

President U Thein Sein meets Stanford professor and master's students



President U Thein Sein poses for documentary photos with Professor James D Fearon of Stanford University of the United States and party.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 26 March—President U Thein Sein met a delegation led by Professor James D Fearon of Stanford University

of the United States at the Presidential Palace here on Thursday, according to officials.

The president ex-

plained to them efforts to enhance programmes for development of human resources, presidential scholarship awards, reforms in

the political, economic and executive sectors, and policies laid down for stability and peace.

He responded to que-

ries raised by the delegation members, who were students doing a master's degree on international policies.

President U Thein Sein was accompanied by

Union Ministers Lt-Gen Ko Ko, U Wunna Maung Lwin, U Soe Thane, U Myint Hlaing, Dr Daw Khin San Yi and Dr Ko Ko Oo, and officials.

MNA

Business confidence in Myanmar still robust: ADB

By Ye Myint

YANGON, 26 March—Business confidence in Myanmar remains robust, as indicated by a 10 percent increase in company registrations in the first nine months of the 2014 fiscal year, the Asian Development Bank said in its assessment of the

country's economy.

Myanmar saw foreign investment topping US\$6.6 billion between April and December last year, up from \$4 billion for the full year of 2013, the ADB said in its report released on Tuesday.

The report said telecommunications represented almost one third of total

investment, followed by oil and gas at 24 percent with a \$400 million increase in gas exports, reaching \$2.1 billion in the first half of the 2014 fiscal year. Real estate made up 18 percent, hotels 13 percent and manufacturing 8 percent, with an average of one new garment factory opening per week in 2014.

Moreover, growth in services was boosted by a surge in tourist arrivals from 2 million in 2013 to an estimated 3.1 million last year, it added.

The report attributed rapid economic growth in the closing fiscal year to the country's policy reform which is expected to drive

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Art exhibition looks at Yangon's heritage

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

YANGON, 26 March—An exhibition showcasing the work of Yangon artists, with a focus on the city's heritage, opened Wednesday at River Ayeyawady Gallery here.

"We Live in Yangon" runs from 25 to 31 March, with more than 30 paintings by eight young artists

in a variety of media.

The one-week event looks at the history of Yangon and the everyday lives of its residents, Artist Min Thurein told The Global New Light of Myanmar.

Some paintings touch on themes of material wealth and morality, (See page 2)



A domestic passenger aircraft lands at Myanmar's busiest airport in Yangon. The country's tourism boom is a welcome development for the aviation market.—PHOTO: YE MYINT

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Union Finance Minister explains salary increase for government employees at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

NAY PYI TAW, 26 March — Finance Union Minister U Win Shein explained the section of expenditure reduction included in the union budgets bill at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw here on Thursday.

According to the union minister, over K 8 billion was reduced from the budgets of the offices of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw, the constitutional tribunal and 14 ministries.

In connection with increased salaries for govern-

ment employees, he said the new salaries range from K 120,000 in minimum to K 500,000 in maximum.

The gap between the lowest and the highest salaries is 4.2 times, with the union minister saying that separate announcements will be made on new rates of salaries for pensioners and other fringe benefits for government staff assigned in remote areas.

Dr Kan Zaw, Union Minister for National Planning and Economic Development, briefed the parlia-

ment on the first five-year national development plan from 2011-2012 to 2015-2016, which is part of the 20-year all-round national development project from 2011-2012 to 2030-2031.

The first five-year plan includes rural development and poverty reduction, anti-corruption, reinforcement of rule of law, reconstruction of the country's economic institutions, state-owned investments, citizen investments, foreign investments and control of inflation.—MNA



Representatives of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw emphasize raising salaries for government service personnel.—MNA

Pyithu Hluttaw

Health Department upgrades YGH with technical assistance of local and foreign organizations



Deputy Minister for Health Dr Win Myint.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 26 March — With regard to the question on arrangements for opening Sports University raised by U Thang Lein of Mindat Constituency, Deputy Minister for Sports U Thaung Htaik



Deputy Minister for Sports U Thaung Htaik. MNA

replied that the university will be opened in 2016-17 fiscal year depending on budget in 2015-16 FY at the 34th day session of Pyithu Hluttaw Thursday.

U Min Swe of DaikU Constituency asked about

upgrading of Yangon General Hospital. Deputy Minister for Health Dr Win Myint explained that the Yangon General Hospital upgrading and renovation committee was formed with 12 members to upgrade the facility with technical assistance of former minister of Department of Health Mr. Lord Darzi of England, trustee Dr Michael Maret-Crosby of Rangoon General Hospital Reinvigoration Fund of England, Robin Cross, Ian Goodfellow, and Louise Hansen Yangon Heritage Trust of the UK, Myanmar Engineering Society, Myanmar Integrated Engineer

Group, Quality Control and Nikki Group.

Health Department allotted K5 billion in 2013-14 FY and K4.5 billion in 2014-15 FY for upgrading the YGH. Up to 4 February, a five-storey building has been completed by 100 percent while a cyclotron PET/CT, emergency and out-patient ward, main building, building for O2Plan, medical store, 1,000-KVA transformer and lecture hall are under construction.

The Hluttaw invited MPs to discuss the bill on rights of persons with disabilities sent by Amyotha Hluttaw with amendments.

MNA

Amyotha Hluttaw

Amyotha Hluttaw approves bill amending national education law

NAY PYI TAW, 26 March — Chairman of Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee U Khin Maung Yi read out the findings and remarks of the committee over the bill amending national education law at the 35th day session of Amyotha Hluttaw on Thursday.

The speaker of the Amyotha Hluttaw sought paragraph by paragraph approval for the bill from the Hluttaw.

Deputy Minister for Education Dr Zaw Min Aung also sought the approval for the bill and the session approved it.—MNA



Chairman of Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee U Khin Maung Yi. MNA

Union SWRR Minister signs book of condolences for demise of Singapore's former PM Mr. Lee Kuan Yew



YANGON, 26 March — Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Daw Myat Myat

Ohn Khin signed the book of condolences for the demise of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister of

Singapore, at the Singaporean Embassy to Myanmar at No. 236 in Bahan Township, here, on Thursday.—MNA

Art exhibition looks

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according to 25-year-old artist Myo Swe Thein, who said, "Accumulation of wealth leads to a decline in values."

"Apart from an acrylic painting, all paintings on display at the gallery are on sale, with prices ranging from US \$200 to \$2,000," Min Thurein said.

Some of the artists have plans to hold solo shows in Yangon later this year to gain greater exposure for their work.

The gallery is located on 35th Street (Middle Block) in downtown Yangon.

GNLM

An art work depicts view of Yangon City.



NATIONAL

Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham honours nationwide immunization campaign

NAY PYI TAW, 26 March — Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham attended the felicitation ceremony for the Nationwide Measles-Rubella Mass Immunization Campaign in Nay Pyi Taw on Thursday.

Also present at Myanmar International Convention Centre (2) were union ministers, deputy ministers, members of the National Health Committee, representatives of the WHO, UNICEF, UN agencies, and international and local non-governmental organisations.

In his speech, the vice president said the govern-

ment has been fulfilling the needs of citizens by giving priority to preliminary healthcare coverage, education standards, drinking water and electricity supply, transportation, and poverty reduction.

After the government increased spending on health in fiscal 2013-14, the free healthcare system was introduced in hospitals and clinics, allowing the public to spend 60 to 80 percent less on treatment, according to the vice president.

The government aims to raise the life expectancy of citizens equally regardless of region and social

status, with immunization to reduce the death rate of children under five an important part of achieving this goal, the vice president added.

Myanmar was able to reduce the death rate of children under five to 43 per 1,000 and the coverage of programmes reached 88 percent of the country including self-administered zones, relief camps and remote areas thanks to various immunization programmes, he said.

The vice president pointed out achievement milestones of the programmes and said the gov-

ernment aimed to reduce measles in 2020 and introduce immunization for rubella in 2015, which was successfully carried out in January and February 2015.

The immunization programme covered 95 percent of the country, the vice president said, thanking the organisations that helped make it a success including GAVI Vaccine Alliance, the WHO, UNICEF, NGOs, the Ministry of Education, and the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association.

The vice president and the union minister for health presented certificates of honour to the organisations at the ceremony.—MNA



Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham presents certificate of honour to an official.—MNA

ASEAN virtual learning resources centre initially launched in Ngwehsaung



Union Minister U Ye Htut and delegates launch ASEAN's virtual learning resources centre.—MNA

NGWEHSAUNG, Ayeyawady Region, 26 March— As part of the 13th Senior ASEAN Officials Responsible for Information Meeting, the ASEAN Virtual Learning Resources Centre (AVLRC) was initially launched at Ngwehsaung Yacht Club and Resort on Thursday, according to officials.

Union Minister for

Information U Ye Htut, together with the chairman and the vice chairman of the 13th Meeting and the rotating chair of ASEAN, pressed the plasma globe to launch the official website of ASEAN's virtual learning resources centre.

The website provides information related to the history, culture and travel destinations of ASEAN

countries, in addition to scholarship awards and research data for university students in the region.

In the evening, ASEAN delegates to the meeting went sightseeing in and around Ngwehsaung.

The Philippines will host the 14th Senior ASEAN Officials Responsible for Information Meeting in 2016.—MNA

Business confidence in Myanmar...

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stronger expansion through the forecast period.

The ADB urged Myanmar to maintain the stability and momentum of reform that underpins the growth.

Since ending its isolation and establishing democratic practises, Myanmar has undertaken a wide array of reforms, including opening up the country to the international business

community.

After seeing significant economic reform for four years, many development challenges of improving infrastructure, strengthening governance and public sector capacity, developing human capital, building a dynamic private sector, revitalizing agriculture and reducing poverty remain for the country, the ADB pointed out in the report. —GNLM

Government announces pay raises for civil workers

NAY PYI TAW, 26 March— The Ministry of Finance has announced that it has increased the salaries of government workers as of 1 April this financial year.

The announcement signed by Union Minister U Win Shein was made on 25 March, following a government meeting the same day.

The pay rises were part of the government's efforts to raise the standard of living of its employees, the union minister said in the announcement.

The new pay scales, some of which doubled, will revoke the allowance of fringe benefits the ministry has rendered to all civil servants since 2012.

Separate announce-

Constitutional Review Committee discusses amendments to Schedules 1 and 2 of 2008 Charter

NAY PYI TAW, 26 March— The Myanmar Constitutional Review Committee met here on Thursday to discuss schedules 1 and 2 of the 2008 Charter, according to officials.

Union Minister U Soe Thane, also Chairman of the MCRC, stressed power

sharing among regions and states, putting emphasis on resource sharing given current situations. According to Union Minister U Tin Naing Thein, who is also MCRC's vice chairman, President U Thein Sein has called for speedy amendments to the two tables, which involves changing and rewriting ex-

isting laws by respective legislative bodies.

Union Minister U Hla Tun, also MCRC's vice chairman, pointed out the need to release notifications, rules and regulations for prescribed laws, put forward laws to be amended to Hluttaw, and enact necessary new laws.—MNA



Union Minister U Soe Thane highlights process of amendment of constitution.

MNA

Tele-plays honour Armed Forces Day

NAY PYI TAW, 26 March—In honour of 70th Anniversary of Armed Forces Day, Shae Hsaung cinema in Yangon will show the tele-plays entitled Father and Sons; Like Father, Like Son; Archive of Stars; and Mother of Good Sons while Myo Gon Yaung cinema in Mandalay will present the tele-play entitled Archive of Stars on 27 March.—MNA

MNA

More cars, illegal parking worsen Mandalay's traffic woes



MANDALAY, 26 March — Due to an increasing number of vehicles, roads in downtown Mandalay are congested every day, with the problem made worse by illegal parking on road-sides.

