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Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham hails newly launched National Archives Department

NAY PYI TAW, 22 May— Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham on Friday attended the first-phase launch of the National Archives Department (Nay Pyi Taw) in Nay Pyi Taw, describing the centre as integral to preservation of the country's historical records and documents of political, cultural and administrative arenas, as well as national identity and heritage.

The archives can be used as testimony in courts and arbitrations, the vice president said, adding that the centre is essential to the smooth operation of the government mechanism, because it can provide information of how government ministries have functioned.

The centre will have the National Archives Information System (NAIS) to enable researchers to easily access required information.

The vice president, accompanied by union ministers, toured the centre, inspecting the installation of data servers, storage of non-paper records and digitalization processes.

In the afternoon, he went to Lashio in Shan State to meet local ministers, leaders of self-administered areas, parliamentarians, departmental officials and community leaders.

At the meeting, he spoke of the government's efforts to promote education, health, religious and social affairs, transportation and disaster preparedness measures.

Officials presented K5 million each to literature and cultural organizations from Shan, Kachin, Kokang, Wa, Palaung, Lisu, Lahu, Bamar, Monwon-Bamar and Myaungzee. The chief minister of Shan State also presented K5 million to a free interfaith funeral service.

MNA

Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham views round scale models of ancient equipment at National Archives Department.—MNA

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Ethnic armed groups to discuss ceasefire accord at June 2-6 summit in Lawkheelah

By *Ye Myint*

YANGON, 22 May — Leaders of Myanmar's ethnic armed groups will hold a conference 2-6 June in Lawkheelah, Kayin State, to seek final approval of a draft nationwide ceasefire accord (NCA), Daw Saw Mya Yazar Lin, one of the ethnic peace negotiators, said Friday.

The NCA draft, the culmination of 16 months of peace talks, was approved by the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team, representing 16 ethnic armed groups, and the government's Union Peace-making Work Committee on 31 March in Yangon in the presence of President U Thein Sein.

"Leaders of all ethnic armed groups—NCCT members and non-NCCT members—are expected to be present at the Lawkheelah Summit," the peace negotiator told The Global New Light of Myanmar in a phone interview, adding that final approval of the draft deal by ethnic leaders is expected at the summit.

Prior to seeking final approval on the deal from all ethnic leaders, the NCCT is set to meet in Chiang Mai on 25-27 May. The meeting was firstly scheduled for 23 May.

The meeting in late May will be the first gathering of NCCT members since the final round of ceasefire talks with the UPWC in March, Daw Saw Mya Yazar Lin said.

The three-day pre-summit meeting of the NCCT will be attended by all members, including the team's leader U Naing Hong Sa and deputies U Pado Saw Kwe Htoo Win and Maj-Gen U Guan Maw, she added.

(See page 2)

Myanmar navy rescues hundreds of boat people off western coast

MAUNGTAW, 22 May— The Myanmar navy handed over 208 Bangladeshi boat people to officials in the village of Angumaw on Friday morning after rescuing them off the western coast aboard two fishing trawlers the previous afternoon.

One of the trawlers, belongs to a Thai national Umint of Ranong in southern Thailand left the town on 8 April and entered Bangladeshi waters on 13 April. Small boats transported Bangladeshis in groups to the vessel anchored at an offshore island in Bangladesh.

The trawler operator planned to set off for Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia but was forced into a U-turn as a result of sea patrols on 15 May.

According to reports, the second trawler was hired to deliver supplies to the first. The second vessel was in Bangladeshi waters on 12 May after leaving Kawthoung on 4 May. It was intercepted in Myanmar waters on 21 May.

The boat belongs to Ko Khine of Myeik, a town in Taninthayi Region.

Aboard the trawlers were 208 Bangladeshis from Cox's Bazar, Chittagong and northern Dhaka, 17 boatmen from Taninthayi and Ayeyawady regions, and three Bengali interpreters.

(See page 3)

Bangladeshi boat people resuced by Myanmar Navy.

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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Urgent proposal submitted to suspend tender invitation for land plot of Yeku broadcast station

NAY PYI TAW, 22 May — Union Minister for Construction U Kyaw Lwin discussed borrowing $137.833 million from Economic Development Cooperation Fund of the Republic of Korea while deputy ministers from Ministry of Electric Power, Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Finance reported on borrowing Japanese Yen 25,888 million from Japan International Cooperation Agency for implementing the projects at the 48th-day session of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Friday. The Hluttaw invited MPs to discuss the loans.

MPs discussed reviews over paragraphs No 24 to 33 of the report of the joint commission for reviewing employees and employers rights to be able to set the minimum wage.

U Tin Htut of Zalun constituency discussed progress of the investigation commission for loss of people in confiscation of farmlands and other lands.

U Aung Thein Lin of South Okkalapa Constituency in Yangon Region submitted an urgent proposal to suspend the tender invitation for handing over a 90-acre land plot of old Yeku broadcast station in Mayangon Township to private entrepreneurs. Dr Nay Lin of Seikkan Constituency seconded the proposal.—*MNA*

48th-day session of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in progress.—MNA

Ethnic armed groups to discuss ceasefire accord . . .

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"The NCCT meeting is aimed at preparing the submission of a draft NCA to ethnic leaders at the planned summit, and discussing the current political affairs in the country, matters related to the team and recent fighting between the government forces and some ethnic armed groups," she told The *GNLM*.

Since the signing of the finalized draft accord by the UPWC and NCCT, the government has indicated its readiness to officially sign the accord as soon as possible, while the NCCT has stated that it must first be put before a conference of all ethnic parties. On the length of time that the ethnic side has taken to reach the truce deal, Daw Saw Mya Yazar Lin said delays are unavoidable, despite unanimous commitment to peace, as the accord must be flawless before signing.— *GNLM*

Together with Myanmar Peace Centre's U Hla Maung Shwe and NCCT leader Naing Hong Sa, Daw Saw Mya Yazar Lin (far right) answers queries at a press conference during the final round of nationwide ceasefire talks in Yangon.
PHOTO: YE MYINT

Myanmar to host 7th Summit of CLMV, 6th Summit of ACMECS in Nay Pyi Taw

NAY PYI TAW, 22 May — The 7th Summit of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV), the 6th Summit of Ayeyawady - Chao Phraya - Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) and related meetings will be held at Myanmar International Convention Centre-1, here, on 22 and 23 June.

Local and foreign correspondents wishing to attend the summits are to fill in media registration forms for the 7th CLMV Summit and 6th ACMECS Summit through registration link of www.moi.gov.mm from 15 to 31 May. The media accreditation cards will be issued to them at Sky Palace Hotel from 10 am to 4 pm on 21 June.

International correspondents may apply for visa at respective Myanmar embassies. For further information about the summits, may dial Political Department under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 09-250966078, 09-5177092 and 09-799576630. For information about media accreditation cards for local-based foreign new agencies and local media, may call News and Periodicals Enterprise on 067-412125 and 412126.—*MNA*

Tatmadaw captures Point 1788 hillock

NAY PYI TAW, 22 May — Defence services personnel are launching military operations against remnants of MNDAA insurgents led by Phone Kya Shin after occupying their footholds in Shinkhotehtan, Sekawhlian and Santaeikshan hill areas.

As the insurgents were being cornered, they reorganized their troops and set up their base on hills in Marlushwe area after entering into the area from border post 111. Tatmadaw columns launched offensives against the insurgents on 11 and 12 May and were able to occupy Point 1607, Point 1709 and Point 1742 hills from the insurgents. The insurgents withdrew to Point 1788 hills. Tatmadaw columns launched operations against the insurgents on 21 May morning while the insurgent fought back with small arms taking advantage of higher land they stationed. With the assistance of artillery forces, Tatmadaw columns were able to retake the hill at about 8 pm the same day and are in hot pursuit of the insurgents.

During the fighting, Tatmadaw columns seized 11 insurgent bodies, two RPGs, one K-12 and ammunition while some members of Tamadaw sacrificed their lives and were injured.

Myawady

Dy FM attends 13th East Asia Forum in ROK

NAY PYI TAW, 22 May — Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Tin Oo Lwin arrived back Yangon Thursday evening after attending the 13th East Asia Forum in Jeju, Republic of Korea on 20 and 21 May.

Government, academic and business representatives as well as experts from ASEAN countries, the People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea attended the 13th East Asia Forum. The 10th Jeju Forum was also convened in Jeju.

The 13th East Asia Forum was officiated by Mr Kim Hong-kyun, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of ROK and followed by the statements of the representatives of Malaysia as the current chair of ASEAN, Brunei Darussalam as the host the previous forum, the People's Republic of China and Japan.

The plenary session of the 13th East Asia Forum was commenced at the meeting hall of the Haevichi Hotel, Jeju. The forum deliberated on three sessions namely trust building in East Asia through soft security cooperation, enhancing security in East Asia through terrorism response, and fostering growth in East Asia through climate change.

Deputy Minister U Tin Oo Lwin participated in two sessions: trust building in East Asia through soft security cooperation; and enhancing security in East Asia through terrorism response.

In his speech at the session one, the deputy minister spoke about illicit drug trafficking, communicable diseases like Ebola and natural disasters, among others.

At the session two, the deputy minister pointed out threats of terrorism and extremism in the East Asia region, promotion of tolerance, peaceful co-existence and harmony among and between different communities and faiths.

ROK Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Yun Byung-se, hosted a welcoming dinner to the participants to the 13th forum.

While in Seoul, the deputy minister met ambassador of Myanmar and officials as well as Myanmar community living in the Republic of Korea and scholars and explained the recent developments in Myanmar. He also met with the Korea-Myanmar Friendship Association and discussed issues of mutual interest and areas of cooperation to promote bilateral relations between Myanmar and Korea.

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Vice President U Nyan Tun meets Myanmar sports contingent to 28th SEA Games

NAY PYI TAW, 22 May — A ceremony for handover of national flag to Myanmar sports contingent to the 28th SEA Games in Singapore was held at Wunna Theikdhi Stadium on Friday, attended by Vice President U Nyan Tun.

In his address, the Vice President called on debutants of Myanmar contingent to make the best of their times and opportunities not only for winning medals but also for gaining valuable experiences from the Games.

He also stressed the need to be fair players while playing the games with the aim of accomplishing the task to win victory.

Next, the Vice President handed over the State Flag to Deputy Minister for Sports U Zaw Win, chairman of the committee for ensuring victory in the Games, and cordially greeted Myanmar sports contingent members.

During the ceremony attended by the Union ministers, deputy ministers and presidents of sports federations, well-wishers made cash donations for the Myanmar contingent.

Myanmar hosted the 27th SEA Games in Nay Pyi Taw in 2013 on a grand scale, bagging 233 medals—86 gold, 62 silver and 85 bronze— and ranking second among 11 countries.— *MNA*

***Vice President U Nyan Tun views sports equipment to be used by athletes who will take part in 28th SEA Games.*—MNA**

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker meets Indian Foreign Secretary

Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann shakes hands with Foreign Secretary of India Dr. S. Jaishankar.

MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 22 May—Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann on Friday met new Foreign Secretary of India Dr. S. Jaishankar at his office here.

Also present at the call were Chairman of Pyithu Hluttaw International Relations Committee U Hla Myint Oo, member of Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission U Ko Ko Naing and officials from the Pyithu Hluttaw Office.

The Indian Foreign Secretary was accompanied by Mr Shri Gautam Mukhopadhaya, Indian Ambassador to Myanmar.

MNA

Myanmar, India to promote cooperation in new sectors

NAY PYI TAW, 22 May—Union Minister for Defence Lt-Gen Wai Lwin held talks with Foreign Secretary of India Dr. S. Jaishankar at the ministry, here, on Friday.

The Indian foreign secretary discussed more cooperation in new sectors between the two countries, material and technical assistance and further cooperation in training and border affairs.

The union minister said that cooperation will be promoted in medical and IT fields between the two countries.

Also present at the call were Deputy Minister Commodore Aung Thaw and officials.—*MNA*

UEC releases dates for electoral roll announcements

NAY PYI TAW, 23 May—The Union Election Commission on Friday issued a statement listing dates and locations for the announcement of electoral rolls for the 2015 general elections.

Voter lists will be announced for the second time at the offices of ward and village election sub-commissions in Dagon Myothit (South, North and East), North Okkalapa, Thingangyun, Thanlyin, Kyauktan, Thongwa, Kayan, Insein, Mingaladon, Shwepyitha, Hlinethaya and Htantabin townships in Yangon Region, as well as Tatkon, Pyinmana, Lewe, Pobbathiri, Zeyathiri, Ottarathiri, Zabuthiri and Dekkhinathiri townships in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area from 25 May to 7 June 2015.

