

SWOLLEN RIVER WARNING

MAJOR WATERWAYS REACH DANGEROUS LEVELS: WEATHER BUREAU

By Ye Myint

YANGON, 31 July — Water levels in Myanmar's five major rivers — the Ayeyawady, Chindwin, Thanlwin, Sittoung and Ngawun — are dangerously high and likely to exceed flood warning benchmarks over the next three days, the weather bureau said Friday.

According to the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology, the Ayeyawady River exceeded its danger level by 10 centimetres in Ayeyawady Region's Hinthada Township as of 12.30 pm on Friday.

Despite being 71 centimetres under the warning point in Sagaing Region's Sagaing Township, the bureau forecast the Ayeyawady to reach its danger mark over the next two days.

The Chindwin River is likely to remain above its danger level over the next three days in Kalaywa Township of Sagaing Region, having already exceeded the benchmark by 143 cm as of Friday afternoon.

In the region's Mawlike, the Chindwin is expected to be above its danger level within next 24 hours, the department said.

Meanwhile, the Thanlwin River is already 92 cm above its danger level in Kayin State's Hpa-an Township and is likely to remain above the benchmark for the next three days.

(See page 9)

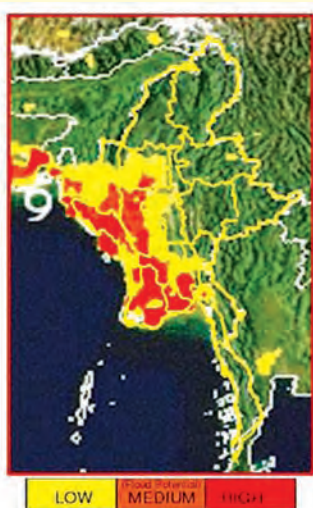
Flood victims evacuate to relief centres in Pwintbyu Township, Magway Region



SEEKING VICTIMS: A mother and daughter walk through floodwater to a relief centre in Pwintbyu Township, where residents are taking shelter as torrential rains continue to overflow Mone Creek. Evacuations are being carried out by Tatmadaw personnel and departmental staff in cooperation with social organizations, Myanmar News Agency reported Friday.—IPRD

WEATHER NEWS

Cyclone Komen weakens, heavy rainfall continues across Myanmar



Patheingyi, Mindat, Monywa, Kyaukpadaung, Bago, Pyaw, Sittway, Nyaung-U, Hinthada, Thantlabin, Thawaddy, Patheingyi, Thandwe, Maubin have a potential for floods.

YANGON, 31 July — Cyclone Komen was likely to gradually weaken from Friday afternoon onward as it continued moving northwest into Bangladesh, according to a weather bureau forecast.

Due to the storm, regionally heavy rainfall is expected across the country as the monsoon is strong to vigorous in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal, the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology said in its forecast Friday.

Severe flooding over the past few weeks inundated nearly 400,000 acres of farmland, destroying nearly 30,000 acres and damaging more than 73,000, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation.

The ministry plans assist flood-hit farmers across the country in planting rice by distributing seeds and ploughing fields with state-owned machinery when the flood recedes, the ministry said.—GNLM

Four regions, states severely hit by floods: gov't

YANGON, 31 July —The Union government announced Friday that two regions and two states have been severely affected by floods.

The announcement signed by President U Thein Sein stated that Chin and Rakhine states, as well as Sagaing and Magway regions, have seen huge destruction and face difficulty returning to normal conditions.

Meanwhile, a national disaster preparedness committee is making evacuation and resettlement efforts in Ayeyawady and Bago regions, as well as Kayin and Mon states, which are also experiencing floods.

Heavy rain in June and July has caused floods and landslides across wide parts of the country.—GNLM

WHO-backed leprosy campaign set for launch

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

YANGON, 31 July — The Health Ministry plans to conduct a leprosy awareness campaign in high disease burden areas this year with the support of the WHO, while also aiming to identify new cases, an official said Friday.

The first phase is scheduled to start in 20 rural health branches in 14 townships in Mandalay, Sagaing, Magway, Ayeyawady and Bago regions in August and September, according to Dr Kyaw Linn of the Myanmar Leprosy Control Programme.

(See page 9)

Buddhists perform meritorious deeds on Full Moon Day of Waso

NAY PYI TAW, 31 July —A ceremony to offer Waso robes to Buddha images at Uppatasanti Pagoda here Friday marked the second Full Moon Day of Second Waso, 1377 Myanmar Era.

Union Ministers U Thein Nyunt and U Soe Win, Commander of Nay Pyi Taw Command Maj-Gen Maung Maung Aye and party offered Waso robes to four Buddha images in the cave of

the pagoda.

In the evening, a total of 9,000 oil lamps were lit to illuminate the pagoda.

Devoted Buddhists packed pagodas in Yangon to perform meritorious deeds, take Sabbaths and practise meditation. Most of the pilgrims offered Waso robes and gold foil to the pagodas and Buddha images.

Religious association recited the Dhammacakka Pavuttana Sutta and oth-

er religious verses on the platforms of Botahtaung, Tooth Relic, Chaukhtetgyi, Ngahtetgyi and other famous pagodas in Yangon.

In Mandalay, devotees visited pagodas and religious edifices, some of them releasing fish and birds there.

In both urban and rural areas, local residents donated meals and refreshments to pilgrims from around the country.—MNA/
Tin Maung (Mandalay)



People waiting for boats to visit Kyauktan mid-stream pagoda.

PHOTO: NYI ZAW MOE



Buddhist people visit Shwedagon Pagoda on Full Moon day of Waso.

PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

Myanmar, Thailand ministers hold talks at 8th joint commission meeting for bilateral cooperation

NAY PYI TAW, 31 Aug—U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs and General Tanasak Patimapragorn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand co-chaired the 8th Meeting of Myanmar-Thailand Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation that was held in

Chiang Mai on 28 July.

Both ministers held the 8th meeting of Myanmar-Thailand Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation and exchanged views on strengthening of friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

At the ministerial meeting on 28 July, they discussed issues of mutual interest

including political cooperation, cooperation along the border, visa exemption for ordinary passport holders, cooperation on combating human trafficking, cooperation in narcotic drugs control, cooperation in security and defence, trade and investment, connectivity, economic linkage between Thailand's SEZ and border

area in Myanmar, development of Dawei SEZ project, labour, agreement on border crossing, financial and banking sector, energy cooperation, fishery development and management, tourism, technical cooperation, public health, education and culture sectors. The meeting was conducted in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and cooperation.

After the meeting, a ceremony to sign Agreement on Visa Exemption for Ordinary Passport holders between Myanmar and Thailand was held with both ministers in attendance. Ordinary passport holders from both countries, who travel through the international airports, will enjoy visa-free entries for 14 days under this agreement. The Visa Exemption Agreement will be effective platform for people to people exchanges and closer collaboration between the two business communities. Recently signed agreement shall be entered into force 14 days after signing.

The two ministers presided over the opening ceremony of the Consulate General of Myanmar in Chiang Mai on 29 July.—MNA



Union Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin shakes hands with Thai's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs General Tanasak Patimapragorn.

MNA

Traffic congestion causes problems for emergency ambulance services

YANGON, 31 July—It takes longer for emergency ambulance services to transport patients to hospitals as the traffic is getting worse and worse in Yangon, according to General Manager Dr Aung Lin of Emergency Ambulance Service.

“Traffic police is helping us but there are a lot of cars and it takes 20 or 25 more minutes to get to hospital than before,” he said.

The emergency ambulance service was established by Myanmar Medical Association and Ayeyawady Foundation in September 2012. The EAS has now 6 emergency vehicles and providing services to the public.

The KBZ Bank Ltd, Shwe Pazun Cold Drinks, Asian Wings, Win Pacific and individual donors are sponsoring the EAS.

Myat Sandi Thin Zaw

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing visits Taj Mahal

NAY PYI TAW, 31 July — A Myanmar military delegation led by Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing left New Delhi for Agra on Thursday to visit the Taj Mahal.

The delegation later inspected the Para Independence Brigade before attending a lunch hosted by Air Marshal KS Gill AVSM, YSM, VM.

The senior general and party then inspected IL78 and AWACs planes.

Afterwards, the senior general and party left Agra for Bodh Gaya and visited the stone inscription of King Mingdon.

Myawady

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla and party visit Taj Mahal in Agra, India.—MYAWADY



UN Special Envoy Angelina Jolie urges youths to ensure voting rights

YANGON, 31 July — United Nations Goodwill Ambassador Angelina Jolie on Friday encouraged young people, especially women, to check voter lists and ensure they are properly enrolled ahead of the 8 November general election.

“The elections in November are an extremely important moment for this country,” Ms Jolie told the youths during her visit to the She Leads voter education project in Yangon, according to a press release from the British Embassy in Yangon.

“Today I met inspiring young women preparing to vote for the first time, who have educated themselves about the process and come together to share that knowledge with others at this critical time,” she added.

The She Leads pro-

gramme, implemented by legal study group Yaung Chi Thit, with the support of the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), has been designed to help address the underrepresentation of women in political and decision-making processes at all levels.

The Oscar-winning actress and the co-founder of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative visited Myitkyina, Kachin State, and met with survivors of sexual violence, including a young woman from a camp for displaced people who endured 10 years of abuse.

Speaking with INGOs and survivors of sexual violence, Ms Jolie underlined the vulnerability of women and girls living in protracted conflict situations to sexual violence, trafficking and other human rights violations.

She also highlighted an urgent need for more medical assistance and legal and psychosocial support for survivors, and for a strong legal framework to ensure all perpetrators of sexual violence are held accountable.

Ms Jolie also met with 12 people from the Inter-faith group in Yangon.

GNLM

Artists raise fund for flood victims



Artists perform during a fundraising concert in Yangon.—MNA

YANGON, 31 July — Myanmar artists held a fundraising performance Friday in Yangon for flood victims across the country.

They entertained

an audience at Myanmar Event Park with traditional dances, music and comedy.

The earnings from the performance will be used to assist the flood victims.—GNLM

Green NGO seeks sustainable development via small grants

By Ko Moe

YANGON, 31 July — Environmental NGO Mangroves for the Future will disburse small grants for social development in Taninthayi Region, the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry said Friday.

Four organizations will be chosen to deliver the grants of between US \$2,000 and \$2,500, said Daw Zin Myo Thu, a national level coordinator of MFF.

An official from the Department of Forestry said, “Organizations to implement regional development tasks are required to collect data on what should be done for regional development before grants will be given to them.”

Small grants, which aim to promote living standards of local people and sustainability of natural resources in coastal areas, will also be available for other coastal regions later, the ministry said.

GNLM



United Nations Special Envoy Angelina Jolie arrives YMCA building to visit the She Leads voter education project.—MNA

Natogyi Tsp faces agricultural water shortage despite rain

NATOGYI, 31 July — Despite recent significant rainfall in Natogyi Township, more than 200 lakes and small dams do not have adequate water levels for crop cultivation, Township Administrator U Kyaw Nang told media on 30 July.

Local farmers started nurturing paddy saplings on their farmlands with the use of irrigated water from Khetlan Dam.