To combat congestion, the Mandalay City Development Committee is carrying out projects to expand roads, build overpasses and open some streets to one-way traffic.

The Myanmar Police

Force has assigned more than 250 members of the Traffic Police to solve the congestion problem in Mandalay.

“Traffic blocks occur at the corner of 26th and 80th streets in downtown Man-

dalay from the early morning to evening. The growing number of vehicles is one of the problems,” a local resident said.

More than 700,000 motorcycles have been registered at the Directorate of Road Administration in Mandalay Region up to the end of February 2015, according to a recent regular session of Mandalay Region's Hluttaw.

The department has registered 836,385 vehicles, including 77,563 cars and 772,522 motorcycles.

Mandalay City's seven townships are home to more than 1.72 million people.

While officials are striving to ease traffic congestions, local people need to abide by traffic rules, a driver said.

Aung Ye Thwin

Five-member committee endorses issuance of citizenship scrutiny cards

MANDALAY, 26 March — A five-member committee recommended issuance of citizenship scrutiny cards to local ethnic people in Mandalay Region who did not have all of the documents required for the ID.

Some people lack the knowledge to systematically store their important documents on background history of family to be used in making IDs, making it difficult to process their applications.

To be able to solve these problems, a five-member committee was set up led by the head of Township INRD and also including one representative each from the Township Planning Department, Township Police Force, Township Health



Department and a village or ward administrator.

With the endorsement of the committee, DINR issued the ID cards. Ac-

cording to the Moe Pwint Project, the Department of Immigration and National Registration needs to issue the CSC to ethnic people

within two days from the time of application.

Aung Ye Thwin

BG and Woodside to invest US\$ 1 bn in Myanmar's energy sector

NAY PYI TAW, 26 March — UK-based BG Group and Australia's Woodside Petroleum will invest US \$1.08 billion in Myanmar's oil and gas sector, the EBR energy business review reported on 24 March.

After securing the rights to shallow and deepwater blocks off the

coast of Rakhine State in 2013, the two companies have now signed production sharing contracts for the blocks.

“Operations for the shallow water blocks will take over \$545 million and deepwater blocks will cost more than US\$ 535 million,” an official from the Ministry of Energy, who

asked not be named, said.

“Rakhine basin is an emerging oil and gas province in Myanmar that fits very well with Woodside's proven capabilities in deepwater exploration,” Woodside Global Exploration executive vice-president Phil Loader said.

Kyaw Htike Soe



Palethwe paddy produces 190 baskets per acre in Kawa Tsp

KAWA, 26 March — A ceremony to harvest a model plot of Palethwe hybrid paddy on a 100-acre farm was held in Khamonkangyi Village, Kawa Township, Bago Region, on 24 March.

Head of Bago Region Department of Agriculture U Hla Myint explained extended sown acreage of Palethwe paddy, production of quality paddy seeds of Palethwe species, and good agriculture patterns

for local farmers to boost production.

Staff of the Department of Agriculture, Department of Settlement and Land Records Department and Agricultural Mechanization Department participated in the paddy harvesting ceremony. After the process, the model plot produced 190 baskets of paddy per acre.

Shwe Phone Aung (Bago)



REGIONAL

India to hold India-Africa Summit in October

NEW DELHI, 26 March — India will hold a five-day “India-Africa Summit” later this year, where nearly 1,000 delegates will be invited, the Ministry of External Affairs has said.

The summit will begin on 26 October, and leaders from some 54 countries are expected to attend, the External Affairs Ministry officials said on Wednesday evening.

The meeting between the heads of state and government will take place on 29 October and bilateral meetings are being scheduled on 30 October, Navtej Sarna, secretary (West) of the ministry, told the media.

The summit was earlier slated for December last year, but had to be canceled due to Ebola outbreak in Africa.—*Xinhua*

China, ASEAN to meet on DOC implementation

BEIJING, 26 March — China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will meet in Yangon, Myanmar, to discuss the implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in late March.

The meeting, slated for 30 to 31 March, is the 13th joint working group meeting on the implementation of the DOC between China and the ASEAN, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said.

China attaches great importance to the meeting and will exchange views with other participants on fully and effectively implementing the DOC, promoting maritime practical cooperation and the consultation on compilation of the Code of Conduct (COC), she said.

Officials and experts will also meet on navigation safety and joint search and rescue, she said.

Xinhua

Four suspected rebels dead after military raid in Thai south

BANGKOK, 26 March — Thai police killed four suspected Muslim separatists after raiding the hideout of an insurgent group operating in Thailand's restive south, police said on Thursday. Thailand is predominantly Buddhist but parts of the south are majority Muslim. A low-level insurgency in the region has claimed more than 6,000 lives since January 2004 when resistance to Buddhist rule resurged violently.

In the latest violence, police said they tracked down through telephone signals the location of members of the Runda Kumpulan Kecil (RKK) group, a Muslim insurgent group that operates in the Thai south, Police Lieutenant Somphon

Piendee, told *Reuters*.

The suspected rebels opened fire when police arrived at the scene, said Somphon. Authorities fired back killing four members of the group.

Somphon said a further 22 members of the group were caught and are being held in police custody. Four others escaped.

Thailand's military government said last year that peace in the Muslim-dominated south was an urgent national priority but despite that pledge talks aimed at ending the insurgency have stalled.

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, who seized power in a bloodless coup in May, promised peace within a year.



His government has yet to revive talks with Muslim separatist groups.

Reuters

Thai security personnel inspect the site of a firefight between security forces and suspected insurgents in Pattani Province, south of Bangkok on 26 March, 2015.—REUTERS

China does not seek dominant role in AIIB

BEIJING, 26 March — Unlike the United States with its preponderant presence in existing global lending bodies, China, despite its status as the initiator of the Asian Investment Bank (AIIB), does not seek a dominant role in the institution's decision-making. Following a report by the *Wall Street Journal* that said China has proposed to forgo veto power at the AIIB to attract more countries to join the new bank, a senior Chinese finance official and a foreign ministry spokesperson both said it is a false proposition to say

China seeks or relinquish veto power.

As an inclusive multi-lateral development bank, the AIIB has been keeping its gate open for all members of the international community, and a growing membership means that the stakes held by each member will be diluted.

The recent wave of enthusiasm among Western countries to join the Beijing-headquartered bank is by no means the result of certain “lure” offered by China but out of the realization that the new bank has a bright future: given factors such as

China's rich experience in infrastructure development, the enormous gap in fund needed to break the infrastructure bottleneck in Asia as well as Asia's growing gravity in the global economy.

The upbeat mood surrounding the China-initiated bank is also partially due to the frustration over long-awaited reforms in existing global lenders such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The distribution of voting power in these organizations, which used to be the fundamental pillars of the Breton

Woods System, has long been considered outdated as it no longer reflects the reality of the global economic landscape.

Since the onset of the 2008 financial crisis, the World Bank and the IMF have embarked on reforms to give emerging economies a larger say, but apparently such efforts is not to the liking of the United States, which wields de facto veto power in both organizations.

A proposal by the IMF in 2010 to increase quotas for under-presented members could not be implemented as of today, thanks

to failure of the US Congress to ratify the draft.

While the AIIB will be a complement rather than a competition for existing development banks, the emergence of the institution will be a great incentive for reforms at the World Bank and the IMF.

Instead of carping on the fledgling AIIB, it is better for Uncle Sam to focus on promoting reforms in the World Bank and the IMF, otherwise it would not take long before he finds himself in a big playhouse but with few playmates.

Xinhua

Vietnam industrial zone accident kills 14, 30 injured

HANOI, 26 March — Vietnamese soldiers and

police joined a rescue mission on Thursday searching

for survivors after a huge scaffolding collapsed, kill-

ing 14 workers and injuring 30 in central Vietnam, the government and state television said.

Two of the dead workers are still trapped under the rubble of the structure that collapsed on Wednesday night in the Vung Ang economic zone of Ha Tinh Province. All the victims are Vietnamese, state-run Vietnam Television (VTV) said.

Rescuers were working urgently to help the victims, Deputy Chairman Dang Quoc Khanh of the provincial People's Committee said in the broadcast.

Many of the injured were in hospital in critical condition, VTV said. It showed pictures of rescue workers digging through the rubble of the collapsed steel structure.

The accident happened at a seaport project that is

part of a complex owned by Taiwan's Formosa group. The workers are from a Vietnamese sub-contractor hired by Samsung C&T Corp (000830.KS), a unit of South Korea's Samsung Group, the state-run *Thanh Nien newspaper* said.

“At the construction site, there were thousands of workers, so the number of workers in distress is not yet accurately calculated,” Pham Tran De, deputy head of the zone's management board told the online *VnExpress newspaper*.

The incident was the latest setback for the Vung Ang economic zone, which was hit by rioting and arson attacks on facilities employing Chinese workers last year, as anti-China sentiment erupted in the wake of a maritime territorial row.

Reuters



Rescuers and workers search for victims at a collapsed construction site in Ha Tinh Province, south of Hanoi on 25 March, 2015.—REUTERS

Ceremony to commemorate victims of slavery held in New York



Sam Kutesa (standing), president of the United Nations General Assembly, addresses a ceremony at the UN headquarters in New York on 25 March, 2015, to unveil a memorial, the Ark of Return, to the victims of slavery and the Transatlantic slave trade. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon (4th from L) is seen in the back. — KYODO NEWS

Chinese police raid office of prominent NGO: co-founder

BEIJING, 26 March — Chinese police officers raided the office of a prominent non-governmental organization in Beijing this week, seizing laptops and details of contacts, its co-founder said on Thursday, the latest target of China's crackdown on dissent.

Lu Jun, co-founder of Yirenping, an anti-discrimination NGO, said about 20 police officers broke into its offices in the early hours of Tuesday, taking away financial receipts, project contacts and several computers and laptops.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has overseen a broad crackdown on the country's rights community since he took office in 2013, in what some groups call the worst suppression of dissent in two decades.

Lu said before the search, police had taken his colleague, a man surnamed Cao, into custody for several hours and entered the office

with Cao. Cao had been involved in a project on public interest law and has since fled Beijing, according to Lu. Lu said he believed the raid was linked to his calls for the release of five women activists, who were detained just over two weeks ago, apparently for planning to demonstrate against sexual harassment on public transport.

"I feel the message is that the police want to suppress my calls for solidarity with these women rights activists," Lu said in a telephone interview from New York, where he is a visiting scholar. "The second signal is that striking down NGOs is a priority."

A police officer in the Yangfangdian District, which administers the area where Yirenping is located, was unable to comment when asked to confirm the raid.

"Authorities have become increasingly con-

cerned with foreign funding," Maya Wang of New York-based Human Rights Watch said in emailed comment to *Reuters*, pointing to the passages devoted to foreign funding in a slew of new security laws.

Police have denied medication to Wu Rongrong, one of the detained women activists suffering from a chronic liver disease, after determining that she does not need it, said her lawyer, Wang Fei.

"Before, she was detained, she was always taking the medication for anti-viral treatment," Wang said. "From what I've seen, her physical condition is poor and her face looks jaundiced."

The Haidian detention centre, where Wu is being held, declined to comment.