Voters whose names are absent from rolls must submit form No. 3, the statement said, while those listed with incorrect information must use form No. 4-C. People may contest the nomination of unsuitable persons, such as those who are deceased or imprisoned, with form No. 4.

Visitors' names will be included in voter list of permanent residences provided they submit household registration form No. 66/6. Political parties should cooperate with the Union Election Commission in assisting voters to be properly enrolled, the statement said.

MNA

Myanmar navy rescues hundreds of boat people...

(from page 1)

Ten teenage children were among the boat people, with the rest believed to be between the ages of 30 and 40.

Investigations are ongoing at a temporary camp in the village of Ale Thankyaw, where the UNHCR is providing humanitarian assistance to the boat people.—*MNA*

***A boat with Bangladeshi boat people on board rescued by Myanmar Navy in Myanmar seas.*—MNA**

Silt removed from Taungthaman Lake to prevent fish deaths

AMARAPURA, 22 May — Dredgers are being operated to remove silt for proper flow of water near U Shwetaung Bridge at Taungthaman Lake in Amarapura Township.

On 21 May, Mandalay Region Minister for Security and Border Affairs Col Aung Kyaw Moe and Region Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Breeding U Myint Than, together with officials of Mandalay City Development Committee, inspected dredging works.

The ministers instructed officials to remove silt from the lake as soon as possible to prevent further fish deaths in the lake.

Maung Pyi Thu (Mandalay)

Election sub-commission meets township authorities

NAY PYI TAW, 22 May — Members of the township election sub-commissions, ward and village administrators and members of ward and village sub-commissions held a meeting on the electoral process at the hall of Ottarathiri Township General Administration Department on 20 May.

Chairman of the township sub-commission U Than Zaw spoke about the announcement of voter lists in wards and villages and urged officials to advise any residents whose names are incorrectly omitted from lists to lodge complaints.

Secretary U Myint Zaw Htay stressed the need for all sub-commission members to study the election manuals.

Commander of Township Police Force Major Aung Than explained security measures being taken by police and firefighters.

Shwe Ye Yint

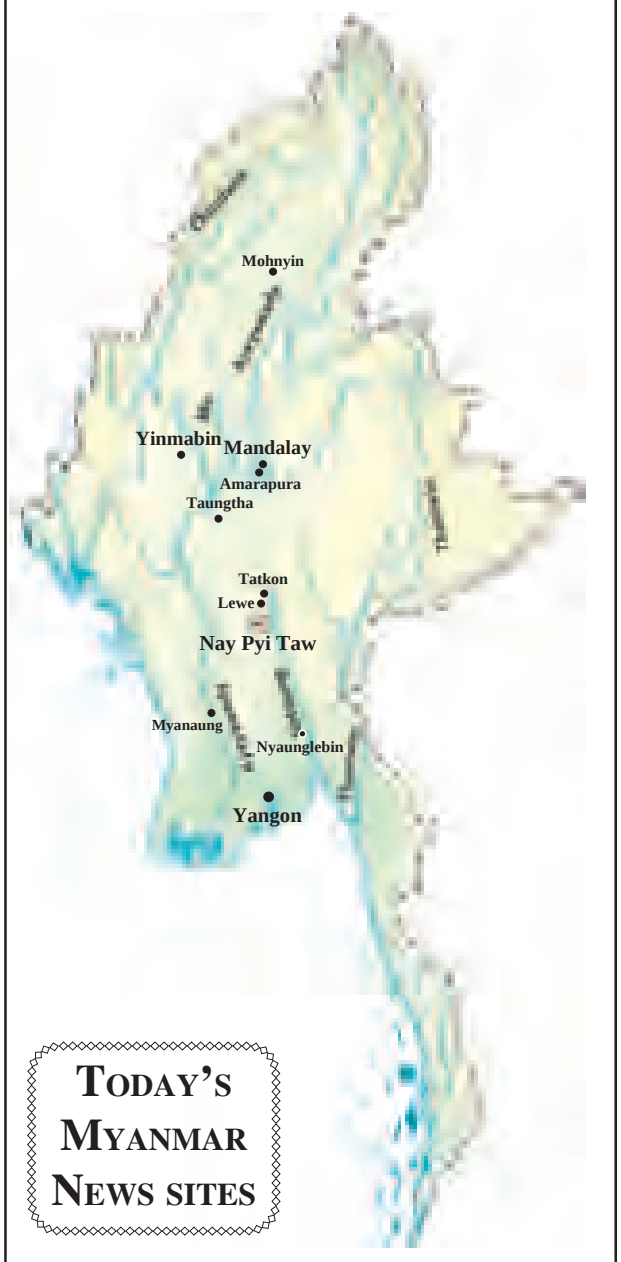
Electricity supply launched in Tatkon Township

TATKON, 22 May— Nyaungbintha Village in Tatkon Township began receiving electricity on 21 May from a newly installed power line.

Delivering speeches at the inauguration ceremony, Nay Pyi Taw Council members U Phone Zaw Han and U Myint Shwe said electricity supply would improve the living standards of local residents.

Nay Pyi Taw Electrical Chief Engineer U Kyaw Nyein gave a talk outlining the installation process and the safe use of electricity.

Nay Pyi Taw Council spent K50 million on installation of a 200-KVA transformer and a one-mile-long power line in the village as of 14 December, 2014 for supply of electricity.—*Tin Soe Lwin (Tatkon IPRD)*



TODAY'S MYANMAR NEWS SITES

Residents complete construction of wooden bridge in Lewe Tsp

LEWE, 22 May — A ceremony to inaugurate a new bridge across Palway Creek linking Okshithline and Ywathit villages was held in Lewe Township on 21 May.

The 280-foot-long, 5-foot-wide wooden bridge was built by local residents at a cost of K9.5 million.

Myitta Paungkyu Bridge was built as of 28 April to give smooth transport to local people, especially students.

Okshithline Village is 17 miles west of Lewe. About 2,000 local residents from the village are engaged in cultivation of crops.

Ko Pauk (Okkar Myay)

School building, village administration office opened in Nyaunglebin Tsp

NYAUNGLEBIN, 22 May — A new village administration office in Gwaygon village-tract and a building of Basic Education Primary School in Kaukmethu Village were opened in Nyaunglebin Township, Bago Region, on Thursday.

Township Administrator U Thein Zaw Kan and township level officials opened the administration office and the school building.

The one-storey administration office was built at a cost of K1.7 million. The 60-foot-long, 30-foot-wide school building cost K32.4 million fund.

Nay Lin (Nyaunglebin)

S Korea, DPRK agree to keep current wage in Kaesong complex for now

SEOUL, 22 May — South Korea and the Democratic People ' s Republic of Korea (DPRK) agreed on Friday to maintain the current level of wage for DPRK workers in the Kaesong industrial complex for the time being, Seoul's Unification Ministry in charge of inter-Korean affairs said.

From early this week, officials from the management committees of the two sides for the Kaesong industrial zone have made intensive consultations about the wage issue and reached a final agreement on Friday, the ministry said.

Under the agreement, South Korean companies running factories in Kaesong would be allowed to pay wages for DPRK workers at the current level first and the remainder of increased wages later in accordance with the results of the future inter-Korean consultations.

The ministry said that Pyongyang accepted Seoul's call for the wage payment at the current level until authorities of both sides reach a separate agreement on the wage issue.

The Kaesong wage row, which has continued for about two months, came as the DPRK revised labor regulations in November 2014 without consulting with South Korea and unilaterally notified the South side of its decision in late February.

Under the revision, the DPRK raised minimum wages for workers in Kaesong from 70.35 US dollars to 74 dollars, topping the growth ceiling of 5 percent agreed upon by an inter-Korean agreement.

South Korea has called for the wage hike to be discussed through an inter-governmental dialogue, but the DPRK has claimed that it was a matter of internal affairs in which the South side cannot intervene. The Kaesong industrial zone, launched in late 2004 and jointly managed by the two Koreas, has been seen as one of the key symbols of inter-Korean economic cooperation. Some 120 South Korean companies hiring 53,000 DPRK workers are operating in the park.—*Xinhua*

Japan lawmaker with letter from Abe says "possible" to meet Xi on Saturday

BEIJING, 22 May —A powerful Japanese lawmaker said on Friday there is a good chance for him to directly hand Chinese President Xi Jinping a personal letter from Prime Minister Shinzo Abe this weekend as the two countries try to accelerate the pace of thawing relations that have long been chilled by disputes over territory and wartime history.

"I believe it is possible to achieve it," Toshihiro Nikai, a 76-year-old seasoned lawmaker from Japan's ruling party, told reporters in Beijing when asked about the possibility of meeting with Xi on Saturday.

Nikai said he wants to tell Xi that Japan and China should both make efforts to further improve important relations between the two countries if he can hold talks with the president.

"Tomorrow, I believe I will have an opportunity to give a personal letter from Prime Minister Abe," Nikai also said earlier Friday in a speech at China's prestigious Tsinghua University.

The letter is addressed to Xi, and Nikai told students at the university, from where Xi graduated, "This is just me and you. I can tell that Japan-China relations will further improve from the day after tomorrow."

Nikai will be in the Chinese capital through Sunday morning to attend events aimed at promoting people-to-people exchanges between Asia's two biggest economies.

Nikai heads a Japanese delegation of about 3,000 people, including representatives from the tourism industry and local government officials.

The primary purpose of the delegation's visit is to reignite Japanese tourism to China following several years of stagnation triggered by political difficulties between Tokyo and Beijing.

China's leadership has welcomed the initiative taken by Nikai, who is known for his good relations with China and South Korea among lawmakers of the Liberal Democratic Party.

The highlight of the visit will be an event at the Great Hall of the People on Saturday, in which senior Chinese officials will also likely take part.

"I hope the delegation's visit will serve as a springboard to expand exchanges between Japan and China," Nikai also said at the university.

Toshihiro Nikai (far L), a senior lawmaker of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party, meets with Li Jinzao (far R), head of the China National Tourism Administration, in Beijing on 22 May, 2015, to discuss how to expand mutual tourism exchanges.
KYODO NEWS

Japan's relations with China and South Korea, where bitter memories of Tokyo's past militarism still run deep, worsened after Abe, leader of the LDP, took power in late 2012.

China and South Korea have repeatedly criticized Abe's nationalist rhetoric and action. However, since Abe's first meeting with Xi in November, tensions between Tokyo and Beijing have been gradually easing, with many more contacts taking place between lawmakers, government officials and business executives than before.

Abe and Xi met for the second time in April on the sidelines of a regional conference in Indonesia, during which they agreed to facilitate a range of exchanges regardless of outstanding issues.

Buoyed by the weakness of the Japanese currency, Chinese visitors to Japan have reached all-time highs in recent months.

In the first four months of 2015, the number of Chinese visitors to Japan nearly doubled from a year earlier to 1.33 million, according to official data.

Kyodo News

A year after Thai coup, stability trumps growth for business

BANGKOK, 22 May — When Thailand's army seized power in a bloodless coup, much of the business establishment quietly cheered them on. A year on, the captains of Thai industry remain firmly behind the junta, despite a lacklustre economy and a delayed return to democracy.

For businesses, calm on the streets of a city that was engulfed in chaos for months leading up to a putsch is more important than finding a cure for the malaise in Southeast Asia's second-largest economy.

"I'm satisfied. At the very least it has made the country peaceful and it has brought order," Poj Aramwattanont, President of Thai Frozen Foods Association (TFFA), told *Reuters.*

In the early months of 2014, Thailand's government was paralysed, parts of Bangkok were clouded by tear gas and state buildings fortified to look like army barracks.

Conditions for growth are better now, reckons Poj.

"There is an attempt to reform according to the junta's road map," he said. "Thailand was on pause for a long time because of political problems so ... the economy has a chance to rebound."

A year ago, pro-government protesters camped on the outskirts of the Thai capital swore they would spring into action if the army intervened to remove the elected government.

In the city's heart, anti-government protesters, mostly southern Thais and middle-class Bangkok residents aligned with the royalist-military establishment, were equally determined to get rid of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra.

On 22 May the military took control, detaining hundreds of politicians and activists on both sides of the divide and dissolving the protests. Investors welcomed the calm imposed on Thailand's febrile politics, and the stock market rallied.

