

President U Thein Sein witnesses signing of draft nationwide ceasefire agreement in Yangon

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March—President U Thein Sein witnessed the signing of a draft nationwide ceasefire agreement between the Union Peace-making Working Committee and the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team at the Myanmar Peace Centre in Yangon on Tuesday, according to officials.

Before the signing ceremony, the president cordially greeted members of both sides, calling them the builders of peace as desired by the people.

The draft agreement came after several rounds of talks, which the president described as a significant step towards the signing of the nationwide ceasefire agreement.

The signing will pave the way for political dialogue, he said, adding that potential obstacles can be overcome through negotiations between the two sides.

The move was seen as the “Second Panglong Victory”, which is historic



President U Thein Sein attends signing ceremony of draft nationwide ceasefire agreement between Union Peace-making Working Committee and Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team.—MNA

and significant for national consolidation, he noted.

The draft nationwide ceasefire agreement was signed by the UPWC and NCCT. Signatories of the

UPWC were U Aung Min, U Thein Zaw, Lt-Gen Myint Soe, Union Minister Lt-Gen Thet Naing Win and Member of Parliament U Khet Htein Nan. Signa-

tories on the NCCT side were U Naing Han Tha, Pado Saw Kwe Htoo Win, Maj-Gen Guan Maw, Dr Salai Lianmong Sakhoung and Col Khun Okkar.

President U Thein Sein enjoyed a luncheon with members of UPWC and NCCT and left for Nay Pyi Taw in the afternoon.—MNA

Peace negotiators vow to strengthen cooperation after approving text for nationwide ceasefire

By Ye Myint

YANGON, 31 March—Peace negotiators from the government and ethnic armed groups concluded talks on a single text for the national ceasefire accord, aimed at ending more than

60 years of internal conflicts in Myanmar, with the release of two joint statements Tuesday.

The single text will be presented to the leaders of both sides for approval, with a specific schedule and a list of signatories to

a truce deal to be set after coordination between the Union Peacemaking Working Committee and Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team, the first joint statement said.

In the second joint statement following the

seventh national ceasefire accord meeting, both sides stressed the need for further cooperation to prevent the recurrence of armed conflicts during the implementation of the peace process.

In his address, U Nai Hong Sar, who led the NCCT, said there are likely to be few amendments to the tentative agreements achieved in the single text while seeking approval of leaders at the ethnic conference which is likely to be held next month, with a specific date yet to be arranged.

The government side will seek no further amendments to the approved single text and is looking forward to setting a date for signing the pact with ethnic armed groups, said Union Minister U Aung Min, who led the UPWC.

The sooner the two sides signed the ceasefire (See page 2)

Peace deal: Not only high expectation, but also bright daybreak of peace

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March — Government-backed Union Peace making Working Committee and Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team of 16 ethnic armed groups have made a draft ceasefire deal on Tuesday.

Regarding the draft pact, President U Thein Sein said Myanmar has seen an auspicious day with both high expectation and bright daybreak of peace, urging all the participants make more attempts for lasting peace in near future.

Union Minister U Ye Htut also said Myanmar has marked two historic milestones of Tuesday's draft ceasefire deal and inaugural speech of President U Thein Sein who vowed to open up reform efforts this day of four years ago.

The union minister added while there are a

number of presidents and armed group leaders who won the wars in the chronicles, only few number of them could ensure peace for the country, referring to President U Thein Sein and Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing with congratulation.

U Ye Htut noted that all must keep patience to be able to sign ceasefire agreement through dialogues based on the draft deal with ethnic leaders and guarantee lasting peace and ethnic rights.

He also remarked that successive governments in Myanmar tried to resolve internal conflicts in their own ways, while President U Thein Sein attempted for ceasefire with more armed groups through alternative approach.

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Peace negotiators from the UPWC and NCCT open the floor to questions from the media at the Myanmar Peace Centre in Yangon on Tuesday.

PHOTO: YE MYINT

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Amyotha Hluttaw

**Education Ministry
to upgrade schools in
Kyangin Tsp****Deputy Minister Dr
Zaw Min Aung.**—MNA**Deputy Minister
U Tin Ngwe.**—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March — Amyotha Hluttaw continued for the 37th day session, here, Tuesday.

U Khin Maung Yi of Ayeyawady Region constituency No 6 asked plans for upgrading basic education middle school branches to BEMS in Alon and Hteinbinmyaung villages in Kyangin Township. Deputy Minister for Education Dr Zaw Min Aung replied that upgrading of the schools depends on number of students, school furniture, land plot, transport and regional development. Ayeyawady Region Education Directorate enlisted upgrading of BEMS branches in Ahlon village and Hteinbinmyaung village in 2015-16 academic year.

With regard to a question on upgrading of solar electrification to supply of electricity in Pyabin Village of Chauk Township raised by U Aung Nyein of Magway Region Constituency No 2, Deputy Minister for Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development U Tin Ngwe explained that the ministry allotted K132.4

million to electrify 662 houses in five villages in Chauk Township through solar panels in 2014-15 FY. The village was allowed to change solar electrification to electricity supply in co-operation with Myanmar Electric Power Enterprise.

The deputy minister replied to a question raised by U Salai Khwe Yan of Chin State Constituency No 12 that the ministry has no plan to build four suspension bridges and four wooden bridges in 2015-16 FY in Paletwa Township.

The session approved salaries and allowances for the chairman and members of Amyotha Hluttaw Political, Economic and Legal Affairs Commission.

The Hluttaw approved the farmers' rights protection and raising interests rules with amendments of the Pyithu Hluttaw.

The Hluttaw agreed to discuss the proposal tabled by U Saw Maw Tun of Bago Region Constituency No 1 on participation of entire people in reducing use of plastic for public health and environmental conservation.—MNA

Courts to win trusts of people

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March — Courts at different levels in the country are striving for winning trusts of the people while creating fairness and justice to every person, Supreme Court Judge U Tha Htay, who chairs strategic plan implementation committee, told the opening of Judicial Public Information Workshop at the hall of the Supreme Court of the Union, here, Tuesday.

The Supreme Court Judge added that the ma-

chinery of the court and judicial affairs must be transparent and release information to the people.

Communication Director Mr John Kostouros of Minnesota Judicial Branch of the US and Communications and Public Affairs Analyst Ms Sarah Vance Guenther of Superior Court of California discussed function of information section of the court, relations between the courts and media, polling court visitors, public

information, expertise of public relations and services and work guidelines of the information counter of the court.

A total of 63 public information officers and court information officers are attending the workshop up to 2 April.

The workshops, jointly organized by Supreme Court of the Union and US-AID-PRLP, will be held in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Mandalay six times.

MNA

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves Union Budgets bill

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March — The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approved the Union Budgets bill of 2015 on Tuesday, following a proposal made by Union Minister U Win Shein, who urged the parliament to agree with the entire bill.

Union Minister Dr Kan Zaw explained steps the central government took in relation to the appointment of permanent secretaries in line with the State Constitution.

MNA

**Pyidaungsu Hluttaw representatives discuss Union Budget Bill for 2015.**—MNA**Netherlands' Queen Máxima says mobile
technology key to financial inclusion****By Aye Min Soe**

YANGON, 31 March — Queen Máxima of the Netherlands on Tuesday urged Myanmar to capitalize on the rapid increase in mobile phone services and other digital technologies, saying the country has a "unique opportunity" to overcome challenges and expand its recently adopted Financial Inclusion Roadmap.

Visiting as the UN Secretary-General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development, the Dutch royal told a meeting of ministers, professors and students at the Convocation Hall of the University of Yangon that "Myanmar has an exciting chance to leap far ahead with financial inclusion thanks to the rapid rise of mobile phone services and other digital technologies."

"Other countries have relied on traditional infrastructure such as physical

banks," she said. "But Myanmar may have a unique opportunity to skip this costly and difficult step by using mobile phones to provide financial services."

"This isn't to say that financial inclusion will happen easily. It will take strong leadership, close co-operation, and careful planning."

Queen Máxima called for cooperation between ministries, the central bank, regulators, commercial banks, mobile phone companies, payment service providers and knowledge institutions to work together on the delivery of financial services at affordable prices to less-advantaged sections of society.

Mobile penetration in Myanmar is growing fast and is expected to reach 90 per cent of the population by 2019. Currently, about 10 per cent of the population transfers money through a formal institution.

"We know that sustain-

**Peace negotiators vow to
strengthen cooperation. . .**

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accord, the sooner the people's wish for peace will be fulfilled, added the Union minister at the press conference.

Pado Kwe Htoo Win, a deputy leader of the NCCT, expressed his belief that approval of ethnic leaders on the single text is possible, asserting that ethnic groups

**Queen Máxima of the Netherlands gives a key
note speech at Convocation Hall of Yangon
University.**—PHOTO AYE MIN SOE

able and inclusive development never happens overnight, but we also know that by taking lessons from other countries, you can go faster and evade mistakes made elsewhere," Queen Máxima said.

Today's students will be the first generation to benefit from the financial inclusion that will be central to making a lasting leap forward for Myanmar, she said.

During her opening

address, Queen Máxima also expressed her delight at Myanmar's efforts for developing a detailed road map to significantly expand financial inclusion responsibly, taking into account the needs of customers as well as banks and government.

After her address at the University of Yangon, Queen Máxima visited the World Vision which is conducting a microfinance programme in 10 villages/wards in Myaungdagar in Hmawby Township.

She began her three-day visit to Myanmar on Monday and held talks with representatives of banks, microfinance institutions and telecom providers in Yangon.

The UN Secretary-General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development will attend the launch of the Financial Inclusion Roadmap in Nay Pyi Taw Wednesday.

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NATIONAL



President U Thein Sein.—MNA

Peace deal: Not only high...

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He said his congratulation to all the participants of

supporting groups and policymakers in peace-making efforts.

Union Minister U Khin Yi, a member of UPWC, recounted peace broker body's efforts to overcome many differences and disputes to sign the peace deal after nearly four years through eagerness of participant groups and peace roadmap laid by state leaders.

He remarked that development and peace are interdependent, saying 'No peace will bear no development', with the expectation of political dialogues after 60 days of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement which is expected to realize on.

U Saw Kwe Htoo Win of Karen National Union also commented the draft agreement was resulted from mutual understandings among the participants, saying he felt hopeful that prospective changes could be made for the welfare of the State.

MNA

Union Minister
U Ye Htut.

MNA

Union Minister
U Khin Yi.

MNA

U Saw Kwe Htoo Win
of Karen National
Union.—MNA

Myanmar, Pakistan to promote cooperation in trade and maritime security

Vice President

Dr Sai Mauk

Kham greets

Admiral

Muhammad

Zakaullah

NI (M), Chief

of Naval Staff

of Pakistan.

MNA



NAY PYI TAW, 31 March—Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham held talks with Admiral Muhammad Zakaullah NI (M), Chief of Naval Staff of Pakistan and party at the Presidential Palace, here, Tuesday.

They discussed further strengthening friendly ties between governments and

peoples between the two countries and promotion of cooperation in trade and maritime security.