Foreign NGOs in China have told *Reuters* they are bracing for a crackdown as the government prepares to pass a new law to regulate their activities.— *Reuters*

N Korea warns against US missile defence system in S Korea

BEIJING, 26 March— North Korea said on Thursday the possible deployment of an advanced anti-ballistic missile system in South Korea by the United States has heightened regional tensions, calling on Washington to stop creating a new Cold War environment.

A Foreign Ministry statement, carried by the official *Korean Central*

News Agency, claimed that the US plan is aimed at preparing for a pre-emptive strike at the country and creating favourable conditions for containing China and Russia.

The United States is considering introducing the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system in South Korea to counter North Korea's nuclear and missile threats.

"In case THAAD is deployed...that will establish a new Cold War structure in Northeast Asia and the (Korean) Peninsula will be again exposed to the danger of being reduced to the theatre of a war of big powers," an unnamed spokesman of the ministry said.

China and Russia have already expressed their concerns over the defence

system's possible deployment.

South Korea's relations with China, its largest trading partner, have been getting closer. But the possible deployment has recently caused diplomatic friction between South Korea and China, with Seoul facing a delicate balancing act between Beijing and Washington, its key security ally.— *Kyodo News*

Military helicopter falls in Central Vietnam, at least three soldiers injured

HO CHI MINH CITY, 26 March — At least three Vietnamese soldiers were injured on Thursday when a military helicopter fell down over the runway on Phu Quy island, central Binh Thuan Province, about 1,150 south

of capital Hanoi.

About 9 am local time on Thursday, a MI-8 helicopter fell down from the height of 9-10 metres over the runway located in the military zone on Phu Quy island, causing the injury

of three soldiers. They were immediately transported to hospital, local *VNExpress* quoted Ta Minh Nhat, deputy chairman of Phu Quy district, as saying.

There are eight people aboard the helicopter when

the accident occurred, said the district official, adding that the helicopter's tail was broken and blew 30 metres away, while debris broke glass windows and walls of houses nearby.

Xinhua

Philippines pushes for single e-commerce platform within ASEAN

MANILA, 26 March — The Philippine Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said on Thursday that it will propose a single e-commerce platform for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) within the ASEAN in the upcoming Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) ministerial meeting to be held in Boracay Island.

The ministerial meeting

dubbed as "APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade" to be held in May will discuss issues affecting MSMEs and the way they do business across the ASEAN.

"We already have ideas we can agree on identifying e-commerce platform to be used by MSMEs across APEC economies," DTI secretary Gregory L Domingo said.

The proposed platform

outlines customs rules and procedures and regulations for the rules of origin (ROO).

"MSMEs are having a hard time exporting. A single platform wherein they can book their sales and with links to logistics will boost MSME trade across the region," said Domingo.

The Philippines will suggest an MSME with shipments of 2,000 US dollars or less be exempt from

the ROO, since ROO rules apply to countries of regions with existing free trade agreements.

Domingo pointed out that many of the MSMEs see the influx of goods and services in their own markets, but find it very difficult to take advantage of the free trade agreements because of the very cumbersome rules and procedures.

Xinhua

Official campaigning for nationwide local polls kicks off



Supporters of a candidate in the upcoming Oita gubernatorial election raise their fists in a rally in the city of Oita, southwestern Japan, on 26 March, 2015, the day official campaigning for the election started.

KYODO NEWS

TOKYO, 26 March — Official campaigning for local elections started on Thursday, with ruling and opposition parties set to vie for seats in nearly 1,000 polls across Japan to choose governors, mayors and local assembly members.

Revitalization of regional economies amid a falling population is likely to come to the forefront of campaign issues in the local elections, which are held simultaneously every four years with the aim to cut election costs and improve voting rates.

While Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Liberal Democratic Party won a

landslide victory in the House of Representatives election in December, a poor performance in the local elections would be a blow to the government, which has already seen ruling party-backed candidates defeated in a series of gubernatorial elections held in January and earlier.

On Thursday, official campaigning for gubernatorial elections started in 10 prefectures ahead of voting on 12 April. The LDP and the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan will face off in two prefectures — Hokkaido and Oita.

In the northernmost prefecture of Hokkaido, incumbent Gov Harumi Takahashi is seeking a fourth term, backed by the LDP and its junior coalition ally, the Komeito party. She will be challenged by Noriyuki Sato, a former television anchor who has won the support of the DPJ and other opposition parties.

Voting for mayors in five ordinance-designated major cities and for assembly members in about 60 prefectures and major cities will also be held on 12 April.

The next round of voting for over 900 local elections will be held on 26 April.— *Kyodo News*

US wants detailed deal with Iran but hints at flexibility

LAUSANNE, (Switzerland), 26 March — The United States wants major powers to reach a detailed political understanding with Iran by 31 March to clear the path for a long-term nuclear accord, a senior US official said, while hinting that Washington could be flexible on its format.

Speaking to reporters travelling with Secretary of State John Kerry to a new round of talks in the Swiss city of Lausanne, the senior State Department official added that Washington would not rush to complete an agreement just because there was a deadline.

The official said any framework agreement must address key aspects of a future nuclear deal with Tehran that Iran and the six aim to conclude by 30 June.

“Any political understanding needs to address in some way all of the elements of a final agreement,” the official said late on Wednesday.

“We do not know what form this will take,” the official said. “We have always said it needs to have specifics. We will need to communicate as many specifics as possible in some form or fashion (to the public and US Congress).”

Those elements include the different pathways to a nuclear weapon, ensuring that it would take Iran at least one year to produce enough high enriched uranium for a single bomb, research and



US Secretary of State John Kerry (L) and Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif pose for a photograph before resuming talks over Iran's nuclear programme in Lausanne on 16 March, 2015.

REUTERS

development into advanced centrifuges, transparency measures and monitoring, and sanctions relief for Iran.

This is a problem for Iran, whose supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is vehemently opposed to the idea of a two-step process — a written framework accord by end-March and a full deal by 30 June. Iranian officials say they fear the former would curtail Tehran's negotiating space for a final deal.

Iranian officials have suggested they could accept some kind of statement or political declaration in Lausanne, as opposed to a formal written agreement. The disadvantage of that, Western officials say, is all sides could spin it to their liking.

Iran denies Western allegations it is seeking the capability to procure atomic weapons.

With the Repub-

lican-led US Congress threatening to vote on new sanctions against Iran if there is no agreement this month, the administration of President Barack Obama is pushing hard to secure some kind of deal. Obama has vowed to veto any new US sanctions moves. France has said the real deadline was 30 June and there was little point in rushing to conclude something at any cost by 31 March. The US official, playing down any suggestions of any ongoing disputes with France, made clear Washington agreed.

“That does not mean that we will rush to get a bad deal because there's a deadline,” the official said. “We won't.”

The Lausanne talks broke off last week due to disagreements between Washington and France, Western officials said.

But the main obstacle in

the talks, Western officials say, remains Iran's refusal to compromise on sanctions, research and development and other issues.

It will not be clear if Iran is now ready to compromise until Kerry meets Zarif on Thursday, the US official said. If enough progress is made this week, other foreign ministers the six power group may join.

The goal of the talks, underway for nearly 18 months, is to hammer out an accord under which Iran would halt sensitive nuclear work for at least a decade in exchange for lifting sanctions, thus ending Iran's 12-year nuclear standoff with the West. Even if there is a deal in the coming days, the US official said much work will remain between now and the end of June to work out the details. And there was no guarantee the talks would not collapse later.

The six powers and Iran have twice extended talks on a long term accord after missing deadlines in the wake of an interim agreement struck in 2013. It remains unclear what Washington will do if the two sides fail to get a framework agreement in the coming days.

“If we get to 31 March and don't have a political understanding, we will have to evaluate where we are,” the US official said. “We will have to look at what we think the path forward is and we will make decisions based on that.”—Reuters

Co-pilot appears to have crashed Germanwings plane deliberately — French prosecutor

PARIS / SEYNE-LES-ALPES, 26 March — The co-pilot of the Germanwings airliner that crashed in the French Alps killing all 150 people aboard appears to have brought the A320 Airbus down deliberately, the Marseille prosecutor said on Thursday.

German Andreas Lubitz, 28, left in sole control of the Airbus A320 after the captain left the cockpit, refused to re-open the door and operated a control that sent the plane into its final, fatal descent, the prosecutor told a news conference.

The French prosecutor said Lubitz was not known as a terrorist and there were no grounds to consider the crash as a terrorist incident. Recordings suggested passengers' screams began just before the final impact, he said. Earlier, a German state prosecutor had said that just one of the two pilots of the

Germanwings airliner was in the cockpit at the time it went down.

The statements came after the *New York Times* reported that “black box” recordings showed one of the pilots had left the cockpit and could not get back in before the plane crashed.

“One was in the cockpit and the other wasn't,” Christoph Kumpa at the prosecutors' office in Dusseldorf told *Reuters* by telephone, adding that the information came from investigators in France.

Investigators were still studying voice recordings from one of the “black boxes” on Thursday while the search continued for a second in the ravine where the plane crashed, 100 km (65 miles) from Nice.

The recordings did not make clear why the pilot left the cockpit or why he could not regain entry as the plane steadily descended toward a mountain range in a remote area of the French Alps on Tuesday.

“The guy outside is knocking lightly on the door and there is no answer,” an investigator described only as a senior French military official told the *New York Times*, citing the recordings. “And then he hits the door stronger and no answer. There is never an answer.”

“You can hear he is trying to smash the door down,” the investigator added.—Reuters



A black box voice recorder from the German Airbus operated by Lufthansa's Germanwings budget Airbus A320 crash is seen in this photo released on 25 March, 2015 by the BEA, France's Bureau d'Enquetes et d'Analyses.—REUTERS

Costa Rica fires ambassador in Venezuela after vocal support of Maduro

SAN JOSE, 26 March — Costa Rica fired its ambassador in Venezuela after the diplomat gave an interview in which he defended the Venezuelan government, the Central American country said on Wednesday.

Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solis had said that the government did not share the opinion of ambassador Federico Picado, whose interview with local newspaper *La Nacion* was published last weekend.

“The content of the statements and the possibility of giving an interview was not previously

discussed,” as is the rule, Costa Rican Foreign Minister Manuel Gonzalez said in a news conference.

In the interview, Picado, who had been in Caracas for two months, asserted that a shortage of basic products was due to “political factors” and “big business” trying to destabilize the country and hurt the government's credibility.

Picado also defended the decree powers that Venezuelan's parliament granted Maduro after US President Barack Obama declared Venezuela a threat to US national security earlier this month.

Reuters

Ex-US war prisoner Bowe Bergdahl charged with desertion, misbehaviour

FORT BRAGG, (NC), 26 March — US Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, a former Taliban prisoner in Afghanistan, was formally charged on Wednesday with desertion and misbehaviour before the enemy, and could be sentenced to life in prison if convicted of the most serious count, the Army said.

Bergdahl's attorney, Eugene Fidell of Yale Law School, said the Army had scheduled an Article 32 investigation hearing on 22 April to determine whether there was sufficient evidence to proceed with a court-martial.

The Army said the investigation, similar to a civilian grand jury proceeding, would take place at Fort Sam Houston in

San Antonio.

Bergdahl, 28, was released from Taliban custody last summer in a controversial prisoner swap that saw five Taliban prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, transferred to Qatar, where they were required to remain for a year.

Bergdahl disappeared on 30 June, 2009, from Combat Outpost Mest-Lalak in Paktika Province in eastern Afghanistan and was subsequently captured. He disappeared from the outpost early one morning after doing guard duty, leaving behind his gun, ammunition and body armour.