Khetlan, Kanna, Myaingtha and Phaungpya dams store water for local consumption but not supply water to farmlands, said Staff Officer U Aung Myint Thein of Township Irrigation Department.—*Khin Zar Mon Myint (Law)*



Mandalay couple receives honorary PhDs from int'l universities

MANDALAY, 31 July — A Myanmar couple received honorary degrees from overseas universities at the National Theatre here Thursday, in recognition

of their philanthropic and religious works.

The Education Board of Trinity World University, located in the Turks and Caicos Islands, conferred an

honorary PhD on Dr Thudhamma U Kyaw Win, while the New Age International University of the United States presented an honorary PhD to Thudhamma Theingi Daw Myint Myint. “We are always considering how we can make donations in various fields,” Dr Thudhamma U Kyaw Win said.

Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)

Training provides knowledge for aiding victims of violence

YE, 31 July — Healthcare management for female

victims of violence was discussed at a training session conducted in Ye Township of Mon State on 28-29 July, an official reported.

At the two-day course, forms of violence and related problems, laws and regulations for human trafficking cases, and current works and future plans were also discussed by experts including members of the police force.

Administrators from wards and villages, mem-

bers of the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation, social organizations, and healthcare workers attended the training.

Htut Htut (Ye)



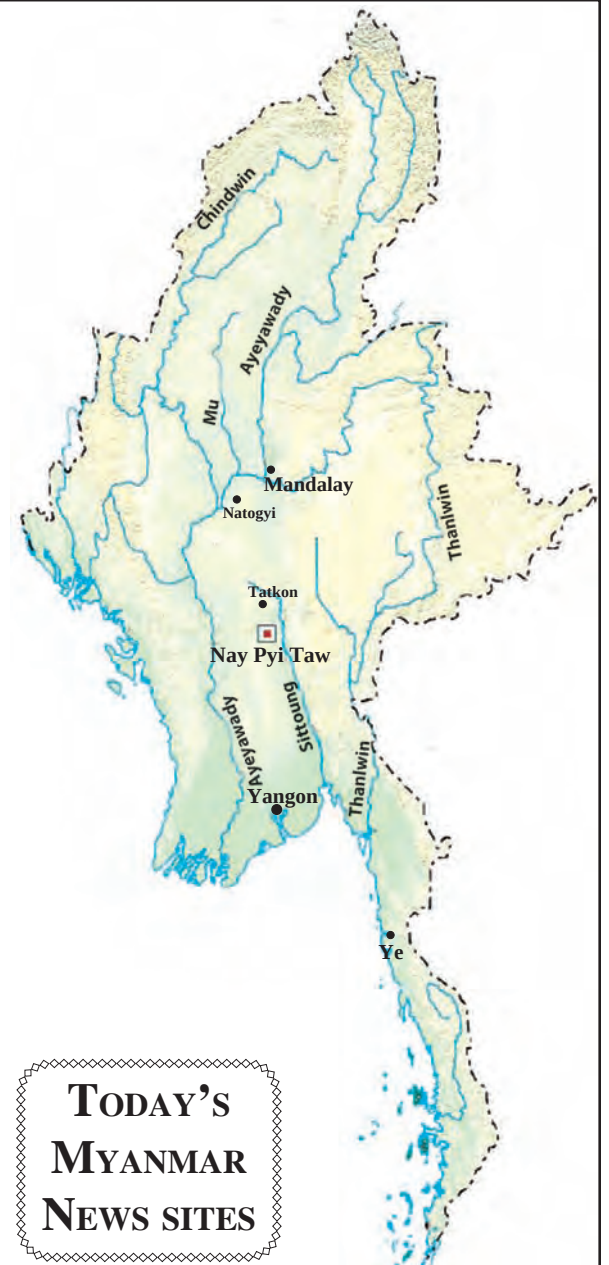
Region electricity ministry prepares for growing power usage

TATKON, 31 July — Mandalay Region Minister for Electricity and Industry U Kyaw Myint recently held discussions on installation of transformers and erection of concrete lamp-posts with local residents and electrifi-

cation committees in wards of Pyigyidagun Township.

The minister said the region government has a plan to supply more electricity to local residents, estimating demand for 300 megawatts in Mandalay

District next summer. Local authorities, township electrical engineers and company officials spoke about efforts by local people to improve the electricity supply at their residences.—*Maung Pyi Thu (Mandalay)*



Flood victims receive cash assistance, relief supplies



MANDALAY, 31 July — Social organizations, concerned citizens and the Mandalay Region government recently provided cash and emergency supplies to flood evacuees at relief camps in NyaungU, Singu, Madaya, Thabeikkyin and Mogok townships, where heavy rains

have caused flash flooding since 24 July.

The region government donated cash and relief supplies worth more than K133 million, including construction materials.

Local residents and World Vision also donated personal goods, clothes, household utensils and

construction materials to 57 households in Thabeikkyin Township and 30 households in Mogok Township.

Dr Kyaw Zin Oo and party of Thabeikkyin Township Public Health Department provided medical care to the evacuees.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)



Families of MH370 victims renew talk of compensation after debris find

SYDNEY, 31 July — The discovery of plane debris washed up on a remote island in the southern Indian Ocean has rekindled efforts by family members of passengers on board a missing Malaysia Airlines flight to seek greater compensation, aviation lawyers said. Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 disappeared in March last year en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 passengers and crew on board. No trace of the plane has been found yet but the appearance of an object, identified by aviation experts as part of a wing, on Reunion island east of Madagascar could offer the first real clue.

Most of those on board were Chinese. Zhang Qihuai, a lawyer representing the families, told Reuters more than 30 family members in China have already agreed to sue if the debris is confirmed to be a part of the missing plane.

Joseph Wheeler, special counsel at Maurice Blackburn Lawyers in the Australian city of Melbourne, also said he had started fresh talks with more families in Malaysia since Wednesday's discovery.

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"It's triggering renewed monitoring and recommendations to families," Wheeler told Reuters. "If there is evidence that the aircraft has failed, that very well may trigger a wave of lawsuits from around the world, predominantly Malaysia and China," he said.

Zhang said the families had discussed filing lawsuits in China, Malaysia or the United States. A Malaysian official and aviation experts have said the piece of debris, a 2-2.5 metres (6.5-8 feet) long wing surface known as flaperon, is almost certainly part of a Boeing 777, the same type of aircraft as MH370. In January, Malaysia Airlines declared the plane's disappearance an accident, clearing the way for it to pay compensation to victims' relatives while the search for the missing plane goes on in a vast area 1,600 km (1,000 miles) west of Australia.

"Regardless of whether our loved ones return or not, I will definitely sue Malaysian Airlines ... they have put us through so much pain and suffering, they must be held responsible," Li Zhen, whose husband was on the plane, told Reuters by telephone.

French gendarmes and police carry a large piece of plane debris which was found on the beach in Saint-Andre, on the French Indian Ocean island of La Reunion, 29 July, 2015.—REUTERS

Under the Montreal Convention, which governs such accidents, families have until March 2016 to either resolve their claim or file legal action. The piece of debris, covered by barnacles but otherwise in reasonable condition, raised hopes that other useful debris could also turn up. Investigators could then examine such components for "patterns of destruction" to see if they had failed, Wheeler said. "When we find things like that we are able to investigate whether similar parts or similar manufacturers of parts have come under scrutiny in the past," he said.

If Boeing Co was found by expert evidence to be the cause of the accident, families might seek to sue the aircraft manufacturer in the United States, helping them claim millions of dollars in compensation, Wheeler said. Boeing has declined to comment on widely circulated photos of the debris.

However, Daniel Rose, a partner at Kreindler & Kreindler LLP in New York, which represents more than 50 victims' families, said the discovery was unlikely to trigger a wave of lawsuits. Families are pursuing a settlement with insurer Allianz through Kreindler, he said, but the firm could sue before the two-year statute of limitations runs out.—Reuters

Return of Thai protest leader raises fears for fragile calm

BANGKOK, 31 July — The return to public life in Thailand of a fiery pro-establishment politician risks ending a period of calm and could lead to the delay of an election the ruling military has promised to hold next year, an opposition leader said on Friday.

Suthep Thaugsuban led occasionally violent protests backed by the Bangkok-based establishment against the populist government of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra in 2014.

The military eventually ousted the government in May last year, to Suthep's delight, saying it had to take power to end the demonstrations and avoid more bloodshed.

Suthep, a former deputy prime minister and top member of the pro-establishment Democrat Party, spent a year as a Buddhist monk but returned to public life this week with the launch of an organisation called the Great Mass of the People Foundation, which he described as a "collective, peaceful force". He also promised there would be no more protests. But opposition supporters who backed Yingluck and are loyal to her brother, former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, are dismayed. "I don't believe a word Suthep says," Jatuporn Prompan, leader of the pro-Shinawatra United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship, told Reuters. "He will upset a period of calm we've had. I only hope the government does not heed Suthep and sticks to its promise of an election next year," said Jatuporn.

Jatuporn has himself been a passionate protest leader when he, during periods over the last decade of polarisation and revolving-door politics, has campaigned against pro-establishment governments.—Reuters



Suthep Thaugsuban the leader of Thailand's opposition movement speaks during a news conference at a hotel in Bangkok, Thailand, 30 July, 2015. REUTERS

Philippines' Aquino endorses interior minister as successor



MANILA, 31 July — Philippine President Benigno Aquino on Friday endorsed his interior minister to succeed him when he steps down next June, saying Manuel "Mar" Roxas would drive forward reforms that put the country among the fastest-growing in Asia.

The constitution limits Aquino to a single six-year term, so the Southeast Asian nation will elect a new president next May, along with more than 17,000 national and local officials. But the prospect of the elections is giving the jitters to foreign investors lured

by governance reforms and average growth of more than 6 percent under Aquino, the country's best 5-year performance in four decades. "In my opinion, the person who has shown competence and integrity, who is ripe and well prepared to continue the 'Straight Path', is no other than Mar Roxas," Aquino told a cheering crowd of supporters at the historic Club Filipino.

That is where his late mother Corazon, the widow of another Philippine democracy hero, was sworn in as president in 1986, after a popular revolt ousted dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Aquino and Roxas, wearing the yellow favoured by the ruling Liberal Party, raised their hands amid a shower of confetti

and chants of "Roxas Na" (Time for Roxas).

Like Aquino, Roxas comes from an influential political family, his father having been a former legislator and his grandfather the Philippines' first president after World War Two. "With this endorsement, I feel you are passing on to me what they had fought for," Roxas said in his acceptance speech, his voice cracking as he referred to the political legacy. "I will not depart from the 'Straight Path'. I will give my all, I will not leave anything for myself. I will leave everything on the floor for this fight." Roxas ran for vice president along with Aquino in the 2010 elections, but he lost to Jejomar Binay, who quit the cabinet last month amid

corruption charges. In the May polls, Roxas, 58, a Wharton-educated economist and former investment banker, will again face Binay. Roxas, with a 21 percent popularity rating in a survey by independent pollster Social Weather Stations, trails Binay's 34 percent, although he, too, was overtaken in June by first-time Senator Grace Poe, who scored 42 percent, but has yet to declare a presidential bid. Despite the poor ratings, many in business circles favour Roxas. "There is still work that needs to be done, that has to be continued by someone who understands what has been started," said Peter Perfecto, executive director of the influential Makati Business Club group.—Reuters

Obama urges supporters to lobby for Iran deal

WASHINGTON, 31 July — US President Barack Obama on Thursday told groups that support the Iran nuclear deal to make their voices heard to Congress to counter the millions of dollars in lobbying by those who want to derail the agreement.

