

Myanmar, Vietnam to forge bilateral ties

NAY PYI TAW, 11 March — President U Thein Sein and visiting Vice President Madam Nguyen Thi Doan of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam discussed promotion of bilateral ties here Wednesday.

The two sides held talks on opportunities of investments in defence and security measures, cooperation in international and regional affairs, banking, telecom, agriculture, livestock and tourism industry.

The meeting was attended by Union Ministers U Wunna Maung Lwin, U Soe Thane, U Myint Hlaing, U Zeyar Aung, Dr Kan Zaw and U Ye Htut, as well as Vietnamese ambassador to

Myanmar Pham Thanh Dung.

Year 2014 is the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Myanmar and Vietnam, reaching US\$ 239.28 million of bilateral trade volume—Myanmar's export volume is \$56.05 million and that of Vietnam is \$183.23 million—in the present fiscal year which will end this month.

President U Thein Sein, as well as a prime minister of previous government, has made four visits to Vietnam, including one presidential visit in March 2012.

Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang also visited in November 2012.

MNA

President

U Thein

Sein

cordially

greeted

Vice

President

Madam

Nguyen

Thi Doan

of the

Socialist

Republic

of Viet-

nam.

MNA



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Correction

Please read Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation U Ohn Than instead of U Tun Than in the second paragraph of fourth column in the byline under the headline of "Seed supply shortfall prompts invitation to private investors" on the front page of this daily issued on 11-3-2015.—GNLM

Myanmar UV index to hit dangerous levels: expert

By Aye Min Soe

NAY PYI TAW, 11 March—Parts of Myanmar may register dangerous levels of ultraviolet radiation on Thursday, the country's former top weather official has warned.

U Tun Lwin, former director-general of the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology, said 13 regions may record potentially harmful UV readings.

The UV index is forecast to reach 12.6 in Yangon Region, 10.9 in Mandalay Region, 12 in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area and Magway Region, 12.5 in Bago Region, 12.5 in Ayeyawady Region, 12.9 in Taninthayi Region, 12.7 in Kayah State, 12.4 in Kayin State, 12.3 in Mon State, 11.6 in Rakhine State, 12.3 in Shan State (South) and 12.2 in Shan State (East).

UV indexes between 10

and 11 can be harmful and pose several health risks, authorities have warned.

The UV index is an international standard measurement of the strength of ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun at a particular place and time.

Small amounts of UV radiation can be beneficial. It is essential for the production of Vitamin D, and under medical supervision can be used to treat a number of diseases, including rickets, psoriasis, eczema and jaundice, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

However, at high levels, UV radiation can damage the skin and eyes over time. Worldwide, some 12 to 15 million people become blind annually from cataracts, of which up to 20 percent may be caused or exacerbated by sun exposure, according to the WHO.

Over the past two years, Yangon has seen summertime UV readings nearly reach 13.

Summer in Myanmar lasts from March to May.

GNLM



Buddhist nuns use an umbrella with UV protection to shield themselves from UV rays in Yangon.

PHOTO AYE MIN SOE

Monks from Letpadan protest allowed to return to monasteries as release of some students underway

NAY PYI TAW, 11 March—Members of Sangha Nakaya Committee in Letpadan Township and authorities interrogated ten monks who participated in the column of student protestors in Letpadan

on 10 March.

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, they vowed to stay away from party politics, social affairs and student protests in the future and to abide by the instructions of the State

Sangha Nayaka Committee, and they were allowed to return their monasteries.

Similarly, the police are interrogating 127 detainees including 107 males and 20 females rounded up (See page 2)

Delhi Dialogue VII focuses on India-ASEAN business ties

By Ye Myint

NEW DELHI, 11 March—Delegates from

India and ASEAN discussed the potential for increased economic integration Wednesday on the

opening day of a meeting to strengthen relations between the 10-member (See page 9)



Delegates discuss business cooperation between ASEAN and India on the first day of Delhi Dialogue VII in New Delhi.—PHOTO: YE MYINT

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves loan for MPF

NAY PYI TAW, 11 March — Loan from EXIM Bank of China for Myanmar Police Force was discussed at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session in Nay Pyi Taw on Wednesday.

Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Kyaw Zan Myint said that Myanmar Police Force is responsible for the rule of law, community tranquility, prevention of drug trafficking, and public

services and it is now taking more comprehensive measures for life security, stability and the rule of law.

As a result, it has recruited more police but it faces with 69.25 per-

cent shortage of vehicles and the Yuan 246 million loan will enable the police to buy required vehicles and vessels. The deputy minister also told the session that the vehicles and vessel will be

purchased through tender in a transparent manner. The session approved the loan from China's Exim Bank for Myanmar Police Force.

Then, representatives discussed the union revenue bill. At today's ses-

sion, two bills sent back with remarks by the president were approved by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and the bill committee reported its finding on bills amending the mercantile customs act and the inland customs act. —MNA

Pyithu Hluttaw

Government to reclaim about 39,000 acres of farmlands in 2015-16 FY

NAY PYI TAW, 11 March — U Myint Soe, MP of Pyawbwe Constituency, asked about plans of the Anti-Corruption Commission to enquire corruption and bribery cases at law offices and courts at Wednesday's session of Pyithu Hluttaw.

Chairman of the commission U Mya Win replied that corruption cases need firm evidences and information from investigation report to take action against the lawbreakers. It is not easy to enquire corruption cases at the law offices and courts under disguise of clients. Depending on the cases, investigation and taking action will be undertaken under the anti-corruption law.

U Than Myint of Wundwin Constituency asked about reclamation of mechanized farm plots and disbursement of long-term loans for reclamation of modern farmlands. Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation U Ohn Than explained that the government has reclaimed 34,376 acres of mechanized farmlands including 711 acres with the assistance of Japanese Institute of Irrigation and Drainage-IIID and

Japan International Cooperation Agency-JICA and Korea International Cooperation Agency-KOICA from 2011-12 to 2014-15 fiscal year. In 2015-16 fiscal year, the government will spend its fund on 4,500 acres of farmland, loans from India on 30,400 acres of land and International Fund for Agricultural Development-IFDA on 4,000 acres of land. Moreover, 20,400 acres of

farmlands will be reclaimed with the loan from India and 4,000 acres with IFAD in 2016-17 fiscal year. A plan is underway to reclaim 2,000 acres by spending loan from IFAD in 2017-18 fiscal year. Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank has no plan to disburse long-term loans to farmers for paying back it through installment.

MNA

Monks from Letpadan protest . . .

(from page 1)

at Letpadan protest site in order to hand over real students who are studying at schools, colleges and universities to their parents. Authorities are contacting the parents of the students to hand over them properly based on empathy for their parents, leniency, and intention to allow them to continue their studies. However, action will be taken against those who committed criminal acts, instigate instability and lead the protests behind the scene.

About 16 students from Yadanabon University led by Chairman of All Burma Federation of Student Unions of the university Aung San Oo, 22, fourth year

(Physics) staged a protest against the crackdown on students in Letpadan without permission at 9 am on Wednesday. Although the rector and officials met with

Amyotha Hluttaw

Amyotha Hluttaw convene 25th day meeting

NAY PYI TAW, 11 March — Representatives of Amyotha Hluttaw discussed issues on road construction, steel factories and infrastructural development.

Dr Htay Win, an MP of Ayeyawady region constituency 5, asked for the transfer of railway section between Htugyi and Bantwegone from the Ministry of Rail Transportation to the Department of Rural Development

under the Ministry of Livestock, Fishery and Rural Development.

Deputy Minister for Rail Transportation U Myint Thein said as the railway section is no longer used and the handover is a possibility if the MLFRD seeks approval from the MRT.

MPs also discussed report of Amyotha Hluttaw's National Planning and Development Projects Committee on its fact-findings for the third three-year of 2014-2015 fiscal year.

U Phone Myint, an MP of Yangon Region constituency 3, said the report of committee has showed that

Myingyan steel factory was targeted to manufacture 200 thousand tonnes of steel. However the target was not met and the factory was suspended.

He continued that another steel factory namely Patpin is under construction and is expected to manufacture steel in 2015-2016 fiscal year to be able to supply Myingyan facility with raw steel.

The representative also noted he is optimistic about the potential of Petpin facility as the project has also been advocated by Union Ministry for Industry U Maung Myint and parliamentarians.

U Paw Lyan Lwin, an MP of Chin State constituency 9, said companies and contractors who won deals for state projects did not observe the standards promised in the agreements due to negligence of quality inspection teams. Later, U Pe Thauang, Amyotha Hluttaw's Rescue and Relief Committee submitted a report on humanitarian works of Amyotha Hluttaw members led by speaker U Khin Aung Myint in Mandalay, Rakhine, and Yangon.

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Students of Yadanabon University stage protest without permission.—MNA

By Khaing Thanda Lwin



Officials from JCB, MPU and the Central Bank of Myanmar at signing ceremony of master licence agreement for MPU-JCB co-branded card issuing in Myanmar.

PHOTO: KHAING THANDA LWIN

Myanmar banks connect to worldwide card network

YANGON, 11 March — Myanmar bank customers will soon be able to use debit card services worldwide following an agreement between the Myanmar Payment Union and major Japanese credit card company JCB.

MPU/JCB co-branded debit cards will be issued from this year, MPU CEO U Zaw Lin Htut said Wednesday at the signing of the master license agreement between the partner companies.

Under the agreement, MPU member banks will issue the co-branded cards linking to their customers' savings accounts. The cards will be accepted through the JCB international network, which includes some 27 million merchants in 190 countries and territories.

"With the strong leadership of MPU in the financial industry, JCB promises to share its experiences and knowledge of the payment business to contribute to the healthy development of Myanmar's payment industry,"

said Mr. Kimihisa Imada, Deputy President of JCB International Co.

JCB launched its card business in Japan 1961 and began expanding worldwide in 1981. CEO U Zaw Lin Htut of MPU said the new cards using JCB's chip technology will be released in three to six months.

"MPU card users who want to replace their cards with the new ones have to apply at their respective MPU member banks," he

added. Established in 2011, the MPU, the only electronic payment network in Myanmar, includes 21 banks and has about 1 million users. In his speech at the ceremony, Chairman U Mya Than of MPU said, "We hope that our partnership will introduce more attractive services and more customers will prefer using MPU-JCB co-branded cards not only domestically but also all over the world with JCB's acceptance network." —GNLM

NATIONAL

NAY PYI TAW, 11 March — Vice President U Nyan Tun received his Vietnamese counterpart Madam Nguyen Thi Doan at Presidential Palace here Wednesday.

During the meeting U Nyan Tun acknowledged increasing bilateral relations amid reciprocal visits of state leaders.

Trade volume between Myanmar and Vietnam reached more than US\$281 million in 2013-2014 fiscal year, while the latter stood at the 9th position in the trade partner list of Myanmar for its investments in construction, banking services and oil exploration sectors.

