

President U Thein Sein attends state funeral for Mr Lee Kuan Yew

NAY PYI TAW, 29 March — President U Thein Sein and party left Singapore in the morning on Sunday and arrived back in Nay Pyi Taw at 8.10 pm. President U Thein Sein attended the state funeral of former Singapore Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew on Sunday.

The president, together with Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin and officials, left Nay Pyi Taw airport for Singapore at 7 am and the president and party were seen off at the airport by Vice President U Nyan Tun, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, union ministers and the ambassador of Singapore to Myanmar and officials.

The president and party arrived at Changi International Airport at 11.40 am and were greeted by officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, Myanmar Ambassador to Singapore U Htay Aung, Military Attaché Brig-Gen Ko Ko Naing



President U Thein Sein signs book of condolences for demise of former Prime Minister of Singapore Mr. Lee Kuan Yew.—CNA

and officials.

Then, the president attended the state funeral of former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew at the Culture Centre of Singapore National University and signed the book of condolences.

Present at the state funeral were former and

incumbent world leaders including Sultan of Brunei Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan of Malaysia Abdul Halim, King of Butan Namgyel Wangchuck, President of the Republic of Korea Park Geun-hye, President of Indonesia Joko Widodo, Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi, Prime

Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Australia Tony Abbott, Prime Minister of Cambodia Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Laos Thongsing Thammavong, Prime Minister of Thailand Prayuth Chan-ocha, Prime Minister of Vietnam Nguyen Tan Dung, Vice

President of China Li Yuanchao, former US President Bill Clinton, former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs William Hague, officials and the public of Singapore.

At the state funeral, eleven eminent people including the eldest son of Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, President Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong, second son of Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Lee Hsien Yang, delivered speeches honoring the former prime minister.

Former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew died at 3.18 am local time on 23 March in Singapore. His death was a loss of a great leader not only for Singapore but also for the ASEAN and the world and the entire world expressed their griefs for his death. People of Singapore waited for hours to pay their last tribute to the former prime minister.—MNA

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MAMDA asks Govt to relax income tax levied on car importers

By Aye Min Soe

YANGON, 29 March — Myanmar Automobile Manufacturers and Distributors Association has asked the government to relax the income tax levied on car importers when they import cars as they are suffering heavy losses.

At a recent meeting with officials of the Finance and Revenue Ministry, the association has suggested the government to relax the income tax that the importers have to pay 3.5 per cent of their income to the Companies Circle Tax Office of the Ministry of Finance and Revenue when they import cars.

U Myo Myint, the deputy chairman of the association, said 90 per cent of car show rooms in Myanmar are operating

at a loss currently due to heavy duties levied by the government.

Late information on changing trade policies including reducing custom duty last year and changing CIF values every year have hardly hit the car importers, according to the MAMDA.

The worst is that fine they have to pay to the Directorate of Road Administration is very heavy for importers, U Myo Myint said.

The Companies Circle Tax Office collects tax from car importers in accordance with the 2014 Tax Law when they import cars, said an official of the office.

The number of applications for getting car import permits increased to double in December last year when the Ministry of Commerce relaxed the car

import policy, allowing importers to apply for import licenses prior to shipping as from 1st January, 2015.

The ministry's effort is aimed at reducing the storage of vehicles at Thilawa Port, an official of the ministry said.

Currently, the ministry has allowed importers to ship in cars to Thilawa Port and to apply for the import license upon arrival of their vehicles.

To be able to cope with the increasing in number of applications,

Officials present cash assistance to Myanmar migrant workers who arrived back home by naval vessel Maha Thiha Thura of Myanmar Navy at No 3 naval jetty (Thilawa).

MNA

Naval vessel Maha Thiha Thura carries back 102 Myanmar migrant workers from Malaysia

YANGON, 29 March — Naval vessel Maha Thiha Thura of Myanmar Navy arrived back at No 3 naval jetty (Thilawa), here, on Sunday after joining the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition 2015

(LIMA-2015) in Langkawi Island, Malaysia, from 17 to 21 March.

The vessel carried back 102 Myanmar migrant workers who illegally worked in Malaysia.

MNA



People need to cooperate with police in crime reduction during Maha Thingyan festival



MANDALAY, 29 March — Police of Mahaaungmye Township station disseminated knowledge about crime reduction in Maha Thingyan festival period to local residents at the Dhammayon in West Maha Ward in the township on Saturday.

Police Captain Than Htut of Anti-Drug Squad urged parents to look after their offspring not to use narcotic drugs. He explained that some unscrupulous persons give soft drinks mixed with stimulant drugs and hormone drugs to revelers. So, police expose drug users and sellers to

take action, he said.

Police Captain Thaik Naing Tun of No 56 traffic police squad explained occurrences of traffic accident in the Maha Thingyan festival. According to the statistics of the traffic police, 94 persons were dead and 917 wounded in 360 traffic accidents across the nation during the last Maha Thingyan festival.

SIP Thet Tun Win called for prevention of trafficking in persons during the festival.

Commander of Township Police Force Police Major Khin Maung Yi said that people need to cooperate with police to enabling the people to safely enjoy Maha Thingyan festival.

Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)

Region Chief Minister clarifies development tasks in region at Hluttaw

MANDALAY, 29 March — Mandalay Region government has spent K149.661 billion on undertaking rural development and poverty alleviation in the region in 2014-15 fiscal year, Mandalay Region government U Ye Myint told the 12th regular session of the region Hluttaw recently.

Development fund was allotted to implement 936 projects in education sector, 305 in health sector, 2,136 in road and bridge sector, 656 in dam and lake sector, 838 in electric power sector, 2,381 in water supply sector and 498 in other sectors. The data also includes projects implemented by Hluttaw representatives from respective constituencies.

In 2014-15 fiscal year, the local authorities disbursed K30 million each to 83 villages from 13 townships of the region for the first time and K30 million each were disbursed to 10 villages from 10 townships for the second time.

As Mandalay Region gets less rainfall, priority was given to supply of water to the local people. In 2014-15 fiscal year, 252 village dams were maintained and 5,889 tube-wells were sunk in 17 townships.

Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)

Curriculum Vitae of Her Majesty Queen Maxima, Queen of the Netherlands



Queen Maxima was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 17 May 1971 as Maxima Zorreguieta. She passed her baccalaureate examinations at Northlands School in 1988. She graduated in economics from the Universidad Catolica Argentina in 1995.

Her Majesty Queen Maxima is married to King Willem-Alexander. The royal couple have three daughters, Princess Catharina-Amalia (the Princess of Orange), Princess Alexia and Princess Ariane.

King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima are patrons of the Orange Fund, which was a gift from the Dutch people on the occasion of their wedding in 2002. Queen Maxima was a member of the Committee for Eth-

nic Minority Women's Participation from 2003 to 2005. Queen Maxima has been a member of the Council of State since 2004. The Queen has chaired the Board of Trustees of the Prince Claus Chair since 2003. Queen Maxima has been honorary chair of the Money Wise Platform since 2010. Queen Maxima is a member of the Committee for Enterprise and Finance, which succeeded the Microfinance Council in 2011. Queen Maxima has been lobbying for years in the Netherlands and abroad to increase access to financial services, improve consumer protection and enhance financial literacy. In 2009 Queen Maxima was appointed the UN Secretary-General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development (UNSGSA). Queen Maxima has been honorary chair of the G20 Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion since 2011. In this capacity, she works primarily to strengthen the synergy between the UN and the G20 in the field of universal access to financial services, calling on her many years of experience to promote inclusive finance.



Extended library building accomodates more readers

NAY PYI TAW, 29 March — "Good Friend" library received one annex in Setkon Village, Pobbathiri Township, on Sunday in a ceremony, with an address by Nay Pyi Taw Council member U Than Htay.

Deputy Director Daw Thin Thin Zin of Information and Public Relations Department explained advantages of reading and efforts for development of the library.

Patron of the library U Thein Zaw presented certificates of honour to well-wishers.

Since its establishment, the library had kept more than 3,000 books on various subjects. Now, the library becomes a reading hub for local villagers not only from Setkon village but its

surrounding villages with more than 10,000 books.

The 27-foot-long and 18-foot-wide library building was extended to a 40-foot-long

and 30-foot-wide facility with contributions of U Kyi Soe and wife Daw Yadana Win and family of Pinyinmana.

Tun Tun Win (Pinyinmana)





Funeral procession of former Prime Minister of Singapore Mr. Lee Kuan Yew in progress.(News on page 1)—CNA

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker honours fallen firefighters in Yamethin



Speaker U Khin Aung Myint comforts patient at station hospital in Thazi Township.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 29 March — Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint honoured fallen firefighters at a ceremony held in the district of Yamethin, Mandalay Region, on 27 March, according to officials.

Two firefighters were killed in action, with the speaker saying that there is no greater pride than risking lives for the country and the people.

The speaker provided financial assistance to the bereaved families in honour of the firefighters.

The speaker also comforted two other firefighters who are receiving medical treatment at hospital, and presented cash and kind to them.

In the afternoon, he honoured outstanding members of the Sangha in Yamathin with certificates

of honour and offertories.

On 28 March, he attended the opening of a 16-bed hospital in Nyaungyan, Meiktila, where he inspected the medicine storage room the surgical theatre, the X-ray room, men's ward, women's ward and staff housing.

It was also attended by Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Than Soe, Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Htay Maung, departmental officials and chairman of Township development supporting committee.

At the Kotaungpyae monastery in Meiktila, the speaker presented offertories to the presiding Sayadaw and viewed stone slabs inscribed with Buddhist literature.—MNA

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with General Sir David Richards, GCB, CBE, DOS, former Chief of the Defence Staff of the United Kingdom.
MYAWADY

Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann signs book of condolences for demise of Singapore's former PM



Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann signs book of condolences for the demise of former Singaporean Prime Minister Mr. Lee Kuan Yew.—MNA

YANGON, 29 March — Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann signed the book of con-

dolences for the demise of former Prime Minister Mr. Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore at Singaporean

Embassy at 236 in Bahan Township, Yangon, at 10 a.m. on 29 March.

MNA

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets former UK chief of Defence Staff

NAY PYI TAW, 29 March — Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing met General Sir David Richards, GCB, CBE, DOS, former Chief of the Defence Staff of the United Kingdom, here on Sunday, according to officials.

They exchanged points

of view with a focus on the country's reforms, the role of the defence services in transition to democracy, developments of ongoing peace talks, and relationship between the army and the media.

The former British general graduated from Eastbourne College and then studied internation-

al relations at University Graduate College of Cardiff University in 1974. He joined the British Royal Artillery Regiment as an officer in 1971 and became the chief of the Defence Staff of the United Kingdom in 2010. His retirement came in 2013. Now is his third visit to Myanmar.—Myawady



Well-wishers provide cash assistance to family of late Red Cross WO Ko Moe Kyaw Than

MANDALAY, 29 March — A ceremony to donate cash to the family of WO Moe Kyaw Than of Kunlong Township Red Cross Battalion who passed away at Mandalay General Hos-

pital while receiving medical treatment was held at the hall of Mandalay Region Health Department on Sunday.

Mandalay Region Minister for Social Affairs

Dr. Win Hlaing took pride of noblest activity of Ko Moe Kyaw Than and accepted cash assistance for the family of late Ko Moe Kyaw Than. Local authorities and well-wishers also

donated cash to Ma Jon Nywe, wife of Ko Moe Kyaw Than.

WO Moe Kyaw Than of Red Cross Battalion was injured while Kokang insurgent shot them in Lauk-

kai region. At that time he gave a helping hand to local residents who departed from Laukkai during armed conflicts.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Villagers get 9.74 tons of firewood from natural forests



YINMABIN, 29 March—Forests are playing a key role in environmental conservation and create a good weather for the human.

Hills and plains cov-

ered with thick forests can balance weather conditions. Barren hills cannot help conserve environment. That is why all the people should abide by rules set by local author-

ities for environmental conservation.

Indiscriminate production of firewood will cause deforestation. In consequence, the areas with lack of forests and

cannot receive fine weather and environment.

Dry Zone Greening Department under the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry is striving for greening all areas in the dry zone by growing and nurturing plants as reforestation.