"Right now the opponents of this deal have been flooding Congressional offices," Obama said on a call with groups including the Washington-based think tank Center for American Progress.

Groups who opposed the deal, such as American Israel Public Affairs Committee known as AIPAC, have spent \$20 million in TV ads to put pressure on members of Congress, Obama said.

"They start getting squishy because they're feeling the political heat," Obama said of members of Congress he has met with in recent weeks.

Obama did not thank the groups for any of their support so far, but rather pressured them to step up their efforts.

He drew comparisons to the lead up to the Iraq war, noting



Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) hugs a Code Pink activist at an event of activists delivering more than 400,000 petition signatures to Capitol Hill in support of the Iran nuclear deal in Washington on 29 July, 2015. —REUTERS

that groups who opposed it were not vocal until it was too late.

"In the absence of your voices, you are going to see the same array of voices that got

us into the Iraq war, leading to a situation in which we forgo a historic opportunity and we are back on the path of potential military conflict," Obama said.

If upheld, the deal is certain to shape Obama's legacy as he prepares to leave office. He said he has never been more certain of a policy decision.

Congress is currently reviewing the deal that the United States and other world powers negotiated with Iran to limit its nuclear capabilities in exchange for a relief of sanctions.

Opponents of the deal question whether it goes far enough to ensure Iran does not develop a nuclear weapon.

Congress has until Sept. 17 to approve or reject the agreement. Obama has said he would veto any legislation that undermines the deal, but Congress could override his veto with enough votes.

Four Democratic representatives voiced their support for the deal on Thursday, including Senate candidate Chris Van Hollen and Dan Kildee, who represents the district of Amir Hekmati, who is being held in Iran.

The White House said its supporters so far have contributed to 70,704 emails and 63,862 calls to members of Congress, urging them to not reject the deal.

The White House did not provide a list of all the groups on the call. —Reuters

Canada pastor held in North Korea confesses to trying to overthrow state

SEOUL, 31 July— The head pastor of one of Canada's largest congregations who has been detained by North Korea since February appeared before media in Pyongyang and confessed to crimes aimed at overthrowing the state, the North's official news agency said on Friday.

The KCNA news agency said Hyeon Soo Lim, of the 3,000-member Light Korean Presbyterian Church in Toronto, "honestly admitted to all crimes" he was accused of committing.

KCNA quoted Lim as telling a news conference he had travelled to North Korea in the guise of humanitarian work and gathered information that he used in sermons outside the country in a

bid to drive the regime to a collapse "with the love of God."

His purpose was to "overturn its social system by taking advantage of the hostile policy against it sought by the South Korean authorities and set up a base for building a religious state," KCNA quoted him as saying.

Lim also said he worked with South Korean and U.S. authorities to "lure and abduct" North Koreans in a campaign of aiding defectors from the country, KCNA said.

The church said in March that North Korea detained Lim during one of his regular humanitarian missions there.

South Korean-born Lim has visited North Korea more than

100 times since 1997 and has helped establish an orphanage and a nursing home there, according to the church. He has lived in Canada since 1986 and is a Canadian citizen.

Canadian media have reported on Lim's extensive business dealings in North Korea, including ramen and wig factories, gas stations, farms and fishing operations. Church spokeswoman Lisa Pak said she was aware of the latest North Korean reports. "That's the most that we know, that the press conference happened and he admitted, I use that word very lightly, to some charges," Pak said. In a statement provided by the church on Thursday, Lim's family said it had no comment regarding the charges and allegations, "except that the humanitarian aid projects that Mr. Lim has both initiated and supported in the DPRK have been for the betterment of the people."

Officials at Canada's Foreign Affairs department are "deeply concerned," a spokeswoman said in a statement. "We continue to advocate for consular access and for a resolution in his case."

Canada suspended diplomatic relations with Pyongyang in 2010. Both North Korea and China have clamped down on Christian groups over the past year, and several American Christians have been detained by North Korea. —Reuters

Thai navy says subs needed to protect maritime interests

BANGKOK, 31 July— The Thai navy is making renewed efforts to defend its submarine procurement plan, which was put on hold earlier amid opposition, saying submarines are needed for the sake of safeguarding maritime interests and security.

Thailand will not use subs to wage war, but it is critical how other countries perceive it, Adm Narongpol Na Bangchang was quoted by Bangkok Post as saying on Friday.

Thailand wants other countries to recognize its potential in taking care of the sea, Narongpol said.

The navy's sub purchasing committee had previously proposed spending about 36 billion baht (1 billion U.S. dollars) buying three submarines, only to be

put on hold by the government, who suggested the navy better explain its proposal to a skeptical public.

The navy released a white paper on Thursday, stressing the urgent need to purchase submarines, as the lack of them puts Thailand at a disadvantage in the region.

According to the white paper, submarines could protect Thailand's marine assets, worth 24 trillion baht (681 billion U.S. dollars) which include natural resources, freight shipments, coastal industries and tourist destinations.

Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia all have submarines, while Thailand is lagging behind, the white paper said.

Xinhua

One killed, 12 injured in shooting in Sri Lankan capital ahead of polls

COLOMBO, 31 July— One person was killed and at least 12 others were injured Friday in a shooting incident in the Sri Lankan capital in the run-up to the parliament elections due to take place next month.

Election monitors said the shooting incident claimed the first victim of the 2015 parliamentary elections.

Police said a group of ruling United National Party (UNP) supporters were engaged in campaigning activities in the Kotahena area in Colombo to support former UNP legislator and Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake when gunmen travelling in a vehicle opened fire.

One woman was killed and at least 12 others were injured; the injured have been rushed to hospital, according to the police.

Elections to select a new parliament will take place on August 17 with the UNP and the United Peoples Freedom Alliance being the main contenders. —Xinhua



A bus is parked in front of the Light Korean Presbyterian Church, where Reverend Hyeon Soo Lim is the head pastor, in March 5, 2015. —REUTERS

WORLD

Democrat Clinton says she put U.S. interests first, after report she helped Swiss bank



Democratic presidential hopeful Hillary Rodham Clinton talks about her environmental plan during a visit to the LEED Platinum certified DART Central Station in Des Moines, Iowa July 27, 2015.—REUTERS

SILVER SPRING, (MD), 31 July — U.S. Democratic presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton on Thursday said she always put U.S. interests first when she was secretary of state, following a report that her family's foundation benefited after she helped a Swiss bank in a U.S. tax case.

The Wall Street Journal said that while Clinton was in office, she intervened on behalf of UBS AG (UBSG.VX). The bank then increased its donations to the Clinton Foundation, her family's charitable organisation, the paper said.

On Thursday, Clinton said she did nothing improper. "This is just the kind of unfortunate claim or charge that you see in campaigns, and all I can do is tell you there is no basis to it," she told reporters.—Reuters

France, Russia reach Mistral compensation deal: RIA

MOSCOW / PARIS, 31 July — France and Russia have reached a compensation deal for the cancellation of the delivery of two French-made Mistral helicopter carriers, according to Russian media reports.

"The talks are already over, everything is already decided - both the timeframe and the sums," Vladimir Kozhin, an adviser to President Vladimir Putin on military matters, told RIA news agency late on Thursday.

"I hope that in the nearest future an agreement will be signed on breaking the contract, and then the sum that France will pay us will be announced," RIA quoted Kozhin as saying.

On Friday, Russian newspaper Kommersant reported that France would pay Russia



Two Mistral-class helicopter carriers Sevastopol (L) and Vladivostok are seen at the STX Les Chantiers de l'Atlantique shipyard site in Saint-Nazaire, western France, May 21, 2015. REUTERS

almost 1.2 billion euros for failing to deliver the two Mistrals.

President Francois Hollande's office declined to comment, as did DCNS, one of the

main contractors building the Mistrals.

Hollande went back on the order after coming under pressure from his Western allies not

to deliver the Mistrals because of Russia's role in the Ukraine crisis. Earlier this week he said discussions were continuing.

Reuters

Pentagon chief gives nod to arm more troops in U.S. after shooting



WASHINGTON, 31 July — U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter signalled on Thursday that he would allow more troops to be armed at facilities inside the United States after the July 16 shooting in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and asked top brass to craft plans to increase security.

Carter in a two-page mem-

U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter

orandum instructed military leaders to develop plans to increase security within existing Defense Department policy guidelines, which, he noted, included "the option of additional armed personnel."

He also asked them to identify gaps in warning notification systems. "The tragic shooting on July 16 in Chattanooga, Tennessee, illustrates the continuing threat to (Department of Defense) personnel in the U.S.

homeland posed by homegrown violent extremists," he wrote, asking for a consolidated set of plans to review by Aug. 21.

Four U.S. Marines and a sailor were killed two weeks ago in Chattanooga when a gunman opened fire on military installations there.. The attack prompted calls, including from within Congress, for more troops to be armed inside the United States.

Reuters

Venezuela troops occupy Polar food distribution warehouses



Venezuelan government supporters hold placards and shout outside a facility used by Empresas Polar as a distribution center, during the occupation of its installations by government representatives in Caracas July 30, 2015. The placard reads: "El Algodonal, in support of the expropriation".—REUTERS

CARACAS, 31 July — Venezuelan troops occupied a Caracas warehouse complex used by local food giant Empresas Polar and Nestle to distribute food

and beverages, workers and company officials said on Thursday.

The move follows months of accusations by President Nicolas Maduro

that Polar, the country's largest private employer, is working to sabotage the economy. The company denies this.

Maduro's predecessor

Hugo Chavez expropriated several warehouses from Polar, in some cases arguing that the space should be used to build houses for the poor.

Around 50 workers protested inside the complex, including atop a water tower, with contractors joining them in solidarity outside in a poor neighbourhood in the west of Caracas.

"If we don't work, we don't eat," said truck driver Carlos Munoz, a 43-year-old contractor for Polar. He transports food and drink from the site to shops and distributors.

"There's no food in Venezuela and now they do this! How are people going to eat?" Workers said dozens of national guard and police took over the building on Wednesday evening. National Guard troops remained within the complex. Graffiti on its walls read, "No to expropriation."

Polar said the move puts 2,000 employees' jobs at risk.

"This is our principal dispatch centre," company director Manuel Larrazabal said in a statement, adding that Polar sent 12,000 tons of food and six million litres of drink out every month from the site. "We ask that the measure be reconsidered."

The government did not respond to a request for comment.

Nestle spokesman Andres Alegrett said the company was informed by the facility's owner that the area was being expropriated and that the firm was preparing alternative means of distribution.

Other companies renting space at the site include Cargill, Coca Cola, industrial gases supplier Praxair and the clothing firm Zara, according to a statement from Inmobiliaria Carapay, the owner of the complex.

The OPEC nation is suffering what is believed to be triple-digit inflation and shortages of basic goods from shampoo to chicken. Critics blame a failed state-led economic model while the government says an "economic war" is behind the problems.