A joint trade committee of Myanmar and Viet-

nam, which was formed in 2012 with annual meeting, has been scheduled to hold talks on bilateral trade this month in Nay Pyi Taw.

U Nyan Tun invited Vietnamese investments in livestock, agriculture, forestry, trade, telecom, transportation, banking, hotel, mining and energy sectors.

The meeting was attended by vice presidents U Thant Kyaw, U Khin Zaw, U Khin Maung Aye, U Zin Yaw, U Aung Htoo, Dr Pwint Hsan, Dr Lin Aung, Daw Lei Lei Thein and Dr Sai Kyaw Ohn, as

well as Vietnamese ambassador to Myanmar Pham Thanh Dung.

In the evening Vice President U Nyan Tun hosted a state dinner for Vietnamese Vice President Madam Nguyen Thi Doan at Kempinski Hotel in the evening.

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Vice President U Nyan Tun holds talks with Vietnamese counterpart Madam Nguyen Thi Doan.

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Vietnamese delegation goes sightseeing in Nay Pyi Taw



Vietnamese Vice President Madam Nguyen Thi Doan visits Myanmar Gems Museum in Nay Pyi Taw.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 11 March — Vice President Madam Nguyen Thi Doan of the Socialist Republic

of Vietnam and party on Wednesday visited Myanmar Gems Museum.

They paid homage to a

Jade Buddha image in the cave of Uppatasanti Pagoda and made cash donation.—MNA

Appointment of Ambassador agreed on

NAY PYI TAW, 12 March — The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the appointment of H.E. Dr. Peter Jakab as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Hungary to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar with residence in Bangkok.

Dr. Peter Jakab was born in Budapest City, Hungary on 12 December 1969. He obtained BA degree from Eger Teacher's Training College in

1995, MA in International Relations from Budapest University of Economic Sciences in 1998 and PhD in Intercultural Communication from Eotvos Lorand University in 2006 respectively. From 1996 to 2000, he served at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and at the Ministry of Education. In July 2003, he joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary and worked under the Department of International Development Cooperation, Asia-Pacific

Department and Hungary Embassy in Bangkok with respective ranks. He was appointed as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar with residence in Budapest on 26 February 2013. From 2014 to present, he has been serving as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Hungary to the Kingdom of Thailand. He is married and has one daughter.—MNA

Political parties urged to register not later than 30 April

NAY PYI TAW, 11 March — The Union Election Commission issued a press release dated 11-3-2015 that the commission allows establishment of political parties by at least 15 persons under the Section 3

(a) of the Political Parties Registration Law.

There remains over seven months to the general elections to be held in late October or early November 2015. Those wishing to set up political parties are to

apply at the UEC, not later than 30 April 2015, so as to establish and register the political parties in time and to carry out electoral tasks and canvassing before the elections.

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Refresher course on foreign economic relations opened in Nay Pyi Taw

NAY PYI TAW, 11 March — A refresher course on foreign economic relations was opened on Wednesday at the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development here.

The course is aimed at appointing officers as economic counselors in the targeted countries to promote the country's economic status.

The two-week course covers ways to increase inflows of foreign direct investment into the country,

export market expansion strategy, updated information on economic, negotiation of projects on getting foreign loans and assistance, and others.

On the occasion, Union Minister Dr Kan Zaw said the government has conducted the refresher courses since 2013. Among the trainees, nine officers have been appointed as economic counselors in Japan, China, India, the U.S, Singapore, Belgium, Thailand, South Korea and Hong Kong.

Economic counselors play a crucial role in improving the lives of people, promoting human resources and poverty alleviation in the country, he added.

Altogether 31 trainees are attending the course lectured by the retired ambassadors and officials.

Also present at the opening ceremony were Union ministers U Soe Thane, U Win Myint and U Win Shein, the deputy minister, the directors-general and high-ranking officials.

MNA

Union FM meets Saudi Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs



NAY PYI TAW, 11 March — U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar received His Highness Prince Khaled Bin Saud Bin Khaled Al Saud, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who is currently on visit to Myanmar, at his office, here, on Wednesday.

MNA

Thousands of students sit matriculation exam in Tatkon Tsp



TATKON, 11 March — Students across the country began sitting the national matriculation examination on Wednesday, with local authorities arranging traffic safety and security measures, as well as stable electricity supply, for the benefit of those taking the tests. Tatkon Township in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area has opened five exam centres expected to accommodate a total of 3,150 students. *Tin Soe Lwin (IPRD)*

Hluttaw fund contributes to development of township



MYINGYAN, 11 March — Myanmar's national assembly, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, allotted K100 million to Myingna Township, Mandalay Region, for public works projects aimed at narrowing the development gap between rural and urban areas.

The funds were spent on construction of bridges, culverts, earthen roads and water supply facilities.

The works were inspected by U Win Myint, a representative of the lower house, the Pyithu Hluttaw, who is also secretary of the Pyithu Hluttaw Banking and Monetary Development Committee, as well as Township Administrator U Tun Thein Aung and officials.—Zaw Min Naing (Myingyan)

Myawady Township to implement literacy campaign in 2015 summer



MYAWADY, 11 March — Myawady Township authorities outlined the progress of the summer 2015 literacy campaign at the coordination meeting on 9 March, with Director U Aung Moun of Kayin State Education Office in attendance.

Myawady District management committee secretary U Aung Win Thein explained strategies to raise the literacy rate across the nation, including Myawady Township.

The township authorities laid down a plan to implement the summer literacy campaign in 2015 with participation of 1,490 school students and 134 teachers, together with 150 university students, to conduct 142 teaching sessions in the township.

The campaign took place from 1 April to 15

May last year across the nation. According to government statistics, Myanmar's literacy rate in 2013 was over 95.13 percent. Myanmar Education Research Bureau is projecting the figure will further rise following successive literacy campaigns.

Htein Lin Aung (IPRD)



Myanmar golfers Maung Maung Oo and Kyaw Thet Oo seen at Yangon International Airport on 9 March before their departure for Bangladesh to participate in the 30th Bangladesh Amateur Golf Championship 2015 at Kurmitola Golf Club in Dhaka, Bangladesh from 11 to 14 March.—GNLM

LOCAL NEWS

Military columns seize teaks in Kachin, Shan States



Military columns seize teak logs, saw mills, vehicles and pieces of sawn timber in military operations.—MYAWADY

NAY PYI TAW, 11 March — Military columns confiscated teaks, vehicles and saw mills in Kachin and Shan states from February 15 to March 10. Defence Services personnel are taking part in control of illegal trafficking in drug and natural resources in cooperation with other departmental officials.

One Chinese was also arrested in the operations, and 24 vehicles, seven saw mills, seven generators, 308.671 tons of teak, 1,218 teak logs, 8 tons of Padauk, 30 logs of Padauk and 9.222 tons of Tamalan timber were confiscated.

During operations in Mabein Township of Shan

State, 802 logs of teak (333.828 tons), two logs of Padauk (1.916 tons) and 8 logs of Tamalan (0.5552 tons) were seized.

Other confiscations in Bhamo Township of Kachin State and Mansi Township and Mabein Township of Shan State were one Chinese, 24 vehicles, one saw mill, 14 generators, 642.499 tons of teak, 1,208 logs of teak, 9.6 tons of Padauk, 30 logs of Padauk and 9.77 tons of Tamalan timber.

The operations of military columns were aimed at controlling illegal arm procurement of ethnic groups which trafficked natural resources to neighbouring country.—Myawady

Anti-drug campaign involves education, crop eradication

MYAWADY, 11 March — The government has been destroying illegal poppy crops in remote parts of the country, as well as providing education on the dangers of narcotics, as part of its nationwide anti-

ti-drug campaign.

On Tuesday morning, residents from Mepale village in Myawady Township heard about the dangers of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, including health risks, from

Wushu training course proves popular with students in Mandalay

MANDALAY, 11 March — More than 200 students from the Mandalay area have this month begun a Wushu training course at Bahtoo Stadium in Chanayethazan Township, Mandalay.

The course in the sport derived from Chinese martial arts was offered by a wushu sub-committee under the Mandalay Region Sports and Physical Education Committee.

“In the basic Wushu course, youths take training in morning and after-

noon sessions,” secretary U Kyaw Aye of the Wushu subcommittee said.

The one-month training course runs until early April, with a second-round

course planned for 20 April to 18 May.—Tin Maung (Mandalay)



Surprise inspections target fuel, storage stations

MANDALAY, 11 March — Officials of Myanma Petroleum Product Enterprise under the Ministry of Energy have been checking private fuel stations and storage stations in Mandalay Region to confirm the proper quality and quantity of fuel is being sold to customers.

A combined team comprising officials of Mandalay Region Petroleum Product Enterprise, the Fire Services Department and the General Administration Department also con-

ducted fire safety checks at the stations.

“Fuel stations that sell low-quality fuel will have their sales licenses revoked,” Managing Director U Thant Sin of MPPE said, adding that low-qual-

ity fuel can damage vehicles.

The team took samples of fuel from stations to the laboratory of the ministry for analysis.

Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)



Parents of former Thai princess jailed for two-and-a-half years



Thailand's Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn (L) and Royal Consort Princess Srirasmi watch the royal ploughing ceremony in Bangkok on 9 May, 2008 in this file picture.—REUTERS

BANGKOK, 11 March — The parents of a former Thai princess were jailed for 2-1/2 years on Wednesday for defaming the monarchy following investigations into the actions of several family members accused of corruption and misusing their royal connection.

Srirasmi Suwadee, formerly known as Princess Srirasmi, is divorced from Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn.

Her parents, Apiruj and Wanthanee Suwadee, were found guilty of violating Article 112 of Thailand's criminal code which says anyone who "defames, insults or threatens the king, the queen, the heir-apparent or the regent" will be pun-

ished with up to 15 years in prison.

"Both accused are guilty of royal defamation and are sentenced to 5 years in prison reduced to 2 years and six months," a judge said in delivering the verdict.

Last month they confessed to charges including misuse of their royal connection that led to a former neighbor being jailed on a bogus fraud charge 12 years ago.

Last year several of Srirasmi's relatives were arrested in a purge of officials allegedly involved in corruption. Some were also accused of defaming the monarchy.

Srirasmi relinquished

her royal title in December following weeks of speculation over her future.

The imprisonment of her relatives comes at a sensitive time in Thailand, including heightened anxiety over the health of the revered but ailing King Bhumibol Adulyadej, 87, and nervousness about what a royal succession might bring.

Thailand's monarchy is protected by some of the world's strictest lese-majeste laws.

Rights groups say lese-majeste prosecutions have spiked since the army seized power in May, as the military burnishes its reputation as the defender of the royal family.—Reuters

Court summons India's ex-PM Singh in coal corruption case

NEW DELHI, 11 March — An Indian court summoned former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday over accusations of criminal conspiracy and corruption over the award of a coal field during his term, in a blow for the Gandhi dynasty that ruled India until last year.