Heavy-handed tactics by the military and police since the coup have ensured that the junta, or National Council for Peace and Order, has ruled largely unchallenged.

Thailand's Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha gestures in a traditional greeting to National Legislative Assembly members at the parliament in Bangkok, Thailand, on 21 May, 2015.—REUTERS

Ronnachit Mahattanapreut, senior vice president for finance at hotel and food group Central Plaza Hotel PCL said what the private sector wanted most was security.

"We want political stability so that businessmen can project long-term investment plans," he said. "Countries like China, Vietnam and Myanmar, their governments can implement key economic policies to keep investments going."

Coup leader and Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-ocha has talked much about healing Thailand's deep political divisions. Reconciliation is a mantra in his weekly televised on Friday evening address "Returning Happiness to the People".

When asked to comment on the military's year in power this week, he said: "I am satisfied but I am not proud."

Critics say politics are simply on hold under a regime that bans political gatherings, and that divisions remain as sharp as ever. They say the blueprint for Thailand in a new draft constitution is an attempt by Prayuth and the powers that back him to prevent a comeback by ousted former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and his allies.

Thaksin this week broke his silence on the junta that removed the remnants of his sister Yingluck's government from office. Its first year in power was "not so impressive", he said, but he had no plans to mobilise his "Red Shirt" supporters.

The junta on Tuesday delayed a planned election by at least six months to August 2016, to allow a referendum on the new charter.

Executives appear unperturbed by the delay.

"We don't need elections quickly," said Poj. "If the roadmap is prolonged because of the referendum then so be it."

Pornsil Patchrintanakul, President of the Thai Feed Mill Association and an adviser to the Thai Chamber of Commerce, scored the junta highly for political governance, but less well on the economy.

"I would give political management a 10 out of 10. We have to compare this to before... things were not peaceful," said Pornsil, but added that "investment and stimulating the economy have been slow".

Despite hopes that the generals would unleash a splurge of infrastructure spending, state investment has failed to keep pace even with the levels the paralysed government of a year ago managed, partly because bureaucrats fear an anti-graft drive by the junta.

Domestic consumption is hobbled as Thai households are saddled with record-high debt and the export-driven economy is suffering as its biggest trade partner, China, grows at its slowest pace in 25 years.

Thailand downgraded its growth forecasts on Monday by 0.5 percentage points to 3.0 to 4.0 percent for the year, but the country's central bank governor said last week that even 3 percent expansion in 2015 would be "a challenge".

For some analysts, the junta has missed the opportunity to use its almost untrammelled power to drive through investment and economic reforms.—*Reuters*

Despite Obama endorsement, US concerns grow over Iraqi premier

WASHINGTON, 22 May — The Obama administration is publicly voicing confidence in Iraq's prime minister in the fight against surging Islamic State militants, but privately some US officials question whether he is too weak to bridge the sectarian divide.

Washington is still betting on Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who stands at the centre of President Barack Obama's strategy to roll back the latest conquests of Islamic State while keeping the United States from being pulled deeper into a conflict US combat troops left in 2011.

But even if Abadi's forces manage to retake the provincial capital of Ramadi after its capture last weekend by Islamic State, his reliance on Iran-backed Shi'ite militias could strengthen his political rivals in Baghdad and signify US acquiescence to greater Iranian influence in Iraq.

That underscores how few options Washington has to beat back Islamic State without overhauling a policy that relies heavily on air strikes or committing large forces of American ground troops, which Obama has ruled out. As the jihadists shore up their positions, Abadi, a moderate Shi'ite leader, faces an important test over whether he can draw Sunni Arabs away from Islamic State, a challenge he has struggled to meet despite vows of a more inclusive governance. He must also show the ability to control powerful Shi'ite militias tainted by earlier abuses that have stoked Sunni anger toward his government.

*Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi (L) calls on a reporter at the end of remarks with US President Barack Obama following their bilateral meeting in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington on 14 April, 2015.—*REUTERS

"Abadi may be more vulnerable than ever," one US official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "And if he's on the hot seat, we're being tested too."

Islamic State, meanwhile, appears to have the momentum, with the Sunni radicals on Thursday seizing the central Syrian city of Palmyra, one of the most important cultural centres of the ancient world, and overrunning Iraqi government defences east of Ramadi.

Reuters

S Korean court suspends prison term of ex-Korean Air exec

SEOUL, 22 May — The Seoul High Court on Friday suspended a prison term imposed on a former Korean Air vice president earlier this year for breaking aviation law in the so-called "nut rage" case.

The court sentenced Cho Hyun Ah to a 10-month prison term with a stay of execution for two years, effectively ordering her release. Cho has been in prison since 30 December and was in February sentenced by a lower court to a one-year jail term for obstructing aviation safety.

Cho, 40, gained notoriety worldwide over the 5 December incident at New York's John F Kennedy International Airport in which she threw a tantrum over being served macadamia nuts in a bag instead of on a dish.

*Former Korean Air Lines executive Heather Cho (C) is surround by reporters as she is released at a courthouse in Seoul, South Korea, on 22 May, 2015.—*REUTERS

The Seoul Western District Court found her guilty of violating air safety and other laws by ordering the Seoul-bound flight to return to the gate it had already left to offload the chief purser over the incident.—*Kyodo News*

International Day for Biological Diversity 2015 (22 May): Message from the Director General, David Molden

Celebrating the International Day for Biological Diversity: Biodiversity for Sustainable Development

Each year, ICIMOD joins the world on the International Day for Biological Diversity to appreciate the world's rich diversity of living beings. This day provides us with an opportunity to reaffirm our commitments, strengthen our actions, and celebrate our achievements to protect, conserve, and sustainably use biodiversity – the foundation of life on Earth and the basis for sustainable development.

Biodiversity and human wellbeing are inextricably linked. The goods that sustain our lives – food, fibre, timber, and medicine – depend largely on a diversity of plant and animal life. The world's rich biodiversity is also the basis for a wide array of ecosystem services on which we depend: air and water purification, climate regulation, erosion control, and nutrient cycling. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, 40% of the global economy is based on biological products and processes. This includes the economic sectors that drive development, including agriculture, forestry, fisheries, pharmaceuticals, and tourism. A healthy ecosystem, and the biodiversity that forms its foundation, can also increase the resilience of the people who depend on it, particularly vulnerable groups, to withstand, cope with, and recover from disasters.

The Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region – located at the convergence of three global biodiversity hotspots: the Himalayas, Indo-Burma, and mountains of Southwest China – is known for its biological diversity. The region's biodiversity is the basis of ecosystem goods and services that contribute to the region's economic growth and are key to sustaining livelihoods and industries that support more than 200 million people in the mountains and up to 1.3 billion people in downstream river basins and benefit the global community. However, despite our understanding of its importance, biodiversity at local, regional, and global levels is being depleted at an unprecedented rate to feed a growing human population and an increasingly unsustainable level of consumption. This is further exacerbated by unsustainable development models.

This year's theme for the International Day of Biological Diversity reflects the complex and inseparable link between the protection of biodiversity and the sustainable development of our region. The sustainable use of natural resources is one of the strongest assurances for the protection of biodiversity for long-term social, economic, and ecological benefits, and consequently for sustainable development. It also recognizes the efforts made at all levels to establish a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including one focused on biodiversity for sustainable development, as part of the United Nations Post-2015 Development Agenda for the period of 2015-2030.

ICIMOD has been an advocate for biodiversity conservation and its sustainable management in the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region for decades. Its Transboundary Landscapes Regional Programme has been an important vehicle for promoting conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity in a holistic and integrated manner. Activities under the programme encourage the adoption of conservation-linked livelihood options that contribute to the sustainable development of the region.

Furthermore, ICIMOD's HKH Conservation Portal serves as a regional repository of biodiversity and conservation-related information from the Hindu Kush Himalayan region. By providing free and open access to primary biodiversity data and information, ICIMOD facilitates the exchange of knowledge to better understand drivers of change, and thereby develop effective programmes for conservation, sustainable use of biodiversity, and therefore sustainable development.

Healthy ecosystems and biodiversity provide a firm foundation to support sustainable development and resilient communities. In the aftermath of the recent Gorkha Earthquake in Nepal, biodiversity will play a key role in the process of rebuilding – including the homes and livelihoods that were disrupted by the earthquake. However, emphasis must be placed on ensuring that the process supports in sustainable development, more resilient communities, and responsible use and conservation of the region's biodiversity. This year, and in the years ahead, what Nepal does to recover from the Gorkha Earthquake while building resilient communities and ecosystems can provide valuable lessons for other countries and communities across the Hindu Kush Himalayan region.

ICIMOD would like to urge the people of the region to commemorate the International Day for Biological Diversity by making efforts to build more sustainable societies and economies through the responsible use of biodiversity, to enhance resilience through the conservation of biodiversity, and to raise awareness of the overall value of biodiversity among the public at large.

With best wishes on the International Day of Biological Diversity.

David Molden
Director General

Fresh fighting erupts in east Ukraine, three Ukrainian soldiers killed

KIEV, 22 May — Three Ukrainian servicemen have been killed and 12 wounded in the latest clashes between government forces and separatists, further eroding a three-month-old ceasefire, Kiev's military said on Friday.

Military spokesman Andriy Lysenko said government forces had come under attack from separatists using large-caliber guns and mortar in several parts of the east and southeast, including near the rebel-controlled city of Donetsk.

"In the past 24 hours we have lost three Ukrainian heroes, and another 12 have been wounded," Lysenko told a briefing.

There was no word on casualties among the separatists, who Kiev, NATO and Western countries say are being provided with arms and men by Russia, something Moscow denies.

Ukraine's largest steel company, Metinvest, said one worker had been killed and two wounded when its Avdiyivka coke plant, which is on government-controlled territory, was been hit by heavy shelling on Thursday. The plant is not able to receive supplies of raw materials or ship out finished products, and damage to equipment has further hampered production, Metinvest said in a statement.

Reuters

Washington should stop acting as back driver over S China Sea

BEIJING, 22 May — Recent statements made by some US military officials are contrary to regional peace and stability, and it is Uncle Sam who should explain its irresponsible behavior over the South China Sea.

During an interview in Singapore earlier this week, Michelle Howard, vice-chief of the US Naval Operations, said China needs to explain what is really going on in the South China Sea amid reports of construction activities there.

The senior US military official also gave assurance about her country's support to ASEAN members who have territorial disputes with China, saying the US Navy is capable of sending ships within 12-nautical miles where China's reclamation works are in progress.

In fact, it is not the first time for the US military to flash such threatening signals in an attempt to overbear China to stop its legal construction activities in its own territory.

Before Howard's remarks, a US official said the Pentagon is considering sending US military aircraft and ships to "assert freedom of navigation" in the South China Sea.

Those irresponsible, to some extent, provocative statements equal a flame stoker for regional instability that may further lead to miscalculation and misinterpretation and deteriorate the situation in the sea, instead of asserting freedom of navigation.

The South China Sea disputes, to which the United States is not a party, are between China and other claimants and should be handled by those directly involved in a peaceful way.

Moreover, it can hardly be accepted as a coincidence that the previously calm South China Sea has lost its tranquility since Washington embarked on its "Pivot to Asia" strategy.

As a matter of fact, China's construction in the South China Sea is within its sovereignty, aiming to provide service for marine search and rescue, disaster prevention and reduction, and navigation safety, as well as fulfilling the country's international responsibilities and obligations.

Therefore, Washington's botheration over the so-called maritime safety is groundless and ill-motivated. The freedom of navigation in the sea has been fully guaranteed, since China's construction is peaceful and beneficial to the public.

Actually, it is the United States that should make a reasonable explanation about its repeated, unflagging and biased interferences in territorial disputes involving China and other countries. Such senseless meddling not only hamper a peaceful solution to such disputes, but also aggravate regional instability.

As an influential country, the United States should take an objective and fair view on the disputes in the South China Sea, honour its commitment of not taking sides, and stop acting as a back driver on the issue.

Xinhua

EU stands ready to assist Cambodia's recently-formed election body

Director for Human Rights and Democracy at the European External Action Service Silvio Gonzato (R) speaks at a Press conference in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on 22 May, 2015.—XINHUA

PHNOM PENH, 22 May — The European Union (EU) stands ready to support Cambodia's recently-formed National Election Committee (NEC) in its reform process in order to ensure free and fair elections in the future, a senior EU official said on Friday.

