much the same way that sectarian violence returned to Iraq after the US withdrawal.

Afghanistan’s national army and police suffered heavy losses last year, the bloodiest since the war against Taliban militants began in 2001.

The emergence of a small number of militants in Afghanistan aligning themselves with Islamic State, which swept into northern Iraq last summer, has underscored anxieties

about the dangers as foreign forces withdraw.

Carter said Islamic State’s presence in Afghanistan appeared “aspirational.”

But he also acknowledged the future of the US counter-terrorism mission was also under review.

“We are discussing and rethinking the details of the counter-terrorism mission and how the environment has changed here with respect to terrorism, since we first laid out our plans,” Carter said.

Discussions about the way forward in Afghanistan, Carter said, were possible thanks to political progress in Kabul, where Ghani’s pro-Western unity government succeeded former president Hamid Karzai last year.

Once the darling of the international community, Karzai made fervently anti-Western speeches in his later years in power and re-

sisted US pressure to sign a crucial security treaty.

Carter, who this week became Obama’s fourth defence secretary, is a former Pentagon No 2 with deep roots in US policy on Afghanistan. He said Saturday marked his tenth official visit to the country, even though it was his first at the helm of the Department of Defence.

Neither he nor Ghani made predictions about peace efforts with the Taliban, after senior Pakistani army, Afghan and diplomatic officials said the Afghan Taliban signaled they were willing to open peace talks.

But Ghani sounded upbeat. “The grounds for peace have never been better in the last 36 years. Our approach is productive. We’re hopeful,” Ghani said.

“But categorical answers in a peace process are dangerous.” —Reuters

Qatar tried to help free Japanese hostages

SENDAI, 22 Feb — Qatari Foreign Minister Khalid bin Mohammed al-Attiyah said on Saturday during a visit to Japan that Qatar’s government tried to mediate the release of Japanese hostages ultimately killed by the Islamic State militant group.

In an interview with *Kyodo News*, Attiyah said, “The Japanese government was very serious about this matter, and they engaged their friends in the region and tried their best to save the two Japanese.”

Attiyah refrained from saying whether the Japanese government directly asked the Qatari government to help free the two men.

“Qatar doesn’t have direct contact with ISIS,” he said, using an acronym

for the group.

According to Attiyah, Qatar has a specialist team dedicated to hostage negotiation. The team has previously helped secure the release of a US journalist and others held in Syria.

In the case of the Japanese hostages, the Qatari government “tried to engage with good people on the ground, who always try through other mediators to reach out and to try to see if they can get to this group,” he said.

Attiyah expressed condolences over the deaths of Haruna Yukawa and Kenji Goto, who were killed in the crisis. He criticized Islamic State for not any negotiations, and killing the men “in cold blood in a very short time.”

Kyodo News



Syrian refugee boys play in rain water at Zaatari Syrian refugee camp near Mafraq city, Jordan, on 21 Feb, 2015. —XINHUA

Turkish tanks enter Syria to evacuate soldiers guarding tomb

ANKARA, 22 Feb — Turkish tanks backed by drones and reconnaissance planes entered Syria overnight to evacuate several dozen Turkish soldiers guarding a tomb considered sovereign territory by Ankara and surrounded by Islamic State insurgents.

Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said around 100 military vehicles, including 39 tanks, were involved and that the 38 soldiers guarding the tomb of Suleyman Shah, grandfather of the founder of the Ottoman Empire, had been brought safely home.

The military said there had been no clashes during the operation, the first such ground incursion by Turkish troops into Syria, but

that one soldier had been killed in an accident.

Flanked by the chief of the military and the defence minister, Davutoglu told a news conference that Turkey had not sought permission or assistance for the mission but had informed allies in the coalition against Islamic State once it began.

He said on his Twitter account that the remains of Suleyman Shah would be moved to a different area of Syria which had been brought under Turkish military control.

There was no immediate reaction from the Syrian authorities.

The Turkish government said late last year that Islamic State militants

were advancing on the mausoleum and had repeatedly vowed to defend it. The tomb was made Turkish territory under a treaty signed with France in 1921, when France ruled Syria.

Turkey has been reluctant to take an active role in the US-led military campaign against Islamic State, partly because it wants to see the military action target Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s forces as much as the insurgents.

Islamic State and other Islamist groups, whose strict Salafi interpretation of Islam deems the veneration of tombs to be idolatrous, have destroyed several tombs and mosques in Syria.

Reuters

Turkish PM says soldiers evacuated successfully in Syria mission



Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu

ANKARA, 22 Feb — Turkish soldiers guarding the tomb of Suleyman Shah in Syria have been successfully evacuated to Turkey in a military operation overnight, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said on his Twitter account on Sunday.

Davutoglu said the remains of Suleyman Shah, grandfather of the founder of the Ottoman Empire, would be moved to a different area of Syria which has been brought under Turkish military control.

The military said in a statement that there had been no clashes during the operation but that one soldier had been killed in an accident.

Reuters



Egyptian men wait to board buses back home in Salloum, Egypt, east of the border with Libya, on 21 Feb, 2015. Over 6,000 Egyptians have returned from Libya, since the air strike against the Islamic State (IS) in the neighbouring country on Monday, according to Salloum land port gate authority. —XINHUA

BUSINESS & HEALTH

Ireland says second major tobacco firm threatens legal action

CASTLEBAR, (Ireland), 22 Feb — Ireland said a second major cigarette manufacturer, Imperial Tobacco Group (IMT.L), has threatened legal action against the government over plans for a law requiring them to sell cigarettes in plain packets.