An initial wave of euphoria over Bergdahl's release was followed by a backlash among US



US Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl is pictured in this undated handout photo provided by the US Army and received by Reuters on 31 May, 2014.

REUTERS

lawmakers angry because they were not given 30 days' notice before the transfer of the Guantanamo prisoners, as required by law.

Some of Bergdahl's former Army comrades also came forward and said they believed he deserted his post.

Former Army Sergeant Evan Buetow, who served with Bergdahl, said on Wednesday that the former war prisoner had been treated fairly by the Army and needed “to answer for what he did.”

“He put all of our lives in danger,” Buetow said. “Men from our company died, when I don't believe they would have if he wouldn't have left.”

Republican lawmakers also backed the Army's decision to move ahead with the charges. Senator John McCain, head of the Senate Armed Services Committee and himself a Vietnam War prisoner, said it was an “important step” towards determining Bergdahl's accountability.

Reuters

PERSPECTIVES

Friday, 27 March, 2015

Education the most worthwhile investment

By Myint Win Thein

According to sociologists, the family is the basic unit of a society. It is with the family, therefore, that such scholars begin to analyze a society.

Being aware that education is the best weapons to counter all social woes, families spend a lot on schooling their children, but the outlay

obviously depends on their income level.

Rich families in Myanmar send their children to international schools affiliated with overseas educational institutions, spending at least US \$10,000 per year for primary school students, excluding other costs like allowances, fees for private teachers and so on. The richer the families, the more money they can spend on the education.

Middle class families also spend a large proportion of their incomes on education of their children, since they deem schooling as the only path to a higher social status. Although school fees for public schools are not very high, there are many others expenditures for education such as private tuition fees and school buses.

Some poor families send their children to school and urge them to try hard, knowing education is the only legacy they can give. These families work hard and save in order to spend as

much as they can on their children's education.

Unfortunately, some poor families take their children out of school because they cannot afford education. There have many such cases in the past, and we can see the impact of this disadvantage. The value of education is apparent, and families should not hesitate to spend what they can on schooling their children.

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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.

The Conquering Spirit

Kyi Mun

Life is not a bed of roses, it is said. It is also said that life is not like going for a picnic, nor is it like embroidering. It is commonly assumed that life is a fight; life is a struggle; or life is a journey. Anyway, life is a long process of unity and struggle of opposites. So, life is made up of both good and bad things, pain and pleasure, gain and loss, joy and sorrow, likes and dislikes, etc. Since life is impermanent and transient and very vulnerable, we have got to have fortitude, resilience, endurance and equanimity, and have the conquering spirit deep down in our being. Ever surrounded by the eight winds, we have got to fortify ourselves with an indomitable spirit. So, let us indulge ourselves in exploring the meanings of the Conquering Spirit as follows:

- **C for Courage** &
- **O for Objective** • **S for Strategy**
- **N for Newness of Mind** • **P for Purpose**
- **Q for Quality of Character** • **I for Integrity**
- **U for Unique Spirit** • **R for Revolutionary**

- **E for Endeavour** • **I for Initiative**
- **R for Resourcefulness** • **T for Tough-mindedness**

- **I for Inspiration**
- **N for Never Giving Up**
- **G for Going all-out for Victory**

* **COURAGE**

Courage means : The ability to do something dangerous, or to face pain or opposition, without showing fear. Synonyms are : Bravery

Boldness, Fearlessness, Audacity, Temerity, Indomitability etc. In the Bible it is said; "Be bold and mighty forces will come to your aid; and **"Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed."** It is commonly said that **"If courage is lost, all is lost."** It is also said that cowards die many times. Courage is usually allied with dignity, honor and selflessness.

* **OBJECTIVE**

Objective means : Something that you are trying to achieve. Synonym is goal. In considering : **"How to get what you want,"** how to get is the strategy and what you want is the objective. So, we have got to unambiguously and definitely know what we want most in our life, in our job, and in our relationships. In going on a journey, you must have a definite destination. You must know where you are going and where you want to arrive at.

* **NEWNESS OF MIND**

To have a conquering spirit in our lives, we have got to be transformed by the renewal of our mind. We must dare to walk in newness of mind. We must be always strong-minded with fervor, determination and resolute steadfastness.

* **QUALITY OF CHARACTER**

Character is what you are. So, your character will be determined by the qualities of your :

- Health & Strength
- Vision & Strategy
- Passion & Values

- Selflessness & Service
- Competence & Commitment

* **UNIQUE SPIRIT**

To have a conquering spirit, you have got to have a very strong spirit, stamina, staying power, serenity and selflessness. You must have the spirit of : **"My head is bloody but unbowed; I'm the master of my fate, and I'm the captain of my soul."**

* **ENDEAVOUR**

It is said that : **"Actions are ours : consequences belong to heaven."** It is also said that **"we reap what we sow"**. And a Jewish proverb says : **"The wisdom of life is to endure what we must and to change what we can."** The Prince Gautama Siddhattha had proclaimed :

"Let there be all skins,
Let there be all bones,
Let there be all sinews,
Let my life be forfeited,
I'll not rise until
I've attained full enlightenment."

It is said that one of the implied meanings of effort or endeavor is courage.

* **RESOURCEFULNESS**

Man, mind, morale, money, material, method and machine are resources for building business, wealth and success. If we wisely use these resources most effectively, we'll be able to be the movers and shakers for peace, progress, and prosperity.

* **INSPIRATION**

Inspiration, here, means : Encouragement or motivation that excites and enhances desire, enthusiasm, fervor, perseverance and indomitable spirit to have a sustainable conquering spirit. We have got to have hands-on, mind-on and heart-on inspiration, as the saying goes : **"motivators must be motivated and trainers must be trained."** Napoleon Bonaparte had said **"Morale is to material as 3 is to 1."**

* **NEVER GIVING UP**

A person with a conquering spirit will :

**"Never give up,
Never give in,
Stand up to it, and
Fight it through to victory"**

It is said that : "A quitter never wins, and a winner never quits."

* **GOING ALL-OUT FOR VICTORY**

To be victorious and triumphant, we've got, with all our mind, with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our strengths to :

- Drive
- Strive
- Thrive
- Arrive
- Revive

* **STRATEGY**

Strategy means : A Plan of Action with a definite objective in mind and backed up by adequate, comprehensive resources. It is a combination of a winning vision and meticulous planning and preparations for securing decisive victory. A strategy should be based on the Eight Principles of :

- Clear-cut, definite objective
- Concentration
- Offensive
- Cooperation

- Economy of Force
- Security
- Surprise
- Mobility

* **PURPOSE**

- Purpose means** : (1) The intention, aim or function of something; the thing that something is supposed to achieve.
(2) The ability to plan something and work successfully to achieve it. Synonym is mission, the meaning of which is :

Reason for being. For example, the reason for being a teacher is to teach; and the reason for being a doctor is to heal and cure disease of some sort. So, the purpose of a man of conquering spirit is to secure victory in whatever is aimed at and executed.

* **INTEGRITY**

- Integrity means** : (1) The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles;
(2) The state of being whole and not divided.

People with the conquering spirit cannot but seamlessly be integrated with personal uprightness, dignity, honor and self-respect.

* **REVOLUTIONARY**

- Revolutionary means** : (1) Involving a great or complete change : a revolutionary idea : a time of rapid and revolutionary change.
(2) A person who starts or supports a revolution. In

making a radical, revolutionary transformation of a person's life or a nation's destiny, the conquering spirit is indispensable. A revolutionary change must be effected with the spirit of : **"Do or die"; and "Swim or sink."** A catalyst of radical change must have : **The resolute determination and capability to turn heaven and earth upside down !**

* **INITIATIVE**

- Initiative means** : (1) The ability to decide and act on your own without waiting for somebody to tell you what to do.
(2) The power or opportunity to act and gain an advantage before other people do.

The conquering spirit flies with the two wings of resourcefulness and initiative.

* **TOUGH-MINDEDNESS**

A Tough-minded person with a conquering spirit deals with problems and situations in a determined way without being influenced by emotions.

* **CONCLUSION**

Let's strive for health, happiness, harmony and heaven-ward ascendancy over peace, progress and prosperity with a conquering spirit !

U Kyi Mun residing in Yangon is a consultant of NAING Group Capital Co.,Ltd.

MNA's Mandalay branch changes flight schedules as of 1 April



MANDALAY, 26 March — The Mandalay Branch of Myanmar National Airlines will change flight schedules as of 1 April for convenience of passengers during the Maha Thingyan Festival.

Air tickets are available at the department through online service.

According to the new flight schedules, MNA will fly to Yangon from Mandalay five days a week, with daily flights to Myitkyina, two days a week to Bhamo, three days to Homalin, three days each

to Kengtung, Hkamti and Kalay, four days to Tachilek and two days to Lashio.

“MNA will fly Mandalay-Yangon flight by E-190 Embraer jet on Monday, Tuesday and Friday mornings. Flight ticket rates are posted through online for all routes,” the manager of Mandalay Branch.

At present, tickets are sold at K52,000 per passenger from Mandalay to Yangon, K57,000 to Bhamo, K71,000 to Homalin, K76,000 to Kengtung, K66,000 to

Hkamti, K58,000 to Kalay, K58,000 to Myitkyina, K82,000 to Tachilek and K51,000 to Lashio.

Passengers may contact the Mandalay Branch of MNA on 02-36221 and 02-36222 and www.flymna.com.

Min Htet Aung
(Mandalay Sub-printing House)

Self-reliant electricity benefits 300 houses



A laterite road was commissioned into service in Nyaunglebin Township, Bago Region, built by Metal Dragon Co., Ltd. with K130 million fund of the Department of Rural Development in 2014-15 FY, on Thursday. Zigongyi-Kyachaung-Zeebyukhin-Kyaban rural road is 2.5 miles long and 10 feet wide.—NAY LIN (NYAUNGLEBIN)

NYAUNGLEBIN, 26 March — A ceremony to launch supply of electricity on a self-reliant basis was held in Ale Village in Nyaunglebin Township, Bago Region, on 25 March.

Township authorities and well-wishers cut the ribbon to switch on the electrification.

Well-wishers U Myo Tun Oo, sister Daw Lei Lei Maw and family donated K13 million together with other well-wishers.

A 100KV transformer installed with the cash donation of well-wishers benefits 300 houses in the village.

Nay Lin
(Reporter)

Danger of narcotic drugs disseminated to local residents

KAYAN, 26 March — Talks on crime reduction and prevention of drug abuse during the Maha Thingyan festival period were given at the hall in Ward 2, Kayan, Yangon, on 24 March.

Commander of Township Police Force Police Major Kyee Lwin gave talks on crime prevention, while Police Captain Thein Lwin of Anti-drug

Squad No 43 spoke of the disadvantages of narcotic drugs and penalty for drug possession. Township Medical Officer Dr Saw Thurein spoke about diseases related to drug abuse.

The talks were also attended by local authorities, members of social organizations, owners of medicine shop and youths.

Ko Htet



Police officer gives talks on danger of narcotic drugs to be combated and crime reduction in MahaThingyan festival period to local residents.

Police target gamblers in crackdown

MANDALAY, 26 March — Local authorities have taken action in 51 cases this year under the gambling law up to 19 March in Mandalay Region, according to the Mandalay Region Hluttaw this week.

Police and local au-

thorities joined hands in arresting gamblers in 434 cases in 2014.

Talks on crime reduction were given to over 70,000 people in 2014 and more than 12,000 people so far this year.