Also present at the call were Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Admiral Thura Thet Swe, Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Kyaw Kyaw Tun, Deputy Minister for Defence Maj-

Gen Kyaw Nyunt, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Tin Oo Lwin and Deputy Minister at the President Office Dr San Lwin.

The Pakistani admiral and party were accompanied by Pakistani Ambassador Mr Ehsan Ullah Bath.—MNA

Presidential Palace opens door to journalists

NAY PYI TAW, 30 March— Journalists who have been permitted for covering Presidential Palace on Tuesday visited the state building.

Officials of Presidential Palace, Ministry of Information, and Myanmar Police Force explained media persons the required process and procedures for reporting.

On behalf of the Union Minister for Information, Director-General U Ye Tint of Information and Public Relations Department confirmed the registered journalists would be

able to enter the Presidential Palace to cover news.

Director U Zaw Htay of President Office and Police Colonel Myint Htoo, Deputy Commander of Special Branch of Myanmar Police Force elaborated arrangements for the reporters at the Presidential Palace.

A total of 45 international journalists have been approved for covering news and the other eight reporters will be allowed after they have submitted the required documents.

MNA

Vice President U Nyan Tun observes hydropower plant in Laos

VIENTIANE, 31 March— Vice President U Nyan Tun visited Nam Ngum Hydropower Plant No.1 here on Tuesday and heard briefings on the energy sector of Laos, a 15-year plan for nationwide power

supply and the use of solar energy for rural power supply.

After signing in the visitors' book of the hydropower plant, the vice president observed the generation of electricity at the

hydropower plant.

He also went on a boat trip in the Nam Ngum Dam and observed tourist sites and environmental observation activities there.

In 1996, Laos could supply electricity to 19 per-

cent of all its households, with the percentage rising to 88 in 2014. The country has seen an average of 10 percent increase in individual electricity consumption over the last 15 years. The sale of electricity accounts

for 15 percent of the country's total export earnings.

The country has plans to generate 9,514 megawatts of electricity in 2020, up from 3,329 in 2015. There are five hydropower plants in the Nam Ngum River.

In the evening, the vice president and his wife went to the Myanmar Embassy, where he met staff and their families.—MNA



Vice President U Nyan Tun
views round Nam Ngum Hydropower Plant
No.1, 90 kilometres north of
Vientiane in Laos.—MNA

Natogyi-Myotha road 75 percent complete



NATOGYI, 31 March — The Department of Rural Development commissioned Dana Phyo Mauk DNPP Company to pave the 20-mile-long Natogyi-Myotha road in Natogyi Township, Mandalay Region.

Three construction teams of the company are laying asphalt concrete on the road in sections with the aim of completing it within five months.

The teams were also assigned duty to build the Myotha-Tawzauk, Wet-lu-Pechet and Pechet-Htanzin sections, with work 75 percent complete.

The department allotted K1.163 billion for construction of the road to link over 30 villages along its route.

Htay Myint Maung



TODAY'S
MYANMAR
NEWS SITES

Mandalay police try to reduce traffic accidents during Maha Thingyan festival

MANDALAY, 31 March — Members of No 11 Traffic Police Branch will control traffic during 2015 Maha Thingyan festival period while Mandalay Region Police Force will take action against drug users and weapon holders.

“Our branch will assign 296 traffic police in downtown Mandalay for easing traffic congestion. Police and local authorities urge local residents to abide by traffic rules and not to drink alcohol during the Maha Thingyan festival,” Police Major Thein Ko Ko of No 11 Traffic Police Branch said.

Traffic police will take action against bikes without number plates and exhaust pipes, as well as unlicensed riders.

Security personnel will be assigned to roads along moats and in Man-



dalay Royal City, Mandalay Kandawgyi Lake and Taungthaman Bridge, the commander of the district police force told media.

During the 2013 Maha Thingyan festival period, 11 people died and 66 were injured in 30 traffic accidents, but only 23 people

were injured in three accidents during the same period last year.

Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)

ISTAF officials discuss techniques, rules of Chinlone

YANGON, 31 March — The president of Myanmar's Chinlone governing body met with international sporting federation representatives Monday to discuss the staging of competitive events for the country's traditional sport.

U Soe Naing, who is vice president of the Asian Chinlone Federation and president of the Myanmar Chinlone Federation, met with Mr. Dato Abdul Halim bin Kader and Mr Boonchai Lorphipat of the In-

ternational Sepak Takraw Federation, Dr Chalerm and officials at National Indoor Stadium-1.

They discussed the staging of Chinlone events in the 28th and 29th SEA Games, how to judge winners in competitive Chinlone, approval of rules and techniques, and dissemination of techniques for Chinlone events to enthusiasts.

They viewed Chinlone demonstrations incorporating new techniques and rules.—SPED

Toshiba to supply four power generators and equipment for hydroelectric plant in Myanmar

TOKYO, 31 March — Toshiba Corporation on 30 March announced that its Chinese subsidiary has won a major order to supply turbines and generators for Myanmar Electric Power Enterprise's Upper Yeywa hydropower plant.

Toshiba Hydro Power (Hangzhou) Co., which

manufactures, sells and maintain hydroelectric equipment, will supply four units of its 77-megawatt hydro turbine and generator for the 308MW Upper Yeywa Hydropower Plant that Myanmar Electric Power Enterprise will build north-east of Mandalay.

Deliveries to the pro-

ject's EPC contractor, China's Zhejiang Orient Engineering Co., Ltd., will start in March 2016. Toshiba Group previously supplied a hydraulic turbine for the 28.4MW Sedawgyi hydroelectric power plant in 1989, making this the second commission from Myanmar.—GNLM



Industrial trainees to undertake 3-year internship in Japan



MANDALAY, 31 March — The Directorate of Industries under the Ministry

of Industry in cooperation with Myanmar Sankou Co Ltd kicked off the Japanese

Language and Mechanical Course No 1 at Mandalay's No 2 Industrial Training

School on Monday.

The school has admitted 60 trainees for the train-

ing course as of 30 March. The trainees are to study theory and workshop train-

ing, Japanese language, as well as Japan's lifestyle and culture. Upon completion, they will be assigned to factories and workshops in Japan under a three-year internship period.

Director-General U Thwin Myint Maung of the Directorate of Industries spoke at the opening of the training course, which was also attended by Mandalay Region Minister for Electric Power and Industry U Kyaw Myint, CEO Mr Tsuda Shunji of Myanmar Sankou Co Ltd and entrepreneurs of the Mandalay Industrial Zone.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Fulltime power supply illuminates rural area



NAY PYI TAW, 31 March — A ceremony to launch the fulltime supply of electricity was held at

Golf tournament turns out outstanding youth golfers

YANGON, 31 March — The 6th Junior Golf Myanmar Tournament 2015 concluded at City Golf Resort in Insein Township, in the last week of March, with Deputy Minister for Sports U Thaug Htaik in attendance.

At the end of the two-day tournament organized by Junior Golf Myanmar, General Secretary of Myanmar Golf Federation U Aung Hla Han presented first prize to Hein Sithu with 145 strokes, second to Min Naing Soe with 149 and third to Kyaw Zin Tun with 150 in the U-24 event.

Officials also awarded winners in the U-10, U-12 and U-15 events respectively.—GNLM

Naseinin village in Pobathiri Township here on Tuesday, with Nay Pyi Taw Council member U Than Htay in attendance.

Township Administrator U Htet Aung Phyto and District Electrical Engineer U Myo Thant Tun switched on the power supply.

The district electrical engineer gave a talk on the

safe use of electricity.

Local residents funded the installation of a 1,500-foot-long power line and a 200 KVA transformer for supply of electricity, so as to contribute toward the union government's nationwide campaign for rural development and poverty alleviation.

Shwe Kokko

Earthen road links three stations in Ingapu Tsp

INGAPU, 31 March — The 5.5-mile-long Mezaligon-Ingauk-Ohgwe earthen road was commissioned into service in Ingapu Township, Ayeyawady Region, on 25 March.

Township Administrator U Hlwan Moe Han and officials cut the ribbon to open the new earthen road.

The new road, funded with K74.81 million allotted by the Department

of Rural Development in the 2014-15 fiscal year, benefits 157 villages from Mezaligon, Htugyi and Nyaunggyo stations in the township.

Township DRD



Myanaung Tsp authorities to hold Maha Thingyan festival on a grand scale



MYANAUNG, 31 March — A meeting on crime reduction during the Maha Thingyan festival period in 2015 was held at the hall of Township Police Station in Myanaung, Ayeyawady Region, in the last week of March.

Township Administrator U Min Min Tun and Commander of Township Police Force Police Major Tun Pe outlined plans to check that medical stores are not selling banned drugs and that accommo-

dation providers do not give lodging to people engaging in antisocial behaviour.

Police officers discussed prevention of traffic accidents in the festival period.

Township development affairs supporting committee and departmental officials reported on arrangements for holding the festival on a grand scale.

Win Bo (Township IPRD)

Indonesia launches military exercises to guard against security threats

JAKARTA, 31 March — Indonesia has launched military exercises in the eastern island of Sulawesi, a haven for radical Islamists, as part of broader efforts to crack down on militants with suspected links to the Islamic State group, officials said on Tuesday.

Television footage showed the military firing rockets in remote, mountainous central Sulawesi as part of the exercises. The drills come amid heightened government concerns over a rising number of Indonesians pledging loyalty to Islamic State (IS) and trying to join the group fighting in Iraq and Syria.

"IS is a potential security

threat ... so we're preparing our forces to respond to that," said military spokesman Major General Mochamad Fuad Basya.

He described the exercises as routine and said similar drills would be held elsewhere in Indonesia.

"The target is to make sure our forces are ready for any threat ... and for a deterrent effect to radicals in that area," he said.

Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population, the vast majority of which practices a moderate form of the religion. It saw a spate of militant attacks in the 2000s, the deadliest of which was a nightclub bombing on the

holiday island of Bali that killed 202 people, most of them tourists.

Police have been largely successful in destroying domestic militant cells since then, but officials now worry about a resurgence in militancy inspired by groups like Islamic State and Indonesians who return after fighting with the group.

"IS provides fresh oxygen to Islamist groups here by giving them a legitimate call to jihad," Tito Karnavian, a police official and former chief of the national anti-terrorism unit, told foreign journalists last week.

The government, which banned Islamic State teachings

and endorsement last year, also began erasing radical websites and videos this month, Karnavian said.

The home affairs ministry is preparing to revise anti-terrorism laws to allow authorities to closely monitor suspicious international travel, Indonesian media reported.

Police have said between 200 and 300 Indonesians have left to join Islamic State, but some security experts believe the figure could be higher.

Up to 32 Indonesian citizens were detained in Turkey earlier this month while trying to cross the border into Syria, suspected of trying to join Islamic State.

Reuters

Thai PM asks king's permission to lift martial law



Thailand's Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha (C) gestures in a traditional greeting after a speech at the Stock Exchange of Thailand in Bangkok on 26 Feb, 2015.

REUTERS

BANGKOK, 31 March — Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha said on Tuesday he has asked for King Bhumibol Adulyadej's permission to lift martial law which has been in place nationwide since before a May coup.