A special court under the Central Bureau of Investigation summoned the former prime minister along with billionaire Kumar Mangalam Birla and another official to appear on 8 April, a source at the agency said.

"I am upset, but this is a part of life," the mild-mannered 82-year-old told reporters at parliament, where

he is a member of the upper house. Singh has not been charged with any crime but is being investigated for criminal breach of trust, criminal conspiracy, cheating and corruption, a lawyer for the prosecution said on condition of anonymity.

The maximum sentence for criminal breach of trust is life imprisonment.

Singh is a respected economist credited with 1990s free-market reforms that unshackled India from its socialist past. Recognisable in his trademark blue turban, glasses and beard, he played a prominent role managing the 2008 financial crisis. Singh ruled as prime minister with a coalition led by the Gandhi

dynasty's Congress party. His second term was mired in corruption scandals and accusations that party leader Sonia Gandhi called the shots in his government, tarnishing his image.

"We have done nothing wrong and we have nothing to hide," said Ambika Soni, a senior Congress leader close to the Gandhis. The Gandhi lineage stretches back to India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. The family ruled for much of the period from independence in 1947. Most coal block awards made by Singh's government, which ran India for a decade, were overturned late last year by the Supreme Court, which ruled the process illegal. The

case known as "Coalgate" came to light in 2012 after a government auditor said the excise had lost as much as \$33 billion because of collusion between officials and private firms to depress the cost coal field awards.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, which ousted the Singh administration last May, is now in the process of re-auctioning the fields in a process key to reducing India's heavy dependence on coal imports.

Auctions of the first 32 blocks have brought in a projected \$32 billion (21.23 billion pounds), Coal Secretary Anil Swarup told Reuters. "In the UPA regime there was ... ad-hocism that



Former India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh talks to Lesotho's Prime Minister Tom Thabane (not pictured) during a meeting in New Delhi on 11 March, 2014.

REUTERS

prevailed, favouritism that prevailed," said GVL Narasimha Rao, a spokesman for Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, referring to the former ruling coalition.

Reuters

Singapore's train service delayed as student's leg got stuck

SINGAPORE, 11 March — Singapore's train service was delayed again on Wednesday morning, after a student's leg got stuck between the train and platform.

A photo showing a female student sitting on the platform, with her left leg stuck between the train and platform at North East Line's Hougang station were seen on Singapore's social media in the morning. The incident, which happened at around 7:50 am, led to service delay during the morning rush hour.

Until 9 am, there were still large crowds of commuters at the line, Channel NewsAsia reported.

This follows a series of breakdown of train services over the last month. Just two days earlier, services along the Bukit Panjang LRT was suspended for 23 hours due to power trip and fire. It was not until 4:40 pm on Tuesday did train services of both directions resumed, Singapore's train operator SMRT said in a statement. SMRT had earlier pledged to do better on rail network reliability last week, after over five breakdowns were reported over the last month.

Singapore's Land Transport Authority urged SMRT "must continue to put maximum effort and resources into this," saying that such frequent service disruptions were "unacceptable."—Xinhua

Bangladesh police stood close by during blogger Avijit Roy attack

DHAKA, 11 March — The wife of an American blogger and critic of religious extremism who was hacked to death in Dhaka last month said that police stood nearby when the couple were attacked on a university campus in the Bangladesh capital.

Avijit Roy, an engineer of Bangladeshi origin, was killed by machete-wielding assailants when returning from a book fair. His wife, Rafida Bonya Ahmed, suffered head injuries and lost a finger. "While Avijit and I were being ruthlessly attacked, the local police stood close by and did not act," Rafida told Reuters. "Now, we demand that the Bangladeshi government do everything in its power to bring the murderers to justice." Mohammad Masudur

Rhaman, a deputy police commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said authorities were investigating Rafida's claims.

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is also helping with investigations.

Avijit's killing follows a string of attacks on secular bloggers in recent years in the Muslim-majority nation. Media group Reporters Without Borders rated Bangladesh 146th among 180 countries in a ranking of press freedom last year.

Rafida urged the government to "stop a legal culture of impunity, where writers can be killed without the killers being brought to trial". Bangladesh's anti-terrorism unit said last week it had arrested Farabi Shafiur Rahman in connection with the attack.—Reuters

Japan marks 4th anniv of deadly disaster



A girl in the northeastern Japan city of Ishinomaki prays on 11 March, 2015, for her friends killed in the deadly earthquake and tsunami that struck on the same day four years earlier. The disaster left more than 18,000 people dead or missing and triggered the continuing Fukushima nuclear crisis.—KYODO NEWS

Survivor discusses experience of atomic-bombing after 70 years

OSAKA, 11 March — Toshie Irie looked awkward when she began talking about an experience she had kept under wraps for some 70 years.

"I should have attended to them right to the end," Irie, 83, said, referring to the day when an American B-29 dropped an atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima on 6 August, 1945.

Irie was born in the intermountain town of Kitahiroshima in the northern part of Hiroshima Prefecture and enrolled in a women's high school in a nearby town, which is now Asaminami Ward in Hiroshima city, in the spring of 1945. At 8:15 am on 6 August, Irie was about to enter a school building when all its windows were blown to pieces and her arms were pierced by shards of glass.

Senior students who



Toshie Irie talks about her exposure to radiation from the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945 as seen in this file photo taken in Kitahiroshima outside the western Japanese city on 21 Oct, 2014. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the US atomic-bombing of the city. — KYODO NEWS

had been working in an urban district under a student

mobilization programme were severely wounded but managed to walk back to the school dormitory.

Irie said the sight of the yellow fluids running down their burned arms was unbearable for her. Unable to stand the horrors around her, she left the dormitory a few days later.

When she reached her home after walking for seven hours, she gave a sigh of relief but at the same time felt a strong sense of guilt at having left so many schoolmates behind.

Since the war, Irie had refrained from disclosing her own exposure to radiation because prejudice against such people was rampant in those days, she said, noting that people believed disease from the atomic bombing was contagious. Irie said she had kept her exposure to radiation

secret when she married, as marriage to atomic-bomb victims was considered impossible at that time.

When she became pregnant for the first time, she was gravely concerned about the possible effects on the baby's health but had nobody to turn to for advice. About 30 years after the end of World War II, Irie applied for official designation as a surviving A-bomb victim to be eligible for public financial support for medical treatment.

Meanwhile, her husband began to talk several years later about his experience following the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, including moving a large number of dead bodies on straw mats and washing the mats to remove the pus and yellow fluids left on them from burn wounds.

He was later recog-

nized as an A-bomb victim for public financial support.

Irie said she now has no reason to hide her exposure, but she has yet to share her experience with the younger members of her family. Recently, however, she began to feel obliged to convey what she knows about the war and the atomic bombing to them.

"A dangerous society is looming large," Irie said, referring to a law empowering the government to designate information as secrets on national security grounds and government moves to allow the exercise of the right to collective self-defence. "Persons who don't know the brutality of war are in charge of politics," she lamented. "We must not return to those days. Nobody should repeat such an experience."

Kyodo News

Pyongyang declares 2015 "DPRK-Russia Year of Friendship"

PYONGYANG, 11 March — The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on Wednesday declared the year of 2015 a year of friendship between the DPRK and Russia, reported the official KCNA news agency.

This is the first year of friendship between the two countries, which is aimed at developing "the bilateral relations onto a new higher stage in various fields including politics, economy and culture under a mutual agreement," said KCNA.

The two countries plan to intensify exchanges of delegation visits and contacts, and jointly hold cultural events in cities including Pyongyang and Moscow.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Korean nation and also the 70th anniversary of Russia's victory in its Great Patriotic War.

On 28 January, the Kremlin said Pyongyang had confirmed its top leader Kim Jong Un would come to Moscow in May for celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany and its allies.

Xinhua

Pakistan paramilitary raids HQ of major party MQM in volatile Karachi

ISLAMABAD, 11 March — A Pakistani paramilitary force raided the headquarters of a major political party on Wednesday in the country's biggest city, officials said, recovering weapons and arresting suspects wanted for several crimes, including the murder of a journalist.

The paramilitary Sindh Rangers launched the raid on the headquarters of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) in the violent southern port city of Karachi, home to 18 million people, where the party holds a stranglehold on politics. "Five to six men are those who are criminals and we have their record," Colonel Tahir Mehmood of the

Rangers told media. "There were certain people who have been awarded death sentences by court."

Although MQM members have been arrested before, there has not been an incursion into the party's heavily defended headquarters since the military raided it in 1992.

MQM's opponents say the party engages in extortion and frequently kills opposition activists. The MQM denies the allegations, saying its own party workers are targeted by others. Mehmood said the raid was not politically motivated, but prompted by news that several wanted men were at the headquarters, including one sentenced



A paramilitary soldier displays weapons recovered during a raid on the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) political party's headquarters in Karachi on 11 March, 2015. — REUTERS

to death in absentia for the 2011 murder of a young television reporter. Four

others, who say they were members of MQM, have already been jailed for the

killing. The MQM denied they were members of the party.—Reuters

Korean Air flight attendant in "nut rage" case sues chairman's daughter

SEOUL, 11 March — A flight attendant at the centre of a "nut rage" case that resulted in the daughter of the Korean Air Lines chairman being sentenced to jail has filed a civil lawsuit against her in New York, the attendant's lawyers have said.

Heather Cho, the airline's former head of in-flight service and daughter of chairman Cho Yang-ho, was sentenced to a year in jail last month after she was found guilty of violating aviation law over an on-board incident New York's John F Kennedy airport on 5 December. She had demanded the flight crew chief be expelled from the plane because she was upset over the way she had been



Cho Hyun-ah (C), also known as Heather Cho, daughter of chairman of Korean Air Lines, Cho Yang-ho, leaves for a detention facility after a Korean court ordered her to be detained, at the Seoul Western District Prosecutor's office on 30 Dec, 2014.

REUTERS

served macadamia nuts and ordered the plane to return

to its gate after it had started to taxi. The incident attract-

ed international headlines and triggered scorn and

outrage at home. The suit, which also lists the airline as a defendant, was filed on Monday. It claims that Heather Cho screamed obscenities at flight attendant Kim Do-hee, hit, shoved, and threatened her. The Weinstein Law Firm PLLC and Kobre & Kim LLP said in an emailed statement on Wednesday they were confident Cho would be found responsible "for the extensive damage that she has caused to Ms Kim's career, reputation, and emotional well-being".

The statement did not specify the amount of damages being sought by Kim.

Neither Cho's lawyer nor Korean Air could be reached for comment about

the suit. Cho has resigned from her posts at the airline and its subsidiaries in the face of public anger over her behaviour, a raw subject in a country whose economy is dominated by family-run conglomerates known as chaebol.

She has appealed against her conviction.

Kim testified tearfully in court that Cho had become abusive as she confronted the crew about service, shouting at them as they knelt on the floor.