Aung Ye Thwin

Ships stranded upstream of Myinmu due to low water level

MYINMU, 26 March — Cargo boats and ferries for tourists have become stranded between Ywathit village in Ngazun Town-

ship and Nyaungyin village in Myinmu Township due to low water levels in the Ayeyawady River.

Stranded boats, which

risk damage while in shallow water, have been waiting for the water level to rise in order to continue their trips. The average

water level of the Ayeyawady River has been dropping year by year since 2010.

Kyemon (624)



Vessels small and large stranded in Ayeyawady River during summer between Ywathit village in Ngazun Township and Nyaungyin village in Myinmu Township, Mandalay Region.

Saudi Arabia, allies launch air strikes in Yemen against Houthi fighters



People search for survivors under the rubble of houses destroyed by an air strike near Sanaa Airport on 26 March, 2015.—REUTERS

SANAA, 26 March — Saudi Arabia and Gulf region allies launched military operations including air strikes in Yemen on

Thursday, officials said, to counter Iran-allied forces besieging the southern city of Aden where the US-backed Yemeni president

had taken refuge.

Gulf broadcaster Al-Arabiya TV reported that the kingdom was contributing as many as 150,000

troops and 100 warplanes to the operations. Egypt, Jordan, Sudan and Pakistan were ready to take part in a ground offensive in Yemen, it said.

There was no immediate confirmation of those figures from Riyadh. Al-Arabiya also said the United Arab Emirates was sending 30 warplanes to join the operation, along with 15 each from Bahrain and Kuwait, 10 from Qatar, six each from Jordan and Morocco and three from Sudan.

Yemen's slide towards civil war has made it a crucial front in mostly Sunni Saudi Arabia's rivalry with Shi'ite Iran, which Riyadh accuses of stirring up sectarian strife throughout the region and in Yemen with its support for the Houthis.

The crisis now risks spiralling into a proxy war with Iran backing the Houthis, and Saudi Arabia and the other regional Sunni Muslim monarchies supporting Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. A widening Yemen conflict could also pose risks for global oil supplies, and Brent crude oil prices shot up nearly 6 percent soon after the operation began.

Unidentified warplanes had earlier launched air strikes on the main airport in the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, and its al Dulaimi military airbase, residents said.

A Reuters witness in the capital said four or five houses near Sanaa airport had been damaged. Rescue workers put the death toll

from the air strikes at 13, including a doctor who had been pulled from the rubble of a damaged clinic.

The air strikes came soon after Saudi Arabia's ambassador in Washington, Adel al-Jubeir, announced the operation.

"We will do whatever it takes in order to protect the legitimate government of Yemen from falling," Jubeir told a news conference in Washington.

State media showed footage of Saudi jets taking off from a darkened airfield. It also showed Interior Minister Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef and Defence Minister Mohammed bin Salman — two of the most powerful royals after King Salman — touring a command facility together.—Reuters

US-led coalition, Iraqis pound Islamic State in Tikrit

BAGHDAD / WASHINGTON, 26 March — US-led coalition warplanes launched their first airstrikes against Islamic State targets in Tikrit on Wednesday, officials said, coming off the sidelines to aid Iraqi forces fighting alongside Iran-backed Shi'ite militia on the ground. The decision to give air support to the Tikrit campaign pulls the United States into a messy battle that puts the US-led coalition, however reluctantly, on the same side of a fight as Iranian-backed militia in a bid to support Iraqi forces and opens a new chapter in the war. It also appeared to represent at least a tacit acknowledgement by Baghdad that such airpower was necessary to wrest control of the hometown of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein from Islamic State fighters, after its attempts to go it alone stalled.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said Iraqi forces would prevail with the support of "friendly" countries and the international coalition, including arms, training and aerial support.

"We have opened the last page of the operations," Abadi said on state television. Reuters first reported the US-led coalition's expected entry into the Tikrit campaign, disclosed by Iraq's president in an interview and later confirmed by a US official. It has been carrying out strikes elsewhere in Iraq since August.

A US defence official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said American

warplanes and aircraft from allied nations were striking up to a dozen targets in Tikrit, selected after coalition surveillance flights.

A second US official stressed that Washington in no way would coordinate with the Iranian-backed militia or seek to empower them in Iraq, even if those fighters might share the same narrow tactical objective as Iraqi forces in Tikrit.

In language that appeared to intentionally omit the Iranian-backed militia, Lieutenant General James Terry, the senior US commander of the US-led coalition, said the strikes were aimed at enabling "Iraqi forces under Iraqi command." "These strikes are intended to destroy ISIL strongholds with precision, thereby saving innocent Iraqi lives while minimizing collateral damage to infrastructure," Terry said, us-

ing an acronym for Islamic State. As coalition aircraft entered the fray, Iraqi forces pounded Islamic State positions in Tikrit, resuming an offensive that had stalled for almost two weeks. Two military officers in the city confirmed Iraqi forces were shelling the militants.

"Military operations in Tikrit started at around 9 pm local time by pounding Islamic State positions with artillery, mortars and Katyusha rockets," said provincial council member Hadi al-Khazraji.

More than 20,000 troops and allied Shi'ite paramilitary groups have been taking part in the offensive and have suffered heavy casualties on the edge of the city, 100 miles (160 km) north of Baghdad.

The Iraqi military had lobbied for US-led coalition air strikes while Shi'ite paramilitary forces opposed such

a move. One militia leader, Hadi al-Amiri, boasted three weeks ago that his men had been making advances for months without relying on US air power.

The mainly Sunni city of Tikrit was seized by Islamic State in the first days of their lightning strike across northern Iraq last June. If Iraq's Shi'ite led-government retakes Tikrit, it would be the first city wrested from the Sunni insurgents and would give Baghdad momentum for a pivotal stage of the campaign: recapturing Mosul, the largest city in the north. Still, the offensive raised thorny questions for American war planners, who have long sought to distance themselves from the acknowledged risks that heavy involvement of the Shi'ite militia on the ground could heighten sectarian tensions in the Sunni city of Tikrit.

Reuters



A military vehicle, belonging to Shi'ite fighters known as Hashid Shaabi, burns after being hit by Islamic State militants, during clashes in northern Tikrit on 11 March, 2015.—REUTERS

Distrust clouds vision of Kurdish peace in Turkey



A Kurdish couple poses for a picture as they arrive for a gathering celebrating Newroz in Diyarbakir on 21 March, 2015.—REUTERS

DIYARBAKIR, (Turkey), 26 March — Kurds applauded last weekend's call from their jailed rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan to end a 30-year armed struggle against Turkey but deep suspicions on both sides could shatter dreams of peace. Ocalan began talks with Ankara in 2012 to end a conflict which has killed 40,000 people and stunted development in NATO-member Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast, and impatience is growing in a peace process complicated by Kurds' involvement in fighting Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.

President Tayyip Erdogan, his attention focused on a June general election he hopes will pave the way for an executive presidency, is exerting pressure on Ocalan's Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) to disarm, declaring there is no longer a 'Kurdish problem' thanks to reforms under his rule.

For Kurds listening to Ocalan's message as they celebrated the 'Newroz' spring festival, dancing to

Kurdish songs and calling for his release, such talk from Erdogan is infuriating and shakes their belief in a peace process they feel is yet to yield results.

"The people are losing patience and if nothing happens in a few months, hope will be completely uprooted," said Habibe Altan, 59, whose village was one of thousands destroyed during the conflict. Her son later died fighting for the PKK.

"We are the heroes who have been crushed. So many sacrificed their lives. Such struggle must not go to waste," she said in the city of Diyarbakir, where supporters of the pro-Kurdish HDP opposition declare an utter lack of confidence in the president.

Such sentiment is frustrating for Erdogan, who has invested huge political capital in the process, pushing through cultural reforms aimed at improving the lot of Turkey's long-suppressed Kurds, roughly 20 percent of its 78 million population.—Reuters

BUSINESS & HEALTH

S Korea expands easy money for small firms by printing money

SEOUL, 26 March — South Korea's central bank on Thursday expanded its easy-money programme for small companies by printing money to stimulate the lack-luster economy.

Bank of Korea (BoK) increased its lending facility for small- and mid-sized enterprises to 20 trillion won (18 billion US dollars) from 15 trillion won, the bank said in a statement. The increase will take ef-

fect from 1 April.

The 5-trillion-won increase at a single cast was the largest since the facility was introduced in 1994 to encourage banks to lend money to small companies at a low rate.

The latest case was the 3-trillion-won expansion in the facility in July 2014.

The BOK increased the program by 2.5 trillion won during the 2008 global financial crisis.

The largest money-printing came as the prolonged weakness of corporate investment may dent the economy's long-term growth potential along with sluggish domestic demand.

Liquidity became ample after the BOK cut its policy rate to a fresh record low of 1.75 percent in March, but small companies suffered from lack of funds for facility

investment as banks are reluctant to lend money to small firms, which have lower credit ratings and collateral capabilities than large corporations.

Under the programme, the BOK lends money within the predetermined ceiling at a rate of 0.5-1.0 percent to banks, which in turn lend those funds to small companies at a relatively low rate.

Xinhua

Asia shares skid; oil climbs on Yemen escalation

SYDNEY, 26 March — Asian shares slipped on Thursday as tech-driven losses on Wall Street and escalating tensions in the Middle East provided a tailwind for oil prices and the safe haven yen.

Risk appetite took a knock from news Saudi Arabia and its Gulf Arab allies had launched air strikes in Yemen against Houthi fighters who have tightened their grip on the southern city of Aden.

The potential threat to oil supplies from the Gulf was enough to boost US crude CLC1 \$1.81 to \$51.02 (34 pounds), while Brent crude LCOc1 climbed \$1.56 to \$58.04 a barrel. The dollar broke down to a one-month trough on the yen around 118.94 JPY=, while yields on 10-year US Treasuries ticked down to 1.91 percent US10YT=RR.

A dearth of Asian data meant the path of least resistance was for stocks to fall and MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan .MIAPJ0000PUS eased 0.8 percent.

Australia's main index .AXJO shed 1.4 percent, while the Nikkei .N225 lost 1.6 percent in its biggest daily decline since mid-January. Chinese markets, as so often, went their own way and Shanghai .SSEC rose 0.5 percent.

On Wall Street, a drop

in technology stocks had knocked the Nasdaq IXIC down 2.37 percent for its biggest decline in nearly a year. The Dow DJI fell 1.62 percent, while the S&P 500 .SPX lost 1.46 percent.

Not helping was data showing spending on US durable goods fell for a sixth straight month in February, fresh evidence that economic growth slowed sharply early in the year, due in part to bad weather.

That was just the latest in a run of soft US indicators, a contrast to Europe where the news has been getting better.

JPMorgan noted that the gap between downward surprises on US data and upward surprises on EU figures was at its widest since February last year when bad weather was also having a chilling effect on US growth.

In currency markets, the dollar continued to drift after wild swings last week. Measured against a basket of currencies, the dollar eased 0.3 percent to 96.695 .DXY, just above a three-week trough of 96.387 set on Tuesday. Earlier this month, it scaled a 12-year peak of 100.390.

The euro EUR= was last at \$1.0989, well off a 12-year trough of \$1.0457 plumed two weeks ago.

Reuters

BOJ says structural factors hurting exports are fading



Trucks line up as containers are loaded at a port in Tokyo, on 19 Feb, 2015.—REUTERS

TOKYO, 26 March — Japan's exports struggled for the past two years due to lower demand for capital goods, a shift in production overseas and a loss of competitiveness, but these structural problems are fading away, the Bank of Japan said on Thursday.