The law, among other things, bans all political gatherings and gives the military sweeping powers of arrest and detention.

"I have asked for the king's permission to lift martial law. The power is now with His Majesty," Prayuth told reporters, adding that he would replace martial law with Article 44 in the interim constitution.

Tour operators had urged the junta to lift martial law, particularly in areas that attract many tourists, in order to boost the sector after months of protests in 2014 took a toll on international visitors to Thailand.

Reuters

Singapore teen charged in court over video blasting Lee Kuan Yew

SINGAPORE, 31 March — A 16-year-old boy was charged in a Singapore court on Tuesday for a video he posted online that made derogatory comments about the country's late founding father Lee Kuan Yew.

Under a Singapore law on harassment, the youth was charged with making "an insulting communication" about Lee in the YouTube video titled "Lee Kuan Yew is finally dead."

He was also slapped with two other charges for allegedly making insensitive remarks about Christianity in the video and for

allegedly separately posting an obscene picture depicting Lee in a sexual position online.

Police arrested him on Sunday.

He turned up in court on Tuesday in a black T-shirt with his father. After the court proceeding, the boy's father commented to reporters outside the courtroom, saying he was very sorry to Lee's son, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, for what had happened. The judge approved his bail at S\$20,000 (about \$14,500) and set the next court hearing for 17 April.

In a statement late on Mon-

day, the police said it had received more than 20 complaints between Friday and Sunday about the video that "contained, in part, insensitive and disparaging remarks against Christians."

If convicted, he could be imprisoned for up to three years, or fined, for making insensitive comments about a religion. He could be fined or imprisoned for up to three months, or both, for the charge of posting sexually obscene material and faces a fine of up to S\$5,000 for the insulting comments.

The senior Lee, Singapore's

founding prime minister who ruled Singapore from 1959 to 1990, died on 23 March and was given a huge state funeral on Sunday.

He is still highly revered in Singapore and also respected internationally for his role in transforming Singapore from a backward colonial outpost to one of Asia's wealthiest economies.

But he has also been criticized for his authoritarian style of leadership that tolerated little political dissent and also restricted freedom of speech and media.

Kyodo News

Heavy rains trigger flood fears in Kashmir; 17 dead

SRINAGAR, (India), 31 March — Heavy rains and a landslide in the Himalayan region of Kashmir killed 17 people, police said on Tuesday, as Indian authorities continued working to rescue stranded villagers, with unseasonal rains raising fears of flash floods in the mountainous north.

Fifteen people were killed

when a hillside collapsed onto a house in Ledhan village, about 40 km (25 miles) from the capital Srinagar, before dawn on Monday. Army and police used shovels and diggers to search for those missing. "We are still searching for one more person who is still buried," said Fayaz Ahmad Lone, a local police superintendent.

Police said two other people died in flash floods in another part of the state. Hundreds of people fled their homes as Kashmir's main rivers began to swell and weather forecasters predicted further downpours in the region that was struck by devastating floods seven months ago.

India is experiencing more

extreme rainfall events as the global climate warms, according to a study of 50 years of data by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology.

The past month has been the wettest in more than a century, and damage to crops has been blamed for a spate of farmer suicides in recent weeks.—Reuters

Vietnam hit by rare strike at major footwear factory

HANOI, 31 March — Thousands of workers at a major factory in southern Vietnam went on strike for a fifth day on Tuesday in protest over social insurance cover, in rare show of labour unrest in a country positioning itself as a future Asian manufacturing powerhouse.

Witnesses in the industrialized suburbs of Ho Chi Minh City said hundreds of workers massed peacefully inside and outside the factory owned by Pou Yuen Vietnam, a footwear maker for firms that include Nike Inc and Adidas and brands like Lacoste, Converse and Reebok.

Pou Yuen, which em-

loys close to 80,000 workers, is controlled by Chinese shoemaker Yue Yuen Industrial Holdings Ltd, a subsidiary of Taipei-listed Pou Chen Corp.

Strikes and protests are rare in communist Vietnam, which has been tightly controlled by one party for four decades. It is known for taking decisive action to thwart the kind of labour and civil unrest that has affected other textile manufacturing rivals like China and Cambodia.

That has earned Vietnam a reputation as a safe bet for firms like Gap, H&M and Inditex's Zara. Such companies have helped fuel annual export



Workers of Pou Yuen Vietnam gather at their factory on the fifth day of a strike in Vietnam's southern Ho Chi Minh City on 31 March, 2015.—REUTERS

growth of 15.8 percent last year in garments, to \$20.8 billion, and 21.6 percent in footwear, to \$10.2 billion.

Workers blocked near-

by streets on Monday, according to news websites of some state-run media, which has given the issue only limited coverage. VN

Express reported several nearby factories closed for security reasons.

The employees are disgruntled about a social insurance law taking effect from 2016, which restricts the scope of entitlements for a lump sum payment if they leave.

The parent companies of the Vietnamese firm gave no immediate comment and city officials were trying to settle the dispute.

"The company has given them a day off today and we are holding dialogue with workers," Nguyen Tran Phuong Tran, deputy chairwoman of the city's Labour Union, told Reuters by telephone.

The strike is another blow for a factory that was among dozens hit by anti-China rioting last year during a maritime diplomatic row between Hanoi and Beijing.

It comes as Vietnam's tries to lure big firms with its cheap labour, tax breaks and its looming accession to Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with its biggest export partners.

Vietnam is in the final stages of FTA talks with the European Union and hopes soon to conclude a Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) in a region covering 40 percent of global GDP, including the United States, Japan and Australia.—Reuters

WORLD

Iran, powers rush for nuclear deal as clock ticks toward deadline

LAUSANNE, (Switzerland), 31 March — Iran and six world powers ramped up the pace of negotiations on Tuesday ahead of a deadline for a preliminary nuclear deal that was less than 24 hours away, as both sides warned it was crucial to overcome differences that could wreck an agreement.

For nearly a week the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China have been trying to break an impasse in negotiations aimed at stopping Iran from having the capacity to develop a nuclear bomb, in exchange for an easing of international sanctions that are crippling its economy.

But disagreements on enrichment research and the pace of lifting sanctions threatened to scupper a deal that could end a 12-year standoff between Iran and the West over Teheran's nuclear ambitions and reduce the risk of another Middle East war.

"We need to get this done now," a Western official told *Reuters* on condition of anonymity. "We only have a few hours left to get a framework agreement or the job is going to become much, much more



European Union High Representative Federica Mogherini (L) and Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif wait for a meeting with officials from P5+1, the European Union and Iran at the Beau Rivage Palace Hotel in Lausanne on 31 March, 2015.—REUTERS

difficult."

Officials in the Swiss city of Lausanne said talks on a framework accord, which is intended as a prelude to a comprehensive agreement by the end of June, could yet fall apart. They have set a deadline of midnight on Tuesday for a framework agreement, but officials from all sides say it was possible the talks could run past the deadline.

"There still remain some difficult issues," US Secretary of State John Kerry told CNN. "We are working very hard to work those through. We are working into the night."

Both Iran and the six

have floated compromise proposals but agreement has remained elusive. Western officials said Teheran has recently backed away from proposals it previously indicated it could accept, such as on shipping enriched uranium stocks to Russia.

But a US State Department spokeswoman said there was never a definite agreement on shipping uranium stocks abroad and other options existed to resolve the issue. Officials close to the talks said dilution of the stockpiled uranium was an option.

The goal of the negotiations is to find a way to

ensure that for at least the next 10 years Iran is at least one year away from the ability to produce enough fissile material for an atomic weapon. In exchange for temporary limits on its most sensitive atomic activities, Teheran wants an end to sanctions.

"Our feeling is that this is the moment," a Western diplomat close to the talks said. "Either we get a deal or not. Because if we don't come out of this period with some type of framework (agreement) it's going to be difficult to explain why we would get one on 30 June."

Iran and the six powers have twice extended their deadline for a long-term agreement after reaching an interim accord in November 2013. They set a goal of securing a framework agreement by the end of March and a comprehensive accord with all technical details settled by 30 June.

Assessments from negotiators close to the talks have been swinging between pessimism and optimism since they arrived in Lausanne nearly a week ago. All sides say an agreement is possible but uncertain.

With the US Congress warning it will consider imposing new US sanctions on Iran if there is no agreement this week, there is a sense of urgency in the talks.

"With Congress, the Iranian hawks and a Middle East situation where nobody's exactly getting on, I'm not convinced we'll get a second chance if this fails," the Western diplomat said.

"If we don't have some type of framework agreement now, it will be difficult to explain why we would be able to have one by 30 June," he added.

US President Barack Obama has threatened to veto any sanctions moves by the Republican-dominated Congress.

Officials close to the talks said the most difficult sticking points remain the removal of UN sanctions and Iranian demands for the right to unfettered research and development into advanced nuclear centrifuges after the first 10 years of the agreement expires.

The six powers want more than a 10-year suspension of Iran's most sensitive nuclear work. Teheran, which denies it is trying to develop a nuclear

weapons capability, demands a swift end to sanctions in exchange for temporary limits on its atomic activities.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has campaigned against the negotiations, said on Monday that the agreement being put together in Lausanne sends the message "that Iran stands to gain by its aggression". He opposes engagement with Iran.

Western officials said the two sides had previously been closing in on a preliminary deal that could be summarized in a brief document that may or may not be released.

Iran said the key issue was lifting sanctions quickly.

"There will be no agreement if the sanctions issue cannot be resolved," Majid Takhteravanchi, nuclear negotiator told Iran's *Pars* news agency. "This issue is very important for us."

Even if a framework deal is reached by the Tuesday deadline, officials say it could still fall apart when the two sides attempt to agree on all the technical details for the comprehensive accord by the end of June.—*Reuters*

Japan not to join China-led investment bank as founding member

TOKYO, 31 March — The Japanese government remained cautious about joining a planned Chinese-led Asian development bank on Tuesday, effectively deciding not to indicate its participation by the deadline China has set for accepting founding members.

"There is no need to participate hastily," Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told a meeting of his Liberal Democratic Party, referring to the proposed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, according to a participant of the meeting.

Abe also pointed to such remaining concerns as governance standards and the screening process for providing loans at the institution. The prime minister added, "The United States now knows that Japan is trustworthy," after Tokyo sided with Washington in keeping its careful stance toward the AIIB, though most of other Group of Seven nations such as Britain and Germany have announced they will take part. Finance Minister Taro Aso restated his cautiousness, telling a Press conference, "We have no choice but to be very cautious about participation" unless the proposed institution clears such conditions as securing fair govern-



Finance Minister Taro Aso

ance and debt sustainability.

As a condition for Japan's participation in the AIIB, Aso also called for loans to be screened from the standpoint of their environmental and social impact, and for the bank board to approve projects individually. Their remarks came as more countries moved to announce their intention to join the bank, with the end-of-March deadline looming for filing applications. The number of prospective founding members has reached more than 40. Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters that Japan has not obtained a clear explanation from China on its concerns about the

proposed bank's governance.