Kobre & Kim said in the statement the flight attendant Kim had lodged the suit because Cho and Korean Air had not responded to attempts to reach a settlement.—Reuters

PERSPECTIVES

Thursday, 12 March, 2015

Mere words not enough to achieve development goals

By Aung Khin

A key goal of the ASEAN Economic Community is to encourage the competitiveness and expansion of small and medium enterprises in accordance with the Strategic Action Plan for ASEAN SME development (2010-2015).

The bloc has developed the ASEAN SME Guidebook with the aim of raising awareness of the financial facilities and market opportunities available to SMEs within the 10-member bloc.

In implementation of the AEC, the different levels of economic development of ASEAN Member states should be considered seriously.

At present, there are vast differences in the

level of economic development between some member countries, with the gaps largely attributable to differences in the stability, management, and mindset of state leadership.

The Asian Development Bank recently recognized that Cambodia, with gross domestic product expansion at an average annual rate of 6.5 percent between 2007 and 2014, now ranks among the world's fastest-growing economies.

The country managed to rapidly reduce poverty from nearly 50 percent of the population in 2007 to 19 percent in 2012. The ADB has predicted growth of 7.3 percent in 2015 due to well-managed inflation, a stable exchange rate and sustained competitiveness.

The ASEAN Framework for Equitable Economic Development (AFEED) was introduced in 2011 for member states to enable regional economic integration based on the principles of inclusive and sustainable growth, poverty alleviation and narrowing the development gap. This is in theory.

In practice, the economic development of member countries largely relies on individual states. Organizations in respective countries need

to assess whether their works can help reduce poverty. If they are not confident of this, they need to consider reforms to better enable them to help meet this goal.

International financial institutions and other groups should consider the situations and management of organizations before they provide support. Mere words are not enough to build up a developing state. Economic hardship can have many negative consequences, such as displacement of people or rising crime rates.

Government and business leaders, as well as ordinary citizens, must seek to ensure their own country does not lag too far behind the rest of the regional community.

Write for us

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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.

Thinking in Advance for Better Tomorrow**Sky and Underground Trains**

By San Shwe Aung

Traffic woes are grave concern for everybody in Yangon nowadays. Huge amount of energy and valuable time are lost on the road travelling during every working day. Nation, as a result, has lost annually million of man-hours which otherwise would have been contributed to the produc-

tion the functionality and pollution control [particularly air pollution] in the country. After 15 to 20 years of running, old car engines will produce exhaust gases which will pollute the air in the cities. Old cars are prone to break leading to unnecessary traffic blockage and accidents. So, all vehicles must be scrapped after 15 or 20 years, except those com-

roads of our cities. Expansion of roads, building of flyovers and bridges will not effectively solve the traffic problem either. There are limited land and space to build new roads in inner city. However, we are not the only country in the world facing traffic woes. Then we need to learn other countries experience as to how they have solved the traffic problems. Some have been very successful in solving traffic congestion and other only to a certain degree. But there has been one common approach in solving traffic problem which is building of sky and underground "rapid" train systems or Mass Rapid Transit system in the cities

London is an exemplary city which introduced underground electric train in 1863, more than 150 years ago. The London underground train system (also known as the Tube) is the first underground rapid transit system in the world. Now London rapid transit system is serving 270 stations with a rail track of 250 miles in length (with 52% above ground) and in 2012-13 carried 1.23 billion passengers. New York City Subway is also a mass rapid transit train system which was opened in 1904 and now the world largest transit system with 468 stations. It serves 5.5 million passengers every week day. Singapore Mass Rapid Transit

(SMRT) was built relatively recently, in 1987. SMRT is the second oldest mass rapid transit system in South East Asia, after Manila Light Rail Transit system, which was opened in 1984. SMRT daily transported 2.755 million passengers in 2013. Apart from underground rail tracks inside the congested downtown areas, SMRT operation is above ground [sky train] in other parts of Singapore.

Sky train is the elevated railroad system to transport mass passengers rapidly above the motor ways where the cars are travelling. The train runs on the separate rail tracks elevated by concrete columns and serves the railway stations which are also elevated and commuters can access by climbing manual stairs or by electrically operated escalators. Sky trains are used for rapid transport of passengers in many cities such as Vancouver in Canada, Shainghai in China and Bangkok in Thailand.

In Yangon and perhaps in Mandalay too, we have to

**Old underground railway station**

have sky and underground mass rapid transit trains rather sooner than later. It is costly to invest initially but unavoidable for efficient city transport. We are sure that the Government has plans in the pipe line, to build underground and sky mass rapid transport systems in our cities. Several international multi-lateral bodies and technology companies would undoubtedly be involved with relevant Government agencies in the process of feasibility studies, EIA, SIA, planning, funding and implementing. Citizens are aspiring with

burning desire to overcome the traffic woes which they face daily now. In not so distant future, our citizens will enjoy travelling quickly to their works, schools, businesses and loved ones and will be relieved of worries associated with traffic jam in the cities, should we have rapid underground and sky train systems.

References:

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SkyTrain_%28Vancouver%29
2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Underground

**Modern underground railway station**

tivity towards nation building. Arrival of new cars in Yangon and other cities must be welcome. Introduction of new vehicle import policies has benefited many middle class families, who otherwise could not have afforded sky rocket high car prices just 4 years ago. Government has adjusted the car policy several times over the last 3 years to mitigate the congestion of traffic in the big cities particularly in Yangon and Mandalay. Among many regulations in relation to car inputs and production, there should be one rule, very important to

mercial vehicles which the owners want to continue using. They must nevertheless pass very stringent technical tests and licensing procedures and pay for double or triple annual license fees. Then gradually another regulation could as well be introduced that "only brand new vehicles will be imported or assembled or manufactured in the country". But the latter option could be still some years down the road. Regardless of whatever car policies are in place, we definitely cannot expect less traffic jams or reduced vehicles on the

**Modern sky train in operation**

NATIONAL

Government sought peaceful protest resolution: Union Information Minister

NAY PYI TAW, 11 March — The forced dispersal of student protesters by police was “a sorrowful incident,” but the government tried as hard as it could to achieve a peaceful settlement in line with its policy, Union Minister for Information U Ye Htut said in an interview on Tuesday.

The union govern-

ment had sought to “avoid undesirable incidents” since the start of demonstrations aimed at amending the national education law, U Ye Htut told Skynet Up to Date Channel following the breaking up of the demonstration on March 10 in Letpadan, about 90 miles north of Yangon.

While expressing sorrow about the situation,

he denounced the idea of taking to the street to fight instead of seeking change through the legislative process or parliament.

“Despite requests for peaceful negotiations, student protesters tried to penetrate the police blockade and the police were legally obligated to disperse them,” the information minister said.

He said the student pro-

testors’ decision to march to Yangon instead of choosing democratic or parliamentary processes was the cause of the conflict.

The information minister said the government’s handling of the protest will have no impact on democratic reform, stating that when demonstrators on Wall Street were removed by police, or when pro-



Union Minister for Information U Ye Htut.

MNA

testers in Ferguson were dispersed with the use of tanks, “nobody spoke of US democracy having backtracked.”

As for the elections scheduled for later this year, the information minister said “political stability, the rule of law and resolving differences in accordance with the state constitution are essential for the elections, and elections will be successful if the government is able to continue its efforts for the rule of law.”—MNA

Bill committee hear public suggestions on amendment of National Education Law

NAY PYI TAW, 11 March — Amyotha Hluttaw’s Bill Committee heard suggestions of four persons on amendment of National Education Law here Wednesday.

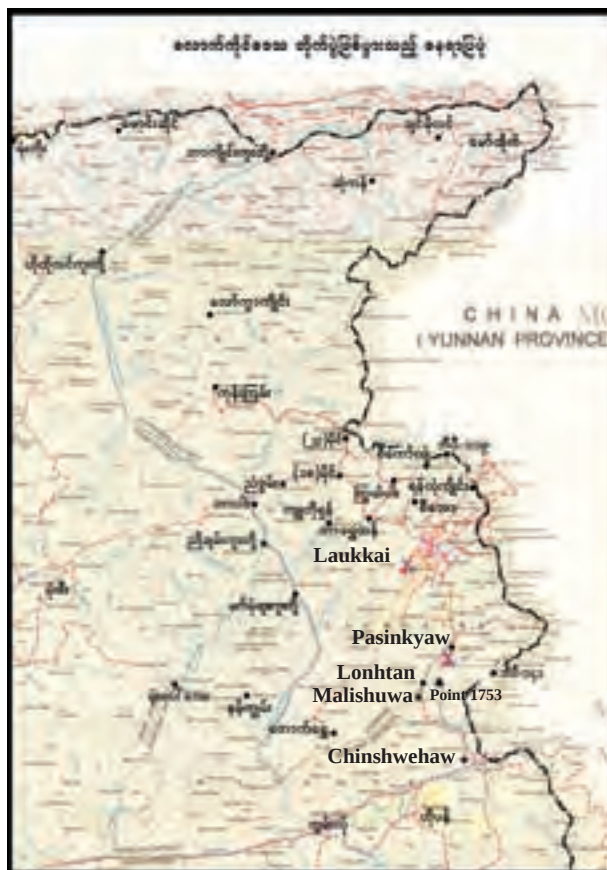
The meeting was also attended by members of Amyotha Hluttaw’s Politics, Economy and Legal Affairs Commission and listened to the different ideas of U Khin Maung Lwin, vice president of Hotel and Tourism Training School; U Htein Linn, director of Thiri Myint Myat Agro Company; Writer U Nay

Win Aung (The Sixth Htilar) and U Tin Min Kyaw, retired tutor at Loikaw Technological University, together with the witness of media.

Committee’s chairman U Khin Maung Yi said public suggestions will be put into redrawing draft for National Education Law, believing ideas of the four persons will be very supportive of the bill.

Bill committee invited public opinions on February to draw a draft National Education Law.

MNA



Tatmadaw arrests three Kokang insurgents, seizes arms and ammunition, narcotic drugs

NAY PYI TAW, 11 March — Kokang insurgents opened fire at military columns at the site, east of Pasinkyaw on 10 March morning but the insurgent withdrew from the area due to attacks of Tatmadaw columns.

In the afternoon, the army troops, acting on tip-off, searched a house in ward 2 of Laukkai and

seized arms, ammunition and narcotic drugs.

On Wednesday morning, the military column discharging security duty near Laukkai and Kokang insurgents exchanged fire and the latter withdrew from the area.

In the incidents, three Kokang insurgents were arrested along with one small arm, ammunition, related equipment, 2,200 stimulant tablets worth K3.3 million and 11 grams of Ice worth K220,000. Four soldiers sacrificed their life for the State and five were wounded.—Myawady

A map shows armed conflicts between Tatmadaw and Kokang insurgents in Laukkai region.—MYAWADY

Matriculation examinations for 2015 commences

NAY PYI TAW, 11 March — A total of 597,768 students of 632,209, accounting for 94.55 percent peacefully sit the matriculation examinations in 2015 at 1,355 centres across the nation on

its first day, Wednesday. Overseas exam centres are opened at 21 Myanmar’s embassies abroad. Hospital exam centres are also opened at Yangon General Hospital, Chin, Shan (South), Mon and Kayin

States and Bago (East) and Taninthayi regions.