Polar has said its operations are limited by its inability to obtain dollars to import raw materials.

Authorities told Polar the area was to be used for housing, said a company source who is unauthorised to speak publicly about the issue.

Around 50 people on Thursday rallied outside the complex in support of the measure, chanting, "We want homes."

"Many of us here don't have homes. Chavez promised us homes," said Lindomar Nieves, a 37-year-old mechanic holding a Venezuelan flag.—Reuters

PERSPECTIVES

Saturday, 1 August, 2015

Accountability breeds trust in leadership

By Kyaw Thura

The Myanmar people have a long tradition of holding in high esteem their leaders and are willing to risk their lives for them. Even if the leaders did something wrong, the ordinary people are likely to abandon themselves to ill fate instead of putting the blame on

their masters.

Ironically, public trust is often abused to the point of exhaustion. Most of the man-made human misery in history is said to have sprung from poor management by those above. So-called leaders take advantage of the introversion of the silent majority, who live in rural areas and want to lead a simple life.

Things are different now. A growing number of rural people have come to the sense that their voices count in nation building. In addition, they are well aware that trustworthy leaders always put the interests of the people and the country above anything else. They have had enough of vacuous speeches and hollow promises. They now understand that accountability is everything.

Simply put, trust is something that is to be

earned by actions rather than words. Leaders are measured by what they do, not what they say. It is therefore crucial for future leaders to learn to earn respect and trust, stay connected with the people from all social strata and listen to their feelings, while bringing about a real rise in living standards. After all, trust is easier to lose than to gain.

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email than-tunaungnrm@gmail.com with your name and title.

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

Shwedagon Pagoda Great Wonder

Htun Tin Htun

Seeing is believing. You are most warmly and cordially welcome to see, observe, respect (people from all over the world) and pay obeisance (if you are Buddhists) to our shrines of Myanmar and getting reassured, refreshed, regenerate, rejuvenate, relax, revitalize, revive, revivify and rest well under tranquil, peaceful and happy environment. Shrines of Burma (article wrote by DAVID MAURICE (Wunna Kyawhtin U Ohn Ghine- 24/9/1899-28/9/1981) in The Light of the Dhamma, The World Fellowship of Buddhists, Second Conference Issue, Union of Burma Buddha Sasana Council, November 1952) mentioned the following facts about Great Shwedagon Pagoda/ The Famous Shwedagon Pagoda: - The first Englishman ever to visit Burma was Ralph Fitch, who in the late fifteen hundreds sailed from the Thames in "the talle shippe Tyger", the same vessel mentioned by Shakespeare's witches in Macbeth. For the "Tyger" was indeed wrecked on its voyage to Aleppo and his good Kamma saved Ralph Fitch and eventually brought him home, safe and sound after many adventures including his short but happy sojourn in Burma. Ralph Fitch found in Rangoon a cultured civilisation in which commerce and the arts flourished, and the cleanliness and sweetness of all he saw inspired him to write most enthusiastically—so much so that his story published in Hakluyt's Voyages captured the imagination of all Europe.

He wrote of the mighty Shwedagon Pagoda; "It is the fairest place, as I suppose, that doe bee in all the worlde". Certainly the Great Shwedagon Pagoda is the oldest and mightiest of Buddhist fanes, and draws pilgrims from near and far to worship at its sacred base and to remember the Great Teachings of the Buddha as they repeat "Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta" "All is Impermanence, a source of discontent, without any unchanging soul or ego". The an-

cient stories tell of the trading mission to India of two brothers, Burmese merchants, Tapussa and Bhallika by name, more than 2500 years ago, and of how they met the Buddha just after He had attained his long-sought Enlightenment, and obtained from Him eight hairs of His head to be enshrined in their native town of Okkala (pa), the present day Rangoon (Yan-gon).

Welcoming in royal manner by the King of Okkalapa on two brothers' return, though they encountered many difficulties and dangers on their way back and, the Hair Relics of the Buddha were enshrined in a Golden Pagoda. Through the ages this pagoda, the Shwedagon, has been added to until in 1774 (241 years ago) it was raised to its present height of 326 ft. by Sin Phyu Shin, king of Ava. Since the Shwedagon is on a hill overlooking Rangoon, it has a commanding position and dominates the landscape. Rising from the summit of the hill which has been levelled to form a platform about 900 ft. long and 700 ft. wide the Pagoda is surrounded by tazaungs (shelters) which have some of the finest woodcraft and mosaic work existing in the world today.

Each of the gateway/archway, East, South, West, North of Shwedagon Pagoda, has Great Hall (Fane) for paying obeisance to Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, three jewels for all Buddhists to take refuge. These tazaungs may have as many as five, seven or nine storied roofs some culminating in a spire and hti (umbrella). There are also almost innumerable figures of the Buddha of brass or of alabaster. If the world has but seven wonders, then Shwedagon Pagoda (The Wonder of the World) is not the least of them and there are many even among the non-Buddhists who come from the ends of the earth to see the beauty and romance of almost-fairy architecture, though there are those who, objecting to the Eastern injunction (given also to Moses) "Take off thy shoes, for thou art upon Holy Ground", do

not enter when they find that it is necessary to remove one's footwear. This prejudice is now happily dying out.

Distinguished Visitors in recent times (1950s period at the time of author's writing) have expressed their awe and reverence and have used that very phrase "one of the wonders of the world". With all the reverence and all the wonder inspired by this mighty symbol, one gets also the atmosphere of quiet happiness and tranquil joy that is so peculiarly Buddhist. A few of the many entries in the Visitors' Book show this.

A dream came true for (Lord) LISOWEL. "My visit to the Shwedagon Pagoda this morning is the fulfilment of a long cherished ambition. Ever since I first heard of the Pagoda many years ago, as one of the world's supreme art treasures, I have looked forward to the day when its beauty and interest would change from a dream to a reality. Thanks to the kindness and courtesy of the Trustees of the Pagoda my dream has now come true. The Pagoda, in all its grace and dignity, has witnessed many dramatic events in Burma's long and illustrious history. I am happy to think that it will so soon witness the achievement by Burma of complete national independence, and the beginning of a new and glorious chapter in the career of a great people. May Britain and Burma always walk together as friends and equals." 7th September 1947. (Lord) LISTOWEL.

Great Britain and Burma (Myanmar) can share together the appreciation of the world's treasures. The members of the United Kingdom Defence Mission to Burma were shown round the Pagoda on 24th August 1947. We have looked forward since our arrival in Burma to paying this visit not only because the Pagoda is, as a work of art, one of the wonders of the world, but also because of its particular significance as a symbol of Burmese unity. The peoples of Great Britain and Burma will find mutual understanding easier to achieve if they can share

together the appreciation of the world's treasures. We have felt this morning particularly, understanding of the aspirations and ideals of a united and independent Burma. 24th August 1947." JOHN FREEMAN, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, War Office.

One of the great wonders and one of the best of all is Shwedagon Pagoda in this Universe. "I have been told of the Shwedagon Pagoda. I have read of the Shwedagon Pagoda. Now I have seen the Shwedagon Pagoda, and that is the best of all. I am deeply grateful to the Trustees of the Pagoda for their kind welcome to me and my wife and members of my staff. I regard it as a good omen that one of my first acts after my arrival in Rangoon as the High Commissioner of the United Kingdom has been to visit this wonderful shrine. 1st December 1947. JAMES BOWKER.

No two in the world, Shwedagon Pagoda is Great Wonder in this Planet. "The dignity and splendour of what I have seen this evening I find difficult to express in words. What is even more striking is the atmosphere of peace and tranquillity. A visit to such surroundings is an inspiration and a source of spiritual strength and sustenance. My visit will remain one of the most cherished memories of my life." 6th January 1948. ARTHUR HENDERSON, Secretary of State.

Purification, Preservation, Protection, Promotion, Propagation and Perpetuation of Buddha Sasana by the people of Myanmar makes the Shwedagon Pagoda long lasting and ever growing, free from all dangers and disasters. Fire, earthquakes, the ravages of time and the inclemency of the weather and, during the last war, British and Japanese bombs, have menaced the Shwedagon Pagoda but still it gleams majestically towards the sky and Ralph

Fitch's words are still as true "It is, as I suppose, the fairest place that doe bee in all the Worlde."

Architectural works of Shwedagon Pagoda is highly praised by the world. Except for pagodas in of Bagan era, the architectural works of the Shwedagon Pagoda has been praised by the world as OUTSTANDING WONDERS OF THE WORLD, in other words, the renowned architectural works of Shwedagon Pagoda is highly praised by the world. The name Shwedagon is derived from the Theingoktara (singuttara) hill-ock and Dagon capital. Theingoktara in Sanskrit means auspicious golden hill from that shwe is added to ti -gon town and putting it into one word, makes it Shwedagon Pagoda. It is also called Dagon Hair Relic Pagoda or Four Relics Auspicious Shwedagon Pagoda.

Going together to Gaya, Giving food together to The Buddha, Getting sacred hair relics together from Awakend One, Coming together to Dagon and Gaining the title of the most outstanding Upasakas (disciples) from the Buddha, and Welcoming back royally by the Okkalapa King, Taphoktha and Balikka, the two bothers on arriving back at their hometown, they offered the whole of Ramanya Division to the reigning King the Okkalapa King. The Okkalapa King and Taphoktha and Balikka brothers put the Buddhas' relics and built a small 44 - taung (66 feet) pagoda with Buddha's hair relics enshrined in it for the public to pay obeisance to this wonder. That was a brief history of how the Shwedagon came into existence and on the full moon day of Myanmar calendar month of Tabaung, Wednesday at 103 Maha Era (BC), the Shwedagon Pagoda was successfully built. At the reign of Queen Shin Saw Pu, the height was raised to 302ft.

(To be continued)

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Deputy Commander-in-Chief attends PLA anniversary celebrations

NAY PYI TAW, 31 July — Vice-Senior General Soe Win, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services and Commander-in-Chief (Army) attended the

88th anniversary celebrations of the People's Liberation Army of China at the Novotel hotel in Yangon on Friday evening, officials said.

Vice-Senior General Soe Win was welcomed by Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Hong Liang and Senior Colonel Wang Jinbo of the Chinese

military attaché. He read out a message sent by the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services before a dinner hosted by the Chinese ambassador.—*Myawady*



Photo taken on Wednesday of a motorized boat crossing the River Chindwin flowing 99 cm above its warning point near Monywa.—PHOTO: CREDIT TO APRIL SAI NGAE

Swollen river warning

Major waterways reach dangerous ...

(from page 1)

Likewise, the Sittoung and Ngawun rivers are likely to be above their danger levels for three more days, after measuring 115 and 57 centimetres above their respective warning points in Madauk, Bago Region and Ngathaingchaug, Ayeyawady Region, the department added.

The weather bureau also warned of heavy rain in Magway, Sagaing, Bago, Taninthayi and Yangon Regions, as well as Rakhine and Chin States, due to the deep depression formed over Bangladesh.—*GNLM*

Nomination for Hluttaw candidates continues

NAY PYI TAW, 31 July — A total of 101 candidates for Pyithu Hluttaw, 60 candidates for Amyotha Hluttaw, 206 candidates for state/region Hluttaws and 12 candidate for state/region ethnic affairs submitted their nomination for 2015 General Election on 30 July.