Staff Officer U Aung Soe Tint of Yinmabin Township Dry Zone Greening Department and staff distributed firewoods to local people in Minzu Village on 28 March.

The staff presented 9.74 tons of firewood to 30 households free of charge.

The firewood were extracted from 1,000 acres of natural forest in Pow-intaung forest reserve in Yinmabin Township in 2014-15 fiscal year.

Tun Ko Ko (Yinmabin)



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Muse district authorities honour blood donors

MUSE, 29 March — Blood donors were honoured for the ninth time at the city hall in Muse, northern Shan State, on Saturday.

Muse District's deputy commissioner U Kyaw Kyaw Tun thanked the blood donors for their noblest donation while medical superintendent Dr Tin Tun of Muse Hospital explained purpose of donating blood to needy patients.

On the occasion, well-wishers donated K2 million in honour of the blood donors. Officials presented certificates of honour to 119 blood



donors. The ceremony staff, members of NGOs totalling about 250. Muse District IPRD

Local people receives citizenship scrutiny cards

MYAWADY, 29 March — Immigration and National Registration Department and Norwegian Refugee Council-NRC carry out issuance of citizenship scrutiny cards to eligible people.

On 25 March, a ceremony to issue the SCS to people was held at Basic Education High School in Shwekokko village, in

Myawady, a border town of Kayin State.

Head of Kayin State department U Win Zaw Aung explained issuance of the cards and disciplines for the card holders.

Officials presented cards to 211 local people at the ceremony.

Htein Lin Aung (IPRD)

Healthy living lifestyle to prevent diabetes



MANDALAY, 29 March — An educational talk on diabetes and healthy society was given at Mandalay Mingala Hall at the corner of 78th and 38th streets in Mahaaungmye Township on Saturday.

Prof Dr Aye Aye Aung of Diabetes Department of the hospital explained symptoms of the disease, its types and related diseases, and chronic disease while Dr Mdy of Health & Fitness gave lectures on diabetes and nutrition, foods and calorie, and regular health exercises.

According to the data of 2013-14 fiscal year, six of 100 people in Myanmar are suffering from diabetes. Across the world, 366 million people are living with diabetes.

Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)



REGIONAL

Japan eyes informal 6-way talks on N Korea denuclearization

Tokyo, 29 March — Japan has sounded out other countries in the stalled six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear programs about holding an informal meeting in Tokyo possibly by the end of June, sources familiar with the matter said on Saturday.

Japan hopes to hold an informal meeting when the next round of the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue hosted by a US research institute is held in Tokyo, which will likely bring together senior government officials from the five other countries — China, North Korea, Russia, South Korea and the United States.

Launched in 2003, the six-party talks aimed at getting North Korea to give up all its nuclear weapons have been suspended since December 2008, as Pyongyang withdrew. Japan aims to bolster coordination among the countries as it seeks progress on the North's reinvestigation into the fate of Japanese nationals abducted by Pyongyang decades ago.

But it remains uncertain whether such a meeting can be held, as Japan has not heard from North Korea, and the United States appears reluctant to back Tokyo's proposal, the sources said.

While calling for North Korea's denuclearization, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has also made it a priority to resolve the

issue of Japanese nationals abducted by the North in the 1970s and 1980s. Pyongyang launched a special investigation committee to look into their fates last year, but no progress has been made.

As Japan has lifted some of its unilateral sanctions against North Korea in return for the launch of the investigation, North Korean officials can visit Japan now.

Tokyo is also expected to explore the possibility of bilateral talks between Japanese and North Korean government officials, the sources said.

The Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue, sponsored by the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, is a forum for government officials and academics from the six countries to discuss regional security and cooperation. Its last meeting was held in the United States in September, but North Korean representatives were absent.

When the conference was held in Tokyo in 2006, chief negotiators to the six-party talks such as US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Christopher Hill, North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan and Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei set the stage for the resumption of the talks.—*Kyodo News*

Singapore stands still as nation bids farewell to founding father Lee

SINGAPORE, 29 March — Grieving Singaporeans were joined by world leaders on Sunday to pay their final respects to the country's first prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, as the nation came to a near-halt to honour its "founding father". Tens of thousands of people waving flags braved heavy rain and lined the streets to catch a last glimpse of Lee as his coffin was taken by gun carriage on a 15 km procession through the streets of the country he helped build to his state funeral.

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, India's Narendra Modi, Indonesia's Joko Widodo and former US President Bill Clinton were among the leaders brushing shoulders with Lee's family and Singapore politicians at the ceremony attended by 2,200 people.

Lee, who died aged 91 on Monday, is credited with founding modern Singapore and transforming it from a small, colonial British trading port into one of the

world's wealthiest nations.

His death has prompted an unprecedented show of mourning and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Lee's son, battled tears as he delivered a 40-minute eulogy in English, Malay, and Chinese. "His was the original Singapore Roar: passionate, formidable and indomitable," he said.

"To those who seek Mr Lee Kuan Yew's monument, Singaporeans can reply proudly: 'look around you'". Public warning sirens sounded across the country to mark a minute's silence, with buses and trains coming to a halt.

Earlier, booms from a 21-gun salute had reverberated around the city's business district, fighter jets had flown overhead in a "missing man" formation and two navy ships near the marina made an 'L' 'K' 'Y' signal with their flags as Lee's coffin was taken from the country's parliament to the funeral. Singaporeans, many dressed in the mourning



People queue up to pay their respects to the late first prime minister Lee Kuan Yew at the Padang grounds outside the Parliament House in Singapore on 28 March, 2015.—REUTERS

colours of black and white, waited for hours to watch the procession, shouting "Lee Kuan Yew" as it passed. "His biggest achievement is to help elevate people's living standards," said Huang Jiancong, 54, who was standing at the start of the route, carrying a Singapore flag.

Lee's influence on the international stage — he was both a regular visitor to the White House and held up as a

role model by China's Deng Xiaoping — was reflected in the funeral's turnout of serving and former leaders from across the globe. Vice President Li Yuanchao represented China while Clinton and ex-secretary of state Henry Kissinger, a close friend of Lee's, came for the United States. Britain's William Hague, leader of the House of Commons, represented Singapore's former colonial power.—*Reuters*

China-led development bank to have over 40 founding members

BOAO, 29 March — The proposed China-led Asian development bank is likely to have more than 40 founding members, as the Chinese Finance Ministry announced on Saturday that three more countries have applied to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Brazil, Georgia and the Netherlands newly filed their applications, while Russia and Australia expressed their inten-

tion to join the new bank as China's end-of-March deadline for accepting the AIIB's founding members nears.

Earlier Saturday, Chinese President Xi Jinping urged the active participation of more countries in the AIIB during his speech at the annual Boao Forum for Asia, which gathers political and business leaders in China's Hainan Province, saying the bank is an open

initiative. The ministry also said Britain and Switzerland have been confirmed as the AIIB's founding members, raising the confirmed total to 30, including Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, India, Saudi Arabia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan and New Zealand. The initiative to set up the bank with an initial capital of around \$50 billion, unveiled by Xi last year, is seen by the United States, Japan

and some other developed countries as an attempt by China to expand its regional influence and challenge the Washington-led global financial system founded after World War II.

The AIIB, which will offer loans for construction of infrastructure systems in emerging countries, will be established later this year, with China as its biggest shareholder.—*Kyodo News*

Modi's popularity in rural India punctured by discontent, suicides

VAIDI, 29 March — Over a dozen debt-laden farmers have committed suicide in recent weeks in India, and discontent in many rural areas against government policies is turning into anger against Prime Minister Narendra Modi less than a year after he swept into office.

Unseasonal storms have badly damaged the winter crop in large parts of the fertile northern plains, most likely contributing to the suicides, and villagers have blamed Modi for not stepping in to help the distressed farmers or ensuring that crop prices remained stable.

The farmer suicides in India's most politically sensitive region are the latest in several setbacks for Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya

Janata Party (BJP), which is hoping to consolidate power by winning local elections in large, predominantly rural states over the next two years.

The government has delayed a comprehensive health plan as it shifts focus from subsidies to investment, while religious tensions have made minorities uneasy. Nevertheless, Modi has made progress with economic reform in his first year — although not as rapidly as some investors would like — and has reined in inflation.

In a village in India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, Dharmendra Singh mourned his brother Babu Singh, who committed suicide after rain destroyed



Workers unload stacks of sugarcane on a farmland at Sisola Khurd village in Uttar Pradesh, on 24 March, 2015.—REUTERS

wheat growing on the five-acre farm he leased from a landlord.

Babu Singh, who had run up debts amounting to \$13,000, soaked himself in

kerosene and set himself on fire on 19 March. He succumbed to burn injuries six days later.

"My brother was bank- ing on the crop so the loss

came as the last straw," Dharmendra Singh said in his village, Vaidi, 185 km (115 miles) southeast of Delhi.

"For God's sake why hasn't the government reached out to us? We overwhelmingly voted for Modi as he promised to take care of us but he has stabbed us in the back."

In more than a dozen villages visited by *Reuters* this week across the state that sends the most lawmakers to parliament, farmers said there was a "crisis" in the countryside, where 70 percent of India's 1.2 billion people live. Angered by low farmgate prices and the lack of state compensation for crop damage, some villagers said they have ostracised

local members of Modi's BJP and barred them from attending weddings.

Parties crushed by the BJP in last year's general election have coupled the discontent with street protests against a land acquisition bill that will make it easier for businesses to buy farmland, a potent issue in the countryside.

For the BJP, the next major election will be in November in the large, mostly rural state of Bihar, and a poor performance will be a huge setback.

India's states send representatives to the upper house of the federal parliament, where the BJP is struggling to form a majority to match its domination of the lower house.—*Reuters*

Kerry cancels trip in honour of Ted Kennedy as Iran talks intensify



US Secretary of State John Kerry (L) waits to start a meeting with Iranian officials at the Beau Rivage Palace Hotel in Lausanne on 29 March, 2015.
REUTERS

LAUSANNE, 29 March — US Secretary of State John Kerry cancelled plans to fly to Boston for a ceremony in honour of his late friend Edward Kennedy as talks on Iran's nuclear programme intensified in Switzerland, with two days left to a deadline.

Kerry's spokeswoman said on Sunday he regretted missing the dedication ceremony for an institute named after the US senator, who was a mentor to him.

Officials close to the talks said the French and German foreign minis-

ters, Laurent Fabius and Frank-Walter Steinmeier, were considering delaying a planned joint trip to Kazakhstan in order to focus on clearing the remaining hurdles to a deal.

Iran denies charges from the West and Israel that it wants to build a nuclear weapon, and says its programme is purely peaceful. It wants the removal of international sanctions that are hurting its economy.

The six world powers negotiating with it are seeking a halt to its most sensitive nuclear work.

The dispute dates back more than a decade and has threatened at times to trigger a new Middle East war.

Kerry and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif have been in Lausanne for days to try to reach a preliminary deal by a self-imposed deadline of Tuesday. They held several rounds of talks on Saturday and met again on Sunday morning.

Fabius and Steinmeier joined the talks on Saturday, and their counterparts from China, Britain and Russia were to take part

later on Sunday.

Close as the sides have come to the outline of an agreement, they still have deep disagreements on Iran's demands for uranium enrichment research and the immediate removal of all UN and key US and European Union sanctions. Those disagreements could wreck a deal, officials say.

Zarif says the six powers are now the ones who must compromise.

"In negotiations, both sides must show flexibility," Zarif said on Twitter. "We have, and are ready

to make a good deal for all. We await our counterparts' readiness."

Western officials close to the talks said it was up to Iran to compromise on the remaining sticking points.

"The serious but difficult work continues," a senior US State Department official said. "We expect the pace to intensify as we assess if an understanding is possible."

Israel meanwhile kept up its public campaign against the possible nuclear deal with Teheran.

"I say here, this morning, in the name of the government of Israel, this is a bad deal, full of holes," Strategic Affairs Minister Yuval Steinitz told Israel Radio.

A key point in the framework accord the sides are trying to agree by Tuesday is expected to be the duration of the agreement, which officials from the six-power group said would have to be in place for more than 10 years.