Japan will continue to call on China to provide such explanation in collaboration with other countries "without a specific deadline in mind," Kishida said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping announced last year a project to set up the bank in Beijing with initial capital of around \$50 billion, with China planning to be the biggest stakeholder.

The bank will offer loans for construction of infrastructure, such as roads, ports and railways in developing and emerging countries, and is set to be established later this year, according to China.

The United States, Japan and some other countries have been wary about their participation because the initiative is seen as expanding China's global influence and a potential rival to Washington-dominated existing institutions such as the World Bank.

While US officials have expressed wariness over the AIIB, they have also started saying recently that the new bank should work closely with existing institutions to make sure that it has proper lending standards.

Kyodo News

Ocean warming suggests 50 per cent chance of El Nino

SYDNEY, 31 March — Recent warming of the Pacific Ocean may signal an El Nino weather event is forming, the Australian Bureau of Meteorology said on Tuesday.

Climate models indicate the central tropical Pacific Ocean is likely to continue to warm, with El Nino thresholds to be reached or exceeded by mid-year, the weather bureau said.

"There is about a 50 percent chance of El Nino developing in the coming months, which is twice the normal likelihood," the bureau said. Should an El Nino eventuate, the system would likely bring below-average winter and spring rainfall over eastern Australia and above-average daytime temperatures over the southern half of Australia. Such climatic conditions would prove a blow for Australian

wheat production, which is reliant on rains in winter and spring.

Wheat production is expected to total 24.39 million tonnes in the 2015/16 season starting July 1, Australia's chief commodity forecaster said this month, up 3 percent from this year's 23.61 million tonnes. Wheat production from Australia's east coast has suffered two consecutive seasons of poor production as dry weather curbed yields. Another season of poor wheat production from Australian east coast farmers will also extend the headwinds for GrainCorp Ltd (GNC.AX), the country's largest bulk grain handler.

GrainCorp said in February its 2015 full-year earnings are expected to hit a five-year low as drought along the east coast curbs grain production.—*Reuters*



A surfer looks at waves as storm clouds move in from the Pacific Ocean at Sydney's Manly Beach on 26 August, 2014. REUTERS

PERSPECTIVES

Wednesday, 1 April, 2015

Don't let them to make a fool of you

By Aung Khin

Although it is not a national holiday in any country, April Fools' Day is celebrated every year on April 1 as a day when people make jokes and play pranks on each other. Those who fall victims of such jokes are called April Fools.

A few years ago, the website of a well-known western media outlet posted a concocted image of penguins flying over a mountain range. Other media organisations, foolishly, shared the story

as though it actually happened, after failing to pay heed to its publication date.

Hoax stories are sometimes reported by the press and other media on this day, but explained on the following days. Although most such stories are not created with ill intention, they have the potential to be spread among people unable to discern the truth. Vulnerable societies may suffer a lot from a simple hoax story.

In Myanmar culture, there is a night named Master of Thief, which is celebrated on the first night after Tazaungmone Full Moon Festival around November. On that night, young people try to steal every movable item from any household and set them up at such improbable places as merry pranks, believing that the 'thief planet' influences the night.

Although the origins of these two events are uncertain, they are celebrated for their light-heartedness. Nevertheless, hoax stories or

amusing thefts are intended to make fools of other people. White lies and stories told to mislead for fun are still lies. If someone takes another's property, it is simply theft.

Telling the truth can help someone build self-confidence, which is nobler than theft. While playing pranks or stealing property may have light-hearted intentions, such actions can cause real problems for the victims.

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How safe is your food?

Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh,
Regional Director, World Health Organization
South-East Asia Region.

HOW often do we ask ourselves if the food we are eating is safe? Do we know if it is free of bacteria, viruses, parasites, chemicals, other contaminants, additives and adulterants which can cause over 200 diseases ranging from diarrhoea to cancer? Every year diarrhoea caused by contaminated food and water kills 2.2 million people, including 1.9 million children, globally. Unsafe food and water kills an estimated 700,000 children in WHO's South-East Asia Region every year. Access to safe food remains a challenge in the Region. Whether as individuals, families, farmers, contributors to and handlers of the food chain or policy makers, we need to make food safety our priority.

Food safety is critical for public health as food-

borne diseases affect people's health and well-being. Unsafe food creates a vicious cycle of disease and malnutrition, particularly affecting infants, young children, the elderly and the sick. Foodborne diseases impede socio-economic development by straining health care systems and adversely impacting national economies, tourism and trade.

Since food passes through multiple hands from the farm to reach our plates, ensuring food safety requires multisectoral collaboration. The approach needs to be preventive - to improve food safety and quality through application of good farming practices by using agro chemicals or veterinary drugs only in the prescribed amount. Good storage, transportation, retail and restaurant practices are equally important to

make food safe.

Street foods are emerging as an important source of food for a large proportion of the population in urban and peri-urban settings. Street food as a source of foodborne diseases therefore assumes public health significance.

Also, new threats to food safety are constantly emerging - the impact of climate change on food production, distribution and consumption; emerging biological and environmental contamination of the food chain, new technologies, new and emerging pathogens; antimicrobial resistance - all pose challenges to the safety of our food.

Countries need to have a comprehensive food safety policy, legislation and national food safety programmes encompassing all the sectors and aspects for food safety.

Though most countries in the Region have food safety policies, enforcement remains a chal-

lenge. Food quality and safety standards are usually strictly followed for exportable food commodities, but not always enforced for food destined for the domestic market. Food safety and quality should be ensured through stringent control and inspection mechanisms for export as well as the domestic market.

Adulteration of food is another problem as informal food production and distribution systems are deeply entrenched at the community level in the Region. Contamination of mustard oil with argemone oil in 1998 and contamination of imported milk and infant formula with melamine in 2008, are among the few events that raised food safety concerns among consumers and policy makers in the Region and globally.

The most pertinent of all the measures is creating awareness among individuals to ensure that their food is safe. In this context, WHO has been promoting 'five keys' to food safety - maintain cleanliness, sepa-

rate raw and cooked food, cook thoroughly, keep food at correct temperature and use safe water and raw materials.

As food supply becomes increasingly globalized, there is an urgent need to strengthen food safety systems in and between all countries. WHO is supporting establishment of a network for food safety authorities in partnership with countries to promote the exchange of food safety information and improve collaboration among food safety authorities at national and international levels.

WHO is also helping countries prevent, detect and respond to foodborne disease outbreaks using the Codex Alimentarius, a collection of international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice covering all the main foods and processes.

In addition, WHO is advocating for food safety to be adequately incorporated in national disaster-management programmes and emergencies. Access to safe water and quality food is a major problem during flooding,

earthquakes and other natural disasters. There is a likelihood of food in the affected areas getting contaminated and causing outbreaks of food-borne disease.

As part of its Regional Food Safety Strategy, WHO is assisting countries in the Region to initiate, develop and sustain multi-sectoral approaches and measures for promotion of food safety among all population groups. Some countries have taken novel and notable initiatives such as the mobile food courts in Bangladesh, the establishment of a Food Standard and Safety Authority in India, and certification of street food vendors with a "Clean Food, Good Taste" logo in Thailand.

This year's World Health Day theme focuses on food safety. Food safety must be an essential component of national health, food, agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, water, sanitation and environment-related programmes. Food safety is a shared responsibility. Let us work together to make our food safe and to contribute to better health of people.

Wife of Pakistani admiral visits MWAF

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March—Vice presidents of Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation explained organizational setups of the federation, its mission

and vision to the wife of Admiral Muhammad Zakaullah, NI (H), Chief of Naval Staff of Pakistan, and party at the MWAF's hall, here, on Tuesday morning.

The wife of Pakistani admiral and party viewed round Myanmar handicrafts, ethnics' costumes, documentary photos on social activities of the federation and livelihoods of members with microfinance.

MNA

People join cooperative society in Aungmyay Village, Hkamti Tsp

HKAMTI, 31 March—Staff Officer U Myo Tun of Township Cooperative Department and executive U Kyaw Thein of Township Cooperative Syndicate gave talks on cooperative society to local residents in Aungmyay Village in Hkamti Township, Sagaing Region, on 30 March.

The staff officer explained cooperative policies, microfinance, pur-

chase of agricultural machinery through installment.

The syndicate's executive gave a lecture on socio-economic development of local residents based on microfinance, and disbursement of loans to rural people.

After the talks, local residents decided to form a cooperative society in the village.—Po Pale Lay



MPs comfort soldiers wounded in Laukkai conflict

MYINT O O LWIN, 31 March—Pyithu Hluttaw speaker Thura U Shwe Mann visited military-run hospital here on Tuesday to comfort soldiers wounded in Laukkai conflicts which began in February this year. The speaker acknowledged outstanding bravery of these soldiers in protecting and safeguarding of sovereignty of Myanmar.

U Soe Win, Vice-chairman of National Democratic Force, and U Win Ko, Vice-chairman of Pa-O National League, congratulated the soldiers. The speaker, the vice-speaker, chairmen of committees, member of parliaments, representatives of ethnic parties and defence services and military officers also provided

the wounded soldiers and their family members with cash and kind.—MNA

Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann comforts an injured military serviceman at PyinOoLwin Military Hospital.

MNA



Amyotha Hluttaw speaker holds talks with Australian Ambassador

Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint cordially greets Ambassador of Australia Mr Nicholas Coppel.

MNA



NAY PYI TAW, 31 March—Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint received Ambassador of Australia Mr Nicholas Coppel at the hall of

Amyotha Hluttaw, here, Tuesday.

Also present at the call were Chairman of Amyotha Hluttaw Public Accounts Committee U Thein

Win, member of Hluttaw Rights Committee U Saw Maw Tun, member of Bill Committee U Soe Myint and officials of the Amyotha Hluttaw Office.—MNA

Malaysia hosts 11th ASEAN Central Bank Governors Meeting

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March—The 11th ASEAN Central Bank Governors Meeting took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 19 to 21 March, according to officials.

The meeting was held alongside the first ASEAN Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meeting, the 23rd ASEAN Central Bank Deputy Governors' Meeting, an ASEAN Finance and Central Bank Deputies' Meeting and a Regional and Global Monetary Cooperation Seminar.

A Myanmar delegation led by U Kyaw Kyaw Maung, Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar, attended the meetings.

The ASEAN Central

Bank Deputy Governors' Meeting was held on 19 March, with participants exchanged views on future banking services.

The ASEAN Central Bank Governors Meeting took place on 21 March and discussed matters related to post-2015 activities, monetary integration in line with the ASEAN Economic Community, and policies to reduce the capacity divide in the region.

At the Regional and Global Monetary Cooperation Seminar on 20 March, governors of banks and chief executive officers of financial institutions sought ways to integrate banking services in the region, raise public awareness of financial issues, improve finan-

cial services, and provide financial assistance to small and medium enterprises.

ASEAN finance ministers and central bank governors released a joint statement on 21 March.—MNA

ASEAN, China discuss implementation of DOC in South China Sea

YANGON, 31 March—ASEAN countries and China exchanged views Tuesday on how to effectively implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea during a two-day working group meeting here.