From 20 to 30 July, 604 candidates including 171 for Pyithu Hluttaw, 89 for Amyotha Hluttaw, 316 for state/region Hluttaws and 28 for ethnic affairs constituencies.

They represent 32 political parties while 31 of them are individual candidates. Detailed nomination process is available at www.uecmyanmar.org.

MNA

Crops damaged by floods in states and regions

NAY PYI TAW, 31 July — Crops were damaged during heavy rains during June and July in the some states and regions. The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation is taking necessary measures to grow crops in damaged farmland as soon as water level recedes.

Although 524,895 acres of farmland were flooded in 12 states and regions during the period, flood water decreased in 121,728 acres of farmland until 31 July and arrangements are underway to grow crops in the recovered farmland soon.

MNA

WHO-backed leprosy campaign ...

(from page 1)

“The second phase covers 40 health branches in more than 20 townships in Nay Pyi Taw, as well as five regions included in the first phase from October through December,” he said.

“We will make field trips to villages to look for new leprosy sufferers. The early discovery of leprosy cases could help patients through multi-drug therapy, which can prevent disability.”

According to the ministry's figures, 2,877 total new cases were diagnosed in 2014. Of them, 145 cases including 10 child patients were found to be grade-2 disability.

As one of the nine objectives of the program, the min-

istry aims to reduce the rate of new grade-2 disability cases by at least 35 percent by the end of 2015 compared to 2010, Dr Kyaw Kyaw Linn said.

Myanmar is one of the top 17 countries where leprosy is endemic, according to a 2013 WHO survey. There are still around 3,000 new cases diagnosed across the country each year, including 100 child cases.

In 2014, Mandalay Region recorded the highest number of leprosy cases with 547, followed by Yangon with 439 and Sagaing with 402.

The country achieved a WHO leprosy elimination target of fewer than one case per 10,000 population in 2003.

GNLM

Torrential rains force Mone, Kyee-ohn-kyee-wa dams to release water



Kyee-ohn-kyee-wa dam in Magway Region's Sedoktara Township is pictured Friday evening.

PHOTO: CREDIT TO SOE MIN LWIN

YANGON, 31 July — Torrential rains have raised the water levels of the Mone and Kyee-ohn-kyee-wa dams in Magway Region close to capacity, forcing the opening of spillways to allow outflows, an irrigation officer said Friday.

The water levels of the dams are 35.7 and 32.4 feet over their spillways, respectively, U Soe Min Lwin said in a Facebook

posting at 7 p.m., with declining trend of water inflow into the Mone Dam.

The dams and power intake structures are still in good condition but is being closely watched by irrigation staff, he added, warning that people living downstream may need to be moved to higher ground if the heavy rains persist.

As there has been continued water outflow from spillways of

Mone and Kyee-ohn-kyee-wa dams, irrigation officers are preparing emergency response plans, the Myanmar News Agency reported. According to local sources, the outflow of river water from Mone Creek and spillways of the dams has forced people in Sedoktara and Pwintbyu Townships to abandon their homes, but some have been stranded.

GNLM

First aim is to restore Yemeni government in Aden, Sanaa later — Arab-led bloc

DUBAI, 31 July — The Saudi-led coalition fighting to reinstate Yemen's exiled government aims first to set it up in the mostly recaptured port city of Aden and then return it to Sanaa if possible via peace talks with Houthi foes, a coalition spokesman said on Thursday.

But if the Iranian-allied Houthis did not eventually agree to quit Sanaa, the government would have the right to "get them out" by force, Brigadier General Ahmed Asseri said in an interview.

A Saudi-led Arab coalition allied with southern Yemeni secessionist fighters retook much of Aden last week in the first significant

ground victory of their campaign to end Houthi militia control over much of the Arabian Peninsula country and restore the exiled president, Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

Yemeni forces backed up by Saudi-led air strikes have recaptured positions on Aden's outskirts used by Houthis to fire rockets into the city, local officials said on Thursday.

Senior members of Yemen's exiled administration flew into Aden on July 16 to make preparations for the government's return to the major southern port, four months after it was pushed out by Houthi forces, the dominant armed faction in

the conflict.

Asseri, whose side has been conducting air raids on Houthis since March 26, said the first task was to secure Aden so the government could operate from there for the moment.

"Aden was the first step. Now the government will start rebuilding their military capability, their security capability, the stability in cities," he said, and this would need time.

"We believe that going surely, step by step, if the Houthis get out of Sanaa through peace talks, then this is important.

"But if they keep controlling (Sanaa), I think the legitimate government has



Smoke rises during an air strike on an army weapons depot on a mountain overlooking Yemen's capital Sanaa 20 April, 2015.—REUTERS

the right to get them out of Sanaa." Sanaa is in north-

ern Yemen and has been frequently bombed by Saudi-led warplanes over the past four months.—Reuters

Israel evacuates 200 settlers from illegal settlement in West Bank

JERUSALEM, 31 July — Israeli security forces on Thursday evacuated about 200 settlers from the site of the former illegal settlement of the Sa-Nur in the northern West Bank, a military spokesperson said in a statement.

Since Sa-Nur was evacuated as part of the 2005 Disengagement plan from Gaza, former Sa-Nur residents have made several attempts to rebuild their settlement.

Overnight Tuesday, hundreds of activists, including former residents and a far-right parliament member, reentered the site, squatting in the ruins of historic stone British fortress. They confronted with paramilitary Border Police officers who arrived at the scene, de-



Jewish settlers embrace each other during an evacuation of settlers by Israeli security forces in the settlement of the Sa-Nur in the northern West Bank, on July 30, 2015. Israeli security forces on Thursday evacuated about 200 settlers from the site of the former illegal settlement of the Sa-Nur in the northern West Bank, a military spokesperson said in a statement. Since Sa-Nur was evacuated as part of the 2005 Disengagement plan from Gaza, former Sa-Nur residents have made several attempts to rebuild their settlement. —XINHUA

manding the government to establish a special committee to discuss the return of settlers to Jewish settlements in the northern West Bank.

Meanwhile, Israeli security forces completed Wednesday the demolition of two buildings in the Beit El Settlement, five days after the demolition were suppose to take place according to a Supreme

Court order.

Israel's top court decided the so-called Dreinoff buildings should be demolished because they were built on private Palestinian land.

However, hundreds of right-wing activists arrived at the scene, barricading themselves in the buildings and clashing with security forces. The eviction was

completed only after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that 300 new housing units will be built at the site. Israel occupied the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war and has controlled it ever since. The settlements are built on lands the Palestinians see as their future state, and are considered illegal under international law.—Xinhua

Afghan Taliban name a new leader, but peace talks delayed

PESHAWAR, (Pakistan), 31 July — The Taliban have chosen late supreme leader Mullah Omar's longtime deputy to replace him, two militant commanders said on Thursday, as Pakistan announced that peace talks between the insurgents and the Afghan government had been postponed.

Pakistan cited reports of Omar's death as the reason for the delay in negotiations, amid fears they could trigger a potentially bloody succession battle and further deepen divisions within the militant movement.

Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour was appointed leader at a meeting of the Taliban's top representatives, many of whom are based in the Pakistani city of Quetta, according to the sources who were present at the shura, or gathering.

"The shura held outside Quetta unanimously elect-

ed Mullah Mansour as the new emir of the Taliban," said one commander at the Wednesday night meeting.

"The shura will release a statement shortly."

Siraj Haqqani, leader of the powerful Haqqani militant faction, will be a deputy to Mansour, both commanders added.

Mansour will be only the second leader the Taliban have had, because Omar, an elusive figure rarely seen in public, founded the ultra-conservative Islamist movement in the 1990s.

The Taliban eventually conquered most of Afghanistan, imposing strict Islamic law before being driven from power in 2001 by a U.S.-led military intervention.

"There has always been Mullah Omar. So this is a completely new situation," said Bette Dam, author of an upcoming biography of the Taliban leader.—Reuters

Six wounded in stabbing attack during Jerusalem's gay parade

JERUSALEM, 31 July — Six people were stabbed at Jerusalem's annual gay pride parade on Thursday, in one of the gravest attacks on the gay community in Israel, Israeli officials and eyewitnesses told Xinhua.

A police spokesperson said the assailant was captured and identified as Yishai Schlissel, a Jewish

ultra-Orthodox man who carried out a similar attack in 2005, injuring three people. Schlissel was released from prison only three weeks ago.

A spokesman with Israel's emergency service said that a woman in her 30s was rushed to hospital unconscious, in a critical condition. Two other men, also in their 30s, sustained mod-

erate injuries, and another two men and a woman were lightly wounded.

The incident occurred as the parade marched from the Independence Park to the Liberty Bell Park in central Jerusalem. Tom Canning, a spokesperson with the Jerusalem Open House for Pride and Tolerance and an eyewitness to the event, told

Xinhua that the attacker "ran through the crowd with a butcher's knife and stabbed whoever he could."

"People lay down on the ground screaming, bleeding, people ran away. Some people ran after him and pushed him to the ground; the police came and held him down," he said. Jerusalem's 14th pride parade was supposed

to be a day of celebration, sending a message of love and tolerance to the city, the organizers said at the beginning of the event.

However, because many in this volatile city are ultra-religious, the parade draws much controversy and tensions.

Just across the parade, some two dozen anti-gay

activists with a Jewish extremist organization called Lehava, rallied in a counter-demonstration. They chanted: "Perverts out! Jerusalem is holy city!"

"I'm not here to tell people what to do in their own homes, while I may not be supportive of what they are doing," said Michael Rosenfeld, a protester against the parade.

Xinhua

BUSINESS & HEALTH

Global economic woes dent strong UK consumer sentiment —GfK

LONDON, 31 July — British consumer morale eased in July as concerns about Greece and the global economy weighed on Britons' outlook for the economic situation over the next year, a survey showed on Friday.

Household spending, a key driver of the country's strong economic recovery, was weak at the beginning of 2015. But rising wages and zero inflation has increased consumers' disposable income, boosting morale to its highest in over 15 years in June.

The GfK monthly sentiment index fell to +4 in July after jumping to +7 last month — the highest since January 2000.

"In part, driven by anxiety over the potential Grexit melt-down and global uncertainty, con-



Shoppers sit outside a retail store in Oxford Street in central London June 19, 2008.—REUTERS

sumers are feeling less secure about wider economic

prospects for the country as a whole this month,"

Joe Staton, an executive at market research company

GfK said.

Britons were slightly more upbeat about their financial situation over the next year but were more pessimistic about the general economic situation over the same timeframe.

The index measuring the latter fell to -1 in July from +4 in June — its lowest since January.

Greece came close to a complete financial collapse last month, while the Chinese stock market recently plunged on concerns about the country's long-term growth prospects.

Britain's economic growth recovered in the second quarter but the strength of the pound hurt manufacturers. "Overall, despite this month's dip, the underlying message is strong," said Staton.

Reuters

Honda group net profit up 19.6% to 186.04 bil. yen in April-June

TOKYO, 31 July — Honda Motor Co. said Friday its group net profit in the April to June period rose 19.6 percent to 186.04 billion yen, helped by strong sales in North America and cost-cutting efforts.