Ireland said in 2013 it wanted to become the first country in the European Union to ban branding on cigarette packages and reiterated its plans this week after the legislation prompted a threat of legal

action from Japan Tobacco International (2914.T).

The minister who has designed the legislation, James Reilly, said Japan Tobacco and Imperial Tobacco had written to his department and that one of the firms demanded he tell them in writing by this week that Dublin would not proceed with the law.

"This week I received letters from two of the largest tobacco companies in the world threatening legal action against this state," Reilly said in a speech at

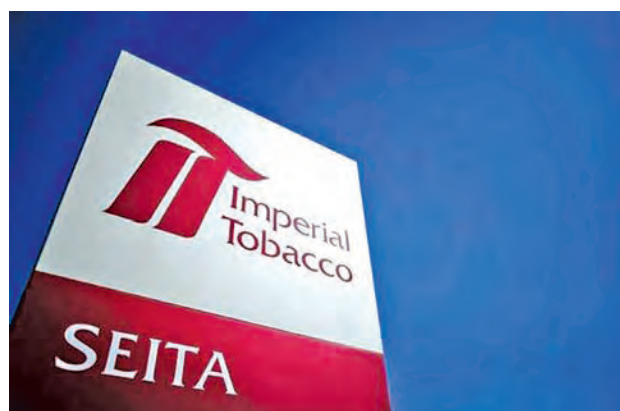
his Fine Gael party's annual conference.

"I want to be crystal clear. We will put the health of our children ahead of the profits of Imperial Tobacco and Japan Tobacco International every time," Reilly said to applause from supporters.

No one at Imperial Tobacco, whose cigarette brands include Davidoff, Gauloises and John Player in Ireland, was immediately available for comment.

In a response last year to Britain's health department over its plans to introduce a similar law by May, Imperial Tobacco said plain packaging would infringe international law, could threaten future foreign direct investment into Britain and set a dangerous precedent for other sectors.

Australia introduced a ban a few years ago as a way to reduce smoking and is facing challenges at the World Trade Organization over complaints the laws create illegal obstacles to commerce.—Reuters



View of a sign outside the Imperial Tobacco Seita cigarette plant in Carquefou, near Nantes, on 15 April, 2014.—REUTERS

Tokyo market bulls face hurdles to sustained rise

Tokyo, 22 Feb — Growing optimism that Japan's economy is on track to recovery is pushing the Nikkei Stock Average to levels unseen in nearly 15 years, but market watchers say there are hurdles to achieving a sustained rise.

Investors have been encouraged by the country's exit from recession and a robust corporate sector amid aggressive easing by the Bank of Japan, with some speculating that the Nikkei is within reach of the 20,000 mark. But turmoil in Europe, mixed signals about the US economy and the slowing fall in the yen are factors that could rein in the market's bulls.

On Friday, the Nikkei ended above 18,300 for the first time since May 2000 as investors grew more optimistic about the performance of Japanese businesses.

Pretax profit grew 7.3 percent in the nine months through December, according to data compiled by SMBC Nikko Securities Inc

on 1,399 companies in the Tokyo Stock Exchange's First Section, raising hopes about the full earnings for the fiscal year through March. Major manufacturers have been particularly strong as the yen weakens due to the BOJ's easy money, a pillar of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's reflationary economic policies. Yen weakness boosts the price competitiveness of exports and inflates overseas earnings when brought home.

Japan emerged from recession in the last quarter of 2014, returning to positive growth helped by growing exports, after contracting for two consecutive quarters. Exports' firmness continued into this year, with a 17 percent year-on-year surge chalked up in January in a five-month winning streak.

Overseas stock markets have also helped lift sentiment. Wall Street's Dow Jones Industrial Average and S&P 500 as well as Germany's DAX are all continuing their record-breaking

uptrend.

But the Nikkei's steady climb shouldn't be taken for granted, analysts say.

"I see the Nikkei being capped at around 18,500 in the short term," said Yutaka Miura, a senior technical analyst at Mizuho Securities Co. "It could still slip below 18,000."

For one thing, economic recovery in the United States, the biggest importer of Japanese goods, may not be as robust as anticipated.

While corporate earnings in the last quarter of 2014 were solid, lower crude oil prices, which have yet to fully recover after sinking to nearly six-year lows last month, will likely deal a blow to energy-linked firms. Economic data have been mixed, with a January labour market report bettering forecasts but retail sales falling more than expected the same month. An expected hike in the Federal Reserve's key interest rate this year would further cloud the picture.

Kyodo News

Youth fighting 'superbug' infection from Los Angeles outbreak

LOS ANGELES, 22 Feb — An 18-year-old man who was one of seven patients infected with a drug-resistant bacterial "superbug" during a medical procedure in Los Angeles was under 24-hour monitoring at a hospital as he fought a severe infection, his attorney said on Friday.

Infection by the carbapenem-resistant enterobacteria, or CRE, during endoscopies at a large teaching hospital in the University of California at Los Angeles system has contributed to two deaths among the seven patients.

Officials warned that as many as 179 people who had endoscopies at the UCLA Ronald Reagan Medical Centre may have been exposed to the so-called superbug. The procedures were done between 3 October and 28 January.

All five of the confirmed infected patients who remain alive are under treatment, said UCLA spokeswoman Dale Tate.

The infections all occurred during procedures in which a specialized scope, known as a duoden-

oscope, was inserted down the throat to diagnose and treat pancreatic and bile duct diseases. The outbreak has raised questions about whether methods for cleaning the endoscopes were adequate.

The 18-year-old man, whose name has not been released, was among those infected by CRE, said attorney Kevin Boyle, a member of his legal team.

The man went to the medical centre in mid-2014 for a pancreatic ailment and received an endoscopy, Boyle said. The man became ill and was hospitalized a short time later.