Speaking at a Press conference marking the conclusion of his 10- day mission to Cambodia, Director for Human Rights and Democracy at the European External Action Service Silvio Gonzato said his mission was to show EU's continuing support to the Cambodian government in reforming its electoral process.

"Cambodia is at a critical juncture in its electoral history. There is a window of opportunity for the country to take real positive steps in improving its electoral process and in strengthening the democratic process," he said. "The EU stands ready to support the country in this task."

During his mission in Cambodia, Gonzato had met with a wide range of Cambodian and international stakeholders, including the NEC, government representatives, political parties and civil society organizations.

In a statement released at the Press conference, the mission said the NEC is facing many challenges ahead, notably the establishment of a new professional secretariat, the setting up of independent electoral structures at the provincial and commune levels, and the adoption of new, streamlined regulations and procedures which will guide the electoral process.

The mission also noted some concerns about various articles of the new Law on the Election of Members of the National Assembly, including those relating to transparency in the financing of electoral campaigns, offenses by political parties, and the role of civil society in the electoral process.

In addition, the mission emphasized that the voter registration process is a critical issue.

The new NEC was officially established last month after Prime Minister Hun Sen, vice president of the ruling Cambodian People's Party, and Sam Rainsy, president of the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party, reached an agreement on 22 July last year to end the opposition's 10-month boycott of parliament following the 2013 elections.

Its nine-member leadership comprised four people chosen by each party, and one "neutral" person, who is not related to political parties.

Xinhua

Gov't to choose sites for final disposal of high-level nuclear waste

TOKYO, 22 May — The Cabinet adopted on Friday a revised basic policy on the final disposal of highly radioactive nuclear waste, introducing a scheme in which the government will choose candidate sites based on scientific grounds, rather than waiting for municipalities willing to host a final depository.

Under the policy, revised for the first time in seven years, the government is to take such a step given the little progress made in the process of soliciting candidates that began in 2002 due to safety concerns.

The move indicates the government's attempt to address the unresolved issue as Japan gets closer to the restart of idled nuclear reactors after the 2011 Fukushima meltdowns.

The outlook, however, still remains highly uncertain over when such a final depository would be built, with no specific time frame mentioned in the policy. The government also plans to expand the storage capacity for spent nuclear fuel by constructing new interim facilities as a short-term fix.

"We will steadily proceed with the process as (resolving the problem is) the current generation's responsibility," industry minister Yoichi Miyazawa told reporters.

The minister added that the number of candidate sites suitable for building a final depository to be chosen by the government will be "quite a few."

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's administration is seeking to revive the country's nuclear plants idled following the Fukushima crisis, although the majority of the public remains opposed to the use of atomic power. The government has been under criticism over its stance of promoting nuclear power without resolving the issue of the final disposal of nuclear waste, especially after the 2011 disaster.

For permanent disposal, high-level nuclear waste needs to be stored at a final depository more than 300 meters underground for up to some 100,000 years until radiation levels fall and there is no harm to humans and the environment.

Currently, around 17,000 tons of spent nuclear fuel are being kept on the premises of nuclear plants and elsewhere in Japan, but some nuclear plants would run out of space to keep nuclear waste in three years if idled reactors go back online.

In the revised policy, the government also said it will allow future generations to retrieve high-level radioactive waste from a final disposal facility should there be possible nuclear policy changes or development of new technologies.

Worldwide, only Finland and Sweden have been able to decide on the final depository site. Finland is constructing the world's first permanent disposal site of high-level radioactive waste in Olkiluoto, aiming to put it in operation around 2020.

But many other countries with nuclear plants are struggling to find a site for such a facility. In the United States, President Barack Obama decided in 2009 to call off a plan to build a disposal site in Nevada's Yucca Mountain due to local opposition.

Kyodo News

Italy passes law to tackle rampant corruption

ROME, 22 May — Italy made a fresh attempt at tackling rampant corruption on Thursday when the Chamber of Deputies approved a strongly contested law stiffening penalties for various types of graft and balance sheet fraud. Corruption has long undermined Italy's chronically stagnant economy by deterring foreign investors and pushing up costs. A previous "anti-corruption" package in 2012 proved to have little impact.

The last year has seen high-profile arrests of politicians and businessmen over graft allegations connected with the 2015 Expo in Milan, a 5 billion euro (£3.5 billion) Venice flood barrier, and public contracts awarded by the city of Rome. Italy ranked 69th in Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index, joint last in the European Union with Bulgaria, Greece and Romania. After a long parliamentary passage, the latest anti-corruption bill was approved by the lower house in a watered-down version more than two years after it was presented by Senate speaker Piero Grasso, a former anti-mafia prosecutor.

Visitors walk at the France pavilion at Expo 2015 in Milan, on 6 May, 2015.—REUTERS

The legislation increases prison sentences for corruption by an average of two years up to a maximum of around 10 years for the most common varieties, involving bribery or offering or demanding favours to obtain public contracts. The bill raises jail sentences for balance sheet fraud by two or three years to a maximum of eight years for listed companies, and six years for unlisted firms. It also makes all balance sheet fraud a criminal offence, unlike before, although if a judge decides the fraud is "mild", the sentence can be as low as six months.—*Reuters*

PERSPECTIVES

Saturday, 23 May, 2015

Consumption of basic necessities should not be discouraged

By *Myint Win Thein*

Human beings, rich or poor, consume basic necessities like food, clothing, shelter, education, healthcare, water, electric power and communication services all over the world.

It is evident that most people consume these fundamental goods and services for their daily survival rather than to profit from them.

For instance, while poor families enjoy their ordinary dinner at home, rich people may eat out at expensive restaurants where taxes are added to the price of food. Similarly, poor families use electricity to light their homes for their children's studies but some rich people may use electricity to run factories for profit. There is nothing wrong with collecting taxes from rich people when they consume more than their basic needs and use goods and services to manufacture products for their own benefit.

In this regard, collecting taxes from the poor for their basic consumption of necessities is not the same as levying taxes on the rich. In addition, most basic human needs coincide with fundamental rights of human beings. Consumption to fulfill fundamental human needs should therefore be encouraged and not subject to commercial taxes.

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Investing in Myanmar's People and Ending Poverty

By *Ulrich Zachau*

ON a visit to a school in Myanmar's Mon State last summer, I looked in the faces of young students and saw curiosity, expectation, hope, and promise. Mostly from poor families in one of the world's poorest places, they bubbled over with energy and optimism.

How will Myanmar shape its future? Emerging from decades of military rule, isolation and conflict, the country faces extraordinary development opportunities and formidable challenges. The eager learners in Mon state epitomized to me a vision for Myanmar's future: a Myanmar free of poverty, with opportunities and prosperity shared by all.

The World Bank Group shares this vision. Our new country partnership framework with Myanmar, the first in three decades, focuses on openness, inclusion and ending poverty. Investing in Myanmar's people will be the key, so that more people can get a good education, skills and jobs; more families have access to affordable health care, reliable electricity, and community infrastructure and services; and everyone benefits from development regardless of who they are, where they live and what they do.

Myanmar has introduced programs that provide grants to local schools for teaching aids and equipment, as well as stipends to help 30,000 children stay in class. Myanmar's Decentralizing Funding to Schools Project, funded by the Australia and the World Bank Group, lets principals, teachers and parents decide together on classroom purchases, giving parents a stake in the future of their children, as well as the future of the country.

Of every thousand babies born in Myanmar in 2012, 41 died within a year. Each year, 2,000 pregnant women and 50,000 children die from preventable causes. Myanmar seeks to provide access to basic health services to all the people living in the country by 2030. The Essential Health Services Access Project, launched with World Bank Group support, provides $100 million in funding for more and better health care coverage across the country's 330 townships.

The project is expected to benefit more than 3 million pregnant women and their young children. For example, midwives will be able to visit the homes of pregnant women, infants and young children more often to provide needed care.

"The reason I chose this hospital is because there are skilled doctors and comprehensive care including for child delivery." — May Zin Moe, Mother

"Investment in the education sector is critical. When we have more educated people, the number of jobless people will decrease and the development of the country can be accelerated."
Daw Nwe New Oe, Primary School Teacher

Two-thirds of Myanmar's people lack a reliable source of electricity. That means students don't have light to study, clinics can't refrigerate medicines and businesses can't steadily manufacture goods.

Myanmar has an ambitious goal of reaching universal access to electricity by 2030. In the next several years, along with Japan, the Asian Development Bank, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Netherlands, Norway and other development partners, the World Bank Group will finance investments and programs to provide new or improved access to electricity for 3 million people, while more than doubling national power generation capacity to 660 gigawatt hours by 2017.

At least 70 percent of Myanmar's poor live in rural areas, and 50 percent of the poor depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Increasing agricultural productivity and opportunities will be essential for ending poverty in Myanmar. Under the new partnership framework, the World Bank Group expects to support Myanmar's efforts to increase rice yields and improve access to infrastructure and services in rural areas.

Even more remarkable, rural communities in 15 townships now have the power to manage development resources. They now have a previously unrealized voice in local development and can choose how money gets spent on roads, bridges, irrigation systems, schools, health clinics, and rural markets. The six-year Community Driven Development (CDD) project began in 2012 with $80 million in International Development Association funding, and has already reached 390 villages in three townships.

For U Aye Than, a fisherman in Pan Zin village in southern Myanmar, the CDD allows the community to work together as it always has on projects the villagers need most.

"We needed to fix up the school for our children because it kept getting flooded when it rained or the tide was high," he said. "Now our children can go to school throughout the rainy season without worrying about getting wet."

Such an inclusive approach helps everyone – including those enthusiastic students I met last summer – get involved in improving their communities and livelihoods to shape their futures.

"I don't want them to work as a fisherman like me," U Aye Than said of his children. "It is a very tiring job. I want them to get educated and get a better job."

Ulrich Zachau is the World Bank's Country Director for South East Asia, including Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand.

Entrepreneurs gather at Myanmar Business Forum

MANDALAY, 22 May— The Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Mandalay Region CCI jointly held the Myanmar Business Forum at MRCCI Office in Chanayethazan Township on Friday.

Speakers included MRCCI Chairman U Aung Than and UMFCCI President U Win Aung. Joint general secretary Dr Thet Thet Khaing spoke about the forum's contribution to the reform process in the private sector.

An economist of the International Financial Corporation reported on Myanmar's investment situation. President U Win Aung and officials of UMFCCI outlined future tasks for the federation.

The Myanmar Business Forum is held twice a year.

Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)

Phone Creek bridge under construction in Yinmabin

YINMABIN, 22 May — A 90-foot-long and 24-foot-wide bridge is under construction across Phone Creek, which divides eastern and western parts of Yinmabin in Sagaing Region.

The bridge on Monywa-Pale-Gangaw Road will have a 2.5-foot-wide footpath on each side and one 24-foot-wide motorway. The bridge will withstand a 60-ton load.

Approach structures of the bridge have been completed but construction tasks are currently suspended. Local residents hope for timely completion of the bridge so they may avoid using a temporary bridge, which is already beginning to erode, during in the rainy season.—*Min Min Tun*

Mandalay Region's Chief Justice addresses judges

MANDALAY, 22 May— Chief Justice of Mandalay Region High Court U Soe Thein held a meeting with judges at different levels in the region at his office in Mandalay on 21 May.

The chief justice spoke about judicial matters, reducing the number of cases, prison sentences for corruption and bribery cases, safeguarding the judicial pillar and abiding by State policies. The chief justice outlined the need to uplift the prestige of courts by exercising authority in a responsible manner.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

ESE official distributes stoves to conserve environment

TAUNGTHA, 22 May— More than 300 families in Taungta Township in central Myanmar, one of the country's driest areas, recently received cooking stoves as part of a programme aimed at preventing deforestation.

In the 2014 rainy season, the township received just 16.90 inches of rain during a 34-day period, impacting cultivation of crops in the region.

Deforestation is one of the root causes limiting rainfalls in the region.

On 21 May, General Manager Colonel Tint Wai (Rtd) of Electricity Supply Enterprise under the Ministry of Electric Power donated more than 300 stoves for families in three villages of the township without electricity. The stoves are designed to run with a minimum of firewood.—*Ko Htein (Taungtha IPRD)*

Rural Development Department manages upgrading of inter-village road

MYANAUNG, 22 May— An inter-village road linking Htugyi in Ingapu Township and Zalokkyi Village in Myanaung Township, Ayeyawady Region, is being paved with concrete.

Ingapu Township Rural Development Department assigned duty to Shwe Dana Oo Company for construction of a 3.5mile-long road in fiscal 2014-15.