Consolidated operating profit increased 16.4 percent from the previous year to 239.29 billion yen on sales of 3.70 trillion yen, up 15.5 percent.

Japan's third-largest automaker retained its earnings outlook for the current business year through March, with a group net profit of 525 billion yen. Operating profit is estimated at 685 billion yen on sales of 14.50 trillion yen.—Kyodo News

Liberty Global ups stake in broadcaster ITV to 9.9 percent

LONDON, 31 July — European cable operator Liberty Global said it had raised its stake in ITV to 9.9 percent through a hedging deal but still had no intention of taking over Britain's biggest free-to-air commercial TV firm.

Liberty, the owner of pay-TV company Virgin Media, took a 6.4 percent stake in ITV a year ago, and in September said it had no plans to increase the holding.

"Given ITV's operating and stock price performance, we were able to increase our stake to 9.9 percent with no incremental investment by hedging our existing equity position," Liberty said on Friday. "This investment remains an opportunistic one for us in our largest market." Liberty Global confirmed it did not intend to make an offer to acquire ITV.

Backed by U.S. tycoon John Malone, who

also controls Liberty Media Corp and Discovery Communications, Liberty Global has bought cable assets across Europe in the past decade and has more recently started buying strategic stakes in content producers.

ITV has been snapping up independent production companies, such as Talpa Media which makes entertainment show "The Voice", to reduce its reliance on its broadcasting business in



A man passes ITV television studios in central London August 3, 2010. REUTERS

Britain.

Liberty bought its initial holding in ITV from satellite broadcaster Sky in July 2014 for 481 million pounds, a deal that

boosted ITV's share price by 8 percent as investors bet that a full takeover would follow.

Shares in ITV, which reported a 25 percent in-

crease in first-half pretax profit on Tuesday, have risen by 57 percent since Liberty bought its initial stake.

Analyst Ian Whittaker at Liberum said he expected ITV's shares to jump again on Friday.

"Liberty has stated it does not intend to make a bid for ITV but its move suggests that it thinks a move by another player is likely or, at least, an increasing possibility," he said.—Reuters

Over 500 quarantined after Ebola case recorded in N Sierra Leone

FREETOWN, 31 July — Over 500 people were placed under quarantine in Sierra Leone's northern district of Tonkolili following an Ebola case confirmed there over the weekend, an official has revealed.

The infection led to the quarantine of a whole village for 21 days and the village chief would face disciplinary measures for failing to alert health authorities, Sidi Yayah Tunis, head of communications at the National Ebola Response Center (NERC), told Xinhua Thursday.

It has brought a halt to 150 days of zero Ebola cases recorded in Tonko-

lili. The quarantined people also include over 30 members of staff at a local hospital who took care of the patient before he later died.

After showing symptoms of the Ebola virus, the patient was first rushed to a traditional healer instead of a hospital, the official noted.

The NERC has called on the public to follow calls of health authorities as Ebola threats remain, or "one mistake Ebola will start all over again".

Three Ebola cases were recorded in the past two weeks in Sierra Leone, according to the official.

Xinhua

Japan's jobless rate worsens to 3.4% in June, 1st rise in 5 months

TOKYO, 31 July — Japan's unemployment rate worsened for the first time in five months to 3.4 percent in June, up 0.1 percentage point from May, the government said Friday, as more people sought jobs in a sign that labor market conditions continue to improve.

Separate data showed the country's job availability remained unchanged in June from May. The ratio of employment offers to seekers stayed at 1.19, meaning

that 119 positions were available for every 100 job seekers.

An official of the Internal Affairs and Communications Ministry said the labor market "continues to be on a recovery path," as the jobless rate has stayed below 3.5 percent and the number of employed women hit a record high.

The number of unemployed people gained a seasonally adjusted 1.8 percent from May to 2.22 million.

Boy gets world's first double-hand transplant

BEIJING, 31 July — The courageous boy, Zion Harvey who lost his hands and feet at the age of two due to a serious infection, becomes world's first child double-hand transplant recipient.

The 8-year-old boy from Baltimore suburb of Owings Mills, Maryland, received the transplant sur-

gery earlier this month at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, though doctors did not publicly disclose the operation until this week.

The nearly 10-hour surgery involved a 40-member team of nurses, doctors and surgeons led by Dr. L. Levin who is the chairman of the department

of orthopedic surgery at Penn Medicine and director of the hand transplantation program at Children's Hospital. According to Dr. Levin, Zion already can move and flex his new thumbs and fingers, which is taking part in rehab to regain further dexterity.

Zion Harvey and his mother Pattie Ray, were

more people on the back of improving corporate earnings. But some analysts say it may be difficult for the jobless rate to sharply drop as the market may be nearing full employment.

Demand for labor appears to be strong in the health-care and information technology sectors, as the number of jobs increased by 500,000, or 6.7 percent, and 120,000, or 5.8 percent, respectively, on a year-on-year basis.—Kyodo News

both excited about the "modern miracle" considering that the 10-hour surgery was a dream come true. Zion said he can't wait to hold his sister by using his new hands.

"My favorite thing is to wait for her to run into my hands as I pick her up and spin her around," he said.—Xinhua

FEATURE: At World Potato Congress, China cultivates spud's future

By Ben Dooley

YANQING, (China), 31 July—David Thompson has seen the future. And it is potatoes.

They're "going to be the super food," the president of the World Potato Congress told a table of journalists in the Beijing suburb of Yanqing, where as many as 1,000 delegates from over 30 countries and regions gathered in late July for the triennial potato version of the United Nations General Assembly.

The Chinese government shares Thompson's vision. Earlier this year, it upgraded the tuber to the rank of staple food, along with rice, wheat and corn.

The promotion comes with a stronger push to transform the simple spud into a more scientific crop, with cultivation moving from the farm into the lab in an effort to increase yields that lag far behind the United States and northern Europe.

An exhibition hall near the potato legislature's meeting is full of booths touting the latest in spud tech, everything from computerized combines to test-tube tubers.

While Chinese potato technology has improved, it can't compete with the world's great potato powers. Chinese scientists and machinery are notably absent from a photo exhibit on potato farming and research at China's only potato museum, a short bus-ride from the convention site.

The potato super powers have "much more intensive potato

growing, much more technically focused potato growing. There are opportunities there for China, through adopting technology, to increase their yields," said congress delegate Mike Storey, head of research and development at Britain's Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board.

Now, Beijing is intent on closing the spud gap, an ambition demonstrated by a gleaming new research facility in the last stages of construction in Yanqing.

China's already enormous appetite for food is expected to increase by 50 million tons between 2010 and 2020, according to forecasts by the Ministry of Agriculture.

As demand increases, the country has begun to push up against the limits of its geography. Only about 11 percent of its land is arable, and water has become increasingly scarce, forcing the government to embark on massive engineering projects to supply water for drinking and irrigation to the increasingly arid north.

Urbanization and rampant pollution have exacerbated the problem, further reducing China's farming options.

The squeeze has created a dilemma for the country's bureaucrats, worried about the national security implications of increasing food imports.

The potato seems like a perfect solution. On average, it produces 1.5 million more calories per acre than its closest competitor, corn, while using 1/20 the water.



Attendees at a potato industry exhibition on July 29, 2015, in Yanqing, China check out a spread of foods made with potatoes.
KYODO NEWS

"Look at how the populations are growing here and around the world. We need some good staple crop," Thompson said. "Potatoes will provide more energy and protein per acre than most crops.

If the argument sounds familiar, it's because it's a blast from the past. The potato's arrival from the Americas to Europe in the second half of the 16th century kicked off a population explosion on the continent, according to historian William McNeill, that allowed European powers to overrun the rest of the world.

But before Beijing can make its vision reality, it has to convince consumers to play along.

The tuber arrived in China in the early 1600s but never really caught on. Although the country already produces one-quarter of the world's potatoes, it's far behind others in per capita consumption. In China, rice is king. And while demand for other cereals has skyrocketed, potatoes still suffer from the perception that they are a peasant crop, evoking bad memories for those who grew up in an era when starvation was a frightening reality.

The government has tried several tactics to encourage love for the spud, including the 2011 "Patriotic Potato Campaign," a nationalistic appeal to consumers

to eat the country out of a potato glut that drove prices into the dirt.

Fittingly for the vision of potato as future food, the process of transforming it into a staple has mostly taken place in the lab.

In addition to rice, Chinese meals, particularly in the country's north, often feature bread or noodles, main dishes that anyone can make with a little flour, water, salt and time.

Making potato bread, on the other hand, is best left to the experts. The Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences failed over 12,000 times before arriving at a formula that consumers found acceptable, according to a recent article in Chinese-language newspaper The Global Times.

Potato bread on offer at Yanqing's exhibition center was manufactured at the "National Engineering Research Center for Potatoes."

The spread of potato science projects, ranging from pizzas to ice cream, met with mixed reactions from attendees at an industry expo held at the same time as the congress.

A horde of sweet teeth made short work of a table piled high with a rainbow array of potato cookies, including oddly addictive chocolate French fries. But they steered clear of potatoey versions of more traditional Chinese fare. Platters of steamed bread, known as mantou, sat untouched amid a display of noodles and dumplings.

Offered one of the gray buns, a woman in her 60s gave a dismissive wave. "I wouldn't dare," she said. Nearby, a mother handed her young son a piece of the bread. He took a bite, grimaced and threw it away. If China is hoping to raise a generation of tater tots, there's still a long road ahead. For now, at least, the food of the future is still ahead of its time.

Kyodo News

Mexico approves U.S. extradition warrant for fugitive kingpin Guzman

MEXICO CITY, 31 July — The Mexican Attorney General's office said on Thursday a judge had approved an order to extradite to the United States drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, who escaped from prison through a tunnel earlier this month.

Mexico said it received a U.S. extradition request on June 25, a couple of weeks before Guzman's breakout from a maximum security prison not far from Mexico City.

Guzman remains at large since escaping through a mile-long tunnel. The government had said it expected a U.S. request after Guzman's last capture in February 2014, but previous attorney general Jesus Murillo indicated in January 2015 that the capo would not be handed over so he could serve time in Mexico.

Now headed by Arely Gomez, the Attorney General's office said in a brief statement that the U.S. extradition request had been analysed and was consistent with existing laws.

Guzman, boss of the powerful Sinaloa Cartel, is wanted by U.S. authorities for a variety of criminal charges including cocaine smuggling and money laundering. The failure to extradite him after the June 25 request was heavily criticized by the government's critics after the jail break. Guzman's drug gang has smuggled billions of dollars worth of drugs into the United States and is blamed for thousands of deaths through addiction and gang violence.—Reuters

Greek PM defends 'emergency' plan for potential euro zone exit

ATHENS, 31 July — Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras on Friday confirmed he authorized his former finance minister to prepare contingency plans in case the country was forced to leave the euro, calling it the obligation of a responsible government.