The candidates with blind and disabilities also sit at the respective examination centres. A total of 17 candidates sit the exam at the central jail.

Authorities arranged examination for 109 candidates from Laukkai region in Lashio, Kunlong, Namtu, Tangyan, Yangon Region, Kyaikmaraw, Kanbalu and PyinOoLwin townships.—MNA

Delhi Dialogue VII focuses on India-ASEAN...

(from page 1)

regional bloc and the world’s largest democracy.

Under the theme “ASEAN-India: Shaping the Post 2015 Agenda,” the two-day Delhi Dialogue VII for the first time included dedicated business sessions.

Business representatives discussed ASEAN participation in Make in India, a programme to make the country a global manufacturing hub, as well as integration of regional production networks

and value chains.

In his inaugural address, Mr. Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East) of India’s Ministry of External Affairs, said trade between India and ASEAN, its fourth-largest trade partner, was far below its true potential.

“We hope the FTA in goods, when reviewed, will lead to better efficiency and results,” the Secretary (East) said.

Since the signing of the ASEAN-India free trade agreement in goods

in 2009, the value of trade between the dialogue partners has risen from under US\$44 billion in 2009-2010 to over US\$74 billion in 2013-2014.

Dr. APK Mochtan, Deputy Secretary General of the ASEAN Secretariat also said bilateral trade and investment must be increased to reach its potential.

He noted that the combined GDP of ASEAN nations and India was US \$2.4 trillion and India was ASEAN’s seventh-largest trading partner. The bilateral trade volume is projected to rise from \$70

billion in 2014 to \$100 billion in 2015. Against the backdrop of total ASEAN export-import trade of \$2.5 trillion, the ASEAN-India trade figures were abysmally low, he said.

ASEAN and India are waiting for ratification of the trade in services agreement in July and conclusion of the negotiation for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) within this year.

The dialogue will include further discussion from political leaders, business leaders, and academics on its final day.

GNLM

Study for new maritime training centre under way

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

YANGON, 11 March — Myanmar’s seafaring industry could soon receive a boost from construction of a new maritime training centre, with interested parties meeting recently to discuss the feasibility of the project, a Myanmar Maritime University official revealed Monday.

The inaugural meeting involved representatives from MMU and the Korea Maritime and Ocean University, with attendees discussing the potential for the project to be implemented under the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) 2015 Academic Partnership Programme.

The meeting also heard about the difficulties faced

by Myanmar’s maritime schools under the current system.

“The country sees more maritime training centres than before. But those schools are still in need of modern simulators and teaching aids,” a training officer said.

“Education is a tool for maritime industry growth,” said a senior marine official who welcomed the project, urging local seafarers to improve their English language skills to gain employment opportunities.

The Myanmar and South Korean universities signed a memorandum of understanding on academic cooperation at the meeting.—GNLM

West should pay attention to Kosovo, Libya, not just Crimea



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov

Moscow, 11 March — We wish our Western partners paid equal attention to international law issues in the bombing campaign against Yugoslavia, situation in Kosovo and Libya's collapse as they do when they speak about Crimea, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Tuesday.

Here we have "bombardments by members of the OSCE [Organization

for Security and Co-operation in Europe] of another OSCE member, I mean Yugoslavia, and the situation with Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence without any referendum," the *Itar-Tass* news agency quoted Lavrov as saying.

He said that the aggression against Iraq had been carried out "under blatantly false pretences" and there had been a gross "abuse of the United Nations Security Council mandate in Libya."

Nationalist leaders in Ukraine openly called for banishing or destroying Russians in Crimea a year ago, but not one of our Western partners reacted to these statements, Lavrov said.

Tanjung

Clinton says used personal email account for convenience

NEW YORK, 11 March — Hillary Clinton, under attack for using a personal email address to conduct US State Department business, defended the practise on Tuesday as a matter of "convenience," but her comments failed to calm critics, who accused her of secrecy.

Holding her first news conference since leaving her administration post two years ago, Clinton conceded she wished she had used a government email address as secretary of state but said she violated no rules and did not send classified material through the private account.

Clinton, the presumed front-runner for the 2016 Democratic presidential nomination, has come under fire for using an email server from her New York-area home and a personal account as the top US diplomat. Critics raised concerns that the arrangement allowed her to hide important facts about her tenure and put her correspondence at a security risk.

"I opted for convenience to use my personal email account, which was allowed by the State Department, because I thought it would be easier to carry just one device



Former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton speaks during a Press conference at the United Nations in New York on 10 March, 2015.

REUTERS

for my work and for my personal emails instead of two," a self-assured Clinton told more than 200 reporters crowded into a UN corridor. "Looking back, it would've been better if I'd simply used a second email account and carried a second phone."

It is not unusual for officials in Washington to have two mobile devices.

Clinton said she had provided all her emails that were work-related to the State Department and did not keep personal emails on subjects such as yoga routines, her mother's funeral arrangements or her daughter's wedding plans.

But she also said the private server contained communications from her and her husband, an apparent contradiction to her statement that emails had been deleted.—Reuters

Venezuela's Maduro seeks decree powers to face US 'imperialism'

CARACAS, 11 March — Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Tuesday asked parliament for decree powers in response to new US sanctions, in a move opposition critics slammed as a power-grab.

If as expected the government-controlled National Assembly approves his request for an "Enabling Law", it would be the second time the 52-year-old successor to Hugo Chavez has gained these expanded powers since winning election in 2013. "I've come to ask for an Enabling Law to confront the aggression of the most powerful country in the world, the United States, against this beautiful nation," Maduro told parliament.

"This is a law that will prepare our country, may we never be caught off guard."

His adversaries say he is using the worst flare-up with Washington during his nearly two-year rule to justify autocratic governance, sidetrack parliament and distract attention from a shrinking economy and chronic product shortages.

"Nicolas, are you re-

questing the Enabling Law to make soap, nappies and medicines appear, to lower inflation?" satirized opposition leader Henrique Capriles. "It's another smokescreen."

Confirming Venezuela as Washington's No 1 adversary in Latin America after a rapprochement with Cuba, the United States has taken its gloves off against Maduro, characterizing his government as a security threat and sanctioning seven officials.

In terminology that has also been used for measures against nations such as Iran and Syria, President Barack Obama's government declared a "national emergency" due to "the unusual and extraordinary threat" from Venezuela.

A visa ban and financial block were slapped on seven officials, ranging from the head of national intelligence and a state prosecutor to the national police chief and various military officers, for their alleged role in repressing Maduro's domestic opponents or corruption. Maduro hailed the seven as "heroes" and named one interior minister.



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro shows up his petition for decree powers while arriving at the national assembly in Caracas on 10 March, 2015. —REUTERS

Despite improving ties with Washington, communist-run Cuba was quick to join Venezuela's mockery of the US language.

"Venezuela a threat to the United States? Thousands of miles away, without strategic arms and without using resources or officials to conspire against the US constitutional order, the declaration is barely credible and reveals the real aims of those behind it," Cuba's government said in a statement.

Despite the diplomatic tensions, the United States is Venezuela's top trad-

ing partner, and the OPEC member's crude sales even rose in February to 796,000 barrels per day. Venezuela's heavily traded bonds have slipped amid the dispute, with most down on Tuesday. The benchmark 2027 issue was off 2 points, or nearly 5 percent, to a bid price of 39.444.

US-Venezuelan tensions have escalated amid since Maduro's accusations that Washington was behind an alleged coup plot and the arrest of an opposition Caracas mayor accused of conspiracy.

Reuters

Italy court upholds Berlusconi acquittal in prostitution case



AC Milan's president and former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi arrives before the match against Fiorentina at San Siro stadium in Milan, on 26 Oct, 2014.—REUTERS

ROME, 11 March — Italy's highest court on Tuesday confirmed an acquittal for former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi on charges of abuse of office and paying for sex with a minor, giving him a boost as he is trying to hold onto his role as a conservative leader.

At the first trial in 2013, Berlusconi, 78, was convicted and sentenced to seven years in prison. But that ruling was overturned by an appeals court in Milan that acquitted him last year.

The Rome court, in a ruling that is now definitive, rejected an appeal by Milan prosecutors to overturn the acquittal and to hold a new trial.

Berlusconi was accused of paying for sex with former teenage nightclub dancer Kharima El Mahroug, known by her stage name "Ruby the Heartstealer", during "bunga bunga" erotic parties at his palatial home near Milan when he was prime

minister in 2010.

He was also charged with abusing his authority to get El Mahroug, who was 17 at the time, released from police custody over unrelated theft accusations.

The trial was the most sensational Berlusconi faced. It mesmerised Italy with its lurid accounts of sex parties. A stream of would-be starlets on his TV channels took the stand as witnesses.

Tuesday's ruling came at a time when the conservative leader is struggling to hold together his Forza Italia party and maintain a front-line role in Italian politics.

Last month Berlusconi pulled out of a pact with Prime Minister Renzi over reform of Italy's voting system and political apparatus, complaining that Renzi had excluded him from the choice of who

should become the new head of state.

On Tuesday Forza Italia voted against Renzi's political reforms in the Chamber of Deputies, but 18 party deputies wrote a public letter of dissent. They lamented a lack of internal party democracy and said they had only obeyed Berlusconi's instructions out of loyalty to their leader.

Forza Italia has steadily lost support since Berlusconi was convicted for tax fraud in 2013. As a result of that sentence he lost his seat in the Senate and was barred from holding any public office.

According to most polls the party now has only 13-14 percent of the vote. That puts it behind Renzi's Democratic Party, the anti-establishment 5-Star Movement and the anti-immigrant Northern League whose leader Matteo Salvini seems to be eclipsing Berlusconi as the prominent figure on the Italian right.—Reuters

WORLD

Graphic torture photos from Syria on display at United Nations

Islamic State video shows killing of teen accused as Israeli spy

UNITED NATIONS, 11 March — Britain, France, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United States are holding an exhibit at the United Nations of graphic photos taken in Syria by a former military police photographer that show what appear to be evidence of brutal torture.

About two dozen of some of the 55,000 pho-

tographs taken — some showing eye gougings, strangulation and long-term starvation — went on display at UN headquarters in New York this week as the conflict in Syria enters its fifth year.

Former war crimes prosecutors have described the pictures as “clear evidence” of systematic torture and mass killings in Syria’s

three-year-long civil war. The photographer has been identified by the code name “Caesar.” The pictures were smuggled out of Syria between 2011 and mid-2013.

Britain’s UN Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant said the aim of the exhibit was to raise awareness of the human rights abuses that President Bashar al-Assad’s troops have been accused of committing against the Syrian people. “As the conflict in Syria enters its fifth year, the number of those killed and displaced has reached 220,000 and 7.6 million, and over 3.8 million have been forced to flee the country,” Lyall Grant said.