By November, he had been diagnosed with CRE. The youth spent 83 days in the hospital, mostly in the intensive care unit, the attorney said.

"It's definitely a severe infection," he said, adding that the infection had landed the young man back in a Los Angeles hospital. The 18-year-old was not in the intensive care unit but was under 24-hour monitoring.

"The (man's) prognosis is unknown," Boyle said. He would not give the

name of the hospital where the young man is being treated.

Further details on the conditions of the five infected patients have not been disclosed, and details on the circumstances of the two deaths have not been made public.

Officials have said there is no broader threat to public health, and that hospital officials have called and sent letters to at-risk former patients. All of them are at home, rather than at a hospital, Tate said. No further infections have been reported.

Corey Egel, a spokesperson for the California Department of Public Health, said the short-term risk window for additional CRE infections among the patients who came into contact with the scopes was over.

There remains, however, a possibility of future infections if the organism was able to colonize inside any of the patients.

"Any person who is colonized with any multi-drug resistant organism is at some increased risk in

the future of developing an infection with that organism," he said.

The medical centre has said that it had been sterilizing the duodenoscopes implicated in the infection, which it began using in June, according to manufacturer standards. It has said it now uses a more rigorous process that exceeds national standards.

The two infected scopes were immediately removed from use for return to the manufacturer, Olympus Medical Systems Group. Olympus did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Hospitals across the United States have reported exposures from the same type of medical equipment in recent years. The US Food and Drug Administration has said it was working with other government agencies and scope manufacturers to minimize risks to patients.

California's public health department said no other hospitals in the state have seen a similar outbreak.

Reuters

China, ADB can tap "belt and road" potential



BEIJING, 22 Feb — The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and China can make use of the huge potential in infrastructure and energy along the belt and road, said ADB Vice President Zhang Wencai. "Belt and road" refers to the Silk Road economic belt and the 21st century maritime Silk Road proposed by China in 2013 for improved cooperation between countries in Asia, Europe and Africa. The belt and road will result in increased investment that will improve connectivity across Central Asia, Zhang said in an interview with Xinhua.

The ADB can work with China to translate the concept into concrete action through the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) programme, Zhang said. The CAREC programme is an ADB initiative launched in 2001 to

promote regional cooperation in transport, energy and trade between its 10 members, including Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. "China can contribute to the economic corridor development in the CAREC region by sharing its experience in logistics, infrastructure, economic zones, spatial economic agglomeration, urbanization and public-private partnerships," he said. "Large investment needs for infrastructure in the region create large funding gaps," he said.

All CAREC countries have substantial needs in energy development, Zhang added. An ADB study in central Asia found that investment of about 36 billion US dollars is needed before 2022 for power infrastructure in four countries.

Xinhua

Marshall Islanders seek attention for “ignored” nuclear victims

TOKYO, 22 Feb — Residents of the Marshall Islands called on Saturday for attention to the existence of people denied assistance despite apparently being exposed to nuclear fallout from the US hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll in 1954.

“We are from Ailuk Atoll, we also experienced...sufferings,” Tempo Alfred, 74, said in a symposium in Tokyo held ahead of the 61st anniversary of the Bravo test on 1 March, referring to an atoll located 525 kilometres away from where the United States conducted its largest hydrogen bomb test.

Alfred said he was out in the ocean on the day of the test and saw light that looked “yellow and red,” followed by a “great sound like thunder.” He thought maybe another world war had started, and did not realize that he had been ex-



Tempo Alfred (R) from the Marshall Islands atoll of Ailuk talks about his experiences in the wake of the 1954 US hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll. Seated to his left is his niece Rosania Bennett. — KYODO NEWS

posed to nuclear radiation.

Ailuk people say they subsequently started suffering from unfamiliar illnesses and cancer, women began giving birth to deformed babies, and food crop production declined.

The United States, however, has recognized only four atolls in the is-

land nation as “exposed,” namely Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap and Utirik, offering compensation payments or health checks to the people in those areas.

Rosania Bennett, a 44-year-old niece of Alfred who also attended the symposium, said she wants people to know that “when

you talk about the victims of nuclear testing, we are not just talking about the four atolls.”

The level of radiation fallout on Ailuk Atoll was “comparable, or very close to that of other islands” whose people were evacuated by the United States after the Bravo test, Bennett said. But the US government apparently decided “it would be too much of an inconvenience” to move the 401 people living on Ailuk Atoll at that time, she added.

“Imagine a simple people not knowing the dangers of radioactive dust falling from the sky that covered all our islands, our drinking water, our food crops and our homes. The people of Ailuk will never forget this great injustice, and neither will we rest in our quest to right this particular wrong,” Bennett said.—Kyodo News

N Korea FM to attend UN human rights session amid scrutiny

BEIJING, 22 Feb — North Korea’s Foreign Minister Ri Su Yong left Pyongyang on Saturday for a visit abroad that will see him participate in next month’s UN Human Rights Council session in Geneva, at which the country’s troubling human rights record will come under close scrutiny.

The country’s state-run Korean Central News Agency said in a brief dispatch from Pyongyang that Ri and his party “left here Saturday to visit Mongolia and participate in the 28th Session of the UN Human Rights Council to be held in Geneva.”

At the session, scheduled for 2-27 March, a “commission of inquiry” established by the council in March 2013 will report its detailed findings, strongly refuted by North Korea, that “systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations” have been and are being committed by the state in North Korea, and on such a scale that they constitute “crimes against humanity.”