The framework accord should be followed by a comprehensive deal by 30 June that includes full technical details.

Reuters

Austria, Slovenia, Croatia discuss energy cooperation amid row over nuclear power

VIENNA, 29 March — Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann met with his Croatian and Slovenian counterparts as well as European Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic on Saturday for talks on energy cooperation.

Faymann said the talks with Croatian and Slovenian Prime Ministers Zoran Milanovic and Miro Cerar were centered around "energy and economic cooperation," while Austria once again took up its position against nuclear energy, Austrian broadcaster ORF reported.

The Austrian Chancellor criticized the Krsko Nuclear Power Plant that lies in Slovenia, not far from the Austrian border, saying it provides unsustainable nuclear energy.

He conceded however that Slovenia should be offered an alternative within the European Union (EU)'s energy union framework, which would provide joint research and development projects.

"The better this energy union becomes, the more convincing the alternative (will be)," he said.

Sefcovic, who also chairs the energy union, said the project "must not be of EU institutions," and the population must support it. "The goal is that energy is safe and affordable," he said, which includes lowering the acquisition cost as well as creating "better and more intelligent networks."

Milanovic stressed the importance of the planned liquefied natural gas terminal on Krk Island in Croatia. He said his country currently obtains 20 percent of its energy from renewable sources and would like to increase the amount, adding that there is at present no apparent alternative to nuclear energy.

Cerar said Slovenia is on "the right track" in obtaining electricity from renewable sources, and also hoped for greater integration in the EU.

"I have told Commissioner Sefcovic that the EU must champion even more innovative approaches," he said.—Xinhua

54.6% seek Abe apology in war anniversary statement

TOKYO, 29 March — A majority of people surveyed think Prime Minister Shinzo Abe should express regret and apologize for Japan's colonial rule and aggression in marking the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, a Kyodo News poll found on Sunday.

While 54.6 percent said those expressions should be part of Abe's anniversary statement to be issued in August, 30.5 percent said otherwise, the telephone survey conducted over the weekend showed. On Abe's bid to enact legislation for Japan to play a greater security role, 49.8 percent were opposed to his doing so during the ongoing parliamentary session through June. Opinions were divided on enabling Japan to exercise the right to collective self-defense, with 40.6 percent supporting and 45 percent opposed to such legislation. Also, 77.9 percent said prior Diet approval should be necessary for the Self-Defence Forces to be sent overseas for logistical support for other countries' militaries. Abe's Cabinet approval rating edged up 1.2 percentage points from the previous survey seven weeks earlier to 55.4 percent. The disapproval rating was 32.7 percent, down 0.2 point.—Kyodo News

Los Angeles train hits car on tracks and derails, 21 hurt

LOS ANGELES, 29 March — A Los Angeles commuter train struck a car that turned in front of it near the University of Southern California campus on Saturday, derailing into a major thoroughfare and injuring 21 people, two of them seriously.

The car, a silver Hyundai Sonata, was left crumpled and unrecognizable and pinned against a pole alongside the tracks by the collision shortly before 11 am PST (1800 GMT), according to a Reuters witness. The lead train car jumped the tracks, crashing through a metal fence and across a grass-covered median before coming to rest in the middle of Exposition Boulevard.

The operator of the three-car Metrolink train suffered serious injuries, said Donald Frazeur, assistant chief of the Los Angeles Fire Department. He said the driver of the Sonata, a man who had to be removed from his car with the "jaws of life" tool, was in grave condition.

Nineteen other people suffered minor injuries and ten of them were transported to hospitals for treatment, Frazeur said. Emergency responders set up a triage area on a lawn in front of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles.

Authorities said an initial investigation showed that both the train and the Sonata were travelling eastbound on Exposition Boulevard when the Sonata turned in front of the train and was struck, dislodging the lead train car from the tracks when it became wedged against the pole.

Officials said the investigation would determine



A Los Angeles commuter train that struck a vehicle on the tracks near the University of Southern California campus, is seen in this picture in Los Angeles, California, on 28 March, 2015.—REUTERS

how fast the train was going at the time of the collision, but typically travel through that stretch of the tracks at about 35 miles per hour

Exposition Boulevard, a main artery through downtown Los Angeles, was shut down in both directions as crews surrounded the white, black and yellow train, which is painted with "Heads up, watch for trains," in large letters on the side.

The crash was the latest among several train and road vehicle wrecks to occur in different parts of the United States over the past few months.

In February, about 50 people were hurt and an engineer fatally injured when a Los Angeles-bound Metrolink train struck a pick-up truck, flipping over three double-decker rail cars and tearing apart the truck. Three weeks earlier in a suburb of New York City, six people were killed when a Metro-North commuter train struck a car at a crossing and derailed.—Reuters

WORLD

Irish governing parties see poll boost as Sinn Fein falters



Ireland's Prime Minister Enda Kenny

DUBLIN, 29 March — Support for Ireland's governing parties has increased sharply since December and support for left-wing challenger Sinn Fein has fallen in the same period, a leading pollster said on Saturday.

The improvement coincides follows strong economic data, including 2014 economic growth of almost 5 percent, which the government hopes will provide a boost before elections due in early 2016.

The Fine Gael Party of

Prime Minister Enda Kenny is supported by 27 percent of voters, according to the monthly Red C/Sunday Business Post poll, up from 21 percent in December. Junior coalition partner Labour was on 10 percent, up from 6 percent in December.

Sinn Fein, the former political wing of the Irish Republican Army, which has seen its support surge during seven years of austerity budgets, posted its worst result in the poll in a year with 17 percent, down seven points since December.

A rival Irish Times/IP-SOS-MRBI poll on Friday also showed a significant improvement for Fine Gael since December, rising from 19 percent to 24 percent. But that poll also put Sinn Fein on 24 percent, tied for first place.—Reuters

Crash pilot was psychiatric patient, planned big gesture

BERLIN, 29 March — The co-pilot suspected of deliberately crashing an airliner, killing 150 people, had told his girlfriend he was planning a spectacular gesture so “everyone will know my name”, a German daily said on Saturday.

The *Bild* newspaper published an interview with a woman who said she had had a relationship in 2014 with Andreas Lubitz, the man French prosecutors believe locked himself alone in the cockpit of the Germanwings Airbus on Tuesday and steered it into the French Alps, killing all on board.

“When I heard about the crash, I remembered a sentence... he said: ‘One day I’ll do something that will change the system, and then everyone will know my name and remember it,’” said the woman, a flight attendant the paper gave the pseudonym of Maria W.

“I didn’t know what he meant by that at the time, but now it’s obvious,” she said. “He did it because he realized that, due to his health problems, his big dream of working at Lufthansa, of a having job as a pilot, and as a pilot on long-distance flights, was nearly impossible.” “He never talked much about his illness, only that he was in psychiatric treatment,” she told the paper, adding they finally broke up because she

was afraid of him.

“He would suddenly freak out in conversations and yell at me,” she recalled. “At night he would wake up screaming ‘we are crashing’ because he had nightmares. He could be good at hiding what was really going on inside him.”

The woman also told *Bild*: “We always talked a lot about work and then he became a different person. He became upset about the conditions we worked under: too little money, fear of losing the contract, too much pressure.”

A Lufthansa spokesman declined to comment. The company and its low-cost subsidiary Germanwings took out full-page advertisements in major German and French newspapers on Saturday, expressing “deepest mourning”.

Lufthansa and Germanwings offered condolences to the friends and families of the passengers and crew and thanked the thousands of people in France, Spain and Germany it said had helped since the crash.

German officials said there would be a ceremony on 17 April in Cologne Cathedral attended by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and senior officials from other countries including France and Spain.

Reuters

French local election runoff to test far-right strength

PARIS, 29 March — French voters elect thousands of local councillors on Sunday in a test of the far-right National Front’s growing hold on grassroots politics.

While the FN came second in the first round of voting last week, in a setback to its claims that it has become the country’s first party, it did win one in four votes and is all but certain to see a big jump from its current two councillors.

The anti-immigrant, anti-EU party, which under the helm of Marine Le Pen has worked hard to appeal to mainstream voters, has based its new strategy on building up a base of locally elected officials.

It saw eight of its candidates elected in the first round last week and could

see 100-220 more elected on Sunday, an Ifop poll showed.

In total, 4108 councillors with limited powers over roads, schools and social services will be elected in the two rounds of a ballot that usually attracts limited interest but has this time become a test case for the two main parties and Le Pen.

Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy has put a faltering comeback back on track by steering his conservatives to an unexpected first place in the first round.

But he needs a big win on Sunday to help consolidate his challenged hold on his conservative UMP party and get its nomination for the 2017 presidential election.

Opinion polls see the UMP and its allies winning nearly twice as much seats

as President Francois Hollande’s embattled Socialists and its partners.

The complex election system, in which a duo of councilors is elected per constituency and they then vote to decide on 98 “departements” assemblies’ presidents, means much negotiation will follow to see how many “departements” each party has won.

Both the Socialists and the UMP have ruled out striking an alliance with the FN to jointly chair departements.

The far-right party, which came in first in EU elections last year, is hoping to win one or two departements at most due to unfavourable electoral arithmetic but eyes a bigger win in regional polls later this year.

Paris and Lyon,



France's far-right National Front leader Marine Le Pen gestures as she speaks during a political rally as part of the campaign for the second round in the French local elections in Henin-Beaumont, northern France on 25 March, 2015.—REUTERS

France’s two biggest cities, are excluded from Sunday’s election. In these cities the FN vote tends to be smaller than in the rest of the country.—Reuters

Thousands march in Indiana to protest law seen targeting gays



Demonstrators gather at Monument Circle to protest a controversial religious freedom bill recently signed by Governor Mike Pence, during a rally in Indianapolis on 28 March, 2015.—REUTERS

INDIANAPOLIS, 29 March — Thousands of people marched in Indiana’s largest city on Saturday to protest a state law that supporters contend promotes religious freedom but detractors see as a covert move to support discrimination against gay people.

Waving signs reading “No hate in our state” and carrying rainbow flags, a crowd of at least 2,000 people including Democratic elected officials rallied the same day that business-rating website Angie’s List Inc put on hold its plans to expand its Indianapolis operation with new offices, citing

the new law.

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act was passed overwhelmingly by the Republican led-state legislature and signed into law on Thursday by Indiana Governor Mike Pence.

Supporters say the legislation will keep the government from forcing business owners to act against strongly held religious beliefs. Opponents say it is discriminatory against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and broader than other states’ religious freedom laws.

“This bill is not about discrimination and does

not in any way legalize discrimination in Indiana,” said Pence’s spokeswoman, Kara Brooks.

That statement did little to assuage the concerns of Rick Sutton, one of the marchers.

“It’s a great sound bite but it’s not the truth. I’m not protected. LGBT citizens are not protected,” Sutton said. “If we were protected, we would not be there right now.”

Indiana’s also drew criticism from business leaders.

“Angie’s List is open to all and discriminates against none and we are hugely dis-

appointed in what this bill represents,” company chief executive Bill Oesterle said.

Seattle’s openly gay mayor, Ed Murray, said on Saturday he will ban city employees from travelling to Indiana on official business.

“None of our taxpayer dollars should go toward supporting this discriminatory law,” Murray said.

The National Basketball Association and Women’s National Basketball Association said in a joint statement the basketball leagues would ensure all fans, players and employees feel welcome at events in Indiana and elsewhere.

“The game of basketball is grounded in long established principles of inclusion and mutual respect,” they said.

On Friday, Apple Inc’s Tim Cook, one of the most prominent openly gay American CEOs, joined other executives, including Salesforce.com Inc’s Marc Benioff, in blasting the law.

A day after Indiana’s move, the Arkansas Senate overwhelmingly approved a similar bill, which Governor Asa Hutchinson, a Republican, has said he would sign into law. Wal-Mart Stores Inc, which has its home office in Bentonville, Arkansas, criticized that measure.

Reuters

PERSPECTIVES

Monday, 30 March, 2015

A mechanism to monitor dishonest business activities is needed

By Myint Win Thein

As more people in Myanmar are now working in partnership with more foreign companies, there are opportunities as well as traps for them.