Myanmar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the 13th Meeting of the ASEAN-China Joint Working Group on the Implementa-

tion of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea discussed practical cooperative projects under the implementation plan for the DOC and considered new initiatives and proposals.

The meeting, which began Monday, aimed to build upon the dialogue among ASEAN member states and China in promoting the DOC and the early

conclusion of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.

The 13th ASEAN-China JWG on DOC hosted by Myanmar was co-chaired by Mr Jakkrit Srivall, Director-General of the Department of ASEAN Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, and Mr He Wei, Deputy Director-General of the Department of

Boundary and Ocean Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. Representatives from ASEAN member states, China, and the ASEAN Secretariat participated in the meeting.

The next meeting will be held in May or June in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

GNLM

Commander-in-chief meets Pakistani chief of Naval Staff

NAY PYI TAW, 31 March — Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing met Admiral Muhammad Zakaullah NI(M), Chief of Naval Staff of Pakistan, here on Tuesday morning, according to officials.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing welcomed Pakistan's willingness to work with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and pledged support for friendly relationship between ASEAN and

Pakistan, while creating a new level of cooperation between the naval forces of the two countries.

There exists deep, constructive relationship between the two countries and two armed forces, with the Pakistani admiral saying that the first ambassador to his country was from Myanmar. He expressed appreciation and thanks to Myanmar for its assistance to his country as a fresh sovereignty as well as for its support for the establishment of coopera-

tion between Pakistan and ASEAN.

They also discussed ways of creating greater cooperation between their defence services, and exchange of friendly visits and trainees.

Admiral Muhammad Zakaullah NI(M) won the coveted Sword of Honour from Pakistan Naval Academy and was also awarded Chief of the Naval Staff Gold Medal at his graduation. He is the twentieth Chief of Naval Staff of Pakistan.—Myawady



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with Admiral Muhammad Zakaullah NI(M), Chief of Naval Staff of Pakistan.—MYAWADY



Members of the Ukrainian armed forces drive a tank in the settlement of Luhanske, Donetsk region on 27 March, 2015. —REUTERS

Air and sea traffic disrupted as 120 km winds batter Netherlands

AMSTERDAM, 31 March — Spring storms battered the Netherlands with gusts of up to 120 kilometres an hour on Tuesday, causing Amsterdam's Schiphol airport to cancel flights and the closure of two container terminals at the port of Rotterdam.

Gale force winds sweeping in from the North Sea disrupted land and marine traffic throughout the low-lying country, as the Dutch meteorological office issued a code red warning for the country's northern and coastal provinces.

A spokesman for Schiphol airport, Europe's fourth largest, said 80, primarily European, flights had been cancelled because wind

had reduced runway capacity, and that delays would mount as flight volumes rose later in the day.

At Rotterdam, Europe's largest port, two container terminals were closed, with ships forced to queue out at sea. A spokesman said this was a routine precaution when winds rise above gale force seven. Bulk liquid terminals continued to operate.

Near the port of Vlissingen, authorities were preparing to refloat a 300 metre container ship that ran aground in the small hours near the port of Vlissingen on the Belgian border. The crew was in no danger, the water management agency said, according to NOS public radio. —Reuters

Poland says will train 50 Ukrainian military staff this year

WARSAW, 31 March — Poland will provide training to around 50 Ukrainian army instructors this year, the Polish ministry of defence said on Tuesday, a part of NATO's efforts to boost Ukraine's defence capacity as it faces a pro-Russian rebellion in the east.

The Ukrainians will be trained in Poland, the ministry said in a statement, with the courses scheduled to take place in June, September and October this year. Other NATO coun-

tries will organize similar courses, the ministry also said.

Earlier this year, Britain said it would send 75 military personnel to Ukraine to help train its army.

Poland has been one of the most outspoken critics of Russian policy towards a pro-Russian separatist rebellion in eastern Ukraine, joining Western allies in accusing Moscow of supplying help to the insurrection — something the Kremlin denies. —Reuters

Spain arrests four including two teens planning to travel to Syria

MADRID, 31 March — Two young teenagers were arrested early on Tuesday in northeastern Spain, the same morning they planned to travel to Syria to fight with Islamist militants there, the Spanish interior ministry said.

Police arrested the two, both aged under 16, and another two suspects in a raid in the Mediterranean city of Badalona, about 11 kilometres from Barcelona.

"A brother of the minors had already traveled to Syria, recruited by jihadist groups, dying in 2014, and is believed to have formed part of the terrorist ranks supporting DAESH (Islamic State)," said the ministry in a statement.

The ministry said the teenagers had dropped out of school in Badalona and begun studying at an Islamic centre in Morocco. They were due to travel on Tuesday morning through Morocco to Turkey and from there onto Syria with the full knowledge of those close to them including their mother, said the ministry.

Since the attacks on satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris earlier this year, Spain has stepped up efforts to prevent recruiters from militant groups targeting young Muslims.

Reuters

Russia's Lavrov to rejoin Iran talks, sees chance of success



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov (C) waits with others for a P5+1 meeting at the Beau Rivage Palace Hotel in Lausanne, Switzerland on 29 March, 2015.

REUTERS

Moscow, 31 March — Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said he would rejoin talks on Iran's nuclear programme in Lausanne later on Tuesday

and said there was a good chance of success.

"The chances are high. They are probably not 100 percent but you can never be 100 percent certain

of anything. The odds are quite 'doable' if none of the parties raise the stakes at the last minute," Lavrov told a news conference in Moscow. —Reuters

Japan and US look to extend naval missions after law change

TOKYO, 31 March — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's push to revise the constitution to allow Tokyo's right to collective self defence will pave the way for closer co-

operation between US and Japanese forces in Asia, a top US commander said on Tuesday.

Expanded training and joint missions could extend across Asia from

Japan through the disputed South China Sea — claimed in whole or part by China, Vietnam, the Philippines and other nations in the region — into the Indian Ocean.

Neither the United States nor Japan have territorial claims in the South China Sea, but the Seventh Fleet operates in the area. A Japanese naval presence there could irritate Beijing.

Lawmakers in Japan are set to approve Abe's constitutional reinterpretation to recognize Japan's right to collective self defence (CSD). The Japanese parliament, where Abe enjoys a big majority,

will vote on the new security legislation in May.

"CSD makes it easier for the Seventh Fleet and JMSDF to exercise and operate across the Indo Asia Pacific," Admiral Robert Thomas, commander of the force said aboard his command ship, the *USS Blue Ridge*, in Yokohama.

The Japanese "have the capacity and capability for operations in international waters and international airspace anywhere on the globe," he told a media briefing with Admiral Eiichi Funada, commander of the JMSDF. A broader regional military role for Japan is being welcomed by Washington,

as it pushes its allies in Asia, including Australia, to do more as China takes an increasingly assertive stance in territorial disputes in the region.

Japan and the United States have said they will decide by the end of June on a new set of guidelines for their decades-old alliance that will give Japan a more prominent role.

The two admirals had earlier discussed expanding the scope of joint operations, in areas such as combating piracy and human trafficking and in human aid and disaster relief, Thomas said.

The two countries could also conduct train-

ing exercises in more diverse locations, he added.

The most powerful naval fleet in Asia, the US Seventh Fleet remains the main counterweight to China's growing maritime power in Asia. Centered around a carrier battle group that operates out of Japan, the US Seventh Fleet includes some 80 vessels, 140 aircraft and 40,000 sailors making it the most powerful naval force in the western Pacific.

Japan's navy consists of around 120 vessels, including more than 40 destroyers and a submarine force of around 20 boats.

Reuters



Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe

Saudi-led strikes again hit Yemen overnight



Smoke billows near military barracks in the Jabal al-Jumaima mountain following an air strike near Sanaa on 30 March, 2015.—REUTERS

ADEN, 31 March — Air raids by a Saudi-led coalition again hit Houthi militia targets across Yemen on Monday night, striking the group's northern stronghold of Saadeh, the capital, Sanaa, and the central town of Yarim, residents and media said.

"There were huge blazes in the mountains outside Sanaa. It looks like they hit a missile depot and it was on fire for half an hour or so. Then there was anti-aircraft fire until dawn," a Sanaa resident said.

The strikes, which began on Thursday, are aimed at stopping

the Houthis from taking more territory and pressing them and former president Ali Abdullah Saleh to negotiate a power-sharing deal with President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

The Houthis are from a Yemeni Shi'ite sect and are allied to Iran, Saudi Arabia's main regional rival. The Saudis and other Sunni Muslim countries in the region fear the advance of the Houthis will ultimately threaten the world's top oil exporter.

However, the Houthis and forces loyal to Saleh have continued to advance on the southern

port of Aden, the last big centre still under control of Hadi, who left Yemen on Thursday and is now in Riyadh with other members of his government. Shooting continued in Aden during the night, a *Reuters* reporter said. If the Houthis took the city, it would represent a significant defeat for the Saudi-led coalition, which has repeatedly said protecting the presence of Hadi's government there is a major objective.

An air strike on Monday killed at least 40 people at a camp for displaced people in northern Yemen, humanitarian work-

ers said, in an attack apparently aimed at the Houthis.

Saudi Arabia's military spokesman said he could not confirm a camp had been hit, but said jets might have returned fire on anti-aircraft weapons placed in civilian areas. Hadi's foreign minister, Riyadh Yassin, blamed Houthis for the explosion.

Qatar-based Al Jazeera television reported air raids at an army camp in Saadeh, while Saudi-owned Al Arabiya reported raids on the Red Sea port of Hudaida. A Sanaa resident said strikes had also hit Sanaa's international airport. Beirut-based al-Maseerah television, which is linked to the Houthis, reported that raids struck a gas plant in the central town of Yarim, killing eight people and wounding another 28.

In Riyadh, the campaign's spokesman, Brigadier General Ahmed Asseri, on Monday showed footage of air strikes hitting what he said were Yemeni army tanks under Houthi control as well as arms depots he said were held by the militia.

A US official said the Saudis had shown little appetite for a ground invasion if it can be avoided. "The objective here is to get to a point where the Houthis halt their destabilizing actions and come back to the table," the official said.—*Reuters*



Afghan President Ashraf Ghani

Council fears US troop decision will hurt faltering Afghan peace process

KABUL, 31 March — The official body overseeing the Afghan peace process and other influential players in the region have criticized President Ashraf Ghani for pushing for US troops to stay longer, saying it could hurt the chances of ending the Taliban insurgency.

Talks between the government and Taliban have yet to begin, although militant leaders have signaled that they are ready to negotiate through Pakistani mediation. The conflict costs thousands of lives each year.

Progress towards highly sensitive talks appears to have stalled, in part over divisions within the Taliban.

The US announcement during Ghani's recent visit to Washington to slow the pace at which it would wind down a force of 9,800 soldiers, and allow them to stay through the end of 2015, could further complicate the process. Under the previous plan, US forces were to have been cut to about half their current levels by year-end, and the change has angered the Taliban, which has stated that foreign troops against which it has fought must not be allowed to stay. "This will certainly complicate the peace effort, because the Taliban have long wanted foreign troops and US forces in particular to leave Afghanistan," High Peace Council spokesman Shahzada Shahid told *Reuters*. The High Peace Council was appointed by Ghani's predecessor to negotiate peace with the Taliban and has some 70 members.