As these structural

problems become less of a factor, exports are likely to expand and will get an added boost from the yen's recent weakening, the BOJ said in a report.

Strong exports are important because they keep factory workers employed, supporting consumer spending and the BOJ's

plan to achieve 2 percent inflation.

The yen JPY= has weakened 17 percent versus the dollar over the past two years, but exports have only started showing signs of life in the past few months. Japan tends to export a lot of capital goods, but these exports slumped after the 2008 financial crisis as companies across the globe cut back on capital expenditure, the report said.

A turnaround took longer than expected as some emerging market economies like China were saddled with excess production capacity, the BOJ said. However, capital expenditure globally has finally started rising again, which will increase demand for the heavy machinery and manufacturing equip-

ment that Japan produces, according to the report.

Japan's auto manufacturers have been shifting production abroad for several years to access faster-growing markets. This will continue, but at a slower pace as a weak yen encourages some companies to expand domestic production capacity, the report said.

Electronics makers, which had been losing market share to Asian rivals, are also becoming more competitive, which will help their exports recover, the report said.

Indexes measuring both price competitiveness and non-price competitiveness have bottomed out recently and are showing signs that they will now start rising, according to the report.—Reuters

Ebola is most deadly among babies, young children, study finds

LONDON, 26 March — The Ebola virus causing a devastating epidemic in West Africa is far more deadly in children than in adults, killing around 90 percent of babies under one who become infected, researchers said on Wednesday.

A study led by scientists at the World Health Organization (WHO) and Imperial College London found that, although infection rates are lower in children than adults, babies and toddlers who get the disease have a far slimmer chance of survival.

The virus, which causes hemorrhagic fever and induces internal and external bleeding, profuse vomiting and diarrhea, is killing 90 percent of infants in the current outbreak and around 80 percent of children aged between one to four years, the scientists found.

Older children are much more likely to survive the disease — it has killed 52 percent of those infected aged 10 to 15.

"These findings show that Ebola affects young children quite differently to adults, and it's especially important that we get them into treatment quickly," said Christl Donnelly, who co-led the study Imperial's Centre for Outbreak Analysis and Modelling.

"We also need to look at whether young children are getting treatment that's appropriate for their age."

The world's worst Ebola epidemic has killed more than 10,200 people in total in the three most affected countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone since March 2014 when it was first confirmed in the forest region of Guinea.

As of March 2015, almost 4,000 children under

16 have been affected by Ebola in the current epidemic.

Donnelly's team, whose work was pub-

lished in the *New England Journal of Medicine* on Wednesday, analyzed data on Ebola cases in children under 16 in Guinea, Libe-

ria and Sierra Leone.

As well as the higher risk of death in younger children, they found the incubation period — the time

between becoming infected and showing symptoms — was 6.9 days in children under a year, compared with 9.8 days in children aged 10 to 15.

There were also differences in symptoms, with children more likely than adults to have a fever when they first see a doctor but less likely to have difficulty breathing or swallowing, or to have pain in the abdomen, chest, joints or muscles.

"The very youngest of children — neonates — appear to have the worst outcomes from Ebola," said Robert Fowler, a co-researcher on the study from the University of Toronto.

He said the findings about how children suffer more show the need to "evolve more dedicated and specialized means of caring for them in an Ebola outbreak".—Reuters



Health workers take the temperature of a boy who came in contact with a woman who died of Ebola virus in the Paynesville neighbourhood of Monrovia, Liberia, on 21 Jan, 2015.—REUTERS

Police search Chongryon leader's home over illegal mushroom import

TOKYO, 26 March — Police on Thursday searched home of the head of the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, while arresting two South Korean men on suspicion of illegally importing “matsutake” mushrooms from North Korea.

The raid was conducted at six locations, including the Tokyo home of Ho Jong Man, chairman of the association called Chongryon, sending a shockwave among parties related to the body which has functioned as a de facto North Korean Embassy for many decades in the absence of diplomatic ties between Tokyo and Pyongyang.

Observers say the raid on the chairman's home could affect stalled bilateral talks on Pyongyang's abductions of Japanese nationals in the 1970s and 1980s.

Police arrested Lee Tong Chol, 61, president of a Tokyo-based trading house, and Yoshihiko Kin, 42, an employee of the company, on suspicion of illegally importing about 1,200 kilograms of matsutake mushrooms worth around 3 million yen through China to Japan in September 2010.

The mushrooms are believed to have been sold in Japan, mislabeled as Chinese-grown produce.

Japan has banned imports from North Korea since October 2006 as part of its economic sanctions imposed following Pyongyang's missile launch and its nuclear test.

Both suspects, residents of Japan, denied the allegation. Police are investigating the relationship between the suspects and Ho, who is a member of North Korea's top legislature.

After his home in a Tokyo residential area was raided in the early morning, Ho told reporters angrily he does not know the trading company. “The investigation is done unlawfully and this would lead to serious problems in the relationship” between North Korea and Japan, he said.

Police have been investigating the case by searching more than 10 locations, including the trading house and homes of the president and Ho's son last May.

The locations searched on Thursday include the Tokyo home of the pro-Pyongyang group's vice chairman.

Kyodo News

Heavy rains in northern Chile leave two dead, 20 missing



Locals gather near a flooded road after heavy rains in Copiapo city on 25 March, 2015.—REUTERS

SANTIAGO, 26 March — The heaviest rains to hit Chile's northern desert regions in 20 years have left at least two people dead and 24 missing as the torrential downpours caused mudslides and rivers to breach their banks, leaving thousands of residents stranded.

The government's ONEMI emergency office reported early Thursday that nearly 61,000 people were without power and almost 50,000 lacked drinking water in the usually arid re-

gions of Coquimbo, Atacama and Antofagasta.

Television images and photos on social media websites such as Twitter showed muddy rivers rushing through city streets, bridges washed away, flooded buildings, including a hospital, and even some towns that had been partially wiped out.

Onemi said that one person in Antofagasta was electrocuted on the street, while a mudslide killed another person in Atacama. Another 24 people were missing.

President Michelle Bachelet travelled to the affected areas to assess damages and help lead rescue efforts.

“We're doing everything humanly possible to get to where (those affected by the catastrophe) are as quickly as possible,” Bachelet said.

Interior Minister Rodrigo Penailillo said on Wednesday that a state of catastrophe had been declared and armed forces had been ordered to co-ordinate support operations and take con-

trol of public order in the worst affected area.

The “very intense” rains were expected to continue for around another eight hours yet, he said.

Residents of several towns were asked to evacuate. Many roads were cut off and evacuations could only be done via air transport, said Deputy Minister Mahmud Aleuy.

The normally arid north is home to many of Chile's largest copper mines, which account for about a third of global supply.

The torrential downpours in the world's biggest copper producer have forced companies to suspend operations at several of the area's major mines, putting an estimated 1.6 million tonnes of capacity of the red metal on hold.

Fibre optics had been cut across the northern region, which was affecting communications and could affect flights, said LATAM Airlines' Chilean arm LAN.

The sudden autumn downpour comes after an unusually hot, dry summer exacerbated an eight-year drought and left fields parched.

The dry conditions continue in the south of Chile, where firefighters are battling nearly 40 separate blazes that are burning some 14,000 hectares, according to Onemi.

The China Muerta reserve and the Conguillio national park, revered for its forests of thousand-year-old Araucarias, or monkey-puzzle trees, are among the areas affected by the flames.—Reuters

5-year restoration completed of Himeji Castle, a world heritage site

KOBE, 26 March — Restoration of the 17th century Himeji Castle, a UNESCO World Heritage site in western Japan, was completed on Thursday after five and a half years, marked by a government celebratory ceremony a day before its opening to the public.

Roof tiles were replaced and outer walls repainted during the extensive renovation that started in October 2009, enabling the castle, a national treasure also known as “shirasagi-jo” (Eglet Castle), to regain its elegant appearance with its white plastered earthen walls. The castle's main donjon — or central six-floor tower — was built in 1609. The castle — recognized by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as Japan's first World Cultural Heritage site in 1993 — was renovated for the first time since 1964, when the last major reconstruction ended.

“Himeji Castle stands today thanks to the passion of people living nearby,” Masanori Aoyagi, head of the Cultural Affairs Agen-



The renovated Himeji Castle, a world heritage site and national treasure, in the western Japan city of Himeji in Hyogo Prefecture, is shown in this 26 March, 2015 photo prior to its opening to the public from 26 March, 2015.—KYODO NEWS

cy, said at the ceremony. “The story of the major renovation work this time will be passed down to the next generation.”

The “Blue Impulse,” the Japanese Air Self-Defence Force's air aerobatic and precision flying team, flew over the castle to celebrate the restoration work comple-

tion. The Himeji city office expects 1.8 million visitors to the castle in fiscal 2015 starting on 1 April. The city also signed Thursday a pact with the operator of Germany's Neuschwanstein Castle to boost cooperation in promoting tourism between the two popular castles.

Kyodo News

Cold front to hit N China, rains to sweep south

BEIJING, 26 March — A cold front will hit north China, bringing floating dust and strong winds, while rains will sweep south China, over the next three days, the National Meteorological Centre (NMC) said on Thursday.

The country's weather observatory said a cold front will hit parts of Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, as well as areas of northwest and northeast China from Thursday to Saturday. These regions will see floating dust and strong winds, and even sandstorms. Temperatures will drop by four to six degrees Celsius.

The NMC added that haze will shroud areas along the Yellow and Huaihe rivers, as well as north China on Thursday and Friday.

Meanwhile, south China will experience rains and showers in the coming days. Rainfalls will hit parts of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, as well as Guizhou and Hunan provinces, according to the centre.—Xinhua

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CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV ROYAL 16 VOY NO (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ROYAL 16 VOY NO (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 27.3.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of S.P.W (3) where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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Consignees of cargo carried on MV ROYAL 88 VOY NO (04/15) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 27.3.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of S.P.W (5) where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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Consignees of cargo carried on MV E.R. TURKU VOY NO (068W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 27.3.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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MV ESM CREMONA VOY NO (120W)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ESM CREMONA VOY NO (120W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 27.3.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S ORINET OVERSEAS
CONTAINER LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV BEHSHAD VOY NO (1006E)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV BEHSHAD VOY NO (1006E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 27.3.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S LAND AND SEA
SHIPPING LINE

Phone No: 2301185

Scaffolding
collapse kills 3 in
S China

NANNING, 26 March — A scaffolding collapse on Thursday left three workers dead and ten others injured, including three in serious condition, in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

The city government of Nanning, capital of Guangxi, said 18 workers were on the scaffolding at a factory under construction when the accident happened at about 8:20 am. The injured have been sent to hospital.

The government is investigating the cause of the accident.—Xinhua

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF ENERGY
MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE
(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)
(5/2015)

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

Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Remark
(1)	IFB-171(14-15)	Spares for Doosan Natural Gas Engine Ex Daewoo Gen ; Set (53) Items	US\$
(2)	IFB-172(14-15) (GRS)	Metering System Up Grade at Kanbauk	US\$
(3)	IFB-173(14-15) (Daw Nyein)	24" Pipe Line System Up Grade at PLC	US\$
(4)	IFB-174(14-15)	4" Dia Steel Line Pipe (5000)M	US\$
(5)	IFB-175(14-15)	4" Dia Steel Line Pipe (9000) M (3 LPE Coated)	US\$

Tender Closing Date & Time - 27-4-2015, 16:30 Hr

Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 24th March, 2015 at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

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

National Media Release —
Block AD-5 and A-7

Public Notification - Initial Environmental Examination Studies for Offshore Exploration Activities

AECOM and E Guard Environmental Services, on behalf of Woodside Energy (Myanmar) Pte Ltd, are currently undertaking an Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) study and associated stakeholder consultation for exploration activities in two offshore blocks (Blocks AD-5 and A-7) in the Rakhine Basin, Ayeyawady Region, For further information on the proposed activities and opportunities for public consultation, please visit www.woodside.com.au or contact Mr. Daniel Clery at daniel.clery@woodside.com.au or on 01 514379.