Recently, a businessman from a neighbouring country registered a company in Myanmar for an advertising website in his home country. People who worked with him were required to

deposit their own money before they could work with him and had to post advertisements on the website to get their salaries. The amount of salaries depended on the amount of money deposited. For some time, people working with him were paid salaries regularly and other people began to take interest in his advertising firm. When he knew a lot of local people started taking interest in his company, he raised the salaries for workers and invited more deposit money from other people who were interested in his company.

A large number of people deposited their money with him but he disappeared from Myanmar a few days later with almost all the deposited money. Although some of his victims filed complaints against him at police stations, no effective action could be taken as he had been out of Myanmar. Company registration authorities could not do anything to help the victims. It is also not

known whether the embassy of the foreign businessman cooperate with authorities to arrest him.

To prevent such undesirable incidents in the future, it is necessary to set up a mechanism to monitor the activities of dishonest businessmen who are likely to break law in order to protect the interests of local people.

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Innovations in Governance and Public Administration in India

Sonu Trivedi

Innovations and 'Best practices' are considered to be the life line for effective delivery of public service in any country. Innovative trends in government and administrative practices offers tremendous opportunity for good governance in India. For a better public administrative mechanism, it is important to have innovations in public institutions. Public administration also has to adapt to new market oriented approaches for the delivery of public services. It has to minimize bureaucratic delays and reduce the administrative burden, thereby enhancing public satisfaction and increasing efficiency and effectiveness of public administration. Innovations in public administration emphasizes on the role of public managers in providing high quality services that citizens value and advocates increasing managerial autonomy, particularly, by reducing central agency controls. Under this context, this article looks at the restructuring of the Planning Commission in India and re-christening it as NITI (National Institution for Transforming India) Aayog, particularly under the milieu of political economy of reform and innovations in public administration. However, any discussion on the reform process in Indian state must attend to the broader process of economic change that has been underway for decades now and which provides a background to the current phase of economic liberalization and market-based reforms that began in 1991.

Development Strategy Model in India: Crisis and Contradictions

India started with the development strategy of economic planning which envisaged for an interventionist state based on socio-economic realities of Indian politics. The national development which followed subsequently was based on complex interaction between the economic and political strategies, many of them had inherent contradictions. These were reflected, according to Francis Frankel, in the "paradox of accommodative politics and radical social change". Another significant contradiction was visible in the *Nehruvian* model of development based on the conflicting ideologies of capitalism on

the one hand and communism on the other. The developmental model that was pursued from then on, under a 'democratic pattern of socialism', came to be known as a new model for Asian and African development. On the one hand, it stood for socialistic principles of state ownership, regulation and control, on the other hand, it envisaged for liberal economic policies and incentives to private investment. At this critical juncture, in contrast to many liberals and socialists, *Gandhian* intellectuals advocated for a decentralized, egalitarian and cooperative order which was in contradiction to the goal of Parliamentary democracy in India. Furthermore, the dual goal of 'economic growth' and 'social justice' were also irreconcilable within the existing framework of accommodative politics. Another major contradiction was visible in reconciling the ideals of 'political democracy' with 'socio-economic inequalities'. Over the years, there has been contradiction between the development strategy of 'planning' and the 'market oriented' economic framework in recent times.

Reforms and Structural Change

The national leadership's inability to carry out radical social change through peaceful and parliamentary means led India into an economic and political impasse that prevented progress towards the goals of growth and social justice. The attempt to achieve both economic development and reduction of disparities, in the absence of basic institutional changes resulted in the worst of both worlds—achieving neither growth, nor redistribution. The socio-economic realities of Indian society which legitimized for an interventionist role of the state in the initial years after independence, has witnessed a complete transformation to a market-based regulatory state.

State led industrialization unleashed in the 1950s witnessed a 'U' turn in its strategy of development in the post 1990s. From a 'nanny state', it has been transformed into a 'facilitator' of goods and services. As a result of the forces of market led growth under the impact of liberalization, citizens have been transformed into consumers gaining from the process of reform and good governance. They have been given options to choose

between appropriate providers at minimum cost. The result has been an accelerating pace of de-regulation and privatization, reversing the previous trend of the expansion of the public sector.

Structurally, the change has been from the rigid, hierarchical and bureaucratic form of public administration to a flexible market based form of public management. The change was not merely in the form and style. There has been a remarkable change in the role of government in the society with its focus on efficiency, consumerism and competition. This transformation in the role of the state has been theorized by Osborne and Gaebler in their path breaking publication titled, "Reinventing Government" in 1993. Its publication immediately caught the attention of anti-bureaucracy campaigners, and the publication was accorded a warm welcome, heralding the birth of a new form of public management. This new model of public management, also known as 'Entrepreneurial Government' envisaged for promoting competition between diverse providers of goods and services.

NITI Aayog

It is in this context that the establishment of National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog replacing the decades-old Planning Commission becomes significant. NITI Aayog is envisaged to emerge as a "think-tank" that will provide Governments at the central and state levels with relevant strategic and technical advice across the spectrum of key elements of policy. There have been wide-ranging discussions on the role and function of the new institution to replace the Planning Commission ever since the Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned about it in his Independence Day address on 15th August 2014. Promoting cooperative federalism and giving States greater freedom in designing their development plans are two of the key objectives behind the setting up of the NITI Aayog. It is further expected to focus on quick resolution of inter-departmental and Centre-State issues to speed up the pace of implementation of infrastructure projects. It seeks to provide a critical direction and strategic input into the development process. The NITI Aayog also aims at putting an end to slow and delayed implementation of policy, by fostering better Inter-Ministry coordination and better Centre-State coordination.

The NITI Aayog will create a knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurial support

system through a collaborative community of national and international experts, practitioners and partners. It will offer a platform for resolution of inter-sectoral and inter-departmental issues in order to accelerate the implementation of the development agenda. In addition, the NITI Aayog will monitor and evaluate the implementation of programmes, and focus on technology upgradation and capacity building. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has noted that one of the objectives of NITI Aayog is to establish a dynamic institutional mechanism where eminent individuals outside the Government system could contribute to policy making.

The NITI Aayog is not expected to undertake the five-year Plan process, and has removed allocation of Plan funds from its domain. Unlike the Planning Commission, the new body does not have the power to allocate funds to states or to recommend plan budgets to the finance ministry. Yet, it still handles the infrastructure division that was set up at the Planning Commission to monitor the performance of infrastructural projects. **NITI Aayog aims to accomplish the following objectives and opportunities:** (Source: <http://pmindia.gov.in/en/tag/niti-aayog/>)

- An administration paradigm in which the Government is an "enabler" rather than a "provider of first and last resort."
- Progress from "food security" to focus on a mix of agricultural production, as well as actual returns that farmers get from their produce.
- Ensure that India is an active player in the debates and deliberations on the global commons.
- Ensure that the economically vibrant middle-class remains engaged, and its potential is fully realized.
- Leverage India's pool of entrepreneurial, scientific and intellectual human capital.
- Incorporate the significant geo-economic and geo-political strength of the Non-Resident Indian Community.
- Use urbanization as an opportunity to create a wholesome and secure habitat through the use of modern technology.
- Use technology to reduce opacity and potential for misadventures in governance.

(See page 9)

Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham attends opening of seven historic sites in Mandalay



Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham and wife Daw Nan Shwe Hmon visit seven religious and historic sites in Mandalay.—MNA

MANDALAY, 29 March — Seven historic sites were opened in Mandalay on Sunday, attended by Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham and wife Daw Nan Shwe Hmon, Union Ministers U Win Myint, Dr Than Aung and U Soe Win, and Mandalay Region Chief Minister U Ye Myint.

The vice president and his wife, together with well-wishers and members of the Sangha led by Sitagu World Buddhist Academy's Chancellor Sayadaw Dr Ashin Nanissara, planted a Bodhi Tree.

The vice president and wife, union ministers and high-ranking officials presented offertories to members of the Sangha, followed by a sermon delivered by Sayadaw Bhaddanta Sasanabhivamsa.

King Mindon of Konbaung Dynasty donated the seven historic sites, which were Mahalokamarajin Kuthodaw Pagoda, Maha Atula-weiyon Atumashi Monastery, Maha Patthana Golden Prayers' Hall, Thudhamma

Hostel, Pitaka House, Mandalay Palace Wall and Mote.

Their construction started in 1221 Myanmar Era and was complete two years later. They were destroyed by fire during the Second World War. These sites were reconstructed at a cost of over K 5 billion contributed by Thiri Thudhamma Manijotadaya Dr Kyaw Win and wife Thudamma Theingi Daw Myint Myint Than.

In the afternoon, Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham and his entourage visited Mandalay Dental University, where he met faculty members and staff.

The vice president urged faculty members of the university to improve the quality and capacity of students, pledging teaching aids to the university.

After signing in the visitors' book of the university, he toured the university.

Mandalay Dental University came into existence on 1 October 1998 and then was affiliated to Mandalay University of Medicine on 29 November 1999.—MNA

Peace talk for Kayah State held in Loikaw

LOIKAW, 29 March —The Kayah State peace talks took place at the hall of Kayah State government in Loikaw on 28 March, with an opening address by Vice Chairman of the Union Peace-making Work Committee Union Minister at the President Office U Aung Min.

A delegation led by

Union Minister U Aung Min and a delegation led by Vice Chairman of Kayinni National Progressive Party-KNPP U Khu Oo Rei openly discussed peace process in Kayah State.

Also present at the talk were union ministers U Soe Thane, U Ohn Myint, U Khin Yi and U Than Htay,

Kayah State Chief Minister U Khin Maung Oo, members of UPWC, ministers of Kayah State, and officials of Myanmar Peace Center.

MNA

UPWC and KNPP delegates shaking hands at peace talks in Loikaw.—MNA



Innovations in Governance and . . .

(from page 8)

The NITI Aayog aims to enable India to better face complex challenges, through the following: (Source: <http://pmindia.gov.in/en/tag/niti-aayog/>)

- Leveraging of India's demographic dividend, and realization of the potential of youth, men and women, through education, skill development, elimination of gender bias, and employment.
- Elimination of poverty, and the chance for every Indian to live a life of dignity and self-respect.
- Redressal of inequalities based on gender bias, caste and economic disparities.
- Integrate villages institutionally into the development process.
- Policy support to more than 50 million small businesses, which are a major source of employment creation.
- Safeguarding of our environmental and ecological assets.

Caveats and the Road Ahead

Innovations in public institutions call for bridging the gap between the citizen's expectations and delivery of public services. Deliberations are being carried out by NITI Aayog on how to make the implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes more effective. As a departure from the erstwhile policy of 'mapping poverty', the new body would look at other social indicators prepared by Socio-Economic Caste Census to assess the impact of social schemes on the poor. Capacity building and enabling communities will go a long run in effective implementation of these policies in the future.

It also faces the challenge of bridging the digital divide between the haves and the have nots. Digitalisation and e-governance provides a direct 'interface' between citizens on the one hand and administration on the other. It aims at achieving citizen centric 'responsive' government and adds 'transparency' to the administrative procedures. It will be critical in building up of a robust and efficient knowledge network for

innovation and strategic thinking.

The new institution is faced with the dilemma of providing a harmonious blend between the demands of 'economic liberalization' and 'governmental regulation' amidst a vibrant private sector emerging and posing a threat to the monopolizing tendency of the 'Leviathan'. Grass root planning and harmonizing it with the state level and national planning is also going to be a daunting task. How to disseminate knowledge and convert it into successful practices would be a formidable task before the new institution.

So far as evaluating the proposed function of NITI Aayog, its role in disbursement of funds has been subject to criticism. There are three main channels through which funds get devolved from Centre to the State—through the finance Commission; planning Commission; and discretionary transfers. The elimination of the Planning Commission would mean that planned transfers would now be fated out through the finance ministry. This would entail both a definite reduction in the total magnitude of transfers and a possible increase in the Centre's control over State's plan.

NITI Aayog has been accused of leading towards greater centralization of power because of the abolition of National Development Council (NDC) and its replacement by Regional Councils. These Regional Councils are likely to be a purely formal political body concerned with 'political alliances' rather than 'planning' on the basis of developmental issues. These regional consultations replacing NDC meetings are more likely to be political occasions where the states would be at the mercy of the Centre.