Some senior regional diplomats and Afghan power brokers say the US decision makes little difference on the battlefield, but could further erode already fragile trust between the Taliban and the government.

They fear that by seeking additional US military support, Ghani is sending the wrong message to the Taliban, which was ousted in an American-led operation in 2001 and is fighting to return to power and impose a strict interpretation of sharia.

Reuters

Buhari builds on early lead in tight Nigerian election

ABUJA, 31 March — Nigerian opposition leader Muhammadu Buhari built a lead of 2 million votes with three-quarters of states counted on Monday, raising the prospect of a stunning ballot box victory for a man who first came to power three decades ago via a military coup.

According to results collated by *Reuters*, Buhari had notched up 12 million votes. A 72-year-old general, he has campaigned as a born-again democrat intent on cleaning up the corrupt politics of Africa's most populous nation.

This compared to 10 million for President Goodluck Jonathan, a one-time zoology professor whose five years at the helm of the continent's biggest economy and top oil producer have been plagued by corruption scandals and a bloody insurgency by Islamist Boko Haram militants.

There is still time for a reversal of fortunes, with some of Jonathan's big support bases in the oil-producing Niger Delta yet to report.

In Rivers state, the volatile and hotly contested home of Africa's biggest oil and gas indus-

try, Jonathan won a massive 95 percent of the vote.

Such results prompted suspicion among diplomats, observers and sympathisers of Buhari's All Progressives Congress (APC), some of whom took to the streets in protest.

In the oil city of Port Harcourt, police fired tear gas at a crowd of 100 female APC supporters demonstrating outside the regional offices of the INEC election commission. "Their intention was to destroy INEC materials," a policeman at the scene told *Reuters*.—*Reuters*

Austria charges 14-year old with terror offences

VIENNA, 31 March — Austria has charged a 14-year old boy with terror offences after he researched how to build a bomb online and made contact with militants supporting Islamic State fighters in Syria, prosecutors said on Tuesday.

The boy from a Turkish family had been detained for a second time in January on suspicion of terrorism-related activity.

More than 170 people have left Austria to fight in the Middle East, according to the interior ministry, some of whom have been killed. Fear of attacks is running high in Europe, especially after Islamist gunmen killed 17 in Paris. Authorities base their charges on data found on the boy's Playstation games console, including bomb-building plans downloaded from the internet, said a spokeswoman for prosecutors in Sankt Poelten, the capital of Lower Austria Province.

The boy faces up to five years in jail if convicted of supporting a terrorist organization and planning an attack.—*Reuters*

Turkish special forces enter Istanbul courthouse after prosecutor taken hostage

ISTANBUL, 31 March — A far-left Turkish group took an Istanbul prosecutor hostage on Tuesday and threatened on its website to kill him, prompting special forces officers to enter the courthouse as people inside the building were evacuated.

The Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C) published a picture of the prosecutor with a gun to his head. The prosecutor is leading an investigation into the death last year of a teenager

wounded during anti-government protests.

Television footage showed special forces officers entering the building and courthouse officials being escorted out.

The DHKP-C blames the ruling AK Party for the killing of 15-year-old Berkin Elvan, who died last March after nine months in a coma from a head wound sustained in anti-government protests.

The group said on its website it wanted the police officer it

blames for Elvan's death to "confess" on television, the officers involved to be tried in "people's courts", and charges against those who attended protests for Elvan to be dropped.

The United States, European Union and Turkey list the DHKP-C as a terrorist organization. It was behind a suicide bombing at the US Embassy in 2013. In 2001, two policemen and an Australian tourist died in a DHKP-C attack in central Istanbul.

Reuters

US defence chief to visit S Korea from 9 April : Yonhap

SEOUL, 31 March — US Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter plans to make a two-day visit to South Korea from 9 April, *Yonhap News Agency* reported on Tuesday.

“Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter is to arrive here on 9 April for a two-day schedule, during which he plans to hold talks with South Korea’s Defence Minister Han Min Koo and meet with President Park

Geun Hye,” a Seoul source was quoted as saying by *Yonhap*.

Carter is also expected to visit Japan as well.

His visit comes amid speculation that South Korea and the United States could discuss the possible deployment of an anti-ballistic missile system in South Korea in the face of strong opposition from China. South Korea’s Defence Ministry spokesman

told journalists in a press briefing that deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system in South Korea is not on the agenda of Carter’s talks with South Korean leaders.

Beijing has been protesting against the deployment of the system in South Korea, claiming it will target China as part of US efforts to expand its military presence in East Asia.

South Korea has maintained strategic ambiguity on the issue so far, saying there have been no consultations with the United States and no decision has been made.

US officials maintain the system is purely defensive and its deployment in South Korea would be aimed at exclusively dealing with the threats posed by North Korea.

Kyodo News

Narita airport to open more passport control counters at busy times

CHIBA, (Japan), 31 March — Narita International Airport plans to double the number of passport control counters handling arriving passengers at Terminal 2 in busy hours starting on Wednesday, an airport source said on Monday.

The terminal has been alternating between its

two immigration control sections following a sharp drop in foreign travelers at the country’s main international gateway after the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear plant disasters in 2011.

Both sections of the terminal will now open every day from around 1 pm to 5 pm, the busiest

time for arrivals at the airport serving Tokyo, with up to 40 counters handling both foreign and Japanese travelers, the source said.

The terminal has been experiencing an increase in traveler numbers, with up to several hundred people queuing to clear immigration at peak hours on some days. There had been grow-

ing calls to address this issue out of concern it was giving arriving passengers a poor first impression of Japan. The decision to open more passport control counters was made after talks between officials from customs, immigration and quarantine services, according to the source.

Kyodo News

Puppet master assumes prestigious teacher’s name



Yoshida Tamao, a puppet master of the traditional Japanese puppet theatre, Bunraku, heads to his dressing room at the National Bunraku Theater in Osaka on 31 March, 2015, after assuming his master’s name. He was previously called Yoshida Tamame. His master was a living national treasure.—KYODO NEWS

OSAKA, 31 March — A puppet master of the Japanese puppet show, Bunraku, assumed his late teacher’s name on 31 March, 2015.

Yoshida Tamame, 61, has now become the heir of Yoshida Tamao, a living national treasure who passed away in 2006.

Since becoming a disciple of Tamao in 1968, Tamame continued his

practice under the master. Assuming the name of Tamao, he visited the grave of his master in the city of Osaka.

A gala performance of the succession to his predecessor’s name will be held at the National Bunraku Theater in Osaka from 4 to 26 April and at the National Theater in Tokyo from 9 to 25 May.

Kyodo News

Crash pilot had been treated for suicidal tendencies



Andreas Lubitz

DUESSELDORF, (Germany), 31 March — The German pilot suspected of deliberately crashing a plane in the French Alps last week was treated for suicidal tendencies years ago before he received his pilot’s licence, German prosecutors said on Monday.

This was the first acknowledgement from German officials that the pilot, Andreas Lubitz, had suffered bouts of depression and it is likely to intensify a debate about how airlines screen and monitor their pilots.

Investigators believe Lubitz, serving as co-pilot on a Germanwings flight from Barcelona to Duesseldorf on March 24th, locked the captain out of the cockpit and steered the Airbus A320 plane into the side of a mountain while passengers

screamed in horror. A total of 150 people died in the crash.

Lufthansa (LHAG.DE), the parent of the budget airline, has said it was not aware of anything in the 27-year-old’s past which suggested he might have posed a risk. It has confirmed that Lubitz broke off his pilot training in 2009 for nearly a year, around the time he was reportedly suffering from depression and anxiety.

“Several years ago before obtaining his pilot’s licence the co-pilot was in a long period of psychotherapeutic treatment with noticeable suicidal tendencies,” Duesseldorf prosecutors said in a statement on Monday.

They said that in recent years he had not shown signs of suicidal behaviour or aggressive tendencies in visits to doctors.

After searching his family home in Montabaur and apartment in Duesseldorf, and following interviews with friends and relatives, the prosecutors said they had not found any evidence Lubitz was planning such an attack, nor the reasons behind it.

“No special circumstances have come to light, whether in his personal life or his work life, that shed any plausible light on a possible motive,” they said.

Lufthansa CEO Carsten Spohr has said the airline prides itself on the rigorous selection methods of its pilot training scheme. The school is currently closed to new applicants, but around 6,000 people apply each year, with just 7-8 percent of them making the cut. Lufthansa has also made clear that Lubitz’s medical records were subject to doctor-patient confidentiality and that the airline therefore had no knowledge of what they contained. Under German law, employers do not have access to employees’ medical records and sick notes excusing a person from work do not give information on their medical condition.

Some politicians have called for a loosening of these rules in the wake of the Germanwings disaster. But at a news conference in Berlin on Monday, a spokeswoman for the German health ministry said doctors already had the right to break their vow

of confidentiality if they thought their patients posed a danger to others.

French investigators said on Monday they were digging an access route to the mountain crash site in order to speed up the investigation.

The head of the French police forensic team told reporters it would take two to four months to identify the victims and that there was no certainty all would be identified because of the high speed at which the plane crashed.

“After a plane crash like this, the state of the bodies is not like after a simple car crash. The bodies are not necessarily whole, as the families know,” Colonel Francois Daoust, head of the French Gendarmerie’s criminal research Institute, told reporters.

He added that some 400 samples from body parts taken from the crash had allowed police to identify 78 different DNA profiles so far, but no identifications had been made as yet.

The plane’s second flight recorder, which contains flight data, has not yet been found.

Kay Kratky, a board member of Lufthansa’s German airlines unit, told a German talkshow on Sunday evening that, due to the force with which the plane hit the mountain face, it was possible the recorder’s locator beacons had been damaged and were not working properly.—Reuters

Gov’t to address maternity harassment against working women

TOKYO, 31 March — The labour ministry has decided to make it unlawful to treat female workers unfavourably at their workplaces within one year in principle after expiry of their child-care leave, according to ministry officials.

If firms insist there were circumstances necessitating such treatment of female workers, those firms will be obliged to explain the situation, the officials said.

So far in Japan, even if female workers were unfairly demoted or reassigned without due causes in so-called maternity harassment, firms have often forced them to accept it by citing the workers’ lack of ability and other reasons. Last October, the Supreme Court ruled that demotion due to pregnancy is prohibited in principle by law and is unlawful unless women accept it without compulsion or there are special circumstances necessitating it.

On the basis of the landmark decision, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare has reviewed its views on the law for equal employment opportunity for men and women and distributed new guidelines to labour bureaus across the country.—Kyodo News

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Consignees of cargo carried on MV MERATUS GORONTALO VOY NO (097N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 1.4.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**Extension for Consultation Date on the
Modernization of Myanmar Investment Law**

In order to modernize the Myanmar Investment Law, the Directorate of the Investment and Company Administration (DICA) is currently preparing a new Myanmar Investment Law with the assistance of International Finance Corporation (IFC). The draft law in Myanmar and English languages has now been uploaded on DICA's website: (www.dica.gov.mm).