Ri’s departure comes a day after North Korea’s Foreign Ministry denounced the commission’s report, which was issued in February last year, as well as a resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on 18 December that called for possible referral of the North Korean human rights issue to the International Criminal Court, as having been “cooked up” by the United States and “forcibly adopted on the basis of the false testimonies” of North Korean defectors.

Earlier this month, Ri, in a letter addressed to UN leaders, blasted the resolution as an “unlawful” one based on lies and fabrications, while demanding they take measures to revoke it.

“The initiators of the ‘resolution’ including the EU and Japan have colluded to forcibly adopt the ‘resolution’ by concocting

frauds and falsehoods from the beginning...I hope Your Excellencies will urge them to admit this fact by themselves and to apologize for it to the international community,” he was quoted by KCNA as saying.

Ri added that if the resolution were to be withdrawn, North Korea would be “willing to actively engage itself in talks and co-operation in the field of human rights.”

The commission said in its report, set to be presented at the council on 17 March, that the gravity, scale and nature of human rights violations in North Korea “shock the conscience of humanity” and reveal a totalitarian state “that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world.”

These violations, it said, include extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, rape, forced abortions, and persecution on political, religious, racial and gender grounds, as well as forcible transfer of populations, enforced disappearance of persons and knowingly causing prolonged starvation.

It calls on the United Nations to ensure that those most responsible for the crimes against humanity are held accountable, such as by referring the situation to the ICC or by establishing an ad hoc UN tribunal.

In its report on Saturday, KCNA called the North Korean human rights issue a “non-existent” one.

In his letter to UN leaders, Ri said regarding the testimonies of North Korean defectors that served as the basis for the commission’s report that “if they manage to present the list of that hundreds of ‘testifiers’ they claim to have interviewed, we are ready to reveal to the whole world the true identities of each and every one of them and the crimes committed and the lies told by them one by one.”

Kyodo News

UNHCR repatriates over 1,400 Somali refugees from Kenya

NAIROBI, 22 Feb — The UN refugee agency said on Sunday it has so far repatriated 1,473 refugees from Kenya to Somalia under the current voluntary return pilot project, which kicked off late last year.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in its biweekly update received in Nairobi that 199 individuals were repatriated in two convoys to Somalia on 7 February and 10 February, adding that over 80 percent of the returnees are refugees who arrived in Kenya after 2010.

The first group of refugees travelled to Somalia from Dadaab refugee camps on 8 December, 2014, when the pilot project was launched. According to UNHCR, the refugees who have been living at the Dadaab complex, the world’s largest refugee settlement in northern Kenya, use prearranged bus transport.

So far, the agency said 13 convoys have depart-

ed since then with Kenyan police providing security to ensure a safe and secure journey, adding that most of the refugees have returned either to Baidoa or Kismayo in Somalia. According to UNHCR, before their departure, the refugees underwent counseling by UNHCR and partners on conditions in Somalia, especially with regard to security.

Kenya hosts more than 600,000 refugees from 36 nationalities who flee conflicts from the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region. Somali refugees in Kenya are estimated at 500,000 and the number has increased due to turmoil and recurrent droughts in the Horn of Africa nation.

The current repatriation process follows a tripartite agreement which was signed by Kenya, Somalia and UNHCR in 2013 that establishes a legal framework and other support for Somali refugees in Kenya who might be willing to return.—Xinhua

Ice Monsters attract skiers



People enjoy skiing among so-called “Ice Monsters” at Zao hot spring ski resort in Yamagata, northeastern Japan, on 21 Feb, 2015. Ice Monsters are formed by ice and snow coating pine trees, and are now in the last stage of their best time to view. KYODO NEWS

Peru recalls ambassador from Chile over spying suspicions

LIMA, 22 Feb — Peru’s President Ollanta Humala said on Saturday that he was recalling the Peruvian ambassador from Chile and would not accept “unfriendly acts” from the neighbouring Andean country amid suspicions of spying.

Peru also sent a letter of protest to Santiago following revelations this week that two Peruvian naval officials are being tried and a third investigated for allegedly spying for Chile. “We’re waiting for an answer from the Chilean government,”

Humala told reporters on the sidelines of an event.

Chile had said in a statement on Friday that it does not promote or accept spying. Humala, who previously warned that confirmation of the spying would damage ties, said his evaluation of

the Navy’s evidence merited a firmer position towards Chile. “This government is not going to accept unfriendly acts of this nature,” Humala said. “And even less so from countries with which we’ve been working in a sustained way.”—Reuters

Indian aid worker freed by Taliban after 8 months in captivity in Afghanistan

NEW DELHI, 22 Feb — An Indian aid worker has been released by the Taliban after being kept in cap-

tivity in the eastern Afghan city Herat for eight months, said the foreign ministry on Sunday.—Xinhua

GENERAL

Another winter storm to pummel eastern United States with snow and sleet

NEW YORK, 22 Feb — A fresh band of winter weather that churned up the East Coast on Saturday, pummeling the storm-weary region with snow, sleet and freezing rain, was expected to gradually taper off Sunday morning, forecasters said.

Six inches or more of fresh snow was forecast for parts of the Northeast by early Sunday, according to the National Weather Service (NWS). Bitter cold is also expected, but conditions should start to ease in many areas by mid-morning, the service said.

Boston, which had already been hit by 98.7 inches (251 cm) of snow going into the weekend, saw only about an inch Saturday, but local weather watchers there were forecasting the total tally to hit 100 inches by midnight. The city's total is well above the average yearly total of 31 inches (79 cm).

The new round of harsh weather is part of a system that has cut a



The One World Trade Centre tower is pictured in the background as ice floes are viewed along the Hudson River in New York on 20 Feb, 2015.—REUTERS

curving, 2,000-mile path from southern Missouri to Maine.