“We hope that this exhibition will serve as a reminder of the imperative to pursue a political solution to the conflict with utmost urgency to end the suffering of the Syrian people,” he said.

Syrian’s UN Ambassador Bashar Ja’afari was not immediately available for comment on the photo

exhibit.

Caesar was a senior sergeant in Syria’s army who spent 13 years working as a forensic photographer, say former war crimes prosecutors who examined the photos. Lawyers acting for Qatar commissioned the examination of the evidence. Qatar, like Saudi Arabia, is strongly opposed to Assad.

Between September 2011 and August 2013, Caesar worked at a military hospital, taking photos of bodies from three detention centers in the Damascus area. He smuggled copies of those photos out of the hospital on memory sticks hidden in his shoe.

The UN Security Council viewed the photos during an informal meeting last April. Russia and China vetoed a bid in May to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court for possible prosecution of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the civil war.—Reuters

BEIRUT, 11 March — A video posted online by Islamic State militants on Tuesday showed a boy fatally shooting Muhammad Musallam, an Israeli Arab accused by the group of having signed up as a jihadi to spy for Israel’s intelligence service.

The video, published by the group’s Furqan media outlet, showed Musallam, 19, sitting in a room wearing an orange jumpsuit, talking about how he had been recruited and trained by Mossad. He said his father and elder brother had encouraged him.

After that, it showed Musallam being escorted to a field and then being shot in the head by a boy, described by an older, French-speaking fighter as one of the “cubs of the caliphate”.

Reuters could not immediately verify the au-

thenticity of the footage, which also appeared on Twitter feeds used by Islamic State supporters.

Israeli security officials said they were aware of the video but could not confirm that it was authentic.

The video, about 13 minutes long, showed Musallam on his knees when the boy armed with a pistol and wearing a military uniform fires one bullet into Musallam’s forehead. The boy then fired three more shots into his body.

In the video, Musallam said he had joined Islamic State to report to the Israelis on weapons caches, bases and Palestinian recruits. Israel and his family denied that he was an Israeli spy.

An Israeli security official had said Musallam went to Syria to fight for Islamic State in October last year.—Reuters



A woman reacts as she looks at a gruesome collection of images of dead bodies taken by a photographer, who has been identified by the code name “Caesar,” at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 10 March, 2015. The pictures were smuggled out of Syria between 2011 and mid-2013.—REUTERS

Iraqi troops, militia retake strategic town north of Tikrit from Islamic State

AL-ALAM, (Iraq), 11 March — Iraqi troops and militias drove Islamic State insurgents out of the town of al-Alam on Tuesday, clearing a final hurdle before a planned assault on Saddam Hussein’s home city of Tikrit in their biggest offensive yet against the ultra-radical group.

The power base of executed former president Saddam’s clan, Tikrit is the focus of a counter-offensive against Islamic State by more than 20,000 troops and Shi’ite Muslim militias known as Hashid Shaabi, backed by local Sunni Muslim tribes.

If Iraq’s Shi’ite-led government is able to retake Tikrit it would be the first city clawed back from the Sunni insurgents and would give it momentum in the next, pivotal stage of the campaign — to recapture Mosul, the largest city in the north.

A Reuters photographer saw dozens of families, who earlier fled al-Alam to escape Islamic State rule, return to the town, celebrating and slaughtering sheep for

the victorious forces.

“I announce officially that the town is under the total control of security forces, the Hashid Shaabi (Popular Mobilization) units and local tribal fighters,” said local mayor Laith al-Jubouri.

“We rejoice in this victory and we want al-Alam to be the launchpad for the liberation of Tikrit and Mosul,” he told Reuters by telephone.

Mosul in the far north is the largest city held by the ultra-radical Islamic State, who now rule a self-declared cross-border caliphate in Sunni regions of Syria and Iraq.

But the ultra-radical group over the past few months has gradually lost ground in Iraq to the army, Shi’ite militias and Kurdish peshmerga forces, backed by air strikes carried out by a US-led coalition of mainly Western and allied Arab states.

The United States says Baghdad did not seek aerial backup from the coalition in the Tikrit campaign. Instead, support on the ground has come from neighbouring Iran, Washington’s longtime regional rival, which backs the

Shi’ite militias and has sent an elite Revolutionary Guard commander to oversee part of the battle.

The Iraqi army and militias now control the two towns to the north and south of Tikrit along the Tigris river and appear ready to move on the city itself.

Security officials said the assault could start as early as Wednesday, although the 10-day campaign has so far been marked by gradual and steady advances rather than rapid attacks.

Security officials said Islamic State fighters blew up a bridge over the Tigris on Tuesday, aiming to hinder any advance. Both al-Dour and al-Alam lie on the east bank of the river, opposite Tikrit. But the army has a large military base on the same western side from which it could send forces into Tikrit.

Hundreds of Shi’ite army recruits who abandoned the Speicher military base last June were shot dead in one of the biggest mass killings carried out by Islamic State fighters.

There have been fears that the Shi’ite-dominated security forces and militia would seek revenge on lo-



Militias known as Hashid Shaabi stand with their weapons in the town of al-Alam on 10 March, 2015.—REUTERS

cal Sunni residents for the Speicher killings. In the nearby village of Albu Ajil, local officials said houses had been set on fire by the militia.

Some houses were also set alight in al-Alam, but local tribal fighters said they belonged to security force members and government workers and were burnt by the retreating insurgents.

A local official said security forces and militias had regained control over the Ajil oilfield northeast of al-Alam, but other sources said the situation was still unclear.

Black smoke columns could still be seen rising

from the area and Jubouri, the al-Alam mayor, said Islamic State fighters set ablaze at least 10 wells in the oilfield. He could not confirm it was completely under the control of security forces.

An Interior Ministry source said two of the ministry’s armored vehicles were hit by Islamic State missiles or rockets north of al-Alam, and heavy clashes were taking place. He did not give details of casualties.

The Reuters photographer inside al-Alam saw two destroyed Islamic State vehicles, which had been targeted by army helicopters on Tuesday, with

charred bodies still inside.

Islamic State has sent reinforcements to Tikrit from other parts of its “caliphate” further north, where it came under attack on Monday from Kurdish forces around the oil-rich-city of Kirkuk.

A Kurdish commander said his forces would press on with their offensive and had captured another village on Tuesday. They had stopped in an area called Kwas, but would resume in coming days, Major General Omar Hassan said.

Reuters

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Dated 12 March 2015

Fukushima plant still posing risks 4 yrs after meltdowns

Tokyo, 11 March — The situation still remains risky at the crippled Fukushima Daiichi power plant four years after nuclear meltdowns occurred in 2011, the chairman of Japan's nuclear regulator said on Wednesday, vowing utmost efforts to avoid further trouble there.

"There have been quite a few accidents and problems at the Fukushima plant in the past year, and we need to face the reality that they are causing anxiety and anger among people in Fukushima," Shunichi Tanaka told personnel at the Nuclear Regulation Authority on the fourth anniversary of the nuclear disaster.

Mishaps still occur regularly at the radiation-leaking complex in Fukushima Prefecture, where decom-

missioning work is continuing after it was heavily damaged in the massive earthquake and tsunami that hit northeastern Japan on 11 March, 2011.

Late last month, Tokyo Electric Power Co, the plant operator, said highly radioactive rainwater has flowed into the Pacific Ocean every time it has rained, in the latest revelation of a series of contaminated water leakages from the seaside plant.

The number of accidents involving plant workers has also increased as the decommissioning work becomes more complex. In one accident in January, one worker died after falling into a 10-metre-high rainwater storage tank.

"There are numerous risks that could cause various accidents and prob-

lems," Tanaka said, urging TEPCO to continue efforts to enhance the plant's safety.

The chairman also voiced concern that the lessons from the world's worst nuclear crisis since the 1986 Chernobyl accident may fade from people's memories as time passes by.

"As regulators, we must not forget what we've learned from Fukushima," Tanaka added.

After being hit by the magnitude-9.0 earthquake and ensuing tsunami, the six-reactor Fukushima Daiichi plant lost nearly all its power sources and consequently its ability to cool most of the units. The Nos 1 to 3 reactors suffered nuclear meltdowns, while hydrogen explosions damaged the buildings housing the No 1, 3 and 4 units.—Kyodo News

University of Oklahoma expels two leaders for racist singing



The Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity is seen at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma on 9 March, 2015.—REUTERS

OKLAHOMA CITY, 11 March — The University of Oklahoma has expelled two students for playing a leadership role in singing a racist song at a fraternity-linked event that was captured on video and viewed worldwide, the school's president said on Tuesday.

The two students, who have not officially been identified, were connected to a Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity event. The video, posted on Sunday, prompted the university to shut down the fraternity's house on campus and force members to vacate it by midnight on Tuesday.

"There is zero tolerance for this kind of threatening racist behaviour at

the University of Oklahoma," President David Boren said in a post on social media website Twitter.

The 10-second video was shot on a bus chartered for a date night by the fraternity. Students were seen and heard chanting in unison, using offensive language referring to blacks and vowing never to admit them to the fraternity.

The Dallas Morning News identified the two students as Levi Pettit, 20, and Parker Rice, 19. Pettit's parents and Rice issued apologies on Tuesday.

"It was wrong and reckless," Rice told the paper in a written statement. "For me, this is a devastating lesson, and I am seeking guidance on how I can

learn from this."

The university said more people could face punishment, depending on the outcome of its probe.

A sorority that may have been involved in the date night, the Tri Delta group, said it was cooperating with the investigation. Its house on campus has not faced any sanctions.

The controversy played out on social media, with an online fundraising campaign launched for a black cook who lost his job because of the closure.

Another video purportedly showed the fraternity's white house mother using a racial slur.

William Bruce James II, one of the Oklahoma fraternity's few black members, said the SAE chapter there had undergone a cultural change since he was a student there, from 2001 to 2005. "The guys in that video are not my brothers," he told CNN. He said he never got an inkling of the offending song when he was a student.

Civil rights leaders applauded the university's prompt and decisive action.

"Racism is alive and well in America and we need ongoing, continuing dialogue to address these concerns," Garland Pruitt, president of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, told reporters.—Reuters

Cuban dissident leader fends off leadership challenge

HAVANA, 11 March — One of Cuba's most prominent dissidents appears to have fended off a challenge to her leadership of a women's opposition movement, but with her reputation dented after disgruntled followers accused her of abusing her authority.

Berta Soler is leader of the Ladies in White, a group that won the European Parliament's 2005 Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought. The US government periodically cites the group for its defence of human rights, and Soler has received an audience with both President Barack Obama and Pope Francis.

But an internal schism led to calls for her resignation, with disaffected members accusing her of abuse of authority, arbitrarily expelling members and misusing funds.