According to the request of interested people to give more comprehensive comments, DICA extends the date until 30 April 2015. Comments are to be sent by email: policylegal.dica@gmail.com, or the following address:

Yangon Office : No.1 Thitsar Road, Yankin Township, Yangon
Fax: 01 658135
Nay Pyi Taw Office : Building No. 32, Nay Pyi Taw
Phone: 067 406124, Fax: 067 406306
Mandalay Office : Corner of 26th and 84th Street, East Zay Cho Market,
2nd Floor, Chan Aye Thar Zan Township, Mandalay,
Mandalay Region
Fax: 02 686660
Shan State Office : No. 139, Sat San Tun Road, Zay Pine Yut, Taungyi, Shan State
Fax: 081 2124974
Mon State Office : No. 401, Toe Chae Kan Nar Road, Mayangone Quarter,
Mawlamyine Township, Mon State
Fax: 05 7 23385

**Japan, China, S Korea tourism
ministers to meet in April in Tokyo**

TOKYO, 31 March — Tourism ministers from Japan, China and South Korea will meet in April in Tokyo, resuming what had been an annual meeting last held in 2011 until Japan-China ties soured, the Japanese tourism minister said on Tuesday.

Japanese Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Minister Akihiro Ota, China National Tourism Administration Chairman Li Jinzao and South Korean Culture, Sports and Tourism Minister Kim Jongdeok will gather on 11-22 April, Ota told a Press conference.

"There is a significant rise in tourists from China and South Korea (to Japan), but (visitors) from Japan to both those countries have been on the wane. We will discuss mutual expansion (of tourists) in the three countries," he said.

The trilateral meeting, launched in 2006 in Japan's Hokkaido to promote tourism, was suspended in 2012 after Beijing declined to participate amid a confrontation with Tokyo over a group of Japanese-controlled islands in the East China Sea.

In the upcoming meeting the three minis-

ters are also expected to discuss jointly promoting the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics and issue a statement, a Japanese official said.

The aborted 2012 meeting was to take place in Fukushima Prefecture to overcome the negative effects of Japan's March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, and subsequent Fukushima nuclear crisis, but the venue this time is in Tokyo due to scheduling requirements, the Japan Tourism Agency said.

Kyodo News

Ancient Chinese culture textbooks available in middle schools

BEIJING, 31 March — Textbooks on ancient Chinese culture will soon be available to middle school students to boost their knowledge of the past, a local newspaper said.

The list of cultural books was organized by the

Ministry of Education and carried out by the Ancient Chinese Culture Centre. It will be available next semester for schools to adopt should they choose, the *Beijing News* said on Tuesday.

It is the first textbook

dedicated to ancient philosophy and classic Chinese culture.

Currently, middle school students are taught modern literature with a minimal focus on classics.

The textbook will help middle school stu-

dents understand classics by Lao Tze, Confucius, Mencius and others. It will also analyze the differences between the East and the West, comparing the concepts of Confucius' benevolence and Socrates' virtues, as well as Mencius'

ideas of moral and profit versus Jeremy Bentham's Utilitarianism.

The textbook came as ancient Chinese culture regains popularity in society amid extra emphasis by the government.

Chinese President Xi

Jinping has stressed on several occasions the importance of traditional Chinese culture, saying that the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation needs the prosperous Chinese culture.

Xinhua

**China orders military to keep barracks
simple, guard against excess**

BEIJING, 31 March — China ordered its military on Tuesday to build barracks as simply and economically as possible and avoid using ostentatious or imported building materials, as part of a broader crackdown on graft and excess.

China's armed forces, the world's largest, have become a focus of President Xi Jinping's campaign to root out deeply-ingrained graft including bribery, which often takes the form of lavish gifts to officials

or extravagant spending of government funds.

The guidelines on construction were in line with demands for the military to be thrifty and "guard against luxury", the Defence Ministry said in an update to building rules carried on its website.

Colours used should be sober, plain and uniform, and new barracks must be well-connected to the Internet and be energy efficient, it said.

"Materials used should be economical, last a long

time, look good and be useable," the ministry said. "High end materials and luxurious construction is banned; put priority on using Chinese products, and high-end products from abroad are banned."

The anti-graft drive in the military comes as Xi steps up efforts to modernize forces that are projecting power across the disputed waters of the East and South China Seas, though China has not fought a war in decades.

One former senior of-

ficer felled in Xi's sweep, Gu Junshan, who had been deputy director of the army's logistics department, had an obsession with gold, according to Chinese media reports. China intensified its crackdown on corruption in the military in the late 1990s, banning the People's Liberation Army from engaging in business. But the military has been involved in commercial dealings in recent years due to a lack of checks and balances, military analysts have said.—Reuters

WEATHER REPORT

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 1st April, 2015: Rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagaing and Taninthayi Regions, Kachin, Chin and Rakhine States, weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%).

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

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Comics skewer apologetic Justin Bieber at celebrity roast



Actor Anders Holm (L), singer Justin Bieber (C) and actor Blake Anderson pose during Comedy Central Roast of Justin Bieber at Sony Studios in Culver City, California on 14 March, 2015.—REUTERS

NEW YORK, 31 March — Pop sensation Justin Bieber, the subject of some unflattering headlines in recent years, suffered the slings and arrows of fellow entertainers, from Kevin Hart to Martha Stewart, as they skewered his looks, music and public antics during a celebrity roast broadcast on Monday.

Comedy Central's "Roast of Justin Bieber,"

hosted by Hart, got off to an edgy start, with Hart joking that most of superstar's Bieber's fans "are either in middle schools, or standing at least 500 feet away from one."

Hart was also joined by Natasha Leggero, Pete Davidson, Shaquille O'Neal, Snoop Dogg, roast veteran Jeff Ross, Chris D'Elia and Ludacris in lambasting Bieber, 21, over a two-hour

special taped in Los Angeles earlier this month.

In keeping with the long tradition of celebrity roasts, off colour, politically incorrect and borderline offensive jokes were the order of the day, mining everything from the 11 September attacks to the Holocaust for humor. The N-word was in wide use.

Referring to Bieber's many tattoos, O'Neal not-

ed one of Jesus Christ and wondered, "Why you got to bring Jesus into this? That man has suffered enough."

Snoop Dogg referenced another Bieber headline-making escapade involving the singer's pet monkey. "That monkey was more embarrassed than the one that started the AIDS epidemic," the rapper joked.

The roasters targeted each other as much as they did Bieber, with cracks about Hart's diminutive stature, O'Neal's weight and appetite and the advancing ages of Stewart, Ludacris and Snoop Dogg, as well as Stewart's prison record. But they saved their sharpest barbs for Bieber, whom Hart described as having "the voice of an angel, and the haircut and tattoos of lesbian butchers."

Bieber, who wore a blue suit and mostly chuckled at the jokes and occasionally clapped, got the last word, however.

Bieber said he was "new to comedy, but here's a joke, all right? What do you get when you give a teenager \$200 million? A bunch of has-beens calling you a lesbian for two hours."—Reuters

Roger Moore denies making racist comment about Idris Elba



Actor Roger Moore has denied accusations that he said "something racist" about "The Wire" star Idris Elba.

REUTERS

LONDON, 31 March — Actor Roger Moore has denied accusations that he said "something racist" about "The Wire" star Idris Elba.

The actor took to Twitter to refute the allegations.

His quotes from an interview with Paris Match seemed to suggest that he thought Elba should not play James Bond as he wasn't "English English."

According to the interview, Moore had said: "A few years ago, I said that Cuba Gooding Jr would make an excellent Bond, but it was a joke! Although James may have been played by a Scot, a Welshman and an Irishman, I think he should be 'English-English'. Nevertheless, it's an interesting idea, but unrealistic."

Moore, who played Bond in seven movies, said his real views were lost in translation. Moore went on to add that he simply agreed with the journalist who interviewed him when he asked if "Bond should be English," and his response has been taken out of context. "Luther" star Elba, was born in Hackney, London, and has emerged as a strong contender to replace Daniel Craig as Bond. British newspapers have speculated that other actors in the frame include Dan Stevens, Henry Cavill and Tom Hardy.

Craig will next appear as the British super spy in "Spectre", the 24th film of the series and his fourth outing. The film is set for a 6 November release.—Reuters

Films bind nations together: Amitabh Bachchan

CAIRO, 31 March — Underlining the importance of cultural exchange through cinema, Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan says films play a major role in bringing nations together.

On a three-day visit to Cairo for the 'India by the Nile' festival, Bachchan, the most popular Indian star in Egypt, said he is proud to be a part of the film fraternity which is instrumental in making people overlook their differences.

"Cinema is a great integrator. When we sit inside darkened halls, we never ask the cast, creed,



Amitabh Bachchan

colour or religion of the person sitting next to us. We enjoy the same films, sing the same songs, we cry at the same emotions, we laugh at the same jokes," Big B said in an interview at the India House here.

"There are very few institutions left in the world that can boast of such integration as cinema. I pride myself of the fact that I am a very small element in this vast fraternity that brings cultures together," he added.—PTI

Helen Mirren fights to rescue stolen art in 'Woman in Gold'

NEW YORK, 31 March — Before Helen Mirren agreed to play elderly Jewish World War Two refugee Maria Altmann in the new film "Woman in Gold," the Academy Award-winning actress checked the last page of the screenplay to see if the character was there.

It's a trick Mirren learnt early in her career. Altmann's character was at the end of the screenplay of the film about her life that opens in US theatres on Wednesday.

"All the good roles are on the last page and if they are not on



Actress Helen Mirren arrives at the 72nd Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California in this on 11 Jan, 2015 file photo.—REUTERS

the last page, they have to have a good exit. I've always done that," Mirren, 69, said in an interview.

"If it just sort of disappears, it is a hopeless role. It is not worth doing. It is not worth reading the script."

The film tells the story of Altmann's against-the-odds battle with the Austrian government to regain paintings by artist Gustav Klimt that the Nazis stole from her family during World War Two.

The most famous of the works, "Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I," was a 1907 oil and gold painting of Altmann's aunt.

Reuters

One Direction's Niall Horan, Harry Styles offered solo deals?

LONDON, 31 March — Boy band One Direction's two members Niall Horan and Harry Styles have reportedly been offered "huge deals" from record label Syco to pursue solo careers. One Direction bosses fear the band will split next year following Zayn Malik's shock decision to quit.

Even though the group's fifth album is expected to be released

as intended in time for Christmas, it is being said Horan and Styles are being groomed for solo success, reported Daily Star.

"The album is a guarantee but next year is all up in the air. Harry and Niall are already being groomed for solo success and both could have huge solo careers if they wanted," a source said.—Reuters



It is being said Niall Horan and Harry Styles are being groomed for solo success.

Prefectural mascot Kumamon demoted after failing to shed weight

KUMAMOTO, (Japan), 31 March — Kumamoto Prefecture's black bear mascot Kumamon has been demoted from the rank of sales manager to assistant sales manager as a penalty for failing to lose weight, Kumamoto Gov.

Ikuo Kabashima said Monday.