Snow and ice contributed to major delays at John F Kennedy International Airport in New York on Saturday, with some arriving flights delayed more than two hours, and flights destined for Newark International Airport in New Jersey were delayed more than three hours, according to a Federal Aviation Administration advisory.

Winter weather advisories and winter storm

warnings were in effect until Sunday for parts of West Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, Maine and New Hampshire, the NWS said.

The system dropped steady snow on Washington and Baltimore as it pushed up the East Coast Saturday. West Virginia saw 18 inches of snow, according to state officials.

NWS warned that "structural collapses" are possible for rooftops overloaded with the persistent snowfall. Maryland State

Police said people had abandoned their vehicles along interstates and roadways.

Nearly a week of cold and ice has contributed to 18 weather-related fatalities in Tennessee since Monday, according to the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency. They include nine people who died of hypothermia and five victims of motor-vehicle accidents.

And in Kentucky, 10 people have died since Monday in weather-related incidents, said Buddy Rogers, a spokesman for Kentucky Emergency Management.

Pennsylvania authorities said on Friday at least two people had frozen to death outside.

A 119-year-old record low temperature for 20 February was broken in Washington, with a temperature of 5 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 15 degrees Celsius) recorded at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.—Reuters

Kin of Japanese victims attend NZ quake anniversary ceremony



Kazuo Horita (R) and his wife, whose daughter Megumi was among 28 Japanese victims of an earthquake that killed 185 people in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2011, attend a memorial service in the city on 22 Feb, 2015, to mark the fourth anniversary of the disaster.—KYODO NEWS

CHRISTCHURCH, (New Zealand), 22 Feb — Relatives of some of the Japanese victims of an earthquake that killed 185 people in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2011 attended a memorial service in the city on Sunday as it marked the fourth anniversary of the disaster.

Christchurch Mayor Lianne Dalziel paid respects to the victims in a speech at the event in the city's Botanic Gardens. More than 1,000 participants offered a minute of silence at 12:51 pm, the time the earthquake took place on 22 February, 2011.

Twenty-eight Japanese students at a language

school in the collapsed Canterbury Television Building were among the victims.

"It has already been four years, and it has only been four years," Kazuo Horita, 60, one of the six Japanese relatives to attend the event, said. He lost his daughter Megumi, 19.

Horita, from Toyama, a city on the Sea of Japan coast, said he hopes local police will press charges over the CTV building collapse that claimed the lives of 115 people.

Police have launched a criminal investigation as the six-story building was found not to have met construction standards.

Kyodo News

Cambodia sees decline in road casualties during Chinese New Year travel

PHNOM PENH, 22 Feb — Road traffic crashes killed 29 people and injured 151 others in Cambodia during Chinese Lunar New Year travel from Wednesday to Saturday, compared with 33 deaths and 197 injuries a year earlier, the police said on Sunday.

"A total of 77 road accidents took place across the country on the occasion," said a police release. "The main causes of the crashes were high-speed, neglect, and drunken driving."

A terrible accident occurred on Saturday in southwestern Kampot Province when a car crashed into a motorcycle, leaving four people dead and four others injured.

The Chinese Lunar New Year is not a public holiday in Cambodia, but a majority of the population celebrates the occasion by traveling to their hometowns or going to tourist destinations for leisure.

Xinhua

Cargo train arrives in China's small commodity hub from Madrid

HANGZHOU, 22 Feb — A cargo train with 64 containers completed its maiden journey from Madrid, Spain, to China's eastern city of Yiwu, on Sunday.

The train travelled for 24 days along the Yixin'ou cargo line, the longest of all the China-European cargo railways, officials said. The train was carrying famous Spanish products including wine and olive oil.

The 13,000-km line passes through China, Spain, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany and France.

The service opened at the end of 2014. The first train from China to Spain, carrying stationary, craft products and products for the Christmas market, left Yiwu on 18 November,

2014, and arrived in Madrid after 21 days.

The line is a more efficient export channel for Yiwu's commodities, as the city previously relied heavily on air and sea transportation.

"The cargo train will boost economic exchange between Yiwu, the world's largest small commodity market, and Madrid, Europe's largest small commodity market," said Li Huihuan, manager of Yiwu CF International Logistics Co Ltd.

According to Yiwu customs, Yiwu's import and export volume in 2014 was 148.6 billion yuan (23.7 billion US dollars), an increase of 28.6 percent year on year.

Xinhua



A woman walks in front of one of the finished murals of the Binational Garden project, in the Friendship Park, at the border between Mexico and the US, in the northwestern Mexican city of Tijuana, on 21 Feb, 2015.—XINHUA

WEATHER REPORT

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy in the Andaman Sea and South Bay and generally fair elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 23rd February, 2015: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagaing and Taninthayi Regions, Kachin, Chin and Mon States and weather will be partly cloudy in Lower Sagaing and Mandalay Regions, Northern Shan and Kayin States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters.

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‘Birdman’ versus ‘Boyhood’ Oscar battle heats up after Spirit Awards



Director Laura Poitras accepts the award for best documentary for her film “Citizenfour” from presenters David Oyelowo and Carmen Ejogo (L) at the 2015 Film Independent Spirit Awards in Santa Monica, California on 21 Feb, 2015.—REUTERS

SANTA MONICA, (Calif), 22 Feb — Dark showbiz satire “Birdman,” and coming-of-age tale “Boyhood,” took the top honours at the Independent Spirit Awards on Saturday, a day before Hollywood’s biggest night when both will face off in the top Oscars categories.

“Birdman,” nominated for nine Oscars on Sunday, won three Spirit Awards, including the top prize of best feature.