Upon completion, the inter-village road will contribute to smooth transport of agricultural produce from rural areas to Htugyi, Mezaligon, Hinthada and Ingapu.

Win Bo (Myanaung IPRD)

Yemen struggles with food shortages as shipments stay slow

LONDON, 22 May — A trickle of aid, medicine and commercial food cargoes is reaching Yemen yet the process remains slow as more ships await clearance to discharge at ports and logistical chains buckle due to fuel shortages and war.

Before Saudi Arabia launched air strikes in Yemen in March, the Arabian Peninsula's poorest country imported more than 90 percent of its food — most of it by sea.

It faces increasing problems as many shipping companies have pulled out and those still willing to bring cargoes endure a long wait for clearance from Saudi-led warships trying to prevent arms supplies reaching Iran-allied Houthi fighters.

In recent days over 130,000 tonnes of wheat has reached Yemen in commercial ships as well as other supplies including sugar and fuel, partly helped by a five-day truce which expired last on Sunday. But aid groups say it is not enough, warning of growing hunger and a worsening humanitarian crisis.

"12 million people out of the total population of 26 million need food assistance now and this number will continue to increase," said Jonathan Cunliffe, Yemen-based country director with non-profit aid group International Medical Corps.

An internally displaced man distributes food at a school in Sanaa on 17 May, 2015. Residents were forced to leave their homes in the nearby province of Saada amidst Saudi-led air strikes.— REUTERS

"There is no doubt food stocks have been run down. In Aden there is virtually nothing left. Wheat prices have quadrupled across the country. There is no purchasing power."

It was not clear how much of Yemen's strategic stocks of wheat and other commodities had been drawn down. The country needs over 100,000 tonnes of grain every month, as well as other basics such as vegetable oil, pulses and meat.

"The absolute bottom line is all the aid agencies in the world working at maximum capacity cannot replace completely the commercial sector inside Yemen. We cannot do it," Cunliffe said.

Tawfiq Shaher, a public sector worker and Sanaa resident, said while there was more availability of flour and wheat in recent days, local prices had spiked.

"People can't afford it and people displaced from their homes, don't have any means to and are dependent on international aid, which is scarce," Shaher said.

Saudi Arabia and its Sunni Muslim allies have carried out almost two months of air raids on Houthi fighters it says are armed by Shi'ite power Iran.

Teheran, which dismisses the allegation, has sent a ship to Yemen which is says is carrying thousands of tonnes of aid.

Commodities trade sources say the delays caused by coalition inspections were adding to challenges of importing goods into the conflict zone. "You don't have any clarity on the situation and there are so many hiccups, which means more disruptions to come," one trade said.

Eight ships were waiting in open waters outside the Yemeni Red Sea ports of Hodaida and Salif, including vessels carrying wheat, corn, sugar and fuel, *Reuters* ship tracking data showed on Friday.

Several ships had been able to discharge in recent days although for some had waited weeks.

The Lycavitos, carrying 31,000 tonnes of wheat, arrived outside Hodaida on 2 May and only berthed on 18 May. It plans to sail from the port on 23 May.

"The situation keeps changing on a daily basis. So, for ships trying to enter Yemeni ports, it is still hard to give any timescale over the whole process or procedure," the ship owner's agent Helikon Shipping Enterprises Ltd said.

Reuters

Air strikes kill 15 suspected militants in northwest Pakistan

PARACHINAR, (Pakistan), 22 May — Air strikes killed at least 15 suspected militants in Pakistan's northwestern Shawal Valley on Thursday, intelligence officials said, a week after security forces moved towards Taleban strongholds there.

The deeply forested ravines are a major smuggling route from Pakistan into Afghanistan and are dotted with Taleban bases used to launch attacks on Pakistani forces.

A local security commander and two intelligence officials said that between 15 and 16 suspected militants were killed in Thursday's strikes in the Datta Khel area of North Waziristan.

The Taleban used to control all of North Waziristan, a mountainous region that includes the Shawal Valley and runs along the Afghan border. But the Pakistani military launched an operation there last June and has recaptured most of it.

NATO forces had long urged Pakistan to launch such an offensive, saying Taleban safe havens in Pakistan were being used to attack NATO and Afghan forces in Afghanistan.

Now locals say that the military is gearing up for an operation in Shawal Valley, where the Taleban still freely operate.

The area is a bastion of Khan "Sajna" Said, a leader of a Taleban faction whose name was added to a sanctions list of "specially designated global terrorists" by US authorities last year.

There have been a number of air strikes in the Shawal Valley over the past week and two drone strikes, but no sign of a large ground offensive.

Most phone lines to the area have been cut off and military roadblocks prevent civilian movement.

Reuters

New Zealand designates Egypt-based militants terrorist group

WELLINGTON, 22 May — New Zealand government has designated the Egypt-based Ansar Bayt al Maqdis militant organization as a terrorist group, Prime Minister John Key said on Friday.

The designation was made under New Zealand's own Terrorism Suppression Act 2002 rather than as an obligation under United Nations Security Council resolutions.

"The group has committed various terrorist acts, including the indiscriminate killing of civilians," Key said in a statement.

"As a result of this designation, any assets the groups may have in New Zealand, either now, or in the future, will be frozen. It will also be a criminal offence to carry out property or financial transactions with them."

Forms of support, such as fundraising and recruiting or harboring terrorists, were criminal offences in New Zealand, regardless of whether a group is designated as a terrorist entity or not.

"These designations are not a response to domestic terrorist threats in New Zealand and nor are they influenced by New Zealand' s relationship with other countries. However, they do form part of our government's support against terrorism activities," said Key.

"Our ability to designate terrorist entities not listed by the United Nations is an important counter-terrorism measure. Our government is determined that New Zealand not be used to support terrorist activities."

To date, New Zealand had designated under UN Security Council resolutions more than 400 terrorist groups and individuals listed by the United Nations, and the designation of Ansar Bayt al Maqdis brought the number of terrorist entities not listed by the UN to 20.

Xinhua

US sending 2,000 anti-tank weapons to Iraq

WASHINGTON, 22 May — US Defence Department announced on Thursday it is sending 2,000 anti-tank weapons to Iraq to help Iraqi forces in fighting the Islamic State (IS).

The weapons will arrive as early as next week, the department spokesman Steve Warren said in a statement, adding that the US is also expediting the delivery of ammunition and other equipment in order to counter IS' increasing reliance on vehicle-borne bombs.

Over the last 30 days, the US also helped deliver coalition donations of 22 million rounds of small arms ammunition and 12,000 mortar rounds to the Iraqi army, Warren said.

Since Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's visit to Washington in April, the US has also delivered 250 mine-resistant, ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicles, 2,000 Hellfire missiles, 10,000 sets of body armor and helmets, and millions of rounds of ammunition, including small arms, tank artillery and anti-tank weapons.

The weapons are for the central government of Iraq to distribute to its army, as well as Kurdish and Sunni fighters, according to Warren.

The US has insisted that its strategy of bolstering a strong central government in Iraq, rather than sending arms directly to the Kurds and Sunnis, is the best course of action against IS.—*Xinhua*

India sets April-June oil subsidy rules, no discounts if oil below $60

New Delhi, 22 May — India's oil ministry has set interim rules that exempt state-run upstream companies from giving any discount on crude and refined fuel sales if global oil prices average up to $60 a barrel this quarter, two sources with direct knowledge of the matter said.

Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC.NS), Oil India (OILI.NS) and GAIL (India) (GAIL.NS) sell crude and fuels like cooking gas at discounted rates to partly compensate retailers for losses they incur on selling fuels at government-set cheaper rates.

Under the new rules, which are applicable only for the three months to June and would need finance ministry approval to be extended, upstream firms will not have to pay any subsidy as long as crude prices average $60 or less, the sources said.

For prices between $60 and $100 a barrel, the companies will have to give a discount of 85 percent of the incremental price, said the sources who declined to be named as they are not authorised to speak to media.

"The oil ministry on Wednesday informed the upstream companies about the formula that they should consider while giving subsidy to fuel retailers in April-June," one of the sources said.

A technician opens a pressure gas valve inside the Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) group gathering station on the outskirts of Ahmedabad on 2 March, 2012. Reuters

Last quarter, the government had exempted ONGC, Oil India, and GAIL from paying a subsidy after a crash in global crude prices. Currently global oil prices LCOc1 are hovering at about $66 a barrel.

The oil ministry last year sought the finance ministry's approval for a formula to end arbitrary decisions on the size of subsidy payments by companies like ONGC, in which the federal government wants to sell a 5 percent stake.

On the top of the discount, state-run fuel retailers — Indian Oil Corp (IOC.NS), Hindustan Petroleum Corp (HPCL.NS) and Bharat Petroleum BPCL.NC — are compensated by the finance ministry for selling cooking gas and kerosene at cheaper rates.

ONGC chairman Dinesh K Sarraf and Oil India Chairman S Sunil Kumar Srivastava did not respond to *Reuters*' calls seeking comments.

Reuters

US, euro zone business growth slower, China contracts

London/New York, 22 May — US and euro zone business growth slowed in May while China's factory sector contracted again, reinforcing the need for major central banks to continue supporting economic growth.

The US Federal Reserve is seen unlikely to tighten monetary policy in June since the world's biggest economy barely grew at the start of the year.

Growth in euro zone business activity also weakened in May, just two months after the European Central Bank launched a 1-trillion-euro stimulus program, and an absence of inflation pressures suggested Asian authorities could inject more stimulus if needed.

"The May (Purchasing Managers' Index) surveys were broadly disappointing although nothing terribly bad," said Richard Kelly, head of global strategy at TD Securities.

"There is no question the ECB is going to continue with quantitative easing up until September 2016. China is just starting the amount of additional liquidity and stimulus that will be needed to safely rebalance the economy," he said.

Growth in the US manufacturing sector slowed for a second straight month during May, with new orders rising at their slowest pace since January 2014, private data vendor Markit said on Thursday.

The preliminary US Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index fell to 53.8 in May from the final April reading of 54.1, although the sector's jobs growth picked up this month from April.

Economists polled by *Reuters* had forecast the May reading would be 54.5. A figure above 50 indicates expansion in the sector.

The index's flash output component fell to 55 from the final April reading of 55.3, and was the lowest since December 2014. The flash reading of the index measuring new orders also weakened in May, to 54.2 from April's final 55.3. "The weaker order book trend doesn't appear to have affected hiring, at least not yet, with job creation picking up in May. However, unless production growth revives, there is a worry that payroll growth will slow as companies seek to boost productivity," said Chris Williamson, Markit's chief economist.—*Reuters*

New properties are seen in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, China on 12 May, 2015.—Reuters

US bird flu causing egg squeeze, emergency measures

Chicago/New York, 22 May — As a virulent avian influenza outbreak continues to spread across the Midwestern United States, some egg-dependent companies are contemplating drastic steps: importing eggs from overseas or looking to egg alternatives.

A spokeswoman for grain giant Archer Daniels Midland Co said that, as egg supplies have tightened and prices risen, the company has received numerous inquiries from manufacturers about the plant-based egg substitutes it makes.

And with a strong dollar bolstering the buying power of US importers, some companies are scouting for egg supplies abroad.

"The US has never imported any significant amount of eggs, because we've always been a very low-cost producer," said Tom Elam of FarmEcon, an agricultural consulting company. "Now, that's no longer the case."

Still, companies wanting to import eggs may have to look far afield.

"Canada is short on eggs and has been buying heavily from the US for the last several years," said Rick Brown, a senior vice-president of Urner Barry, a commodity market analysis firm. "Mexico has been dealing with its own outbreaks of avian influenza, so they're banned from importing into the US The logical place people will be looking now would be Europe."

Avril, a farmer-controlled agri-food group that owns France's largest egg brand, Matines, said it has seen an increase recently in demand from the United States and elsewhere in the Americas and plans to start making shipments in June.

Meanwhile, companies sticking with egg suppliers closer to home are facing sharply higher prices as a result of the outbreak, which has so far affected some 39 million birds. Nearly one-quarter of the hens that lay "breaker eggs" — which include liquid, dried or frozen eggs used by food manufacturers — have either died or are slated to be euthanized.

The outbreak has led to a sharp uptick in the wholesale price of such eggs, from 63-cents a dozen in late April, when the first egg-laying flock was reported infected, to $1.83 a dozen this week, Brown said.

The wholesale price of "shell eggs," typically sold in cartons at grocery stores, has also risen, from $1.19 a dozen in late April to $2.03 a dozen this week, Brown said.