The winner of a 2011 online popularity contest involving around 350 local mascots from across Japan, went on a diet last October after the governor pointed out that Kumamon was too fat.

Kumamon's weight and body fat remained unchanged from six months earlier as the mascot failed to stay the course, sneakily

eating Valentine's Day chocolates and other treats.

By contrast, the governor lost 4.6 kilograms in the same period as he walked to the prefectural government building every morning and continued to eat healthy bento lunches made by his wife.

Earlier this month, the southwestern Japan prefecture announced that sales in 2014 of products featuring Kumamon rose 1.4 times from the previous year to at least 64.3 billion yen (\$535.4 million).

Kumamoto has granted permission to around 18,700 merchandisers to use the official mascot on their products.

Kyodo News



"Kumamon," Kumamoto Prefecture's popular black bear mascot, holds a letter of appointment in Tokyo on 30 March, 2015, after Kumamoto Gov. Ikuo Kabashima announced Kumamon's demotion from sales manager to assistant sales manager as a penalty for failing to lose weight. The mascot had been on a diet since October 2014 after the governor pointed out that it was too fat.—KYODO NEWS

Brazilian club abandon World Cup stadium in Salvador



An aerial shot shows the Arena Fonte Nova stadium, in Salvador, in the state of Bahia, northern Brazil on 28 March, 2014.—REUTERS

SAO PAULO, 31 March — Esporte Club Bahia, one of the biggest clubs in Salvador, said on Monday they were abandoning the

stadium that was rebuilt for last year's World Cup and returning to use the city's old municipal ground.

The club said their fans

had not been respected at the stadium and their 1-0 win over Campinense on Saturday would be their last match there.

"Bahia is still open to negotiations to play at the Fonte Nova arena if the (owners) consortium values and respects fans...and treats them well," the club said in a statement announcing their return to the Pituacu ground. "It's the fans of Esporte Club Bahia that give life to the stadium."

The Fonte Nova was rebuilt at a cost of 600 million reais (around \$200 million) and hosted six matches in the 2014 World Cup and three in the Confederations Cup a year earlier.

Several of the stadiums built for Brazil's World Cup have been underused since the tournament ended and at least one has been closed because of structural problems.—Reuters

Qatar 2022 World Cup may not need cooling systems

DOHA, 31 March — A winter World Cup in Qatar may not require cooling systems to lower temperatures in the stadiums as proposed in the bid for a summer tournament, said an executive from the Gulf state's 2022 organising committee.

Earlier this month, soccer's world governing body FIFA ended more than four years of uncertainty over the timing of the World Cup in Qatar by announcing it would be played in November and December with the final on 18 December.

One of the biggest challenges of hosting the tournament in the summer months, when temperatures at times

exceed 40 degrees Celsius, was cooling down the stadiums but with the shift to the winter the organising committee is reassessing the situation.

"The temperatures are lower in the winter so the demand for cooling will be lower," Dario Cadavid, technical assurance and integration manager at Qatar's 2022 Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy told Reuters in an interview.

"It's very possible that during that time of the year that cooling isn't required for the winter," he added, without giving any details on the potential cost savings of using less energy if the

cooling systems are not used.

Qatar always said a summer World Cup was viable thanks to revolutionary cooling technologies it is developing for stadiums, training areas and fan zones but there was still widespread concern for the health of players and fans.

However, Cadavid downplayed those concerns.

"In order to provide safety for the players we need to provide a temperature between 26 and 29 degrees... our target is 26 degrees," he said.

Whether it is used at the finals or not research on cooling technologies is continuing because Qatar

wants the 2022 stadiums to be available for local league games all year, said Cadavid who described this aspect of the bid as the "legacy" element.

There are fewer local matches scheduled each week in the summer than there will be at the World Cup and they require less planning so maintaining cool temperatures in the stadiums will require lower amounts of energy, according to Cadavid.

"...matches in the summer for the local leagues are less frequent than a tournament.. you have two matches per week so less demand for energy," he said.—Reuters

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Myanmar International

(1-4-2015 07:00 am~ 2-4-2015 07:00 am) MST

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MRTV

News Channel in Brief

(1-4-2015, Wednesday)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 6:00 am | 2:20 pm |
| • Paritta by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw | • Thingyan Festival |
| 6:30 am | 2:35 pm |
| • Physical Exercises | • Traditional Boxing |
| 7:00 am | 3:30 pm |
| • News/ Weather Report | • Head Line News |
| 7:35 am | 4:35 pm |
| • Money Talk Myanmar | • University of Distance Education (TV Lectures) — Third Years (Botany) |
| 8:35 am | 5:00 pm |
| • People's Talks | • News / Weather Report |
| 9:35 am | 6:35pm |
| • Science and Technology Programme | • Science and Technology Programme |
| 10:00 am | 7:35 pm |
| • News / International News | • 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 |
| • Hluttaw Image | • Fine Arts-Boston of Dramatic Performance |
| 1:40 pm | |
| • Documentary | |

MRTV

Entertainment Channel

(1-4-2015, Wednesday)

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 6:00 am | 8:40 am |
| • Mono Classical Songs | • Song and Dance of Thingyan Festival |
| 6:20 am | 9:00 am |
| • Pyi Thu Ni Ti | • Pyi Thu Ni Ti |
| 6:40 am | 9:40 am |
| • Myanmar Series | • Myanmar Movie |
| 7:10 am | 12:00 noon |
| • TV Drama Series | • Close down |
| 8:00 am | |
| • TV Drama Series | |

Williams sisters head into last eight in Miami

MIAMI, 31 March — Sisters Serena and Venus Williams marched into the quarter-finals of the Miami Open after straight-set wins at Key Biscayne on Monday.

World number one Serena beat 24th seeded Russian Svetlana Kuznetsova 6-2, 6-3 producing 29 winners and 20 unforced errors. Kuznetsova, who owns two grand slam titles, had beaten Serena twice in their previous nine meetings but the outcome of this contest never looked in doubt.

"I know Svetlana is super tough and we always have super tough matches," said Serena.

"It seems like I'm cruising but don't think I'm cruising. I have my matches and I'm really focused in my matches because all these players I play are really good," she added.

Serena has now won 18 straight matches and she is looking to add to her seven titles in Miami with her third straight triumph after winning in 2013 and 2014.

Venus continued a winning streak of her own — making it seven wins in seven against fellow former world number one Caroline Wozniacki with a 6-3, 7-6(1) victory. The win also made it seven wins in her last eight against top 10 opponents, highlighting Venus's return to form after her health problems.

The older Williams sister will face Carla Suarez Navarro in the last eight following the Spaniard's win over seventh seed Agnieszka Radwanska 5-7, 6-0, 6-4.

Romanian third seed Simona Halep won through after beating Italy's Flavia Pennetta 6-3, 7-5.

Reuters



Serena Williams hits a forehand against Svetlana Kuznetsova (not picture) on day eight of the Miami Open at Crandon Park Tennis Centre, on 30 March, 2015. — REUTERS

Djokovic, Nishikori and Raonic reach last 16 in Miami



Novak Djokovic hits a backhand against Steve Darcis (not picture) on day eight of the Miami Open at Crandon Park Tennis Centre, on 30 March, 2015. — REUTERS

MIAMI, 31 March — Defending champion Novak Djokovic defeated Belgium's Steve Darcis 6-0, 7-5 on Monday to power into the last 16 of the Miami Open along with Japan's Kei Nishikori, Canada's Milos Raonic and American John Isner.

The Serbian world number one, who just like last year won at Indian Wells before heading to South Florida, will face Alexander Dolgoplov, a 7-5, 6-4 winner over Brazilian Thomaz Bellucci, in the fourth round.

Djokovic, who is seeking a fifth win at Miami, wrapped up a one-sided first set in 26 minutes

but faced a sterner test in the second.

Darcis broke to go ahead 5-4 but after the Serb levelled up the set, he broke back and held on to secure the match.

"I managed to come back in the right moment," Djokovic said.

"I kind of elevated the intensity and started playing a little bit more with depth on the ball.

"He's got a lot of variety, especially from his backhand side.

"So I was handling it really good for first 30 minutes, then started to make some unforced errors and started to play a little

bit more neutral, a little bit slower, and he got into the match.

"I complicated my own life in the second set but in the end of the day, it's a win."

Fourth-seed Nishikori had even less trouble as he crushed Serbia's Viktor Troicki 6-2, 6-2 in 63 minutes.

Troicki, who needed medical treatment to his left side during the match, struggled to cope with Nishikori throughout with the 25-year-old converting five of his six break points.

"I was almost perfect on the court. It is so exciting that I am playing well here," said Nishikori. "Maybe he was hurting a little bit but I was still putting him under pressure with my return."

Raonic also moved into the fourth round after a hard-earned 6-1, 5-7, 7-6 (3) win over French 31st seed Jeremy Chardy.

Raonic was broken when serving for the match at 5-4 in the second and then Chardy went on to force the third set.

"He started playing more freely and I sort of went the other way," said Raonic. "He played well in the second set and I think he played better than I did in the third."

Isner provided an upset as the 22nd seed won 7-6(2), 6-2 over ninth seeded Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov while Belgian 18th seed David Goffin beat Poland's Jerzy Janowicz 6-4, 6-3 and Spain's sixth seed David Ferrer got past Czech Lukas Rosol 6-4, 7-5.—Reuters

FA end plan for combined British team at Rio Games — report

LONDON, 31 March — The English Football Association have scrapped plans to send a combined British football team to compete at next year's Rio de Janeiro Olympics because of opposition from other home nations, the BBC reported on Monday.

The BBC said the FA had written to the Scottish, Welsh

and Northern Irish associations to inform them.

Britain fielded a unified football team managed by the FA, after a 52-year absence, at the London 2012 Olympics although at the time it was seen as a one-off move to mark the home Games.

Several Welsh and Scottish players played at London 2012

without the blessing of their national associations.

Debate has raged over a British soccer team, with the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish FAs concerned that agreeing to unite for the Olympics would jeopardise their independent status within football's world governing body FIFA.

Reuters



File photo of members of Britain's national team pose for a photo before their men's Group A football match against Senegal at the London 2012 Olympic Games in Old Trafford, Manchester, northern England on 26 July, 2012. REUTERS

Woods drops out of world's top 100

Tiger Woods hits his drive on the 17th hole during the second round of the Waste Management Phoenix Open at TPC Scottsdale on 30 Jan, 2015; Scottsdale, AZ, USA. REUTERS



NEW YORK, 31 March — Tiger Woods has dropped outside the top 100 in the world golf rankings for the first time since 1996.

The 39-year-old former world number one and 14-times major champion, who has not played since pulling out of the Farmer's Open in early February due to back problems, has slipped to 104th in the rankings.

The American first topped the list in 1997 and has spent

683 weeks as world number one, more than twice as long as any other player. Woods's last major title was the 2008 US Open but he won five PGA Tour events in 2013 and topped the rankings in May 2014 before suffering injury problems and a loss of form.

He shot a round of 82 at the Phoenix Open in January, the worst of his professional career. Woods hopes to return to play in next week's US Masters, the first major of the year.—Reuters