"We didn't design or have a plan to pull the country out of the euro, but we did have emergency plans," Tsipras told parliament. "If our partners and lenders had prepared a Grexit plan, shouldn't we as a government have prepared our defense?" Former Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis this week provoked shock in Greece by confirming he had made secret preparations to hack into citizens' tax codes to create a parallel payment system in case Greece was forced to leave the euro.—Reuters



Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras gestures as he delivers his speech during a central committee of leftist Syriza party in Athens, July 30, 2015.—REUTERS

GENERAL

WEATHER REPORT

BAY INFERENCE: Monsoon is strong to Vigorous in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 1st August, 2015: Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in Kachin State and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of regionally heavy falls in Magway Region, Chin and Rakhine States and isolated heavy falls in Sagaing, Bago, Yangon and Taninthayi Regions and Mon State. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Occasional squalls with rough seas will be experienced off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (40) m.p.h.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Continuation of Strong monsoon.

FORECAST FOR NAYPYITAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 1st August, 2015: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 1st August, 2015: Some rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 1st August, 2015: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR WEEKEND: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Yangon and Mandalay Regions.

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Spanish-born photojournalist wins Mika Yamamoto award



Spanish photojournalist Ricardo Garcia Vilanova

wish, he will not give up because he believes “there will be no news without journalists.”

The foundation also commended Vilanova for “the overwhelming power of his works” and for his “strong spirit” that allowed him to return to Syria despite having been held there by militants for a period.

Vilanova was captured by a precursor body of the Islamic State militant group for about six months from September 2013 when covering the conflict in Syria.

But he returned to the country upon his release as he believed “reporting what’s happening in Syria is more important than worrying about what happened to me.”

Born in Barcelona, Vilanova was impressed with images from “The Third Man,” a 1949 monochrome thriller set in postwar Vienna, and started taking photographs at about age 13.

After studying photography at university in France, he became a freelance photojournalist.

Vilanova said wars are “the most hideous act that has ever been done by human beings” but that “I have also witnessed their beautiful side (in battlefields).”

He said some people he has met have been willing to sacrifice their lives to help the vulnerable without expecting anything in return, saying Yamamoto was one such person.

“We need more people like Mika,” Vilanova said.

Vilanova has already left for his next destination: Yemen, which is trapped in a civil war.

Kyodo News

Tokyo, 31 July — Ricardo Garcia Vilanova, a Spanish-born photojournalist, believes that photography has the power to make the world a better, more peaceful place.

Since around 2000, Vilanova, 43, has documented the lives of women and children living in conflict zones in such countries as Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya.

A series of his works, covering battlefields in the Middle East and Africa, won in late May the second Mika Yamamoto International Journalist Award, created to honor Japanese journalist Mika Yamamoto who was shot dead in Aleppo, Syria, in August 2012.

The Mika Yamamoto Memorial Foundation says that Vilanova’s works help people outside conflict zones recognize “the reality that there are people living exposed to the disasters of war right now, in this age.”

During an interview on the eve of the award ceremony in Tokyo, Vilanova said he wants to change society for the better with his photographs.

He said that although he has not been successful so far in achieving this

Reuters

Killing of Cecil the lion triggers probe by US agency



Protesters hold signs during a rally outside the River Bluff Dental clinic against the killing of a famous lion in Zimbabwe, in Bloomington, Minnesota 29 July, 2015.—REUTERS

NEW YORK, 31 July — The killing of Cecil the lion in Zimbabwe by American dentist and trophy hunter Walter Palmer is being investigated by the US Fish and Wildlife Service to see if it was part of a conspiracy to violate US laws against illegal wildlife trading, a source close to the case said.

The service is probing the killing under the Lacey Act, which bars trading in wildlife that has been illegally killed, transported or sold, the source said

on Thursday.

Palmer, whose practice is in suburban Minneapolis, has admitted to killing the 13-year-old lion and tourist attraction, in July. Questions have been raised by the Zimbabwe government and animal conservationists about Cecil’s death outside the Hwange National Park, where he was the head of two lion prides.

The best known lion in Zimbabwe is said to have been lured from the park with bait, shot with

an arrow, tracked for 40 hours, shot dead with a rifle and then beheaded and skinned.

Cecil was wearing a GPS collar as part of a research project run by Oxford University.

The Obama administration has made a major push to combat wildlife trafficking, issuing a national plan earlier this year to address it and cracking down on domestic trade in African elephant ivory.

With some of the strongest laws in the world

to protect endangered species, the U.S. government has attempted to prevent the slaughter of such animals internationally by targeting the multibillion-dollar market for illegal wildlife items.

In 2014, the service proposed listing the African lion as threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. The proposal, which is being finalized, would create a permit process for importing lion trophies from countries that properly manage the species.

Estimates vary on how many lions are left in Africa, with a low end of fewer than 20,000. There has been a significant decline in the African lion population over the past 20 years. The Lacey Act can be used to prosecute anyone who violates wildlife protections under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The African lion is protected under CITES, which requires exporters of the animal to get a permit from its home country. The lion or its parts cannot be imported into the United States unless it meets CITES requirements.

72.6-kg python terrorizing neighborhood killed in Missouri

BEIJING, 31 July — A 5-meter-long, 160-pound (or 72.6 kg) snake has finally been killed in eastern Missouri’s Warren County after terrorizing a neighborhood for days.

The Burmese python has been fatally shot in a rural area of the county, about 80 km west of St. Louis, according to media report on Friday. Neighbors believe the snake was responsible for the deaths of some small animals. Burmese pythons are not native to Missouri but can be purchased as exotic pets. A Missouri Department of Conservation official said owners have been known to dump them in the wild when they get too big to handle.—Xinhua

Former deputy CPC chief of Yunnan sacked

BEIJING, 31 July — Former deputy secretary of the Communist Party of China’s (CPC’s) Yunnan Provincial Committee Qiu He has been expelled from the CPC and public office.

The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) of the CPC said in a statement on Friday that Qiu had seriously violated Party rules by accepting

gifts and seeking benefits for the business activities of his relatives.

He also accepted huge sums in bribes, while taking advantage of his posts to seek benefits for businesses and other people.

His case of bribe taking has been transferred to the prosecutors, as the Supreme People’s Procuratorate (SPP) on Friday

confirmed that Qiu is under investigation for corruption.

According to an SPP statement, he is under “coercive measures,” which include summons by force, bail, residential surveillance, detention and arrest.

Qiu, an alternate member of the 18th Central Committee of the CPC, was put under investigation in March.—Xinhua

Three more 'Game of Thrones' seasons likely, HBO says



Actress Sophie Turner

BEVERLY HILLS, 31 July — HBO's most-watched series, the medieval fantasy drama "Game of Thrones," will likely continue through three more seasons, a network executive said on Thursday, as he defended the show's gritty violence.

The sixth season is currently being filmed. Executives have planned to run at least seven seasons and are discussing with the show's creators how much longer the show will extend beyond that, said Michael Lombardo, president of HBO programming.

"They are feeling two more years after six," Lombardo said at a Television Critics Association meeting.

Lombardo said he'd like to have more beyond that and

would also be open to a prequel to the story of the epic battle for the Iron Throne in the fictional kingdom of Westeros, based on George R.R. Martin's "A Song of Ice and Fire" books.

This year, "Game of Thrones" hit 20 million viewers on average for its fifth season, which received 24 Emmy nominations including a best drama nod. It also generated controversy for a brutal rape scene and burning of a child.

Lombardo defended its graphic depictions as part of the story and said he supported show creators Dan Weiss and David Benioff.

"This show has had violence as part of its many threads from first episode," he said.

"There are no two showrunners more careful about not overstepping what they think the line is." The fifth season also ended by killing off one of its lead characters and fan favorite, Jon Snow, but viewers have been speculating that the character will return - not that Lombardo was giving away anything on Thursday.

"Everything I've seen, heard and read, Jon Snow is dead," he said. "Game of Thrones" this year also helped launch HBO's standalone streaming service HBO Now, where viewers can watch HBO programming at any time without a cable subscription, as television continues to move toward on-demand viewing.

Lombardo told Reuters he was happy with HBO Now's

rollout but would not reveal subscriber numbers.

He also said marketing has become more challenging amid an explosion of critically acclaimed shows. Viewers of HBO, a unit of Time Warner Inc, routinely tune in Sunday nights, but other days are less certain, he said. "I worry about that all the time," he said.

"Particularly with a digital platform and on-demand where things are available, I think quality will ultimately win out."

Reuters

Big B sees on-screen mother Sulochana on her b'day

MUMBAI, 31 July — Megastar Amitabh Bachchan visited yesteryear actress Sulochana Latkar's home here to celebrate her 86th birthday.

Sulochana, who epitomised mother roles in '70s, donned the parent's character of almost all the leading actors of that era be it Manoj Kumar, Dev Anand or Mehmood.

"Sulochana ji happy 86th birthday! Played my Mother in endless films! Went to her home and greeted her! Sulochana ji, Mother to so many leading men in films - soft gentle and endearing... 86th birthday!," Bachchan, who played her son in "Faraar" (1975), posted on Twitter.

The "Piku" star also shared pictures of him taking the actress' blessing.

"Badon ka aashirwaad! Sulochana ji ka janm divas, 86 saal! Maa ki bhumika kitni baar nibhayi filmo mein! (Elder's blessing. She played the role of my mother in films many a times)," he wrote.—PTI

King of Cantopop Eason Chan sits on throne unchallenged

BEIJING, 31 July — Twenty years after hitting the big time, Eason Chan reigns unchallenged. Chen Nan reports.

In the 1980s and 1990s Hong Kong held huge sway over the music markets of the mainland, Taiwan and other parts of Asia with its Cantopop, four of its best-known exponents being Aaron Kwok, Jacky Cheung, Leon Lai and Andy Lau, who came to be known as the Four Heavenly Kings.

But these days the volume has well and truly been turned down on Cantopop as music tastes worldwide continue to diversify, and the four kings have given way to a sole sovereign, Eason Chan, dubbed the King of Cantopop. In fact, Chan is just about the only Cantopop singer these days who might be considered anything like a global phenomenon.

Every year, Chan, who has more than 15 million followers on his Sina Weibo account, releases one Cantonese album, one Mandarin album and begins a world tour.



Eason Chan visits Beijing to promote his latest album.

XINHUA

His latest Cantonese album, Getting Ready, was released a fortnight ago, and Chan, 40, came to Beijing to promote it.

At a news conference, wearing a white T-shirt emblazoned with the declaration "I give up wasting paper" and a pair of loose blue pants, he said that putting out a Cantonese album once a year has become a tradition for him, even as the Cantopop market continues to shrink, and many Hong Kong singers do a voice

change, singing in Mandarin to add to their appeal in the mainland market.