According to Prabhat Patnaik, "the transition from the Planning Commission to the NITI Aayog reflects the completion of the transition from a state professing anti-imperialism to a neo-liberal state". Nevertheless, success of NITI Aayog in transforming India will depend upon its nature and effective functioning, power and position of those in the authority and the quality of the people who will lead the institution forward.

(Sonu Trivedi teaches at Delhi University)

Tunisian forces kill nine militants in south before solidarity march

TUNIS, 29 March — Tunisian forces killed nine militants during a raid in a southern region as part of crackdown following the attack on the Tunis Bardo museum that targeted foreign tourists, an interior ministry official said on Sunday.

The operations late on Saturday in Gafsa region came hours before thousands of Tunisians were expected to join world leaders including French President Francois Hollande in a march of solidarity in Tunis.

“Our forces killed nine terrorists in a large operation in Sidi Aich in Gafsa. They also captured arms and explosives,” said Interior Ministry spokesman Mohamed Ali Aroui.

Two gunmen killed



Participants at the World Social Forum hold Palestinian flags during a march at the end of the 2015 World Social Forum (WSF) in solidarity with Palestinians, in Tunis on 28 March, 2015.—REUTERS

21 tourists at the Bardo Museum nearly two weeks ago, in one of the worst at-

tacks in the North African country that mostly avoided violence since its 2011 uprising against autocrat Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali.

A fourth French na-

tional died of her wounds following the 18 March attack on the national museum, the French president's office said in a statement on Saturday.

Japanese, Polish, Spanish and Colombian tourists were among those killed in the attack the government says was aimed at destroying Tunisia's vital tourism industry, which makes up around seven percent of its economy.

Islamic State has claimed the Bardo attack though the Tunisian government has said fighters from a local group, Okba Ibn Nafaa, that has been mostly based the Chaambi mountains bordering Algeria, were involved.

The Bardo attack underscored how Islamist

militant loyalties are blurring as they seek a new North African front, especially in Libya, where political chaos and factional fighting has allowed Islamic State to gain an outpost.

On Sunday, thousands of Tunisians are expected to take part in a solidarity march with French leader Hollande and Italy's Prime Minister Matteo Renzi among the foreign dignitaries taking part in the demonstration.

Four years after its “Arab Spring” uprising against Ben Ali, Tunisia has been praised by the international community as a model of democratic transition with a politics of compromise, a new constitution and free elections. — Reuters

Fighting, airstrikes throughout Yemen as dialogue remains distant

ADEN, 29 March — Yemeni fighters loyal to the Saudi-backed President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi clashed with Iranian-allied Houthi fighters on Sunday in downtown Aden, the absent leader's last major foothold in the country.

Hadi loyalists in the southern port city reported a gun battle in the central Crater district in which three people were killed, and said they recaptured the airport, which has changed hands several times in the last five days of fighting.

The Health Ministry, loyal to the Houthi fighters who control the capital, said Saudi-led air strikes had killed 35 people and

wounded 88 overnight. The figures could not be independently confirmed.

The Houthi fighters, representing a Shi'ite minority that makes up around a third of Yemen's population, emerged as the most powerful force in the Arab world's poorest country last year when they captured the capital Sanaa.

Saudi Arabia has rallied Sunni Muslim Arab countries in an air campaign to support Hadi, who relocated to Aden in February and is now in Riyadh after leaving Yemen in the past week. The fighting has brought civil war to a country that was already sliding into chaos and which had been a battlefield for the se-

cret US drone war against al-Qaeda.

In the eastern province of Shabwa, tribal sources said armed tribesmen were fighting a major battle with the Houthis and their army allies at a military base, killing around 30 Houthis. This also could not be independently confirmed.

Saudi-led coalition warplanes struck military targets at airports in the capital Sanaa and in Hodeida, the main Red Sea port.

In the northern city of Saada, a Houthi stronghold near the Saudi border, strikes hit Houthi military bases belonging to the militia and their ally, former President Ali Abdullah Saleh who still controls

most army units.

Saleh stood down after a 2011 uprising but still wields wide influence in Yemen. He appealed on Saturday to Arab leaders meeting in Egypt to halt their four-day offensive and resume talks on political transition in Yemen, promising that neither he nor his relatives would seek the presidency.

In an apparent rebuttal, a Yemeni official said Hadi had sacked Saleh's son as ambassador to the United Arab Emirates.

Saudi Arabia's military intervention, is the latest front in its widening contest with Iran for power in the region, a proxy struggle also playing out

in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.

Iran denies accusations from Sunni Gulf rulers that it has armed the Houthis, who follow the Zaidi branch of Shi'ite Islam.

Zaidi Shi'ites led a thousand-year kingdom in Yemen until 1962. Former leader Saleh himself is a member of the sect, although he sought to crush the Houthis while in office, only allying himself with them after his downfall.

Reuters

Pakistan sends 747 jumbo jets to evacuate distraught nationals from Yemen

PESHAWAR, 29 March — Pakistan, which has yet to decide whether to offer military support to a Saudi-led campaign in Yemen, is flying jumbo jets to the Middle Eastern country to evacuate hundreds of nationals, a Defence Ministry official said on Sunday.

Saudi Arabia evacuated dozens of diplomats from Yemen on Saturday and the United Nations pulled out international staff after a third night of Saudi-led air strikes trying to stem advances by Iranian-allied Houthi fighters.

Pakistan TV has interviewed distraught nationals in Yemen who have pleaded for help, saying nothing was being down to rescue them.

“The Saudi civil aviation authorities had given us clearance to send our passenger planes to Yemen,” a Defence Ministry official told Reuters.

“In the first step, two jumbo jets will be sent to Yemen on Sunday to bring back the Pakistanis.”

A convoy of 600 Pakistanis was moving towards the Red Sea port of Hodeida, where “arrangements for their brief stay before their return journey to Pakistan have been made”, Foreign Secretary Aizaz Chaudhry was quoted by media as saying.

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif told parliament on Friday Pakistan had made no decision on whether to give military support to the Saudi-led coalition, while pledging to defend Saudi Arabia against any threat.

“We have made no decision to participate in this war. We didn't make any promise. We have not promised any military support to the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen,” Asif said. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, in a telephone call with Saudi King Salman on Saturday, offered “all potentials of the Pakistan army”, media quoted the Saudi Press Agency as saying. Asif told Reuters there was no danger of Pakistan getting caught up in a sectarian war.

Pakistan has been plagued with sectarian violence for years, with militant Sunni Muslim groups targeting its Shi'ite minority.

“So many minorities and sects live in Pakistan,” Asif told Reuters. “Whatever assurances we give Saudi Arabia is to defend its territorial integrity, but I assure that there is no danger of us getting involved in a sectarian war.”

Sharif has long enjoyed close relations with the Saudi royal family. After his second term as prime minister was ended by a military coup in 1999, he went into exile in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia last year loaned \$1.5 billion to Pakistan to help Islamabad shore up its foreign exchange reserves, meet debt-service obligations and undertake large energy and infrastructure projects.—Reuters



Foreigners wait for their flights as they prepare to leave Yemen via Sanaa Airport on 28 March, 2015.—REUTERS

Guinea president announces new emergency measures in Ebola fight



Children come forward to get their feet disinfected after a Red Cross worker explained that they are spraying bleach, and not spraying the village with the Ebola virus, in Forecariah on 30 Jan, 2015.—REUTERS

CONAKRY, 29 March — Guinea's President Alpha Conde announced on Saturday new emergency measures enabling authorities to restrict movements in western Guinea where Ebola transmission continues a year after the epidemic was declared.

More than 10,300 people have died from Ebola in West Africa and while cases are thought to have peaked, Guinea is struggling to stamp out the virus partly

due to often violent resistance to officials working to end it. Following a dip in new cases in January, they have spiked again since early March in and around the capital, prompting officials to announce a new phase of the epidemic in Guinea.

"I declare in the districts of Forecariah, Coyah, Dubreka, Boffa and Kindia a reinforcement of emergency measures for a period of 45 days," Conde said on state television late on Saturday.

"Wherever the need may be, throughout this period, measures of restriction and confinement will be taken," he said in what would be a first for the country since the outbreak began.

Food and medical supplies would be given to the affected communities, Conde added. He not specify where or when such restrictions would take effect. Neighbouring Sierra Leone is currently implementing a nationwide lockdown as part

of a drive to accelerate the end of the epidemic.

Reuters reported last week that three doctors in a Conakry hospital had been infected with the virus because of a lack of infection control in a sign that the lapses that fueled the outbreak a year ago are dogging the final stages of the fight.

Since then, a further six medical staff across three clinics in western Guinea have been infected, including two doctors, according to a report written by France's coordination team which provides technical assistance to Guinea on Ebola. "Indefensible instances of negligence are showing up at the heart of our health care system," Conde said. Centres where medical staff had caught the virus will be closed, he added. President Conde, who faces re-election in October, has set a target to get to zero Ebola cases by mid-April. The bauxite and iron ore-rich country is expected to take a \$2 billion hit from Ebola and is trying to lure back investors, especially in the under-exploited resources sector.—Reuters

Best Buy closes all Future Shop stores across Canada, cutting 1,500 jobs

TORONTO, 29 March — Best Buy Canada Ltd. on Saturday announced that it decided to close 66 of the 131 Future Shop electronics chain stores and consolidated the rest in the country.

The company said the decision of shutting down the 66 Future Shop locations became effective immediately in the day. The remaining 65 Future Shop stores will be closed for consolidation and transition into the Best Buy brand and reopen for business one week later.

The reshuffle will lead to a loss of 1,500 jobs, including 500 full-time positions, said Best Buy Canada in a press release.

The company explained it has reviewed all locations for Future Shop and Best Buy stores and found some were adjacent to each other, often in the same parking lot. After the consolidation, Best Buy will now have a total of 192 locations across Canada, including 136 large-format stores and 56 Best Buy Mobile stores.

"Currently, 80 percent of our customers are within a 15 minute drive to a store and this won't change," Ron Wilson, president and COO of Best Buy Canada, said in the press release. "We will continue to have a strong store presence in all major markets in Canada."

The sudden store closings took many employees and customers by surprise across Canada on Saturday morning. Outside a Future Shop store in Toronto's North York Centre, an employee, who asked not to be identified, said they were called into a meeting early morning, but they had no other choices but to accept the lay-off severance package deal. A woman passer-by said she barely noticed the sign showing the store that was closed, because she seldom visited the brick-and-mortar shop since doing shopping online.

The electronics market used to have good performance but it went on decline in recent years due to digital market change and online shopping trend, retail analysts say.

The first Future Shop store opened in Vancouver in 1982. By 1993, the chain stores had become the country's largest retailer of computer and consumer electronics and operated 139 locations across Canada as of January 2013. There followed by some downsizing and closure in the coming years.

In November 2001, the US consumer electronics giant Best Buy purchased the Future Shop chain stores for 580 million US dollars.

Xinhua



A man looks at a sign posted on a Future Shop store's door, notifying customers that the location has closed in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, on 28 March, 2015. Best Buy Canada Ltd announced that it decided to close 66 of the 131 Future Shop electronics chain stores and consolidated the rest in the country on Saturday. As the largest Canadian retailer of computer and consumer electronics, the Future Shop established in 1982 and was acquired by the American consumer electronics store chain Best Buy for \$580 million in November 2001.—XINHUA

US stocks end higher amid GDP report

NEW YORK, 29 March — US stocks posted modest gains on Friday, with all the three major indices snapping their four-day losing streaks, as investors were digesting the final revision to the fourth quarter real gross domestic product (GDP).

The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 34.43 points, or 0.19 percent, to 17,712.66. The S&P 500 rose 4.87 points, or 0.24 percent, to 2,061.02. The Nasdaq Composite Index increased 27.86 points, or 0.57 percent, to 4,891.22. The US economy expanded at an annual rate of 2.2 percent in the fourth quarter of 2014, unchanged from the second estimate released last month, the US Commerce Department announced on Friday.