After pro-Soler Ladies shouted down a critic, calling her "traitor" in a

video that spread on the Internet, Soler convened a referendum. Final results were to be released on Wednesday, but Soler said on Tuesday night she had all but clinched victory. Of 233 ballots issued, 108 have come back in her favour and nine against her, Soler said, with another nine ballots either annulled or blank. Soler would need only five of the outstanding 107 votes to win.

Asked if she considered it a victory, Soler said, "It's looking that way, but I want to wait until tomorrow."

The public fight has only added to the difficulties for Cuba's tiny dissident community, which faces challenges even when unified.

Police harass and detain them, and the Communist government accuses them of being unpatriotic mercenaries working for the US government.

Reuters

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AGENT FOR: M/S INTERMARINE KUALA LUMPUR

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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 12th March, 2015: Weather will be partly cloudy in Taninthayi Region, Kachin, Kayin and Mon States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

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

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UK shoppers would switch brands, pay more to avoid use of slaves

LONDON, 11 March — The majority of shoppers in the United Kingdom would switch brands or pay higher prices to avoid the use of slave labour in the products they buy, a rights group poll showed on Wednesday.

Two-thirds of consumers would stop buying a product if they learned that its manufacture involved exploiting workers, and more

than half would pay up to 10 percent more for slavery-free goods, according to the Walk Free Foundation.

A government-backed draft law, the Modern Slavery Bill, aims to tackle exploitation by requiring businesses in Britain to disclose what action they have taken to ensure their supply chains are slavery free, and is expected to be passed before

elections in May. The International Labour Organization estimates that globally, millions of forced labourers are generating some \$150 billion a year in profits for those who exploit or enslave them.

Forced labour often lurks somewhere in the supply chain as a product and its individual parts may be manufactured, packaged

and distributed in a process linking numerous suppliers in many different countries, business ethics experts say.

"Consumers, through their purchasing decisions, have the power to change how companies act," said Peter Nicholls, CEO of Global Business Authentication, a Walk Free program that helps companies to combat slavery in their

supply chains.

"The problem is, most companies lack transparency over their supply chains and so it's very difficult for consumers to know which products are actually slavery free," Nicholls said.

Walk Free surveyed more than 2,000 adults across the United Kingdom to examine their shopping habits and purchases of

food, tea and coffee, clothing and accessories and electronics.

Almost 70 percent of consumers who buy luxury brands and around 60 percent of those who buy low and mid range products would switch brands or pay more if they knew slavery was involved in their production, the poll showed.

Reuters

Marvin Gaye's heirs win \$7.4 million for 'Blurred Lines' plagiarism

LOS ANGELES, 11 March — Heirs of the late soul singer Marvin Gaye won a \$7.4 million judgment on Tuesday against recording stars Robin Thicke and Pharrell Williams, who a jury found plagiarized the Motown artist in the creation of their hit single "Blurred Lines."

The US District Court jury in Los Angeles sided with Gaye's estate, finding that parts of his 1977 hit "Got to Give it Up" were lifted by Thicke and Williams for their 2013 R&B chart-topper.

The jury awarded Gaye's heirs \$4 million in actual damages plus \$3.4 million in profits that Thicke and Williams were found to have derived from their copyright infringement.

Several other parties sued by Gaye's estate, the rapper TI and various music companies, were cleared of infringement.

Gaye's daughter, Nona Gaye, hugged her attorney and wept as the court clerk read the verdict capping



Pharrell Williams (L), Robin Thicke and TI perform at the Clive Davis Pre-Grammy Gala and Salute to Industry Icons, honoring Universal Music Group Chairman and CEO Lucian Grainge, in Beverly Hills, California in this 25 Jan, 2014 file photo.—REUTERS

a weeklong trial that explored the boundaries between artistic inspiration and theft.

"Right now I feel free, free from, honestly, from Pharrell Williams and Robin Thicke's chains and what they tried to keep on us, and the lies that they told," she said.

Neither Thicke nor Williams was present for the verdict.

Their lawyer, Howard King, said they were keep-

ing their options open. "It's a lot of money. It's not going to bankrupt my clients. It's a disappointing number," he said.

The attorney for Gaye's heirs, Richard Busch, said they would seek an injunction to halt further distribution of "Blurred Lines."

The suit cited magazine interviews given by Thicke in which he admitted drawing on "Got to Give it Up" when produc-

ing and recording "Blurred Lines."

Thicke said later in sworn statements he was high on painkillers and alcohol when "Blurred Lines" became a hit and that he exaggerated his contribution to writing the song.

Thicke sang the raunchy, percussive dance tune, the biggest US pop song of the summer of 2013, at that year's MTV Video Music Awards in a provocative performance featuring pop singer Miley Cyrus.

Williams acknowledged in court he had been a fan of Gaye's music since childhood, but said "Blurred Lines" and "Got to Give it Up" were similar in genre only.

"The last thing you want to do as a creator is take something of someone else's when you love him," Williams testified. Gaye, whose hits included "I Heard it Through the Grapevine," was fatally shot by his father in 1984 at age 44.

Reuters

Taylor Swift insures her legs for USD 40 million?



Taylor Swift was said to be "embarrassed" when she found out how much her legs were worth.—PTI

LOS ANGELES, 11 March — Pop star Taylor Swift has reportedly got her legs insured for USD 40 million.

It is believed that the 25-year-old singer's team looked into how much her legs were worth in case anything happens while she is on stage, reported *Grazia* magazine.

"It seems like a ludicrous sum, but if something was to happen to her legs, Swift wouldn't be able to give her signature stage performances. Her USD 200 million career would

be in big trouble, "a source said.

The Blank Space singer was said to be "embarrassed" when she found out how much her legs were worth.

"She thought her legs were possibly worth a million. But USD 40 million shocked her. She's even a little embarrassed about it" the source said.

The paperwork for insurance is now said to be going ahead in time for Swift's "1989" world tour, which kicks off in May.

PTI

Movie star Johnny Depp injured in Australia

SYDNEY, 11 March — Actor Johnny Depp will fly back to the US from Australia for surgery after injuring his hand on his latest film set. It was not clear how Depp sustained the injury, but it was reportedly not on the set of the *Pirates of the Caribbean 5: Dead Men Tell No Tales*, which is being filmed in a rain forest in southern Queensland.

The famed actor is the star of the immensely successful film franchise now in its fifth episode.

The *Variety* movie industry magazine first

reported the injury on Wednesday, and the film's publicist then confirmed Depp would fly back to the US for treatment. The film, with a reported 190 million US dollar budget, has been in production for several weeks at a secret location near the Gold Coast tourist city. It was also disrupted on Tuesday when a man with a parrot on his shoulder and dressed as a pirate tried to disrupt filming on the set. He was armed with a knife, but ran into the rain forest and disappeared.

PTI

Not fair to put pressure on new moms to lose weight: Kate Winslet

LOS ANGELES, 11 March — Kate Winslet insists there is nothing bad if a mother takes time to shed her post baby weight. The 'Titanic' star, who gave birth to son Bear 15 months ago, believes the media has created an unhealthy trend for shedding baby weight as soon as possible. "The media do rush to put... Women on the cover of a magazine, or even... Grab a paparazzi

shot of them... Eight weeks post-baby and say, 'Oh look, eight weeks post-baby, doesn't she look amazing?'"

"You know, looking amazing eight weeks post-baby is having a belly that still looks like you've got a baby inside it, because guess what — that's what actually happens," the 39-year-old actress said on a US TV show 'Extra'.

PTI

Disabled Finnish punks prepare to rock Eurovision

HELSINKI, 11 March — Pertti Kurikka, 58, wants to make it perfectly clear that while he and the other members of his Eurovision contestant Finnish band have disabilities, they know how to rock.

"It is nice that we are gaining popularity. But we are no softies. We are straight up punk rockers," he said, demonstrating with an "air guitar" how hard he intends to play at the popular Eurovision song contest in May.

Kurikka, Kari Aalto, Sami Helle and Toni Valitalo play together in a band called Pertti Kurikan Nimipaivat — which means Pertti Kurikka's Name Day in Finnish.

Many say the nomination has given a much-needed voice to disabled people.

"In some European countries, disabled people are kept hidden and attitudes are not as open as here," Finnish Disability Forum Secretary General, Pirkko Mahlamäki, said.

Drummer Toni has Down's syndrome, singer Kari has Williams syndrome, bass player Sami has a minimal brain dysfunction syndrome, and



Members of the Finnish punk band Pertti Kurikan Nimipaivat (L-R) Kari Aalto, Sami Helle, Toni Valitalo and Pertti Kurikka pose for a picture in their rehearsal room in Helsinki on 6 March, 2015. —REUTERS

Pertti, on guitar, has been diagnosed with slight intellectual disabilities.

Last month they won a popular vote to represent Finland in the Vienna finals and have since been touted as one of the favourites to follow Austrian drag queen Conchita Wurst's triumph last year.

"The whole band is a little bit in shock. We are going to Vienna and that's going to be a really big step for us because it's going

to be so many people over there," 41-year-old Sami said at the band's studio, which is in a workshop for disabled people.

"If we win then we win, if we lose then we lose, but it's going to be fun!"

The band members have made several recordings and toured Britain, the United States and Germany since they got together at the workshop six years ago.

Their songs often

comment on life in an institution and call for human dignity. The Eurovision entry song "Aina mun pitää" (Always I must) lists things one must do, like sleep and eat well and see a doctor, and things one might not be allowed to do, like eating sweets and watching TV.

"Our message is: Believe in yourselves. That's the only thing because if you don't believe, then you can't do anything. Follow your dreams."—Reuters

GENERAL

Harrison Ford's plane lost power before LA crash — investigators



Actor Harrison Ford's damaged airplane is taken away after its crash landing at Penmar Golf Course in Venice, Los Angeles California on 6 March, 2015.

REUTERS

LOS ANGELES, 11 March — Actor Harrison Ford's vintage airplane lost engine power shortly before he crash-landed at a Los Angeles golf course last week, a report released on Tuesday said.

The preliminary findings from the National

Transportation Safety Board confirm Ford's own radio transmissions reporting an engine failure to the control tower at the Santa Monica Airport last Thursday as he brought the plane down on the eighth fairway at the golf course. Ford, 72, known for playing the iconic characters

Indiana Jones in "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and its sequels and Han Solo in the "Star Wars" franchise, was seriously injured in the crash of the 1942 single-engine Ryan Aeronautical ST-3KR plane, which is also known as a PT-22 Recruit.

The crash, which occurred a short distance from houses, follows years of complaints by residents in the heavily populated beachside community that the airport interferes with their quality of life.

The National Transportation Safety Board's report released on Tuesday said Ford's plane "sustained substantial damage following a loss of engine power and subsequent forced landing after take-off from the Santa Monica Municipal Airport."

Ford made a left turn back to the airport when

he lost power and on his descent the aircraft struck the top of a tree and crashed onto the golf course, about 800 feet (244 meters) south-west of the approach end of a runway, the report said.

The report does not name Ford as the pilot and sole occupant of the plane but his spokeswoman has confirmed it was him.