Nevertheless, some food makers are turning to the more expensive shell eggs to supplement supplies, although that means an additional cost to send the eggs to a breaking facility that will crack the shells, Elam said.

Analysts at Goldman Sachs predict consumers will ultimately spend an additional $7.5 billion to $8 billion because of the egg supply squeeze.

Nestlé SA— which uses eggs for some of its Dreyer's, Edy's and Häagen-Dazs ice cream products — said it is braced for shortages and working with suppliers to help protect hens.

Dunkin' Brands Group Inc told *Reuters* it will leave it up to franchisees to decide whether to swallow the cost hikes they're seeing or pass them on to consumers.—*Reuters*

New method helps identify stem cell for heart repair

London, 22 May — By using a new identifying protein, British researchers have discovered a particular type of stem cell that could help repair the damage caused by a heart attack when injected in mice, according to a report recently released by the Imperial College London (ICL).

In the last decade, stem cells isolated from the heart have demonstrated potential for encouraging the heart to repair itself, an approach called regenerative medicine. But there has been uncertainty among researchers about the best type and combination of stem cells.

In a study published in Nature Communications, a team from ICL and British Heart Foundation found that stem cells with heart repairing properties carry an identifying protein on their surface, called PDGFR alpha.

They were able to use this protein to find a particular type of stem cell that could have the most potential yet for heart regenerative medicine.

Researchers said mice treated with these stem cells were able to recover and repair a significant proportion of their damaged heart muscle after 12 weeks, preventing heart failure.

The researchers now hope to find a similar cell in human hearts, using PDGFR alpha and other proteins to identify and purify the best stem cells to repair the damage caused by heart attacks.

"Future treatments could be injections of stem cells, as in our current experiments, or use of the healing proteins that these cells make," said British Heart Foundation Professor Michael Schneider, who co-led the study.—*Xinhua*

Thailand, Vietnam seek more Japan investment in medical, other fields

TOKYO, 22 May — Senior government officials of Thailand and Vietnam urged Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Thursday to encourage Japanese investment in their growing industries including in the medical and farming sectors, on top of existing railway and infrastructure development projects, Japanese officials said.

In a brief meeting with Abe on the sidelines of an international conference in Tokyo, Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Pridiyathorn Devakula said he hopes to see increased Japanese investment in new industries such as the medical sector under his country's new incentive strategy to encourage investment, the officials said.

Pridiyathorn also expressed hope over Japan's role in high-speed railway development in the Southeast Asian country and the development of the Dawei Special Economic Zone in southern Myanmar, a joint project between Thailand and Myanmar, they said.

Abe, recognizing the important ties between Japan and Thailand, noted that he wants to move forward the railway and infrastructure development projects, the officials said.

In a separate meeting with Abe, Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister Vu Van Ninh was quoted as saying he hopes to see Japanese firms investing in the farming sector of Vietnam, given that 70 percent of the population in his country are involved in farming.

Abe also met Indonesian Vice President Muhammad Jusuf Kalla and the two agreed to boost cooperation on the Southeast Asian country's infrastructure building, the officials said. The deputy prime ministers and vice president are in Japan to attend the conference on Thursday and Friday. Japan has been offering support for infrastructure development to members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations — of which Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia are part — to help the regional bloc's efforts to increase regional connectivity as they try to establish a more integrated ASEAN Economic Community this year.

Kyodo News

Nepalis return to quake epicenter to rebuild stone by stone

Earthquake victims carry wood recovered from a collapsed house at Barpak village at the epicenter of the 25 April earthquake in Gorkha District, Nepal, on 21 May, 2015.—REUTERS

BARPAK, (Nepal), 22 May — Dressed in his brother's old British army fatigues, Mohan Ghale is rebuilding his mother's home stone by stone, after returning to Barpak village, high in the Himalayas, which was demolished by last month's earthquake.

Ghale had been working as a plumber a full day's journey away in the Nepalese capital Kathmandu, but with his brother overseas and father away for work, it fell to him to remake the family home at the epicenter of the 7.8 magnitude quake that killed 8,633 people nationwide.

"I came back to rebuild and to help my mother. I had to," said the 30-year old, who put off the promise of a job in Japan to return to the rubble of his childhood home.

Ghale is one of tens of thousands of his countrymen to have returned — including many of the more than 2.2 million Nepalis living abroad — to remote villages to help with reconstruction.

On the reopened dirt track that takes a tortuous 60-kilometre (37-mile) climb to Ghale's home at 6,235-feet (1,900- metres), one village after another lies in ruins in the forested mountains. Here, in the sparsely settled Gorkha region, 440 people died in the country's deadliest natural disaster.

Women are clearing debris to retrieve belongings, men are fixing makeshift iron roofs ahead of the monsoon rains, and the army is constructing a school in Barpak to replace the skeleton of a building remaining on the site of the old.

About half a million homes were destroyed in Nepal by the 25 April quake and a series of aftershocks. The government has estimated reconstruction costs of $7 billion, a third of the country's GDP.

In the villages, the sheer number of absentees working in Kathmandu or overseas — remittances account for nearly 30 percent of the economy — was keenly felt after the quake, in the struggle to rescue loved ones and begin rebuilding.

Nepal's labour ministry does not know how many have returned to the country since the quake, but the numbers going abroad to work have fallen to a daily average of 950, down from 1,500 before the disaster.

In Barpak, famed for its fearless Gurkha soldiers, the head of the armed police force's rescue operation, Sudan Acharya, said more than 60 men had returned to the village to help.

It is difficult to know how many are away, but almost every family Reuters spoke with in the village, where 90 percent of the 1,200 houses were leveled, a male member was away serving in the army or working overseas. "This village has had a lot more help than other villages," Acharya said. "Ninety percent of our work here is done."

Further up the mountain, where the road ends, help has been more limited, and some "lower caste" villagers, those at the bottom end of a centuries-old social hierarchy that classifies people by bloodline, complain of getting too little relief. Aid organizations are scrambling to fly in supplies before the incoming rains trigger fresh landslides. Not everyone in Barpak is getting the help they say they need.

Seventy-year old Maya Ghale and her husband lost their small stone house in Barpak when the earthquake shattered the walls and the roof caved in.

Ghale, who is not related to Mohan Ghale, said she needed help because all but one of her children were away in Britain, Korea and India. Her priority now is to build a food stockpile to last the monsoon after the quake ruined supplies.

"We want them (our children) to come back, but they are very far away. Maybe we will make a wood house," she said.

Back in the ruins of his mother's home, Mohan Ghale plans to stay for three months before following millions of his countrymen into a life overseas, a trend the International Organization for Migration has warned would accelerate if more local jobs were not created once reconstruction is complete.

"After, I will go back to learning Japanese in Kathmandu. I still have plans to work there," Ghale said.

Reuters

Cambodian court sentences French organization director for indecent assaults against 5 boys

PHNOM PENH, 22 May — Cambodia's Preah Sihanouk Provincial Court on Thursday convicted 50-years-old French national Philippe Broaly to 14 months in prison, but suspended five-month prison term, on the charge of indecent assaults against five boys, according to a verdict read by Judge Plong Visal.

The verdict also ordered him to pay 5,500 US dollars compensation to the three civil plaintiffs and 1,500 US dollars fine.

Broaly, director of child NGO Enfants du Cambodge, was arrested in October last year by the Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Unit in Preah Sihanouk province for alleged sexual exploitation of several boys living in his organization.

Samleang Seila, executive director of child protection NGO Action Pour Les Enfants (APLE), which provided legal aid to the victims, said APLE was not satisfied with the judgment since the punishment is too lenient. "In addition, the court should have banned him from living in Cambodia since he will pose risk to more children in his community or children involved with his NGO programme,"he said.

Cambodia launched an anti-pedophilia operation in 2003 in a bid to end its reputation as a haven for child sex offenders. Since then, dozens of foreigners have been imprisoned for child sex crimes. — *Xinhua*

Baltimore grand jury indicts police in death of Freddie Gray

BALTIMORE, 22 May — A grand jury has brought charges against six Baltimore police officers in the death of a black man who suffered fatal neck injuries while in police custody, a case that touched off angry protests and a day of looting and arson in the Maryland city.

The charges, including a count of second-degree murder against one of the officers involved in the arrest of Freddie Gray, were announced on Thursday by Baltimore City State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby.

The officers, three white men and three African Americans including a woman, will formally hear the charges and enter pleas at a 2 July arraignment.

Mosby, a 35-year-old African American who took office in January, surprised many Baltimoreans early this month by announcing her swift decision to seek the charges. Under the US judicial system, grand juries are empowered to hear a prosecutor's evidence and return charges against a defendant if the panel agrees there is probable cause to do so.

"These past two weeks, my team has been presenting evidence to a grand jury that just today returned indictments against all six officers," Mosby told reporters. She took no questions.

Gray, 25, died on 19 April, a week after he was arrested and driven in a police van to a station house for booking. On the way, the vehicle stopped four times, the prosecutor has said, and Gray sustained injuries sometime during the ride. Mosby said officers repeatedly ignored Gray's pleas for medical attention.

His death set off weeks of largely peaceful protests in Baltimore punctuated by a day of unrest after his funeral on 27 April, when rioters threw rocks at police and set buildings and cars on fire.

It followed a string of police-involved killings of unarmed black men, notably in Ferguson, Missouri, New York City and North Charleston, South Carolina.

The cases have fuelled waves of protests across the United States over what civil rights activists say is law enforcement's unjustified use of lethal force against minority groups.

In Baltimore, the grand jury charged Officer Caesar Goodson Jr, the driver of the police van, with second-degree "depraved heart" murder, manslaughter and reckless endangerment.

Reuters

People gather at city hall in Baltimore, Maryland on 2 May, 2015.—REUTERS

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV EVER APEX VOY NO (0096-453N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV EVER APEX VOY NO (0096-453N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 23.5.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S EVERGREEN SHIPPING LINE

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV MUNICH TRADER VOY NO (RY-1505-12N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MUNICH TRADER VOY NO (RY-1505-12N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 23.5.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.I.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.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S TRANSOFFSHORE LOGISTICS PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV FS BEACH VOY NO (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV FS BEACH VOY NO (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 24.5.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.I.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.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S G LINK EXPRESS PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301191/2301178

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Energy
Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise
Invitation for the Letter of Expression of Interest

Title: Joint Venture Project for the Construction of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) terminal and Supply Chain of LPG Business (Importation, Storage, Distribution and Marketing)

Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise (MPE) hereby announces an invitation for the Letter of Expression of Interest to implement a joint venture project between MPE and interested investors who shall be a consortium of a local company (or companies) and a foreign company (or companies) and shall have the ability in terms of worldwide experiences in LPG importation, storage, wholesales distribution, marketing and services, financial capability, reliability for long term cooperation.

The scope of the business shall include the construction of a new LPG terminal (i.e storage tank(s), jetty, etc) on available land area in No. (1) Refinery (Thanlyin) and the supply chain of LPG business of importation, storage, wholesale distribution and marketing.

Detailed information for LOEI submission and information related to the joint venture project are available in the Ministry of Energy's website (www.energy.gov.mm/index.php/en/information/announcement) and the facebook (www.facebook.com/MinistryOfEnergy.Myanmar) as well as at the following address during office hour starting from 27.5.2015;

Planning Department
3rd Floor, Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise
Building No (44), Nay Pyi Taw
lpgbusinessjv@gmail.com

Letter of Expression of Interest must be delivered together with all the necessary materials requested in the detailed information to the following address in person before 12:00 noon on 15.7.2015;

Managing Director
Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise
Building No (44), Nay Pyi Taw

No telephone enquiries shall be facilitated.