The GDP growth stays unrevised due to the larger-than-expected increases in exports and personal consumption expenditures and smaller-than-estimated change in private inventories, according to the report.

US quarterly corporate profits over the same period fell for the first time since 2008. Profits from current production decreased 30.4 billion US dollars in the fourth quarter of 2014, in

contrast to an increase of 64.5 billion dollars in the third quarter. "The relative weakness in Q4 has carried over to the first quarter of this year, with the Atlanta Fed's GDP tracker currently projecting a 0.2 percent GDP growth for Q1 2015. It is crucial to see whether Q1 weakness will prove 'transitory' as it did in 2014 or if the slowdown influences business investment and hiring in the second quarter," said Jay Morelock, an economist at FTN Financial, in a note. US consumer sentiment rebounded in late March. The final Thomson Reuters/University of Michigan's consumer sentiment index ended March at 93.0, up 1.8 points from mid-month March of 91.2.

Shortly before closing bell on Friday, Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen said on a conference sponsored by the San Francisco Fed, continued improvement in the US economy means a rate hike could come later this year. But Yellen stressed that any rate increases would likely be very gradual.

Analysts said it seems like anytime Yellen talks the market wants to go up.

Despite Friday's mod-

est gains, US equities suffered big losses for the week with the Dow, the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq falling 2.3 percent, 2.2 percent and 2.7 percent, respectively.

The CBOE Volatility Index, often referred to as Wall Street's fear gauge, decreased 4.62 percent to end at 15.07 Friday.

In other markets, crude prices retreated as investors took profit from prior day's heavy gains. Light, sweet crude for May delivery lost 2.56 dollars to settle at 48.87 dollars a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

The dollar went down against most major currencies. In late New York trading, the euro rose to 1.0899 dollars from 1.0872 dollars in the previous session, while the dollar bought 119.10 Japanese yen, lower than 119.24 yen of the previous session.

Gold futures on the COMEX division of the New York Mercantile Exchange snapped its seven-session winning streak as investors took profit from recent gains. The most active gold contract for April delivery lost 5 US dollars, or 0.42 percent, to settle at 1,199.80 dollars per ounce.—Xinhua

Minnesota finds third bird flu infection in commercial poultry

CHICAGO, 29 March — The US Department of Agriculture on Saturday confirmed the third infection of a virulent strain of avian flu in a commercial poultry flock in Minnesota, the nation's top turkey-producing state. A case of H5N2 flu was found in a flock of 39,000 turkeys in Stearns County, which is northwest of Minneapolis, according to a notice from USDA. State officials quarantined the infected farm, and birds there will be culled to prevent the spread of the disease.

Recent infections of avian flu in states stretching from Arkansas to Oregon have prompted overseas buyers to limit imports of US poultry from companies such as Tyson Foods Inc, Pilgrim's Pride Corp and Sanderson Farms Inc.

The USDA is developing a vaccine to protect poultry from new strains of avian flu, including H5N2, but has no plans to distribute it yet.—Reuters

Palau pres welcomes “historical” visit by Japan emperor, empress

KOROR, (Palau), 29 March — Palauan President Tommy Remengesau expressed gratitude for the decision by Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko to visit the West Pacific island nation next month on the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II.

“We are very much honoured and grateful for this historical opportunity for the emperor and the empress to visit Palau,” Remengesau said in a recent interview Friday with *Kyodo News*.

The imperial couple will make a two-day trip from 8 April to Palau, one of the major battlegrounds of the Pacific War, where they will meet Remengesau and visit Japanese and US cenotaphs to pay respect for the war dead.

Remengesau said while his country looks forward to their visit “as an indication of the strong friendship” between Palau and Japan, it will be an important occasion to remember any conflict in the world must be resolved peacefully.

“We support Japan’s efforts for trying to resolve world conflicts always in peaceful intent” since the end of the war, Remengesau said.

An estimated 10,000 Japanese soldiers died in a fierce battle with the US military on Peleliu



Palauan President Tommy Remengesau attends an interview with Kyodo News in Koror, Palau on 27 March, 2015. He expressed gratitude for the decision by Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko to visit the West Pacific island nation next month on the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. — KYODO NEWS

Island in 1944. The Japanese government has collected the soldiers’ remains at various locations on the island since 1953, but those of roughly 2,600 have yet to be found.

Ahead of the visit by the emperor and the empress, Japanese government officials and mem-

bers of bereaved families searched one of the caves used as trenches during the war on Peleliu Island and collected remains believed to be of Japanese soldiers. Remengesau pledged to cooperate in efforts to recover the remains in places not yet searched and in preservation of the cenotaphs.

Remengesau said his country will “try to make the visit as successful as possible,” hoping that the imperial couple will see the way of life in Palau and “get a better understanding of our love and respect for Japan.”

On the first day of their visit, the emperor and the empress will attend a welcome event sponsored by the Palau government, where the presidents and wives of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands will also be present. On the second day, they will meet local residents on Peleliu Island before returning to Japan.

Referring to a recent incident in which a Chinese flag was found mounted on a sunken Japanese wartime supply ship off the coast of Palau, Remengesau said it was an inappropriate act on a protected historical artifact. Placing artificial objects on wartime ruins “are not in line with historical value and significance of those artifacts,” he said.—*Kyodo News*

Even before any ‘Brexit’ vote, UK losing sway in Europe



European Union flags flutter outside the EU Commission headquarters in Brussels on 2 Feb, 2015. — REUTERS

BRUSSELS, 29 March — After decades of punching above its weight in Europe, Britain’s influence in the European Union is waning, even before we know whether a promised referendum on “Brexit” will go ahead.

London’s partners are keen to keep Britain in the 28-nation bloc, but not at any price.

They value its open economy, international outlook, military prowess, democratic culture and able civil servants, even though it remains semi-detached outside the euro currency, the Schengen open border area and much police and judicial cooperation, and with a permanent rebate on its EU budget contribution.

But there is growing frustration in Brussels, Berlin and Paris at the lack of clarity over Prime Minister David Cameron’s goals if he is re-elected on 7 May and seeks to renegotiate Britain’s EU membership and put the result to a vote in 2017.

“The real danger is that they raise demands that cannot be achieved with their partners,” said a person familiar with German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s thinking.

A belief in Cameron’s entourage that Merkel will do whatever it takes to keep Britain on board, to balance out a more statist France, may be a misjudgment. He has twice ended up isolated by making that assumption — when he tried to veto an EU fiscal pact in 2011, and when he sought to block Jean-Claude Juncker as European Commission president last year.

Long-time British allies such as Poland and other eastern Europeans have been alienated by Cameron’s anti-migration rhetoric. Others are loath to ally themselves in EU bargaining to a country that may not be there to repay a favour.

Cameron himself, under pressure from the anti-EU UK Independence Party and Eurosceptics in his own Conservative party, has been deliberately vague about what changes he seeks.

In a campaign television interview last week, he said: “The problem with the European Union at the moment, it has got some good aspects but too many things that drive people mad.”

“People see that it is trying to become too much of a state rather than an organization, it is trying to take too much power.”

When the prime minister called last year for change in the EU treaty to curb free movement of EU migrants, Merkel and other leaders quickly told him that was a non-starter. No one is ready to plunge into a divisive treaty revision that would entail risky plebiscites in states such as France, Ireland and Denmark.

Some EU diplomats are hoping the election result removes the referendum threat. The opposition Labour party has said it would not hold one. But even if it forms a government, uncertainty over Britain’s place in Europe is unlikely to fade for long.

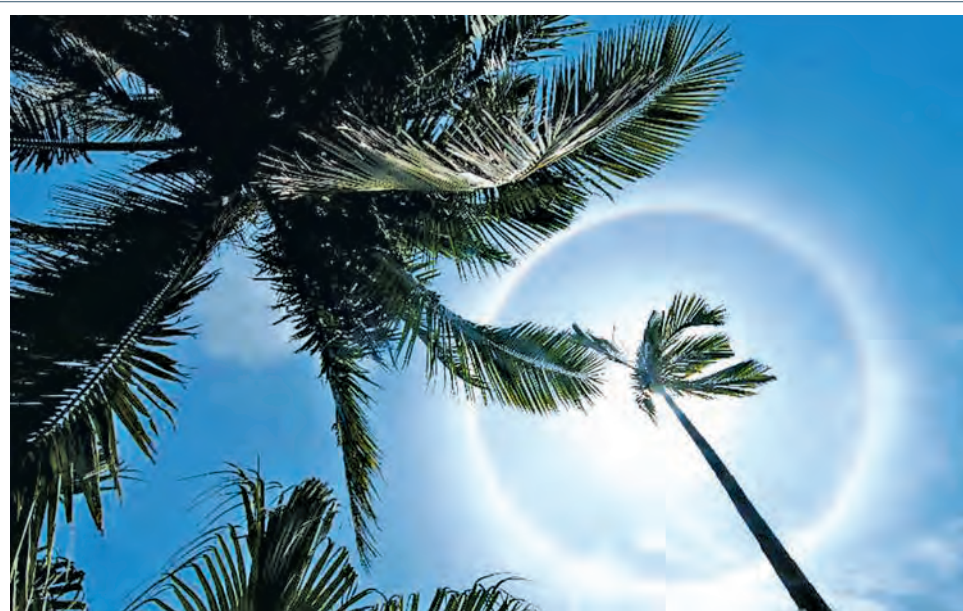
“The UK has had enormous influence on EU policies, but the UK is losing influence,” said Poul Skytte Christoffersen, a veteran Anglophile former Danish ambassador to the EU.

“Nobody wants to join a coalition with the UK because you don’t know where that is leading. The lack of influence will grow as long as you have this lack of clarity. The fact is, this will be a long time,” he said.

He said Denmark, the Nordic countries and the Netherlands, which shared Britain’s attachment to liberal economics and free trade, were deeply worried at its waning influence.

Long over-represented in the upper echelons of the executive European Commission, Britons are a dwindling band. There are now many more German than British officials in key positions.

Some 45 percent of British-born Commission staff are aged 55 and over, heading towards retirement, and Britons make up less than 2 percent of new recruits. They are a wasting asset with uncertain career prospects.—*Reuters*



Solar halo appears in the sky over Boao where the 2015 Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) takes place, south China’s Hainan Province on 29 March, 2015. XINHUA

UN calls for greater member contribution to peacekeeping missions

NEW YORK, 29 March — The United Nations called on member states to provide more resources to peacekeeping missions at its first-ever conference of senior defence officials on Friday.

The meeting brought together defence officials from over 100 member states to discuss issues surrounding the peacekeeping operations whose mandates have become increasingly challenging amid a rise in terror attacks, organized crimes, civil conflicts and health crises.

“The needs are rising, but the

resources fall short,” Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said at the meeting.

More than 130,000 military, police and civilian staff currently serve in 16 UN peacekeeping operations, according to the United Nations. “This is our largest deployment in history. It must be matched by a stronger international partnership for peacekeeping,” Ban said.

The United Nations called on the military officers to provide capabilities needed to fulfill peacekeeping mandates and unite

politically behind its missions.

Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson said conference participants agreed on the need to strengthen intelligence capabilities as threats to peacekeepers are increasing.

Gen Kiyofumi Iwata, chief of staff of Japan’s Ground Self-Defence Force, offered in the meeting to play an active role in training peacekeeping personnel. Iwata told reporters expectations are growing for Japan’s greater role in engineering and hygiene areas.—*Kyodo News*

GENERAL

Cabinet minister to quash Okinawa gov order to halt US base work



Okinawa Gov. Takeshi Onaga criticizes the central government on 28 March, 2015, at a meeting in the prefectural capital of Naha, after it was reported that the fisheries minister has decided to nullify Onaga's order to a local defence bureau to suspend work on relocating a US military base in the southern island prefecture.

KYODO NEWS

Tokyo, 29 March — The fisheries minister has decided to nullify an order by Okinawa Gov Takeshi Onaga for a local defence bureau to suspend work on the planned relocation of a US military base in the southern island prefecture, sources close to the matter said on Saturday.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi will likely make an announcement on Monday, the sources said.