The NTSB is continuing its investigation of the crash following its initial findings released on Tuesday.

Ford was taken to a hospital, where he was listed in fair to moderate condition. He was still in the hospital on Monday, according to a report from ABC News. A spokeswoman for the actor declined to comment on Monday and she could not immediately be reached on Tuesday.—Reuters

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Hamburg ahead of Berlin in local support for 2024

BERLIN, 11 March — The northern port city of Hamburg has edged ahead of capital Berlin in their head-to-head race for the 2024 Olympics, recording stronger local support in a poll, the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB) said on Tuesday.

Hamburg has 64 percent of local residents in favour of a Games candidacy while just over one in two Berliners (55 percent) showed support for an Olympic bid.

"We are delighted with the support for the Olympic and Paralympic Games and especially that in both cities there was an increase (of support)," said DOSB President Alfons Hoermann.

"Now we have a good



The main entrance of the Olympic stadium is pictured with the Olympic rings in Berlin on 9 March, 2015.

REUTERS

basis for the decision making process." The poll was conducted in February over the telephone with a sample of 1,500 citizens over the age of 14 in both cities.

The DOSB is set to name its preferred choice on 16 March before its members

decide on the final German selection on 21 March.

Hamburg is pitching a Games on the water, making use of inner-city land while Berlin, hosts of the 1936 Olympics, is highlighting its multi-cultural character as a city and the use of existing

sports facilities including the iconic Olympic stadium.

But there will also be a referendum in the city once selected as the DOSB is desperate to get as much local backing as possible.

It also wants to avoid the debacle of Munich, which after losing out on the 2018 Games wanted to bid again for 2022, only to have its plan nipped in the bud by a local referendum even before an official candidacy was launched.

The IOC is eager to see local support for bids after four cities pulled out of the 2022 race, some due to a lack of local backing, damaging the reputation of the Olympics and triggering a series of reforms to make them more attractive.—Reuters

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(12-3-2015, Thursday)

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| <p>6:00 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paritta by Hilly Region Missionary Sayadaw <p>6:25 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myitta Pawana By Mingun Sayadaw Phayagyi <p>7:00 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News/ Weather Report <p>7:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly Entertainment <p>8:00 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News / International News <p>8:30 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head Line News <p>9:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary (ASEAN) <p>10:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary <p>11:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science and Technology Programme <p>12:00 noon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News / International News / Weather Report <p>12:35 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hluttaw Image | <p>1:55 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine Arts-Boson of Dramatic Performance <p>3:00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News / International News <p>4:00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News / Weather Report <p>4:35 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Distance Education (TV Lectures) First Year (English) <p>5:00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News/ Weather Report <p>6:35 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People's Talks <p>7:00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News <p>7:35 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Affairs <p>8:00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News / International News / Weather Report <p>9:00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News • Hluttaw Image • Clever • Talk on Old Film |
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Think tank says US farm bill payments to peak with 2015 crop

CHICAGO, 11 March — Government support for US grain farmers under the new five-year farm bill will peak with the coming 2015 crop, the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute said in a new report.

The 2014 farm bill replaced traditional direct payments to farmers with support tied to market prices, with farmers needing to choose one of two basic formulas by 31 March.

One, called Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC), makes payments based on moving five-year average prices at the county level. The other, called Price Loss Coverage (PLC), provides

payments when national average prices fall below fixed reference prices. Farmers commit to one option for all five years.

"Payments under 2014 farm bill programs increase when crop prices fall," FAPRI said in its 2015 US Baseline Briefing Book. The think tank estimated that \$3.9 billion in ARC and PLC payments for last year's 2014 crop would be made after fiscal 2016 begins on 1 October.

"ARC spending is greatest in 2015/16 but declines in later years as the moving averages that determine benchmark revenues adjust," FAPRI said. "Pro-

jected average ARC and PLC payments peak with the 2015 crop at about \$6.5 billion but decline to \$3.4 billion for the 2018 crop."

FAPRI, based at the

University of Missouri, said actual ARC and PLC payments are likely to differ greatly from the projected averages, given price and yield volatility.—Reuters



The sun rises behind a corn tassel in a field in Minooka, Illinois, on 24 Sept, 2014.—REUTERS

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(12-3-2015, Thursday)

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| <p>6:00 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mono Classical Songs <p>6:20 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TV Drama Series <p>6:45 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TV Drama Series <p>7:10 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honour of Cultural Show <p>7:45 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myanmar Series | <p>8:15 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TV Drama Series <p>9:05 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TV Drama Series <p>9:50 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASEAN China Cultural Show <p>10:00 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myanmar Video <p>12:00 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close Down |
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Myanmar women secure three points in debut of qualifiers



Myanmar women thrash Sri Lankans with 16-0 in Asian qualifiers of the Women's Olympic football tournament Rio 2016.

MYANMAR FOOTBALLFANS

YANGON, 11 March — Myanmar football teams met with opponents at different tournaments at home and abroad on Wednesday.

In Mandalay, Myanmar women's team trounced Sri Lankan team in its debut with a wide margin of 16-0

result in the qualifiers of women's football tournament for the 2016 Brazil Olympic Games.

In a tune-match held in Japan, Japan U-22 team beat Myanmar youth team with a 9-0 result.

The match between Ayeyawady United and Persib Bundong ended at

a 1-1 draw in the AFC Cup while South China routed Yadanarbon with a 3-1 result.

Myanmar U-15 secured the third prize with a 1-0 win over Chinese U-15 in the third placed match in Dongxing city of the Guangxi Province.—GNLM

Porto thrash Basel to reach quarter-finals

PORTO, 11 March — Four stunning strikes helped Porto reach the quarter-finals of the Champions League with a thumping and thoroughly deserved 4-0 win over a flat Basel side on Tuesday that gave them a 5-1 aggregate success.

The Portuguese side, who along with Chelsea are the only unbeaten teams in this season's competition, took the lead with an excellent first-half free kick from Yacine Brahimi, which set the tone for an evening of superb long-range efforts.

His opener was followed by equally impressive second-half strikes from Hector Herrera, Casemiro and Vincent Aboubakar with all four of the goals coming from outside the penalty area.

Porto were without their top scorer Jackson Martinez, but the Colombian's replacement, Cameroonian Aboubakar had an excellent game, causing Walter Samuel and Fabian Schaer in the Basel rear-

guard endless trouble.

After a period of early pressure, Basel were pegged back and the opening goal of a frenetic first half came after just 14 minutes.

Casemiro made a clean tackle to win the ball in the attacking third, putting Cristian Tello through on goal. He was up-ended on the edge of the box by Samuel and from the resulting

free kick, Brahimi knocked an arching ball past Basel keeper Tomas Vaclik into the goal.

With Porto beginning to get up a head of steam, the match was broken up by a serious injury to the hosts' captain Danilo, who was flattened by his own keeper Fabiano, as the Brazilian came to head a long ball away.—Reuters



Porto's Alex Sandro Lobo (L) fights for the ball with FC Basel's Derlis Gonzalez during their Champions League round of 16 second leg soccer match at Dragao stadium in Porto on 10 March, 2015.

REUTERS

Holdes Real squeak past Schalke into last eight

MADRID, 11 March — Holders Real Madrid survived a huge scare when they lost 4-3 to Schalke 04 in the Champions League on Tuesday but squeezed into the quarter-finals 5-4 on aggregate thanks to record European marksman Cristiano Ronaldo.

Coming hard on the heels of a 1-0 defeat at Athletic Bilbao in La Liga last weekend, the loss to a battling Schalke side did

nothing to dispel the impression Real have lost their way and they were whistled off the Bernabeu pitch by their angry fans.

Two first-half goals from Ronaldo, which took his tally in European competition to a record 78 goals, and a Karim Benzema strike just after the break saw Real reach the last eight but Schalke came close to pulling off a remarkable comeback.

Striker Klaas-Jan Huntelaar scored twice for the visitors, including a superb late winner on the night, after Christian Fuchs has put the German side in front after 20 minutes, with substitute Leroy Sane also on target for the Bundesliga side.

It was Real's first Champions League defeat at home in 22 games since Barcelona beat them 2-0 in April 2011 and was

only the second time the world's richest club by income had conceded four goals in a European game at the Bernabeu.

"We didn't play well but sometimes you have to suffer," Real midfielder Luka Modric, returning to action as a second-half substitute after a long-term injury absence, said in an interview with Spanish television.

"We have to play as a team and hopefully we will get back to playing the way we did at the start of the season," added the Croatia international, who had been sidelined since November.

"We have the quality and I think we will see the best version of Real Madrid in the next match."

After Real comfortably won last month's last 16, first leg in Gelsenkirchen 2-0, Schalke came out fighting and took a deserved lead when Fuchs' shot ricocheted into the net off Real goalkeeper Iker Casillas.

Ronaldo levelled from a Toni Kroos corner five minutes later before former Real striker Huntelaar, who moments earlier had struck a fierce shot against the crossbar, put Schalke

2-1 ahead when he followed up Max Meyer's saved effort.

Ronaldo struck again from Fabio Coentrao's cross on the stroke of halftime — the Portugal captain's 75th Champions League goal putting him level at the top of the all-time scoring chart with Barcelona forward Lionel Messi.

Both sides continued to attack at every opportunity in the second half and Benzema made it 3-2 in the 53rd minute before Sane curled a shot past Casillas in the 57th to equalise.

Dutchman Huntelaar set up a nervous finish when he smashed a brilliant effort into the net off the bar six minutes from time and Schalke captain Benedikt Hoewedes had one more chance to snatch the decisive goal but a relieved Real held out to claim a place in the draw for the last eight on 20 March.

Real were looking for a convincing performance after the defeat at Bilbao cost them top spot in La Liga but they were outplayed for long periods by an impressive Schalke unit. Both sides were pushing forward in search of

goals, which made for an entertaining spectacle but allowed the visitors plenty of chances to counter attack. Benzema's goal, when he picked up a loose ball and darted across the penalty area before firing into an empty net, seemed to have settled the tie but Sane's brilliant leveller at 3-3 gave Schalke renewed hope. Schalke midfielder Tranquillo Barnetta came close in the 62nd minute and Real fullback Alvaro Arbeloa burst through in the 65th but was denied by a fine save from Timon Wellenreuther. Ronaldo's brace took his goals tally past Barcelona's Lionel Messi (76) and former Real striker Raul (77) in European games. He also matched Messi's record of 20 Champions League doubles and took his total for the season to 41 goals in 38 appearances in all competitions, also level with Messi. Real's defeat meant they missed a chance to set a record for consecutive victories in Europe's elite club competition. They equalled the mark of 10 straight wins set by Bayern Munich in 2013 when they beat Schalke in the first leg.

Reuters



Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo (L) goes for a header challenged by Schalke 04's Marco Hoger during their round of 16 second leg soccer match at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium, in Madrid on 10 March, 2015.—REUTERS