National Media Release —
Block A-6

Public Notification - Initial Environmental Examination Studies for Offshore Exploration Activities

AECOM and E Guard Environmental Services, on behalf of Woodside Energy (Myanmar) Pte Ltd, are currently undertaking an environmental assessment and associated stakeholder consultation for exploration activities in one offshore block (A-6) in the Rakhine Basin, Ayeyawady Region, For further information on the proposed activities and opportunities for public consultation, please visit www.woodside.com.au or contact Mr. Daniel Clery at daniel.clery@woodside.com.au or on 01 514379.

WEATHER REPORT

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 27th March, 2015: Rain or thundershowers are likely to be scattered in Upper Sagaing and Mandalay Regions, Kachin, Shan and Mon States and isolated in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Strong easterly winds with moderate to rough sea are likely at times Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts. Surface wind speed in strong easterly wind may reach (35) mph. Seas will be moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Continuation of likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers in the Upper Myanmar areas.

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Pakistan militant spokesman phones to deny death

DERA ISMAIL KHAN, (Pakistan), 26 March — A spokesman for Pakistani militant group called journalists on Thursday to assure them he was alive after Pakistani intelligence officials claimed he was among 30 fighters killed in air strikes in the northwestern Khyber region.

The intelligence officials said air force jets had targeted militants be-

longing to Lashkar-e-Islam, which announced an alliance with the Pakistani Taleban earlier this month, and they named the group's spokesman, Salahuddin Ayubi, as one of the fighters killed.

"I wanted to talk to you and other journalists and prove that by the grace of Allah Almighty I am alive," Ayubi told Reuters. "I would request our jour-

nalist brothers to check news about the killing of our commanders before reporting it to the media."

Members of Lashkar-e-Islam said on Wednesday they could neither confirm nor deny the intelligence officials' version of events and that they were checking.

The air force has been pounding positions in the Tirah Valley for days and

the military says it has killed over 100 militants. At least seven soldiers have also been killed, it says.

Ayubi denied more than 100 militants had been killed and said Lashkar-e-Islam was "still in possession" of the valley.

There is no way to confirm casualties independently as the area is sealed to journalists.

Reuters

Oak Ridge Boys, Browns, Grady Martin named country music inductees

NASHVILLE, 26 March — The Oak Ridge Boys, Jim Ed Brown and the Browns, and the late guitarist Grady Martin were named on Wednesday as the 2015 inductees into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Singer Brenda Lee announced the artists who will be welcomed into the elite group at a special ceremony in Nashville later this year.

The Oak Ridge Boys, a country and gospel quartet whose hits include “Elvira” and “Bobbie

Sue,” sang backup on Paul Simon’s hit “Slip Slidin’ Away” and toured with singer Johnny Cash in their early days in country music.

The group credited Cash with helping them make the transition from gospel to country music.

“He took us on the road with him and paid us more than we asked and tipped us 10 percent above that,” Duane Allen said at the ceremony.

Jim Ed Brown formed the Browns trio with his sisters, Maxine and Bon-

nie. The trio’s smooth harmonies brought a sophisticated sound to country music in the 1950s and 1960s. They influenced the Beatles and the Osborne Brothers, as well as current hit makers Lady Antebellum and Little Big Town.

With hits such as “The Three Bells” and “Scarlet Ribbons,” the Browns crossed genres, from country to pop and R&B.

Brown said when he was told about the honour, he lost it for two or three minutes.

“I admit that a tear or

two fell,” said the singer, who fought cancer in the past year. He is now in remission and back performing at Nashville’s famed Grand Ole Opry.

“This is the golden,” he added. “You can’t go any higher than this in country music.”

Martin, who died in 2001, was an original member of Nashville’s “A-Team” of touring and sessions musicians in the 1960s and 1970s. His guitar licks are instantly recognizable on Marty Robbins’ “El Paso” and Willie Nelson’s



The Oak Ridge Boys sing the song “Amazing Grace” during the second day of the Republican National Convention in Tampa, Florida on 28 Aug, 2012.

REUTERS

“On the Road Again.”

He also played on sessions with Elvis, Woody Guthrie, Roy Orbison and Joan Baez.

The Hall of Fame was created in 1961 to preserve the history and traditions of country music.—Reuters

Malik quits ‘One Direction’, says wants normal life



Zayn Malik performs with his band “One Direction” on NBC’s Today show in New York on 13 Nov, 2012.

REUTERS

LONDON, 26 March — Singer Zayn Malik said on Wednesday he was quitting the best-selling pop band One Direction because he wanted to live a normal life and apologized to fans of the hugely popular British-Irish group for doing so.

The decision by Malik to quit came after he dropped out of an Asian tour due to what he said was stress when pictures of the singer, who is engaged to Perrie Edwards of Little Mix, were published showing him partying with another woman in Thailand.

“I’d like to apologize to the fans if I’ve let anyone down, but I have to do what feels right in my heart. I am leaving because I want to be a normal 22-year-old who is able to relax and have some private time out of the spotlight,” Malik said in a statement on One Direction’s Facebook page.

The announcement

said Malik’s decision had come after five years with the band, which came to prominence for its performance on the popular televised singing competition “The X Factor” in 2010.

One Direction’s biggest hits include “Best Song Ever”, “Kiss You”, “What Makes You Beautiful” and “Story of My Life”. The remaining band members, Niall Horan, Liam Payne, Harry Styles and Louis Tomlinson, will continue on their current world tour as a foursome and will release their fifth album later this year, the statement said.

“We’re really sad to see Zayn go, but we totally respect his decision and send him all our love for the future. The past five years have been beyond amazing, we’ve gone through so much together, so we will always be friends,” the band members said.

Reuters

Kendrick Lamar tops Billboard 200 for first time with new album

LOS ANGELES, 26 March — Rapper Kendrick Lamar topped the weekly US Billboard 200 album chart on Wednesday for the first time, as his latest album became the second biggest seller of the year so far.

“To Pimp A Butterfly,” Lamar’s third studio record, sold 324,000 albums, 125,000 songs and 3.9 million streams for a tally of 363,000 units, according to figures from Nielsen SoundScan.

It came in behind Drake’s “If You’re Reading This, It’s Too Late” album, which sold 495,000 albums in its opening week in February, becoming 2015’s biggest seller so far.

The Billboard 200 chart tallies album sales, song sales (10 songs equal one album) and streaming

activity (1,500 streams equal one album).

Last week’s chart-topper, the soundtrack to Fox TV’s hit hip-hop drama “Empire,” dropped to No 2 with 110,000 units, while alt-rockers Modest Mouse debuted at No 3 with their latest album, “Strangers To Ourselves,” tallying 77,000 units.

The only other new entry to crack the top 10 of the Billboard 200 chart was British singer Marina and the Diamonds at No 8 with “Froot.”

On the Digital Songs chart, Mark Ronson and Bruno Mars held onto the top spot with their catchy “Uptown Funk!” selling 187,000 downloads in the past week.—Reuters



Kendrick Lamar

Cover of Harper Lee’s second novel, ‘Go Set a Watchman,’ released



The jacket for the new Harper Lee novel titled ‘Go Set a Watchman’ is seen in an undated handout image provided by HarperCollins Publishing.

REUTERS

NEW YORK, 26 March — Publisher Harper Collins on Wednesday released the cover of “Go Set a Watchman,” the highly anticipated second novel by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Harper Lee.

The cover of the book that will be published on 14 July, half a century after Lee’s masterpiece “To Kill a Mockingbird,” features a tree in the foreground and a railroad track with a train in the distance.

Michael Morrison, the president and publisher of US general books and Canada at Harper Collins, said the cover draws on the style of the decade in which the book was written, but with a modern twist.

“Go Set a Watchman” begins with Scout’s train ride home, but more profoundly, it is about the journey Harper Lee’s beloved characters have taken in the subsequent 20 years of their lives,” Morrison said in a statement.

The upcoming book has been

surrounded by controversy since its publication was announced in February. Until then, few people knew it existed; even Lee, 88, had thought it had been lost.

Written before “To Kill a Mockingbird,” the book features the same characters, lawyer Atticus Finch and his daughter Scout, but later as she returns as an adult to the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama.

There were concerns about whether Lee had been pressured into agreeing to have the book published, and an unspecified complaint of elder abuse that was investigated by the Alabama Securities Commission.

Earlier this month, the commission closed its probe, saying Lee had made it clear that she wanted the book to be published.

“To Kill a Mockingbird,” which became an American classic, was adapted into an Academy Award-winning film starring Gregory Peck.—Reuters

GENERAL

Christie's aims for auction record book with \$140 million Picasso

NEW YORK, 26 March — Records look set to tumble at the big spring art auctions with Christie's' announcement on Wednesday of a Picasso oil poised to set the mark for the most expensive work of art in auction history.

"Les femmes d'Alger (Version 'O')," a vibrant cubist work last auctioned in 1997 when it nearly tripled the expected price, is estimated to fetch about \$140 million (94.02 million pounds), by far the highest price ever for a work of art on the auction block.

Pre-sale estimates do not include the standard commission of just over 12 percent, making for a final price in excess of \$155 million if Christie's has accurately assessed the work's appeal to a global, deep-pocketed market hungry for a dwindling supply of trophy works.

The most expensive work ever sold at auction, Francis Bacon's triptych



"Christie's Auction House Chairman Christopher Burge (L) takes bids on the auction sale of Picasso's 'les Femmes d'Alger' of 1955 at Christie's in New York, on 10 November. The painting, which sold for \$29,000,000, was sold with 57 other lots from the art collection of the estate of Americans Victor and Sally Ganz. — REUTERS

"Three Studies of Lucian Freud," sold for \$142.4 million including commission in November 2013, although several works have sold for more on the private market. "It has become clear that the many new global collectors chasing masterpieces have been waiting for an iconic Picasso to appear

on the market," said Jussi Pylkkanen, Christie's global president. "None is more iconic than 'Les femmes d'Alger.'"

Brooke Lampley, head of Impressionist and Modern art at Christie's New York, spoke to what she called the work's remarkable power.

"This is Picasso the maverick astonishing us with his skills while paying tribute to the great masters who came before him," including Ingres, Delacroix, and his great rival Matisse.

"It's the perfect painting to headline a new sale dedicated to artistic innovation and inspiration," she added, referring to Christie's 11 May sale, "Looking Forward to the Past" which augments its semi-annual auctions of Impressionist/modern and contemporary art. Picasso painted a series of 15 variations on Delacroix's "Les femmes d'Alger" between December 1954 and February 1955, designating his versions A through O, and conceived as an elegy to his friend and great rival Henri Matisse, who died weeks before Picasso began his series. In recent years Version O has graced galleries at the Louvre in Paris, London's National Gallery and the Tate Britain. — Reuters

England's Richard III, the 'villainous' king, gets ceremonial reburial

LONDON, 26 March — Richard III, the last English king to die in battle and the country's most maligned monarch, will be re-buried on Thursday three years after his remains were found under a car park.