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Energy
Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise

Title: Invitation for Letter of Expression of Interest (LOEI) for Joint Venture Project of laboratory services for petroleum and petrochemical products

1. Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise (MPE), Ministry of Energy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is planning to establish a Joint Venture Project of laboratory services which analyses the specification and qualification of the petroleum and petrochemical products and certifies or recertifies in accordance with the standard of International Organization of Standardization (ISO).
2. MPE hereby announces an invitation to submit the Letter of Expression of Interest (LOEI) for the Joint Venture Project of laboratory services between MPE and a company which shall have the accreditation of International Organization of Standardization (ISO) and also have experience(s) for the analysis of specification and qualification of the petroleum and petrochemical products.
3. The required data for LOEI submission and information related to the above Joint Venture Project are available in the Ministry of Energy website (http://www.energy.gov.mm/index.php/en/information/announcement) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/MinistryOfEnergy.Myanmar) as well as at the following address during the office hours starting from 27.5.2015;

Director (Planning) Fax: 067-411124
Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise
Email: labjvp@gmail.com
Building No 44, Nay Pyi Taw

4. No telephone inquiries shall be facilitated.
5. LOEI shall be submitted to following address in person no later than 12:00 noon on 15.7.2015;

Managing Director
Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise
Building No 44, Nay Pyi Taw

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Russia, Japan to implement visa-free visits to disputed isles

TOKYO, 22 May — Japan and Russia have agreed to carry out this year's exchange programme including visa-free visits by Japanese people to Russian-administered islands off Hokkaido from late May, in a turnaround from Russia's earlier cancellation, Japan's Foreign Ministry said on Friday.

"Diplomatic authorities (from the two countries) held talks on Thursday in Russia and confirmed the plan to hold this year's exchange programme," Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida said during a House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee session.

The ministry did not reveal any reason why Russia has moved to implement the exchange programme after having once cancelled it citing lagging internal arrangements.

The visits were initially planned to be held from mid-May.

Russia's cancellation had raised speculation that Moscow had called off the bilateral programme due to displeasure with Japan for continuing to impose sanctions on Russia in response to Moscow's annexation of Crimea last year.

Under the rescheduled exchange programme, former Japanese residents of the islets will be able to travel to see the remnants of their old homes and other places from 5 June, while Russian residents and former Japanese residents will be able to visit each other without visas from 2 July.

The visa-free visit programme began in 1992 as part of efforts to promote relations between present and former residents.

About 12,000 Japanese and 8,600 Russians had taken part in the exchange programme by last year.

Japan and Russia are locked in a longstanding dispute over the ownership of the four islands off Hokkaido — Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and the Habomai islet group, which were seized by the Soviet Union following Japan's surrender in World War II on 15 August, 1945.

The dispute has prevented the two countries from signing a postwar peace treaty.—*Kyodo News*

WEATHER REPORT

BAY INFERENCE: Monsoon is strong to vigorous in the Andaman Sea, South Bay and East Central Bay and weather is partly cloudy to cloudy elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 23rd May, 2015: Rain or thundershowers will be isolated in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay and Magway Regions and Chin State, scattered in Upper Sagaing Region and Rakhine States, fairly widespread in Shan and Kayah States and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with isolated heavy falls in Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady and Taninthayi Regions and Rakhine, Kayin and Mon States. Degree of certainty is (80%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Squalls with moderate to rough sea are likely at times off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (35) m.p.h to (40) m.p.h.

Japanese food introduced at Expo Milano 2015

Italian visitors to the Japan Pavilion of Expo Milano 2015 on 21 May, 2015, try making rice balls under the instruction of Yosuke Miura (far R), who manages a well-established rice ball store in Tokyo.

KYODO NEWS

Hollywood stars out en masse for first US Red Nose Day event

NEW YORK, 22 May — Hollywood stars joined top music acts on Thursday for the first US Red Nose Day, a charitable drive that raises funds for children in need around the world.

In all more than 100 stars, including Oscar winners Julia Roberts, Gwyneth Paltrow, Eddie Redmayne, Julianne Moore and Helen Mirren appeared either live or in taped comedy segments, many of which satirised the entertainment world.

NBC's three-hour live telecast was hosted by Seth Meyers, David Duchovny and Jane Krakowski.

Meyers, making much of Red Nose Day's 30-year history in Britain, where it has raised more than $1 billion, joked that the event's main goal was "to raise enough money to rub this in England's stuck-up face."

Accordingly, Simon Cowell, Naomi Campbell, Ian McKellen and Mirren were all seen toiling backstage, ostensibly performing technical or menial tasks such as serving beverages or in Benedict Cumberbatch's case, handling cue cards.

Other highlights of the marathon broadcast, which included segments featuring Jack Black visiting poverty-stricken areas worldwide, included Coldplay's appearance as the centrepiece of a sketch film documenting the creation of "Game of Thrones: The Musical."

Several cast members of the HBO show including Kit Harington, Diana Rigg and Peter Dinklage took part, with Liam Neeson narrating.

Roberts was the focus of another bit as co-star Richard Gere weighed in on her "real," gruffly masculine speaking voice, which Gere compared to a prizefighter's.

Clips of Roberts, her voiced so-dubbed, followed, along with James Bond star Daniel Craig speaking with the voice of a small girl, and action star Neeson sounding like he had inhaled helium.

Reuters

Lady Gaga gets over 30 wedding dress sketches from top designers

LOS ANGELES, 22 May — Pop star Lady Gaga reveals she has received more than 30 wedding dress sketched from the likes of Karl Lagerfeld, Monique Lhuillier, Alberta Ferretti, Donna Karan Atelier, and Diane Von Furstenberg.

Gaga, who is engaged to actor Taylor Kinney to marry, expressed her gratitude and awe via a tweet to those top notch fashion designers.

"Thanku to all the very special&generous designers who designed over 30 wedding dresses for the most important day of my life. I'm speechless," Gaga tweeted.

Though she has not made it clear what kind of dress she wants to wear on her nuptials.

The couple have been hit with ceaseless wedding rumors ever since they got engaged on Valentine's Day this year. Notwithstanding wedding speculations, Kinney has stated in a recent interview that he and his leading lady "don't have a date yet."—*PTI*

Pop star Lady Gaga

Elvis tour bus auctioned for more than 300,000 US dollars

BEIJING, 22 May — A tour bus owned by Elvis Presley was sold for more than 300,000 US dollars on the Music Icons Auction held by Julien's Auctions in New York.

Equipped with air conditioning, a fridge, televisions and speakers, it seats 12 and has sleeping berths for nine.

Elvis's "Takin' Care of Business" and his famous lightning bolt motto are painted on the bodywork.

Its former owner was Tupelo businessman Larry Michael, who drove it to New York last week.

The buyer was a mobile homes specialist in Texas.

JD Sumner, who performed with The Stamps and sang backup for him, was also one of the former owners. It was sold with a copy of a 25,000 US dollar check that Elvis wrote to Sumner for a down payment on it.

As nearly 200 Elvis items went under the hammer this week, including a military uniform and a Love Me Tender record dedicated to his beloved mother Gladys, auctioneers said Elvis remains to be the "king of the auction ."

Xinhua

Taylor Swift shares failed stunt from 'Bad Blood' video

Taylor Swift

LOS ANGELES, 22 May — Taylor Swift has posted a short clip on her Instagram which shows the singer running through a wall and falling to the ground during the shooting of "Bad Blood" music video.

In the painful-looking Instagram clip, however, she runs though the wall and falls right to the ground. "Yeah, I forgot to keep running," she says before assuring everyone she's "fine."

"Bad Blood", widely believed to be about Katy Perry, is a song off Swift's massively successful "1989" album.

Swift debuted the music during the 2015 Billboard Music Awards, featuring appearances from more than a dozen famous faces including Cara Delevingne, Gigi Hadid, Ellie Goulding, Cindy Crawford, Jessica Alba, Karlie Kloss, Lily Aldridge, Hailee Steinfeld, Ellen Pompeo and Mariska Hargitay.

PTI

Dwayne Johnson leaves honoured with handprint ceremony

Dwayne Johnson

LOS ANGELES, 22 May — WWE wrestler-turned-actor Dwayne Johnson aka 'The Rock' joins the likes of Meryl Streep and Bruce Willis by leaving his handprints in wet cement at the famous TCL Chinese Theater.

Movie actors and other celebrities have been leaving autographed cement handprints at the TCL Chinese Theater since the 1920s.

Posting about the ceremony afterwards on Twitter, Johnson, 43, simply said he felt "blessed," reported *People* magazine.

Though the handprint ceremony celebrates a performer's entire body of work, Johnson's latest film, the earthquake disaster film "San Andreas", hits theatres on 29 May.—*PTI*

Music legend John Lennon's bronze sculpture unveiled in Lithuania

The sculpture of John Lennon is seen in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 21 May, 2015. Sculpture of John Lennon was unveiled in Vilnius on Thursday. The late singer John Lennon was a member of British rock band the Beatles.—XINHUA

China aims to capture first men's individual chess world title

BEIJING, 22 May — With trophies of two prestigious team chess tournaments already under their belt, Chinese male chess players are eying on an individual world title.

China won the FIDE men's world team chess championship for the first time in April following its first men's chess Olympiad cup triumph last year.

Chinese coach Ye Jiangchuan believes that his proteges are capable of winning more glories.

"Last year when we won the Olympiad Cup, many attributed it to a bit of luck, but we won the team championship this year, which demonstrated it's not simply because of luck. Now the Chinese male players can be ranked among the best in the sport," Ye said on Friday.

Unlike their male counterparts, China's women players have already made their mark in the world stage, winning the team title several times and also boasted four individual world champions, namely, Xie Jun, Zhu Chen, Xu Yuhua and Hou Yifan.

The Chinese Chess Association has adopted a gradual approach in promoting the sport in the country with less chess tradition. After their women players' success on the world stage, now they aim to emulate that on the men's part.

According to Ye, the development of chess in China can be divided into three phases, firstly winning women's titles, secondly claiming men's team titles and finally the men's individual champion.

"After a decade of hard work, now the Chinese male players have what it takes to win the pearl on the crown - the men's individual world title," Ye said.

Currently eight Chinese male players are in the world top 50, with Ding Liren being the highest at 11th.

Ding, 23, received an invitation last month from world number one Magnus Carlsen of Norway to train together. and he said he has learned many from Carlsen.

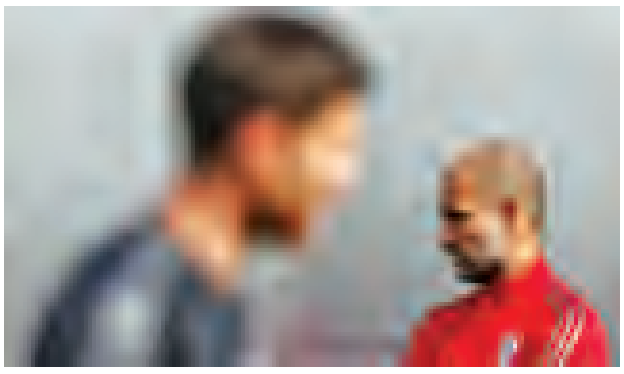
"There's a big gap between the number one and Chinese players, so I think we have to do more in all aspects," said Ding, who skipped Chinese chess league matches for the training. The Chinese Chess league, which has entered into its 11th season this year, is seen as a platform for Chinese players to hone their skills. The league has even attracted world-class players from abroad.—*Xinhua*

Bayern confirm dates for China tour

MUNICH, 22 May — Bayern Munich will face Valencia, Inter Milan and Guangzhou Evergrande on their pre-season tour of China in July, the German champions have announced.

Pep Guardiola's side, who were beaten in the Champions League semi-finals by Barcelona last week, will open their tour against Valencia at Beijing's "Bird's Nest" stadium on 18 July before moving to Shanghai to face Inter three days later.

They wind up the trip with a game against 2013 AFC Champions League winners Guangzhou Evergrande, who have won the Chinese Super League title four years in a row.



Bayern Munich coach Pep Guardiola

Bayern, Germany's richest club with a turnover of more than half a billion euros in the previous season, are looking to Asia's massive market to accelerate growth and previously toured China in 2012.

Joerg Wacker, the Bayern executive board member responsible for internationalisation and strategy, said in a statement on the club website the tour was part of its efforts to focus on China and the United States for growth.

"FC Bayern has nearly 90 million followers in China, who will have the opportunity to see one of the best teams in the world right up close during the tour," said Wacker.

Bayern begin their tilt at a fourth consecutive Bundesliga crown on 14 August.

Reuters

Wreckage found in HK harbor likely British warship

HONG KONG, 22 May — The Hong Kong government said that wreckage found in Hong Kong's Victoria Harbor last year likely belongs to a British warship that sank during World War II, according to local media on Friday.

The government said in a statement issued on Thursday that according to a preliminary assessment by a marine archaeologist, the object may be part of the bottom of the wreck of a ship that sank in Victoria Harbor during World War II, and could be the remains of HMS Tamar, according to the reports.

The object, found 6 metres beneath the seabed last year while dredging work near the old Wan Chai Ferry Pier on Hong Kong Island's northern shore was being conducted, measures approximately 40 metres in length, 2 to 11 metres in width, and 2 metres in height, with noticeable corrosion and cracks in certain parts, according to the government.