“We’re threatened as a species into extinction,” Alejandro González Iñárritu, director of “Birdman,” said of independent filmmakers in his acceptance speech. “These kinds of awards are where we can celebrate the cinema that is being forgotten.”

“Birdman” led the nominees with five nods along with jazz drama “Whiplash,” which won two accolades, and civil rights drama “Selma,” which left empty handed.

“Boyhood,” filmed over a span of 12 years and nominated for six Oscars, won the best director award for Richard Linklater and best supporting actress for Patricia Arquette.

All four acting categories were won by Oscar-nominated frontrunners, including Michael Keaton for best ac-



Actress Julianne Moore accepts the award for best female lead for her role in “Still Alice” at the 2015 Film Independent Spirit Awards in Santa Monica, California on 21 Feb, 2015.—REUTERS

Emmanuel Lubezki (L) poses backstage with his Best Cinematography award along with (L-R) actress Emma Stone, producer Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu with his Best Feature award, actor Michael Keaton with his Best Male Lead award and producer John Lesher during the 2015 Film Independent Spirit Awards in Santa Monica, California on 21 Feb, 2015.

REUTERS



Actor Michael Keaton accepts the award for Best Male Lead for his role in “Birdman” at the 2015 Film Independent Spirit Awards in Santa Monica, California on 21 Feb, 2015.—REUTERS

tor for “Birdman.” In his acceptance speech, he called the film “bold cinema,” and a “game-changer.”

Julianne Moore was named best actress for her portrayal of a woman suffering from Alzheimer’s disease in “Still Alice.”

“I was lucky enough to come in at the beginning of the independent film movement and it really shaped my life and career,” she said in an emotional acceptance speech.

The 30th annual Spirit Awards, hosted by Film Independent, honours the best achievements across movies made under \$20 million and are often an indicator of Academy Award winners, with drama “12 Years a Slave,” taking top honours at both the Spirit Awards and Oscars last year.

Unlike the formal glitz of the Oscars, the Spirit

Awards opts for a relaxed, boozy lunch in a Santa Monica tent on California’s coast. The show, hosted by Kristen Bell and Fred Armisen, was broadcast live for the first time on cable network IFC.

“Hollywood movies may be keeping the industry afloat, but the people in this room are keeping the industry alive,” said “Boyhood” star Ethan Hawke as he presented the best supporting female award to Arquette.

JK Simmons won best supporting actor for “Whiplash,” and thanked his fellow nominees in the category.

Poland’s “Ida” won best international film, while “CitizenFour,” about National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden, won best documentary. Both are nominated for Oscars. Dan Gilroy, nominated for the best screenplay Oscar, won best screenplay and first feature for “Nightcrawler.”—Reuters



Writer and director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu accepts the Best Feature award for the film “Birdman” at the 2015 Film Independent Spirit Awards in Santa Monica, California on 21 Feb, 2015.

REUTERS

Zayn Malik falls ill during concert

LOS ANGELES, 22 Feb — One Direction star Zayn Malik had to miss the last minutes of his band’s concert in Australia after he fell ill.

The British singer, who’s along with his bandmates was in the country for their “On the Road Again” tour, left the stage at Perth’s Patersons Stadium early before Niall Horan announced Malik was too sick to perform, reported Ace Showbiz. Numerous fans then took to social media to wish their idol speedy recovery.

Malik had reportedly sung around 17 tracks before he gave up. The concert continued with the rest of the band, Horan, Liam Payne, Harry Styles and Louis Tomlinson, singing the remaining three songs on the setlist without their friend. Details on the 22-year-old heart-throb’s illness are still unavailable, although his representative said it was “nothing serious.” He was expected to perform at the next “On the Road Again” show in Osaka, Japan on 24 February.—PTI



The Horrors to play Blissfields Festival 2015

LONDON, 22 Feb — The Horrors, Simian Mobile Disco and John Grant are to play this year’s Blissfields Festival, it has been announced.

Others acts performing at the festival include Public Service Broadcasting, Grandmaster Flash and Eton Messy, reported Digital Spy.

The Horrors will close Friday night (2 July) on the main stage, while Saturday (3 July) ends with John Grant followed by a live set from Simian Mobile Disco.

A second wave of artists playing the 5,000-capacity event is still to be announced.

This year’s Blissfields Festival will take place on 2-4 July in Woodmancott, Hampshire.

PTI

GENERAL

Japan's Ito wins women's jump silver at Nordic Worlds



Japan's Yuki Ito celebrates after winning the silver medal in the women's ski jumping at the Nordic Skiing World Championships in Falun, Sweden, on 20 Feb, 2015.

KYODO NEWS

FALUN, (Sweden), 22 Feb — Yuki Ito provided the highlight for Japan on Friday at the Nordic Skiing World Championships with a silver medal in women's ski jumping.

Japan's Sara Takanashi, the two-time defending World Cup champion, was fourth, unable to overcome a poor first jump. Sochi Olympic champion Carina Vogt of Germany won with 236.9 points, with Ito earning 235.1 from jumps of 89 and 93 meters. World Cup points leader Daniel Iraschko of Austria was third with 233.8, while Takanashi earned 228.3.

"Right now, I feel more frustrated than happy," Ito said. "I think because I was aiming for the gold medal, I got silver. The question, however, is whether or not I cut down on my mistakes."

The medal was Japan's first at this year's worlds. In other events, Sochi Olympic silver medalist Akito Watabe and his younger brother Yoshito, finished sixth and seventh, respectively, in the Nordic combined normal hill event.

Kyodo News

Barcelona's run of 11 straight wins ended by Malaga

BARCELONA, 22 Feb — Barcelona's 11-match winning streak came to an end on Saturday when Malaga pounced on a bad mistake by defender Dani Alves to score a shock 1-0 win that cost the Catalans top spot in La Liga.