Depicted by Shakespeare as a sadistic, crafty hunchback, Richard will be re-interred at Leicester Cathedral in central England some 530 years after he was slain at the Battle of Bosworth Field on 22 August, 1485.

Following the battle, his naked body was thrown on the back of a horse, taken to Leicester and buried in a humble grave, without the dignity usually bestowed

on a king.

Despite reigning just 777 days, he still fascinates not just historians but ordinary people across the world, some of whom have traveled to Leicester to witness the ceremony.

"He seems a hero to some and a villain to others, and the few short years of his reign held promise of a time of peace and good government that was not to be," wrote David Monteith, the Dean of Leicester, in a foreword to Thursday's order of service.

The ceremony will feature a message from Queen Elizabeth, who will be represented by minor members of the royal family.



A crown sits on the coffin of King Richard III as it stands in Leicester Cathedral, central England, on 22 March, 2015. — REUTERS

Britain's Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy has written a poem entitled "Richard", which will be read by actor Benedict Cumberbatch, who himself has been identified as a second cousin, 16 times removed of the

dead king.

The last Plantagenet king, Richard's death marked the end of the Wars of the Roses, a bloody civil war between the rival dynasties of the House of York and Lancaster. — Reuters

Premier League back in the black as TV cash rolls in

LONDON, 26 March — English Premier League's clubs have recorded the first combined pre-tax profit for 15 years thanks to the soaring value of television deals and a slowdown in players' salaries.

While on-field performances of England's top teams against Europe's elite have regressed in the Champions League and Europa League, their bank accounts are bulging, according to business advisory

firm Deloitte. In 2013-14, Premier League clubs generated a combined pre-tax profit of 190 million pounds — four times greater than the previous record of 49 million in 1997-98.

The figures are in sharp contrast to the previous decade when Premier League clubs accumulated combined pre-tax losses of 2.6 billion pounds. Deloitte analyst Dan Jones said clubs were now spending less of their income on players' sal-

aries. "Last season was the first in the Premier League's current three-year broadcast deal, which was a record breaker when it was struck," Jones said.

"Despite this extra income clubs showed relative restraint in wage costs, which grew by six percent.

"With the recent announcement of another record Premier League broadcast deal, the revenue increases show no sign of ending and should make

this season's profit a regular outcome."

The report said that, excluding player trading, net interest charges and the amortisation of contracts, top flight clubs recorded a 620 million pounds operating profit last season.

However the percentage of revenue spent on player salaries had fallen from a record of 71 percent in 2012-13 to 58 percent in 2013-14 — the lowest since 1998-99. — Reuters

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MRTV Entertainment Channel

(27-3-2015, Friday)

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 6:00 am
• Mono Classical Songs | 8:50 am
• TV Drama Series |
| 6:20 am
• Play | 9:30 am
• Teleplay |
| 7:45 am
• Song Programme | 10:00 am
• Myanmar Movie |
| 8:00 am
• TV Drama Series | 12:00 noon
• Close Down |

Alonso cleared to race in Malaysia

SEPANG, (Malaysia) 26 March — Fernando Alonso passed a final medical examination on Thursday and will be able to participate in the Malaysian Grand Prix this weekend after the Spaniard missed the Formula One season-opener in Australia due to concussion.

The double world champion was sidelined following a winter-testing crash in Barcelona last month after leaving Ferrari for McLaren at the end of last season, but has been given the go-ahead to race for a team where he spent one unhappy season in 2007.

Alonso flew to Malaysia after coming through tests by three eminent doctors at Cambridge University on Sunday and then passed the official examination by the governing body's medical delegate and the Sepang Circuit's chief medical officer.

"During the examination the driver passed all

mandatory fitness tests and has thus been declared fit to race in this weekend's Malaysian Grand Prix," the International Automobile Federation (FIA) said in a statement.

Considered one of the most skilful drivers in Formula One, Alonso will need to be at his very best around the Hermann Tilke-designed track to have any chance of picking up points on his return to racing for a team that fared poorly in Australia.

Struggling for pace and reliability with the new Honda engine, team mate Jenson Button crawled around Albert Park to cross the line last of the 11 finishers, while Alonso's stand-in Kevin Magnussen failed to start the race due to engine issues.

"I've been working hard on my fitness and I feel good and ready to go this weekend," Alonso said prior to his departure for Malaysia. — Reuters

Golfers to join Myanmar Golf Tours in 2015

YANGON, 26 March — A Press conference on holding the Myanmar Golf Tour 2015 took place at Central Hotel on Bogyoke Aung San Street, here, on 24 March.

Chairman of Myanmar Professional Golfers Association U Chan Han explained plans to hold the Myanmar Golf Tour and replied to queries raised by media.

The first leg of the tour will be held at Myanmar Golf Club in Nay Pyi Taw from 2 to 5 April, the second leg from 7 to 10 May at Hanthawady Golf Club, the third from 2 to 5 June at Mingaladon Tatmadaw Golf Course, the fourth from 23 to 26 July at Yaydaguntaung Golf Club in Mandalay, the fifth from 27 to 30 August in PyinOoLwin golf club, the sixth from 8 to 11 October at Ayethaya Golf Club in Taunggyi, the seventh from 3 to 6 November at Yangon Golf Club in Yangon, the eighth from 19 to 22 November at Shwemantaung Golf Club and the ninth from 3 to 6 December at Zeyathiri Golf Club.—GNLM



Nishikori has sights set on being No 1



Japan's Kei Nishikori holds a Press conference in Miami, the United States, on 25 March, 2015, ahead of competing in the Miami Open Tennis tournament.—KYODO NEWS

MIAMI, 26 March — Japan's Kei Nishikori said on Wednesday at the Miami Open that he aspires to be world No 1, but acknowledged it will take some doing to succeed the man who beat him last year here in the semifinals, Novak Djokovic.

The 25-year-old Nishikori is just now becoming accustomed to being ranked in the top five.

He said he had his eye on the world's top spot, but conceded it's going to take some doing — especially with Djokovic at the top of his game.

"It's going to take some time to get No 1," he told a Press conference according to atpworld-tour.com. "Novak is the top player right now. It's not easy to beat him or Roger (Federer)

or Andy (Murray). But, slowly, I think I'm coming. I'm playing good tennis and feeling much stronger mentally and physically, too. It might take some time, but hopefully I can get there as soon as possible."

"I'm getting used to this. The first couple of months when I was ranked No 5, I was a little bit nervous and wasn't comfortable. But now I've gotten used to (it) and more confidence being top five. It's not easy to keep this ranking. But hopefully I can do well."

"He (Djokovic) has a good serve and great strokes, great backhand. (He's) very consistent and very solid from the baseline. He doesn't give you a lot of unforced errors. If you beat Novak, you have to be aggressive and you have to win points with your aggressive play. You have to take some risks to win against him."

After crashing out in the fourth round at the Indian Wells masters event, the trip to Miami is almost like coming home for Nishikori, who lives and trains

a few hours away in Bradenton, Florida.

"The fast courts suit me," the fourth-seed Nishikori said. "I've just been playing well, so I think I have a chance here."

"This is one of my favourite tournaments. I did well here last year. It's really comfortable playing here. It's a little hot and humid, but I try to enjoy this week. It's almost my home. It's really close from my Bradenton home. It's really easy to come here." "Indian Wells, the ball was flying more, and the court was really slow, so the bounces were high and the courts were slow. Here the court is really fast."

Before the press conference, Nishikori practiced with Uruguay's Pablo Cuevas and worked on his Jekyll-and-Hyde service game with coach Michael Chang.

"If I'm getting the fundamentals right, the location of my toss and how I use my feet, I think I'll be OK," said Nishikori, who is scheduled to begin playing in the second round here on Saturday.—Kyodo News

Azarenka through at Miami to face Jankovic

MIAMI, 26 March — Two-times Miami Open winner Victoria Azarenka defeated Spain's Silvia Soler-Espinosa 6-1, 6-3 on Wednesday to set up a second round meeting with Serbia's Jelena Jankovic.

Former world number one Azarenka made her name with victory in Miami in 2009 and followed that up with another triumph in 2011 but hampered by injuries, she has fallen down the world rankings in the past year to 36. The Belarusian, who has not been in Miami for three years, had to fight back from 3-1 down in the second set to ensure she advanced in straight sets.

"I felt I played really good in the first set but in the second I dropped a little my aggressivity," said Azarenka. "But it is nice to be back somewhere where I had a lot of success. I've always loved this city and this tournament."

Azarenka will face a tough test in the next round with in form Jankovic coming off a run to the Indian Wells final before falling to Romanian Simona Halep.

Third-seed Halep will face Czech Nicole Pietrangeli, the former world number seven back on the tour after ending her retirement. The 25-year-old Pietrangeli beat Hungarian Tímea Babos 6-1, 7-6 in what was her first WTA-level match since Memphis in 2010.

Russian wildcard Daria Gavrilova advanced past New Zealand's, Marina Erakovic who had to retire with an ankle injury when down 5-1. Gavrilova will face compatriot and second seed Maria Sharapova in the second round. Top seed Serena Williams, who had to pull out of her semi-final in Indian Wells with a knee injury, says she will be ready to face Romanian Monica Niculescu on Friday.—Reuters

Podolski spares German blushes against Australia

KAISERSLAUTERN, (Germany), 26 March — Substitute Lukas Podolski grabbed an 81st-minute equalizer to rescue a 2-2 draw for 2014 World Cup winners Germany in an entertaining friendly against Asian champions Australia on Wednesday.

Podolski, who has been mainly on the bench for Inter Milan recently, stroked the ball home from close range with his left foot nine minutes after coming on to score his 48th goal for his country.

Socceroos captain Mile Jedinak had made up for gifting Germany the lead by putting his side 2-1 up with a brilliant curling free kick in

the 50th minute.

Earlier, Marco Reus gave the hosts a 1-0 advantage before James Troisi levelled.

"It was a bit hectic," said Germany coach Joachim Loew. "We had some good chances to make it 2-0 or 3-0."

"Sometimes in friendly matches you are missing a few percentages," said Loew who rested several players including Bastian Schweinsteiger, Mats Hummels and Jerome Boateng.

Australia, who won their maiden Asian crown in January, were in no way intimidated early on while the Germans struggled with an experimental

three-man defence.

The visitors had a good chance in the opening seconds as Nathan Burns raced clear but he was denied by a last-gasp tackle.

Ilkay Guendogan, fit again after a back injury and making his first international appearance since August 2013, responded for Germany with a long-range effort.

Matthew Leckie then should have put Australia ahead in the ninth minute when he twice shook off Benedikt Hoewedes and fired wide.

Hoewedes, Shkodran Mustafi and Holger Badstuber had never played together before and it showed as they were repeatedly left

chasing shadows.

Germany, however, had no such problems in attack when Sami Khedira pounced on a mistake by Jedinak and sent Reus through to open the scoring.

Jedinak almost handed the world champions a second goal but this time Reus' effort was saved by Matt Ryan. The Australians then started to pour forward and Troisi equalised with a bullet header from a cross by Burns.

"I hope this sheds us of any inferiority complex we may have about ourselves," said visiting coach Ange Postecoglou.

"I am super proud. We threw the boys some big

challenges today and they were up to it."

Germany travel to Georgia for a Euro 2016

qualifier on Sunday while Australia meet Macedonia in a friendly on Monday.

Reuters



Germany's Marco Reus challenges Australia's Ivan Franjic during their international friendly soccer match in Kaiserslautern on 25 March, 2015. — REUTERS