The decision comes a day after the governor submitted to the ministry

a document to justify his order, which is widely seen as irritating the government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

The action was taken as a counterargument against a complaint filed by the Okinawa Defence Bureau seeking to invalidate the order relating to the bureau's work off the coast of the Henoko district of Nago. The district is the relocation site of the US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station.

But Hayashi sees the bureau's complaint as having more validity, the sources said. If the order is nullified, the defence bureau will be able to continue its work.

Onaga reiterated his view on Saturday that the central government's attempt to move forward the base relocation despite local protests is "unreasonable." At a meeting in Naha attended by Diet members of opposition parties elected from Okinawa, he said, "I hope all of us can generate momentum to prevent the construction of a new base in Henoko."

The focus will shift to what the governor's next move will be, as he has warned he might revoke the permission that the Okinawa government led by his predecessor Hirokazu Nakaima granted to the bureau to carry out the work.

If Hayashi nullifies the governor's order, the prefecture is also considering whether to seek an injunction to invalidate the minister's decision.

Onaga, a former Naha mayor and a base relocation opponent, won the Okinawa gubernatorial election last November, defeating Nakaima.

The showdown started after Onaga ordered the bureau on Monday to stop all work until the end of the month, as the local government wants to conduct a survey as it believes coral reefs outside the designated work area have been damaged by concrete blocks placed by the bureau as weights for floats.

The Okinawa Defence Bureau, an arm of the Defence Ministry, called Onaga's instruction "illegal," saying the coral damage is not at the level that would be regulated by the prefecture, while Onaga insisted the defence bureau's filing of the complaint was "unlawful and should be rejected."

Okinawa is home to around three-quarters of US military installations in Japan and the Futenma relocation has long been both a political and emotional issue. Antimilitary sentiment runs deep and many residents have been calling for a smaller US military footprint.

Kyodo News

Former Party official in N China under investigation

SHIJIAZHUANG, 29 March — Chen Gui, a former party official in a city in north China's Hebei Province, is being investigated for alleged serious law and discipline violations, according to Hebei's

anti-graft authority.

The discipline inspection commission under the provincial committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) confirmed on Saturday that Chen, former chief of the Hengshui City Com-

mittee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), was under investigation.

Chen was removed from his post in 2010, but the details of his violations have not been made public yet.—Xinhua



Tourists take photos at the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France, on 28 March, 2015. Tourists enjoy the scenery as the spring flowers blossom in Paris.

XINHUA

One crew member rescued 15 hours after boat capsizes off Hakodate

SAPPORO, 29 March — The Japan Coast Guard said on Saturday that it rescued one crew member from a capsized boat 15 hours after the vessel was found off Hakodate, while two others were confirmed dead among the four-man crew.

Rescue divers found Katsuyuki Nagata, 64, in the crew quarters at the bottom of the upturned vessel where an air pocket remained, after they heard

someone knocking from inside the boat, the coast guard said.

Four crew members were believed to have been on the vessel which was towing a skiff carrying ship components at the time of the accident in the Tsugaru Strait between Honshu and Hokkaido, the two northernmost of Japan's main islands.

The coast guard said a man found dead earlier in the day on a beach

near the accident site was identified as one of the four members. The body of Takeshi Yanagimachi, 39, was found washed up on a beach in Hakodate on Saturday morning.

A body pulled from the sea on Friday was later confirmed to be that of Masaki Mizuno, the boat's 43-year-old captain.

A search continues for the fourth crew member.

Kyodo News

Six killed, four missing in Indonesia's landslide

JAKARTA, 29 March — Rescuers have found six bodies and are searching for four others after a landslide hit Sukabumi district of West Java on Saturday night, an Indonesian official said on Sunday.

Soldiers, volunteers and policemen are searching for the missing persons under the debris of the

damaged houses, said Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, spokesman of the national disaster management agency.

"So far, six bodies have been found and four remain missing," he told Xinhua via phone.

Heavy downpours triggered collapse of a hill in Tegal Panjang village

at 22:30 pm Jakarta time Saturday (1530 GMT) and buried 11 houses, said the spokesman.

The landslide also buried a road and as many as 300 people were fleeing homes and taking shelters, he said.

Landslide is frequent in Indonesia during heavy downpours.—Xinhua

6-magnitude quake hits 139km NW of Kota Ternate, Indonesia

BEIJING, 29 March — An earthquake measuring 5.6 on the Richter scale jolted 139 km NW of Kota Ternate, Indonesia at 0750 GMT on Sunday, the US Geological Survey said.

The epicentre, with a depth of 38.46 km, was initially determined to be at 1.6397 degrees north latitude and 126.4488 degrees east longitude.

Xinhua



Actors perform world heritage Quan Ho Bac Ninh during Tourism Festival 2015 in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam, on 27 March, 2015. Tourism Festival 2015 of Ho Chi Minh city is held from 26 to 29 March, 2015.—XINHUA

WEATHER REPORT

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 30th March, 2015: Weather will be partly cloudy in Magway Region, Rakhine and Kayah States and rain or thundershowers are likely to be 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 off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts. Surface wind speed in strong easterly wind may reach (35) m.p.h. Seas will be moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters.

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Nick Jonas understands Zayn Malik's decision to exit 1D



Nick Jonas & Zayn Malik

LOS ANGELES, 29 March — Singer Nick Jonas has showed his support for Zayn Malik after the British hunk announced his departure from One Direction.

Nick, 22, who was a part of another popular boyband Jonas Brothers that disbanded in 2013, said he could relate to

Zayn, reported Ace Showbiz.

"It's a lot of pressure. I think that my situation was really unique, I had family with me," Nick said.

"I feel like it is a tough world already, and I was thankful to have family and walk through it with them. But it's all about how you balance it, and trying

to implement a few moments of normalcy and quietness in a really crazy ride," he continued.

"I feel for the fans, and totally understand fame as well and what he's going through, but all the best to all of them."—PTI

Gwen Stefani's father granted restraining order

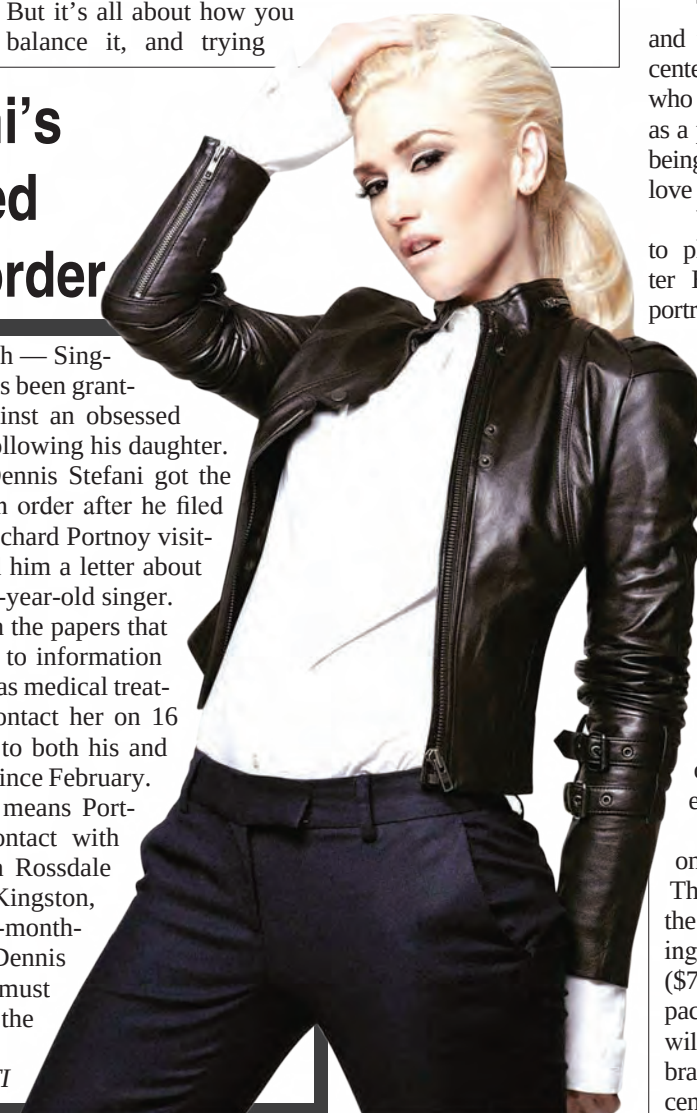
LOS ANGELES, 29 March — Singer Gwen Stefani's father has been granted a restraining order against an obsessed fan who he claims keeps following his daughter.

According to *TMZ*, Dennis Stefani got the green light for a protection order after he filed documents claiming fan Richard Portnoy visited his house and then read him a letter about his feelings towards the 45-year-old singer.

Dennis also claimed in the papers that Portnoy has gained access to information about where his daughter has medical treatments and attempted to contact her on 16 March, and has also been to both his and Gwen's house three times since February.

The restraining order means Portnoy isn't allowed any contact with Gwen, her husband Gavin Rossdale and their three children, Kingston, eight, Zuma, six, and 12-month-old Apollo, as well as Dennis and his wife Patricia, and must stay 100 yards away from the family.

PTI



Jennifer Aniston asks hotel waiter to plan her wedding?



Justin Theroux & Jennifer Aniston

LONDON, 29 March — Former "Friends" star Jennifer Aniston has reportedly asked a hotel maitre'd to help plan her and Justin Theroux's wedding.

The 46-year-old

"Cake" actress has shunned the services of a professional wedding planner and has instead asked Dimitri Dimitrov from Los Angeles' Sunset Tower Hotel to help arrange her nuptials,

reported *Femalefirst*.

"Jen has spent so much time at Sunset Tower over the years that she and Dimitri have become close friends. He personally escorts her in and out of a back entrance so she is never hounded by the paparazzi," a source said.

"Jen has put him in charge of the flowers and linens — anything that will make the party flow. Obviously he is running everything by her but she's relying on his expertise — and, most importantly, the fact he'll be discreet," it added.—PTI

Audra McDonald joins cast of 'Beauty and the Beast'

LOS ANGELES, 29 March — Actress Audra McDonald is set to join the cast of Disney's live-action version of "Beauty and the Beast."

McDonald, 44, is in final talks to portray the role of Garderobe, the singing wardrobe closet, in the Bill Condon-directed film, reported Ace Showbiz.

The upcoming film also stars Emma Watson, Dan Stevens, Josh Gad, and Luke Evans. Release date has not yet been set.

The story of "Beauty and the Beast (2017)" will center on a young woman who takes her father's place as a prisoner in a monstrous being's castle, only to fall in love with the creature.

Watson has been tapped to play the titular character Beauty, while Stevens portrays the Beast. Evans is cast as the villainous Gaston, and Gad will star as his buffoonish sidekick LeFou.

PTI

China Fashion Week: D'Nim art jeans creations



A model presents a creation of D'Nim art jeans by designer Chen Wen during the China Fashion Week Autumn/Winter 2015/2016 in Beijing, capital of China on 27 March, 2015.—XINHUA

Shakespeare's Globe theatres sets stage for new funding for culture



A camper van is lifted by a crane to be placed on the stage at London's Globe theatre on 17 June, 2007.—REUTERS

opment, said the theatres was the first cultural organization to be considered for a social impact bond.

"It would be a good fit because we pride ourselves on our entrepreneurial spirit and we can demonstrate social impact in bringing Shakespeare to as many people as possible around the world, including many free performances," Hewitt told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

He said the theatres, which does not receive a regular public subsidy and relies on philanthropic donations and ticket revenue, was keen to expand opportunities to raise funds.

The Globe, famous for its open-air performances, was burned to the ground during a staging of a play about Henry VIII in 1613 but was rebuilt in the late 1990s. Kieron Boyle, head of social investment at the Cabinet Office, said investors are increasingly looking at businesses that solve a social purpose.

"The sector is growing really rapidly in a variety of areas, some in the more classic social sector, among charity and social enterprise but it's becoming more diverse than that," Boyle told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Reuters

GENERAL

Serena deals with Niculescu but Bouchard upset

MIAMI, 29 March — Serena Williams put aside her knee injury to begin her bid for an eighth Miami Open title with a 6-3, 6-1 win over Romania's Monica Niculescu at Key Biscayne on Saturday but sixth seed Eugenie Bouchard was upset by German qualifier Tatjana Maria.