However, the government stopped short of confirming the identity of the object, as "the ship's bell, name plate or any other unique features have not been found."

The object will be relocated to a nearby seabed area for further underwater surveying to avoid corrosion if exposed to air, it said.

The HMS Tamar, with a displacement of 4,600 tons, arrived in the then-British colony in 1897. As the British army fought against and lost to the Japanese in the Battle of Hong Kong in 1941, the vessel was "towed out to deep water and...scuttled to prevent her use by the invaders," according to the British Royal Navy Research Archive.

Kyodo News

Hokkaido melons fetch 1.5 million yen at season's 1st auction

***Toshiki Shimbo, a senior official at a supermarket in the central Japanese city of Niigata, holds a pair of melons, specialty of Yubari, Hokkaido, which fetched a winning bid price of 1.5 million yen in the year's first auction in Sapporo on 22 May, 2015. The melons are scheduled to be showcased at Shimbo's shop.*—KYODO NEWS**

mitv Myanmar International

(23-5-2015 07:00 am~ 24-5-2015 07:00 am) MST

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* Products of Myanmar — Kachin Traditional Knife
* News
* Crab Business (Part-I) Mud Crab
* Products of Myanmar — Myanmar Circular Stone Slab
* Great Minds of Myanmar (Anthropologist U Kyaw Win)
* News
* Mesmerizing Scenes or Image of Japan (Part-2)
* News
* Food Trip (EP-6)
* News
* Myanmar National Poet and Literary Icon; Prolific Writer of Poems & Prose — Min Thu Wun (Ep-3) His Public Service & Literary World
* Myanmar Masterclass: Still Life (Glass)
* News
* A Cordial Welcome From Pantaung
* Shrinking Footprints
* News
* Karaweik Palace — A Symbol of Glorious Myanma Culture
* Sagaing: Guitar
* Porcelain and Glass
* News
* Traditional Matrimony of Ra Wan Nationals
* The Rising Glory of Myanmar Arts
* News
* Ambassador's View: Indonesia — Myanmar Bilateral Ties
* Products of Myanmar — Shin Ma Taung Thanakhar

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(23-5-2015, Saturday)

6:00 am
- Paritta by Hilly Region Missionary Sayadaw

6:30 am
- Documentary

7:00 am
- News / Weather Report

7:35 am
- Hyper Sports

8:00 am
- News / International News

8:35 am
- Teleplay

9:35 am
- MRTV's Youth Programme

10:35 am
- Science and Technology Programme

11:35 am
- Game for Children

12:00 noon
- News / International News / Weather Report

12:30 pm
- Head Line News

12:35 pm
- Hluttaw Image

12:50 pm
- Round up of the Week's Local TV News

2:00 pm
- Round up of The Week's Local Hluttaw News

3:00 pm
- News

3:35 pm
- Hyper Sports

4:35 pm
- University of Distance Education (TV Lectures) — Second Year (Psychology)

5:35 pm
- Documentary

6:30 pm
- Head Line News

7:00 pm
- News / Weather Report

7:35 pm
- Business News

8:00 pm
- News International News / Weather Report

8:35 pm
- Documentary

9:00 pm
- News
- Pyi Thu Ni Ti
- Gitadagale Phwintbaohn

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(23-5-2015, Saturday)

6:00 am
- Classical Songs

6:10 am
- Teleplay

6:30 am
- Myanmar Series

6:45 am
- Fashion Show

7:00 am
- Radio Teleplay

7:50 am
- Dramatic Arts

9:40 am
- Musical Programme

9:55 am
- Myanmar Video

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

6th Waxing Day of Nayon 1377 ME

Saturday, 23 May, 2015

Blatter challengers down to one after Figo, Van Praag withdraw

BERNE, 22 May — Luis Figo and Michael van Praag pulled out of the FIFA presidential election race on Thursday, leaving Jordan's Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein as the only challenger to incumbent and runaway favourite Sepp Blatter.

Figo went out with a bang as he launched a blistering attack on the electoral system of soccer's governing body, saying it was a "plebiscite for the delivery of absolute power to one man — something I refuse to go along with."

The former Portugal forward added: "Over the past few months I have not only witnessed that desire (for change), I have witnessed consecutive incidents, all over the world, that should shame anyone who desires soccer to be free, clean and democratic.

"I have seen with my own eyes federation presidents who, after one day comparing FIFA leaders to the devil, then go on stage and compare those same people with Jesus Christ. Nobody told me about this. I saw it with my own eyes.

"I am firm in my desire to take an active part in the regeneration of FIFA and I will be available for it whenever it is proven to me that we are not living under a dictatorship."

Blatter, 79, is widely to expected to be re-elected for a fifth term on 29 May, even though, under his watch, FIFA has been plagued by a wave of scandals and controversy.

These have ranged from allegations of corruption in the 2018/2022 World Cup bidding process to a row over $25,000 watches gifted to executive committee members at the World Cup in Brazil last year.

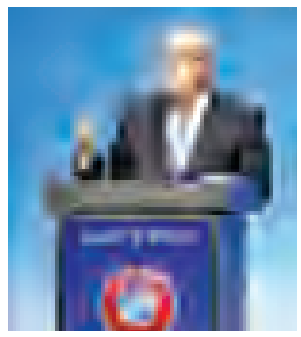
UEFA, with 53 of the 209 votes at the election, have said they will not back Blatter, but the Swiss has widespread promises of support from the rest of the world.

Dutch FA president Van Praag pledged to back Prince Ali and, in a joint press conference in Amsterdam, said that the only way to unseat Blatter was for his opponents to unite.

Van Praag said Prince Ali had agreed to back his human rights and governance commitments, including ensuring better protections for migrant workers in 2022 World Cup hosts Qatar.

"He is the one candidate who has the biggest chance to challenge Sepp Blatter," Van Praag said.

"If the football family follows their desires, and if things are done in a correct way with no interference, we have a great chance of making that change," Prince Ali said.—*Reuters*



***FIFA President Sepp Blatter delivers his speech during the opening session of the 39th Ordinary UEFA Congress in Vienna on 24 March, 2015.*—REUTERS**

Sharapova ready to go distance again in Paris

PARIS, 22 May — Maria Sharapova has hit form at the perfect moment as she eyes a defence of her French Open crown but old nemesis Serena Williams is lurking in the Parisian shadows.

Russian Sharapova, who once despised clay-court tennis but transformed herself into the 2012 and 2014 champion, arrives in the French capital fresh from winning the Italian Open in Rome.

The 28-year-old, beaten by Williams for a 16th consecutive time in the Australian Open final in January, defeated Spain's Carla Suarez Navarro in the Rome final, a week after reaching the semis in Madrid and will be full of confidence.

"I'm in an especially good spot physically. I'm prepared to go the distance now, and to beat someone like Carla who loves long matches, to come through that gave me a lot of confidence," Sharapova, winner of 20 of her last 21 matches at Roland Garros, said last week.

Yet most observers make twice French Open champions Williams the favourite — even if she has suffered niggling injuries of late and can be at her most beatable on the red dirt.

Romania's Simona Halep, last year's runner-up, will be in the mix too but few would be surprised if Williams and Sharapova served up a repeat of the 2013 final.

"I think this would be a better surface for her to play Serena," Chris Evert, a commentator for ESPN during the French Open fortnight, said in the build-up to the tournament.

"I think that it (the clay) defuses Serena's power. I think (Sharapova) likes that few extra seconds that clay allows her to set up her shots.

"She feels confident, she feels happy on the clay."

Williams, 33, will be aiming for a 20th grand slam singles title to move four shy of Margaret Court's record, but was forced to withdraw in Rome with an elbow injury, having also suffered knee problems earlier in the year.

Her physical condition will be severely tested over the coming fortnight, but Martina Navratilova believes if she is fit, Williams remains in a class of her own.

"Serena is amazing, and she will get to 20 slams for sure," the 18-times grand slam singles winner told the Tennis Podcast.

"It definitely gets harder when you are in your 30s but at the same time, the new generation hasn't quite caught up to Serena so she has a nice window there."

Incredibly, despite being a relative veteran, there is talk of a Williams grand slam, but Evert, thinks that is unlikely.

"I think Serena, when she has bad days, she's very beatable," the American said.

"When she has bad days, she loses her timing, consistency, everything just goes."

The list of those waiting to take advantage if the world number one stumbles is not a long one, however.

Halep has the patience on clay, while Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova has the power but not necessarily the craft to survive two weeks at Roland Garros.

Former world number one Victoria Azarenka, coming back to her best after injury, could be a dark horse.

Reuters

***Maria Sharapova of Russia returns the ball to Carla Suarez Navarro of Spain during their final match at the Rome Open tennis tournament in Rome, Italy, on 17 May, 2015.* —REUTERS**

Expect Nadal to step it up in Paris, says McEnroe

LONDON, 22 May — Seven-times grand slam John McEnroe knows how it feels when a tennis career starts going in the wrong direction.

That's why he is paying careful attention to Rafa Nadal's current travails as the Spaniard prepares to try and win a record-extending 10th French Open.

At nearly 29, Nadal is already four years older than McEnroe was when he claimed his last grand slam title.

And after a season in which once rare defeats on his favoured claycourts have arrived with alarming frequency, no wonder many believe Nadal has reached a tipping point.

McEnroe, however, thinks it is foolhardy to dismiss the Mallorcan as a fading force and fully expects him to find his 'A game' in the days ahead.

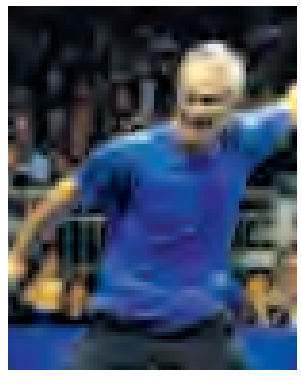
"He obviously wants to try to peak for the French," McEnroe, who will form part of Eurosport's commentary team at the championships, told *Reuters* by telephone on Thursday.

"He was out for a while, he came back, he figured he would work his way back to the sort of level he needs and the confidence level he needs to win again.

"I guess by Madrid or Rome he would at least liked to have won one or two but it's hard not to think that he's gonna take it up to another level (at the French) unless there's physically something wrong with him."

Former world number one McEnroe says everything points to Novak Djokovic winning his first French Open and says the only player capable of stopping the in-form Serb is Nadal.

"It's hard to think that there's anyone who could beat Novak other than (Nadal) in a five set match based on what I've seen," said McEnroe, who let slip a two-set lead against Ivan Lendl in the 1984 French Open final and was never the same again.—*Reuters*



***John McEnroe of the US reacts after winning a point during his BNP Paribas Showdown friendly tennis match against compatriot Ivan Lendl in Hong Kong on 4 March, 2013.*—REUTERS**

Evening of goodbyes as Real Madrid end the season on a low note

MADRID, 22 May — It looks as if it will be an evening of goodbyes when Real Madrid end their season at home to Getafe on Saturday evening.

Real Madrid's Champions League exit at the hands of Juventus and Barca's win at the Vicente Calderon a week ago means they are out of Europe and their Catalan rivals have claimed the BBVA Primera Liga title.

As always at Real Madrid failure comes at a price and at Real Madrid the man who pays the price is the coach and the growing rumors are that Carlo Ancelotti will be sacked next week with Napoli coach Rafa Benitez the favorite to replace him.

It would be harsh on Ancelotti, who last season led Real Madrid to a Champions League and Cup double and was being hailed as a peacemaker after Jose Mourinho's turbulent reign and the Italian will not even have the chance to direct his final game from the dugout given that he is suspended on Saturday.

Another who could be heading for the exit is Iker Casillas, who is expected to move on after being made the scapegoat for the club's misfortunes by a sector of the fans.

Casillas has apparently been told there is a place for him at the club, but if Real Madrid seal the signing of David De Gea from Manchester United, it's hard to imagine the man who has defended the Madrid goal since the 1998-9 season wanting to stay on to be a reserve.

Gareth Bale' s future is also in doubt after a disappointing season in which he too has been singled out for criticism despite being forced to play on the right of the Madrid attack to accommodate Cristiano Ronaldo on the left.

Bale is being linked with a move back to England, where he will probably not be asked to be a square peg in a round hole as he has during his two years in Spain. And finally Javier Hernandez will play his last game covering for the injured Karim Benzema. The Mexican has performed well in recent weeks, but needs more first team action.

Xinhua

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