Elsewhere, Antoine Griezmann struck twice as Atletico Madrid produced a devastating performance to sweep Almeria aside 3-0 and move within four points of leaders Real Madrid who play their game in hand at Elche on Sunday.

Athletics: Ethiopia's Negesse wins Tokyo Marathon

TOKYO, 22 Feb — Ethiopia's Endeshaw Negesse held off world and Olympic champion Stephen Kiprotich of Uganda to win Sunday's Tokyo Marathon, part of the six-race World Marathon Majors series.

The 26-year-old Negesse took the tape in 2 hours, 6 minutes flat ahead of Kiprotich (2:06:33) and defending champion and race record-holder Dickson Chumba of Kenya, who came in third (2:06:34).

Negesse's compatriot Birhane Dibaba won the women's competition in 2:23:15, capping the first men-women sweep by any nation in race history.

Masato Imai was Japan's highest men's finisher at seventh (2:07:39) in a strong field including Kiprotich and five runners who have cracked the 2:05 barrier.

"I think it was a good race but a bit windy," Negesse said. "I had hoped for a faster time but wasn't pos-

sible given the conditions." "There were many good runners in the field with fast times from big meets like the Olympics and the world championships. But I didn't lose any sleep over it." "I knew if I put in the work and ran the race I'm capable of running, I was good enough to win it."

Negesse failed to match Chumba's record from last year by 18 seconds, but his time was still his second best after a 2:04:52 at the Dubai Marathon in January 2013.

But after Dubai, Negesse, who dropped out of school in 2012 to run professionally, injured his left leg and didn't enter another marathon until Dusseldorf in April last year.

Now that he's won his second marathon, Negesse's goal is to challenge the world record of 2:02:57 held by Kenya's Dennis Kimetto.

"That is a dream of mine," Negesse said, referring to the only sub-2:03

time in history. "I'm not saying I will do it in my next race, but it is a big goal of mine to eventually do it."

"I spent almost four months getting ready for this race. I won today because I trained hard and worked to overcome an injury that kept me out a while." "I'm very happy to have won this race because to win a majors race, you need a combination of talent, strength and the will to work hard."

Chumba was in the lead as late as the 38-kilometre mark, but faded after feeling pain in his stomach. By 40 km, Negesse had seven seconds on Chumba and coasted the rest of the way.

"It was cold," said Chumba, who was passed by Kiprotich over the last strides to the finish. "There was wind from 18 km up to 30-something km. When I was at 38 km, I had an upset stomach."

"The race was not like last year." — Kyodo News

Nadal stunned by Fognini in Rio semi-final

RIO DE JANEIRO, 22 Feb — Fabio Fognini pulled off a huge upset, stunning top seed and holder Rafa Nadal 1-6, 6-2, 7-5 in the Rio Open semi-final on Saturday.

The Italian's spectacular victory ended world number three Nadal's 52-match winning streak in semi-finals on clay and earned him a place in the final against another Spaniard David Ferrer.

"I'm really happy about this match. I beat the best player on this surface," said the world number 28, who has been in good form this year since winning the Australian Open doubles title with Simone Bolelli last month. "Rafa is always difficult. From the second



Rafael Nadal of Spain returns to Fabio Fognini of Italy during their men's singles tennis semi-final match at the Rio Open tournament in Rio de Janeiro, on 21 Feb, 2015. — REUTERS

set I played really well, and I tried to change a little bit to be more positive on court," he was quoted as saying on the ATP Tour website.

Nadal had complained of poor scheduling after Friday's quarter-final win

over Uruguayan Pablo Cuevas finished at 3.30 am on Saturday. Fognini played a long last eight match that lasted more than three hours on Friday before he overcame Argentine Federico Delbonis. — Reuters



Barcelona's Neymar is challenged by Malaga's Roberto Rosales during their Spanish First division soccer match at Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on 21 Feb, 2015. — REUTERS

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| * Aesthetic Chinlone | * A Visit to Kyauk Kyi |
| * Kayah | * Sagaing: Youth Leader |
| * News | * News |
| * Young Photographer (Thi Ha Aung) | * The Precious Lands of Myanmar (Mandalay Region) |
| * Next Weekend | * News |
| * News | * Social & Charitable Association (EP-3) |
| * A Day Out With Sarah (EP-6) | |
| * News | |

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(23-2-2015, Monday)

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 6:00 am | 8:50 am |
| • Wut Hmone Music Troupe | • TV Drama Series |
| 6:25 am | 9:50 am |
| • TV Drama Series | • 40 th Years of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation |
| 6:50 am | 9:55 am |
| • TV Drama Series | • ASEAN CULTURAL FAIR 2014 |
| 7:20 am | 10:15 am |
| • Fashion Show | • Myanmar Video |
| 7:40 am | |
| • Myanmar Series | |
| 8:10 am | |
| • TV Drama Series | |

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(23-2-2015, Monday)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 6:00 am | 3:00 pm |
| • Paritta by Hilly Region Missionary Sayadaw | • News/ International News |
| 6:30 am | 3:35 pm |
| • Physical Exercise | • People's Talks |
| 7:00 am | 4:35 pm |
| • News/ Weather Report | • 2015 University Entrance Examination (Myanmar) |
| 7:35 am | 5:35 pm |
| • National Sports Games | • Documentary (Women in Myanmar Society) |
| 8:30 am | 6:00 pm |
| • Head Line News | • News/ Weather Report |
| 9:00 am | 6:30 pm |
| • News/ International News | • Head Line News |
| 9:35 am | 6:35 pm |
| • Documentary (ASEAN) | • Socio Economic Scenes |
| 10:35 am | 7:00 pm |
| • People's Talks | • News |
| 11:35 am | 8:00 pm |
| • MRTV'S Youth Programme | • News/ International News/ Weather Report |
| 12:00 noon | 9:00 pm |
| • News / International News / Weather Report | • News/ International News/ Weather Report |
| 12:35 pm | • Documentary |
| • Tasty Trip | • Hluttaw Image |
| 2:35 pm | • National Sports Games |
| • Teleplay | • TV Drama Series |
| 2:45 pm | |
| • Documentary | |

Body-building, traditional boxing, football events continue

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Feb — Union Minister for Sports U Tint Hsan visited the sports venues of 4th National Sports Festival in Nay Pyi Taw on Sunday.