Williams withdrew from her semi-final at Indian Wells last week with the injury and said upon arriving in Miami that this tournament would involve "managing pain".

But the 19-times Grand Slam winner was too much for Niculescu, ranked 70th in the world. Niculescu made ample use of her effective slice and played some clever tennis and forced a series of entertaining rallies but Williams was always in control.

The world number one said her knee injury had barely bothered her at all.

"I really didn't feel it today, to be honest," Serena said. "Once you step out on the court you have so much adrenaline going. The adrenaline kind of kills it. So I was surprised. I felt pretty good."

The match was sched-



Serena Williams (R) shakes hands with Monica Niculescu (L) after their match on day six of the Miami Open at Crandon Park Tennis Centre, Key Biscayne, FL, USA on 28 March, 2015. Williams won 6-3, 6-1. — REUTERS

uled for Friday but was postponed following a rainstorm in South Florida meaning Williams will be back on court on Sunday against fellow American, qualifier Catherine Bellis. Canadian Bouchard lost 6-0, 7-6(4) to Maria.

Bouchard was outplayed in the first set, but provided a strong fightback in the second taking a 5-3 lead. But Maria, whose last win over a top-10 opponent

was five years ago against Li Na, rallied to take the set and match.

"It is the best win I have ever had," said Maria, "I just didn't think she was comfortable against my style." Maria has returned to tennis after giving birth to a daughter 15 months ago and has worked her way back to the tour via the ITF circuit.

Venus Williams, who has won Miami three times, enjoyed a 6-3, 7-6(3) win

over Australian Samantha Stosur. Fourth seed Caroline Wozniacki battled past Estonian Kaia Kanepi and into the fourth round, winning a tough match in windy conditions 4-6, 6-1, 6-3.

Germany's Angelique Kerber beat Britain's Heather Watson 7-5, 3-6, 6-4 while Italy's Sara Errani defeated Russian Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-1, 7-6(5).

Reuters



Image taken on 27 March, 2015, shows children of the Wounaan indigenous ethnic group playing soccer in the Maje community in Panama Province, Panama. According to local press, the Wounaan are one of the seven indigenous ethnic groups in the Panamanian territory, and are dedicated mainly to fishing and the elaboration of crafts of cocobolo wood. However, the illegal logging of the cocobolo trees by settlers and companies have caused clashes between the indigenous group and loggers recently. The Wounaan asked Panama's government to provide protection in the zone and to enforce laws that define the regional territory and collective lands they inhabit.

XINHUA

Hiddink insists Dutch will qualify despite setback

AMSTERDAM, 29 March — Veteran Netherlands coach Guus Hiddink insisted his side would qualify for next year's European Championship as questions over his tenure re-emerged in the wake of a last-gasp 1-1 home draw with Turkey on Saturday.

Hiddink's team needed a goal from Klaas-Jan Huntelaar two minutes into

stoppage time to snatch a dramatic draw in the Group A qualifier at the Amsterdam Arena.

Had Huntelaar not scored, it would have been their first loss at home in a European Championship qualifier.

"Of course, we will succeed even if I'm not sure yet how," Hiddink said. "We wanted to beat

Turkey but at the end of the qualifying competition it could yet prove to be a very important point."

Hiddink had already been under pressure after the Dutch lost two of their opening three Group A qualifiers.

After the 2-0 defeat in Iceland in October, he had talks with the Dutch football association over his

role, but was given a vote of confidence.

Pressure eased after a 6-0 win over Latvia in November but was ratcheted up again after Saturday's disappointing draw.

A leading Dutch soccer website began an online poll on whether the coach should stay after Saturday's performance, eliciting a lukewarm response. — Reuters

mitv Myanmar International

(30-3-2015 07:00 am ~ 31-3-2015 07:00 am) MST

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| * News | * Today Myanmar |
| * Family of Toys | * "E-Bike Rental Business" |
| * Fortune Teller: "Yan Moe Aung" | * News |
| * Myanmar Puppet | * Taste of Myanmar (Noodle Salad) |
| * News | * Amazing: U Nyein Chan Aung |
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MRTV News Channel in Brief

(30-3-2015, Monday)

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|--|---|
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| 6:30 am | 3:00 pm |
| • Physical Exercises | • News / International News |
| 7:35 am | 4:35 pm |
| • Weekly Entertainment | • University of Distance Education (TV Lectures) — First Years (Economic) |
| 8:00 am | 5:00 pm |
| • News / International News | • News / Weather Report |
| 8:35 am | 6:35pm |
| • Documentary (Women in Myanmar Society) | • Socio Economic Scenes |
| 9:30 am | 7:00 pm |
| • Head Line News | • News |
| 10:35 am | 7:35 pm |
| • People's Talks | • Documentary |
| 11:35 am | 8:00 pm |
| • MRTV's Youth Programme | • News / International News / Weather Report |
| 12:00 noon | 9:00 pm |
| • News / International News / Weather Report | • News / International News / Weather Report |
| 12:35 pm | • Hluttaw Image |
| • Tasty Trip | • TV Drama Series |
| 1:45 pm | |
| • Teleplay (Part-1) | |

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(30-3-2015, Monday)

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| 6:00 am | 9:30 am |
| • Mono Classical Song | • Musical Programme |
| 6:20 am | 9:40 am |
| • Teleplay | • Pyi Thu Ni Ti |
| 7:40 am | 9:50 am |
| • Fashion Show | • ASEAN CULTURAL FAIR (2014) |
| 8:05 am | 10:10 am |
| • TV drama Series | • MyanmarVideo |
| 8:50 am | 12:00 noon |
| • TV drama Series | • Close down |

Cyclists join road race in Mandalay

MANDALAY, 29 March — Myanmar Cycling Federation and Myan Shwe Pyi Tractors Ltd. jointly organized the men's and women's age-wise road race in Mandalay on 28 March.

Mandalay Region Minister for Social Affairs Dr. Win Hlaing launched the road race with participation of 48 cyclists who rolled on three rounds of moats and climbed Mandalay Hill twice and continued their route along 66th street, 62nd street, Prince Kanaung Road and 51st street. Principal of Sports and Physical Education Institute (Mandalay) U Myo Myint Aung awarded winners in the under19 and above-26 events.

Chairman of Myan Shwe Pyi Tractors Ltd U Khin Maung Win presented medals and cash awards to prize winning cyclists.—*Tin Maung (Mandalay)*



Croatia rout Norway 5-1 but Kovac wants more

ZAGREB, 29 March — Croatia edged towards the Euro 2016 finals with a 5-1 home win over Norway in their Group H qualifier on Saturday but coach Niko Kovac was still not totally happy with the performance.

Midfielder Marcelo Brozovic fired the hosts ahead in the first half while Ivan Perisic, Ivica Olic, Gordon Schildenfeld and Danijel Pranjin scored after the break, with Alexander Tettey netting a consolation for the visitors.

Although Croatia ripped their rivals apart with crisp passing and slick movement after Brozovic struck on the half-hour, Kovac scorned them for a lack of guile in the first half.

"It's a great result but

I am not entirely satisfied because we were not aggressive enough in the first half," he told Croatia's state HRT television.

"We didn't stick to the game plan, pulled out of 50-50 tackles too often and lacked discipline.

"We still have a lot of work to do and beating Italy in our next (qualifying) game will require a higher level."

The result, which stretched Croatia's unbeaten home record in Euro qualifiers to 29 matches, left the home side top with 13 points from five games, three more than second-placed Italy who were playing Bulgaria in Sofia later on Saturday.

Kovac fielded his favourite 4-3-2-1 formation with Brozovic, who re-

placed injured Inter Milan team mate Mateo Kovacic, enjoying a superb afternoon.

The 22-year-old cen-

tral midfielder pulled the strings alongside playmaker Luka Modric and came close in the 20th minute, when Norway

goalkeeper Orjan Nyland tipped over his rasping shot from outside the penalty box.

Reuters



Gordon Schildenfeld of Croatia (C) celebrates his goal against Norway with team mates during their Euro 2016 qualifying soccer match at the Maksimir stadium in Zagreb on 28 March, 2015. —REUTERS

Bale forgets about Real woes as Wales set course for finals



Wales' Gareth Bale celebrates scoring a goal against Israel during their Euro 2016 Group B qualifying soccer match at the Sammy Ofer Stadium in Haifa on 28 March, 2015.—REUTERS

HAIFA, (Israel), 29 March — Gareth Bale forgot all about his recent troubles at Real Madrid when scoring twice in a superb Wales victory over Israel on Saturday that kept them on course for next year's Euro 2016 finals in

France.

The 3-0 win, which lifted Wales to the top of qualifying Group B, was not just down to a superb Wales victory over Israel on Saturday that kept them on course for next year's Euro 2016 finals in

dynamic performance.

It was exactly the sort of display that persuaded Real to buy him from Tottenham Hotspur for a world record fee of 85.3 million pounds in August 2013 and provided convincing evidence there is

little wrong with his game — no matter what some Real fans think.

Despite his decisive goal in last season's Champions League final when Real beat Atletico Madrid in Lisbon and his significant part in three other trophies in his first 18 months in Madrid, some Real fans have it in for the 25-year-old. They have made Bale the scapegoat for Real's recent lack of form, aiming punches and kicks at his car as he left training with thousands calling for him to be dropped after last week's defeat to Barcelona in La Liga.

The unrest at Real has prompted headlines back in England, where he started at Southampton before moving to Spurs, speculating that he could be on his way back to the Premier League with Manchester United who are reportedly interested in signing him.

Bale has largely remained above the debate,

which to most outsiders, seems utterly illogical, and he gave the Spanish detractors plenty to think about with the way he played in Haifa.

He helped set up the first Welsh goal with a cushioned header which allowed Aaron Ramsey to head home. He then scored the second with a direct free-kick and nailed the points by sweeping home their third. "We were buzzing in the second half, and we showed what a good team we are," he told Sky Sports afterwards.

Unlike Real Madrid, Wales have not gorged on endless success over the decades, but they do have a realistic chance of reaching their first finals since the 1958 World Cup in Sweden.

Even if they were to fail, one thing seems certain: the Welsh will not turn on Bale like some Madrid fans have done.

Reuters

Djokovic survives tricky test, Nishikori off to flying start

MIAMI, 29 March — World number one Novak Djokovic survived a second set fightback from Slovak Martin Klizan before winning his opening match at the Miami Open 6-0, 5-7, 6-1.

Djokovic, who is aiming to follow up last week's win at Indian Wells with his fifth triumph at Key Biscayne, took care of the first set in just 22 minutes but was broken when serving for the match at 5-3 in the second. Klizan went on to turn the set around in his favour and had the packed crowd sensing an upset, but Djokovic regrouped and romped home in the third set. Djokovic will face Belgian qualifier Steve Darcis in the next round.

Japan's Kei Nishikori made a confident start to his Miami Open bid beating Russian Mikhail Youzhny 6-2, 6-1 in their second round meeting. Nishikori, the fourth seed at Key Biscayne, won 70 percent of his service points and converted five of his 16 break chances.

"I felt really good on the court. Really confident," he said. "I was almost dictating the court against Misha, and serving well. Everything was good."

Jo-Wilfried Tsonga enjoyed victory in his first match back from injury with a 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 win over American Tim Smyczek. The Frenchman had not played this year after picking up the injury in the Davis Cup final defeat to Switzerland in November.

"I didn't expect to play my best tennis today, but I'm happy the way I managed my match," said Tsonga.

"I just had a little hole in the second set. But it's normal when I haven't played in a couple of months now. I hope it's going to be better and better, but for the first match it was already something good for me."

Sixth seed David Ferrer of Spain beat Argentina's Federico Delbonis 6-1, 6-1.

In an all-South American clash Brazil's Thomaz Bellucci beat Uruguayan Pablo Cuevas 2-6, 6-2, 7-5 and advanced to face Ukraine's Alexandr Dolgoplov, who beat 16th seed Tommy Robredo 6-7(1), 6-3, 7-5.—Reuters