The union minister viewed men's and women's body-building contest at Paunglaung sports ground in Pyinmana Township and traditional boxing contest at Wunna Theikdi boxing hall. In the boxing event, Saw Sa Wah of Kayin State met with Ah Mann of Yangon Region in the 67-kilo event while Thway Thit Aung of Kayin State fought against Ye Yint Aung of Taninthayi Region in 71-kilo event.

At Wunna Theikdi Training Ground No 1, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area routed Bago Region 10-0 in the women's event. Nay Pyi Taw Council Area beat Kayin State 4-2 in the men's quarterfinal in the ground No 3.—MNA



Participants in best body postures in men's body-building contest and a boxer lands a punch on an opponent in traditional boxing event of National Sports Festival 2015.

MNA

Medal tally in 4th National Sports Festival 2015 on 22-2-2015

State/Region	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Yangon	69	42	30	141
Mandalay	29	31	44	104
Bago	15	15	22	52
Kayin	11	6	6	23
Rakhine	9	12	20	41
Nay Pyi Taw	7	6	10	23
Magway	7	6	7	20
Mon	6	14	15	35
Kachin	6	6	9	21
Ayeyawady	5	11	22	38
Kayah	5	8	8	21
Taninthayi	4	8	17	29
Sagaing	4	6	9	19
Shan	2	10	19	31
Chin	2	1	-	3

Chelsea held in Bridge storm, five-star City cut gap

LONDON, 22 Feb — Chelsea were held to a 1-1 draw by lowly Burnley as rivals Manchester City thrashed Newcastle United 5-0 to leave Jose Mourinho smouldering with rage after the title race was injected with new life on Saturday.

Leaders Chelsea offered a chink of light to City after a stormy game at Stamford Bridge where Nemanja Matic was sent off for retaliating to an awful challenge from Burnley's Ashley Barnes and the hosts were denied two strong penalty claims.

City made the most of their lifeline, emphatically exposing Newcastle's failings with two goals from David Silva among the highlights of a crushing victory that reduced their deficit at the top of the Premier League to five points.

It was another ominous display from second-placed City who have scored nine goals in their last two games and look back to their very best.

In typical fashion, all of Saturday's action, that included a 2-1 win for

Arsenal at Crystal Palace and defeat for Manchester United at Swansea City by the same scoreline, was largely overshadowed by the simmering Mourinho.

It began so brightly for Chelsea as Branislav Ivanovic's knack of scoring crucial goals looked to have set the hosts on the way to a routine win after 14 minutes.

Then an Ivanovic shot struck Michael Knightly's arm and Diego Costa was pushed over by Jason Shackell but both penalty appeals were waved away by referee Martin Atkinson who then became public enemy number one.

Barnes flew into an ugly challenge on Matic, catching the Serbian enforcer on the shin. The Burnley player escaped without a booking while Matic, who chased the striker before throwing him to the floor, was dismissed with 20 minutes left.

Any sense of injustice may have been mitigated had the home side clung on but Ben Mee rose to power in a header at the back post

and Mourinho was left to seethe.

"I am punished when I refer to these situations and I don't want to be punished," he told the BBC.

His mood would not have improved when Manchester City took the lead in Saturday's late game after two minutes, with Sergio Aguero coolly converting from the spot.

Samir Nasri fired into the roof of the net for the second and Edin Dzeko, felled for the penalty, added a third after being fed by Silva.

The Spanish playmaker then scored twice in three minutes at the start of the second half.

Manchester United will be sick of the sight of Swansea who completed the double over Louis van Gaal's side, having also won on the opening day of the season.

There was an element of role reversal at the Liberty Stadium where United, who have frequently

this season played poorly and still won, dominated but were undone when Bafetimbi Gomis deflected in Jonjo Shelvey's long-range strike for Swansea.

United, who took the lead through Ander Herrera before Ki Sung-Yueng levelled, slipped to fourth, 13 points off the top, after only their second defeat in 20 games.

They are a point adrift of Arsenal who made it

five league wins out of six by beating Palace.

A Santi Cazorla penalty and an eighth league goal of the season for Olivier Giroud allowed Arsene Wenger's side to survive a late scare when Glenn Murray reduced the deficit in stoppage time.

Tim Sherwood's first match as Aston Villa manager ended in disappointment as his new charges squandered a first-half lead to lose 2-1 at home to

Stoke City who scored an injury-time penalty from Victor Moses to snatch the points.

At the bottom of the table Hull City moved four points clear of the relegation zone with a 2-1 win over fellow strugglers Queens Park Rangers who had midfielder Joey Barton sent off in the first half.

Sunderland and West Bromwich Albion drew 0-0.

Reuters



Chelsea v Burnley, Barclays Premier League, Stamford Bridge, Ben Mee scores the first goal for Burnley on 21 Feb, 2015.—REUTERS