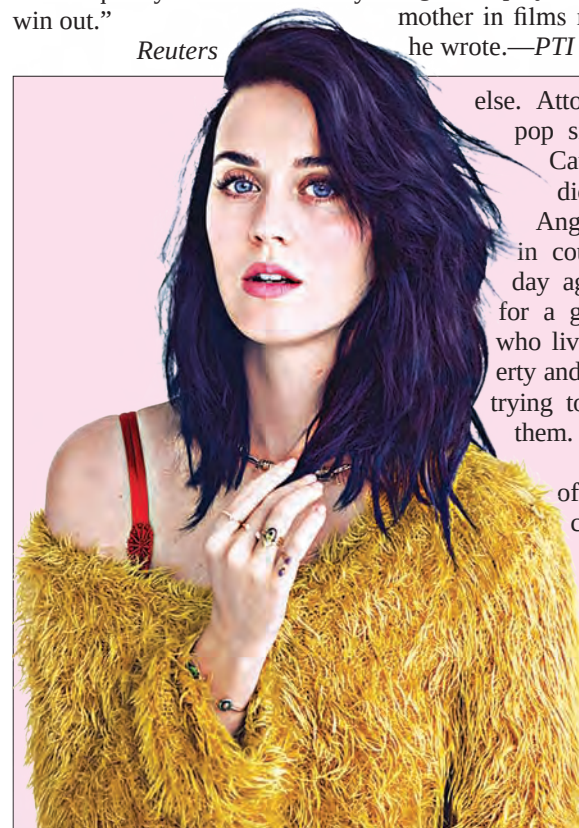
"To the listener the sound of Cantonese lyrics is unique," Chan says. "You can easily identify a Coldplay song in the same way you can identify an Eason Chan Cantonese song."

It may have been that uniqueness that helped Chan win the top two awards best Mandarin album and best Mandarin male singer for his last Mandarin album, Rice & Shine, at the annual Taiwan Golden Melody Awards, akin to the Grammy Awards, in June.

In Beijing Chan spoke of the time in which Getting Ready had its genesis, saying the album was the fruit of a year in which he faced considerable professional difficulties.

His manager, who for Chan was a mother figure, retired, leaving the singer with the difficult task of finding a replacement. In addition, Chan says, he had been touring internationally for about seven years and he felt he needed a good break.

Xinhua



Katy Perry may get chance to live at disputed ex-convent in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES, 31 July — Katy Perry, who grew up the daughter of Protestant pastors and rose to fame with the hit song "I Kissed a Girl," may get her chance to live in a former Roman Catholic convent in Los Angeles - after a judge tentatively blocked its sale to someone

else. Attorneys for the pop singer and the Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles faced off in court on Thursday against lawyers for a group of nuns who live at the property and a restaurateur trying to buy it from them.

Perry has offered to purchase the majestic 8-acre (3-hectare) property, built in the style of a Roman villa, for \$14.5 million. But the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary have rebuffed the 30-year-old performer, accepting a competing \$15.5 million bid of restaurant owner Dana Hollister.

The archdiocese, asserting that the restaurateur is out to take advantage of the five nuns, filed a lawsuit in June claiming it had the final say over disposition of the property for the nuns' benefit. Los Angeles Superior Court Judge James Chalfant tentatively sided with church officials, voiding the sale to Hollister but stopping short of ruling that the archdiocese could sell the former convent to Perry.—Reuters

GENERAL

Tokyo Olympic logo designer Sano reacts to plagiarism claims

TOKYO/BRUSSELS, 31 July — Kenjiro Sano, the designer of the logos for the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo, hit back at claims of plagiarism on Friday and said he knows nothing about the Belgian theater logo that has drawn renewed attention for its apparent resemblance to his Olympic emblems.

"I know nothing about the overseas piece of work that is being reported by the media," Sano said in comments released by the Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee.

"I never referred to it when

I was creating (the Olympic logo)," added Sano, who will speak further on the matter at a later date.

Olivier Debie, the designer of the Belgian theater logo in question, told Kyodo News on Thursday that he was planning to request jointly with the theater a retraction or a change of the Games' symbol design.

"We've decided on an action to ask for the withdrawal or the change of the (Olympics) logo," adding that it is his own idea and he does not know what specific request his lawyer would make

at this moment. He suggested that his lawyer would take steps as early as next week.

Facing a potential public relations blow, Toshiro Muto, director general of the Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee, said Thursday, "We made an announcement (of the emblem) after researching trademarks in and out of Japan. We believe it doesn't pose any problems."

Muto spoke to reporters on Thursday in Kuala Lumpur, where the International Olympic Committee is holding a meeting.

Debie said the theater logo is

not registered as a trademark but it predates the Olympics emblem that was revealed in Japan on July 24. His design was "made official in 2013. It's not difficult to find it on the Internet," he added.

He noted that the envisaged action is a decision jointly made with the theater's general director. The theater "is constantly engaged in exchanges with the whole world. I think they don't want to have something resembling their logo," he said.

For his part, "I prefer that my creation remain unique,"

he said. Besides Debie's work, the Tokyo Olympics logo also sparked attention on the Internet for its similarity to a design conceived by Spain's Hey Studio for soliciting donations for victims of the major earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan in 2011.

The Barcelona studio does not seem to take issue with the Olympic logo, telling Kyodo News on Thursday that they would be proud if they have inspired an emblem for a major event but believe it would probably be a coincidence.

Kyodo News

Northern California wildfire forces hundreds to flee



Firefighters work to dig a fire line on the Rocky Fire in Lake County, California July 30, 2015.—REUTERS

SAN FRANCISCO, 31 July — Flames raged unchecked for a second day through tinder-dry brush and scrub oak in Northern California's ranch country on Thursday after destroying three homes and forcing hundreds of residents to flee, as firefighters sought to benefit from subsiding winds, officials said.

The blaze, which has scorched some 8,300 acres (34 square km) of California's rural Lake County, was one of 14 large conflagrations under attack by nearly 7,000 firefighters statewide, forestry authorities said.

To help reinforce thinly stretched resources, the California National Guard mobilized nine of its helicopters Thursday morning to help battle the fiercest fires, state emergency management officials said.

The fires have been stoked by high winds, extremely low humidity and a heat wave that has brought triple-digit temperatures to much of the drought-parched state.

The so-called Rocky Fire erupted on Wednesday afternoon in the rugged foothills and canyons on the inland flanks of California's northern coastal range, 110 miles (180 km) north of San Francisco.

The blaze, propelled by strong winds, grew quickly during its first 12 hours, devouring three homes and numerous outbuildings, said Kaaren Stasko, a spokeswoman for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

About 500 people were ordered to evacuate, with emergency shelters opened for the evacuees and their livestock, she said.

Stasko said winds abated considerably on Thursday, though the 600-plus firefighters assigned to the blaze, backed by air tankers and water-dropping helicopters, had yet to achieve any measurable containment of the flames.

"Everything is very dry, and this fire has moved extremely fast," said Suzie Blankenship, another CalFire spokeswoman.

Smoke from the blaze was visible up to 80 miles (130 km) to the south in Napa, one of the state's famed wine-making regions, where a separate fire burning for the past week forced the evacuation of 200 people on Wednesday.

The Wragg Fire, near Lake Berryessa in Napa County, was 80 percent contained on Thursday after charring 7,500 acres (30.35 square km), fire officials said. North of Sacramento, a 2,300-acre (9.3-square km) blaze had threatened 1,550 homes and other structures at its height, but 60 percent of that fire was contained by Thursday and evacuation orders were downgraded to advisories, officials said.—Reuters

In the Southern California county of San Bernardino, east of Los Angeles, officials posted a \$75,000 reward on Tuesday for information leading to the arrest and conviction of drone hobbyists whose aircraft have interfered with recent firefighting efforts there.—Reuters

Oliver suffers Diamond Race setback, Fraser-Pryce wins

STOCKHOLM, 31 July — World champion David Oliver failed in his bid to wrap up the 110 metres hurdles Diamond Race title after finishing third in the Stockholm Diamond League meeting on Thursday. The American's lead was cut to two points after he was beaten by Cuba's Orlando Ortega and Russian Sergey Shubenkov although he will get another chance to seal overall victory in the season-ending Zurich meeting.

Women's 100 metres world champion and Diamond Race leader Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce won in 10.93 seconds ahead of American Tori Bowie and fellow Jamaican Natasha Morrison.

Caterine Ibarguen, unbeaten in 28 competitions, comfortably won the women's triple jump with a leap of 14.69 metres, beating her nearest rival, Kazakhstan's Olga Rypakova, by 39cm.

Czech world champion Zuzana Hejnova picked up her second win inside a week with victory in the 400m hurdles. She edged out Denmark's Sara Petersen by five hundredths of a second to sit top of the Diamond Race standings.

There was an exciting finish in the men's high jump when American Jacorian Duffield cleared 2.32 metres, enough to give him victory



Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce of Jamaica (L) competes to win the women's 100m race ahead of Tori Bowie of the U.S. at the IAAF Athletics Diamond League meeting at Stockholm Olympic Stadium on July 30, 2015.—REUTERS

over Qatari Diamond Race leader Mutaz Essa Barshim. Olympic long jump champion Greg Rutherford extended his lead in the Diamond Race to five points by winning with 8.34m. Germany's Christina Schwanitz effectively wrapped up her first Diamond Race shot put title with a winning throw of 20.13 metres on Wednesday. Schwanitz, who has 18 points and a nine-point lead over American Michelle Carter after four successive Diamond League wins this season, needs only to show up for the IAAF Diamond League final in Zurich on Sept. 3 to end a run of four overall victories for world and Olympic champion Valerie Adams.

Points are awarded to the top three in each event, with four to the winner, two for second place and one for third. Double points are awarded in the final event of the season. — Reuters

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- * News
- * Great Shwedagon: The Ten Traditional Arts & Crafts
- * Dhamma School
- * News
- * Ar Khar New Year Festival

- * The Photographer: Kyaw Kyaw Winn
- * Kayah
- * News
- * Let's Cook (EP-9) Crispy Deep-Fried Calamari Rings

- with Tartar Sauce & Apple Mint Mojito & Blue Lagoon Mocktails
- * Sitagu International Buddhist Academy (Part-1)
- * Sagaing: Guitar
- * News
- * A Cordial Welcome From Pantaung
- * A Novitiation Ceremony in a Rural Township
- * News

- * "Myanmar's Beauty and Nature" Beach
- * Culture Shows: Theatrical Art
- * News
- * Myanmar Masterclass: Art Teacher
- * News
- * A Highland with Peace and Charm
- * Living Myanmar Glazed Ceramics

- * News
- * Shwe Myanmar And Full Moon Day Of Waso
- * News
- * "Myanmar Traditions and Culture" Tea
- * A Girl Guide
- * News
- * MURAL PAINTING BAGAN
- * Kyauk Phyu Township
- * Black Gold (P-II)
- * TECH School

Goosen and Ishikawa set pace, Woods five back

GAINESVILLE, (VA), 31 July — Veteran South African Retief Goosen drew on good memories of past Presidents Cups played at Robert Trent Jones Golf Club as he charged into a tie for the first-round lead at the Quicken Loans National in Virginia on Thursday.

The 46-year-old, who represented the Internationals in the 2000 and 2005 Cup editions at the leafy venue in Gainesville, piled up eight birdies in hot, humid conditions for a flawless eight-under-par 63.

Goosen covered his back nine in a sparkling four-under 31 to finish level with 23-year-old Japanese Ryo Ishikawa, who reeled off five consecutive birdies on his front nine before recording a hole-in-one at the par-three fourth after the turn.

South African Ernie Els and Americans Justin Leonard and Kevin Chappell fired 64s while tournament host Tiger Woods recovered from a poor start to open with a 68 after play was suspended for 97 minutes due to the threat of lightning.

“I hit a lot of iron shots close that gave me birdie chances,” Goosen, a seven-times winner on the PGA Tour, told Golf Channel after taking advantage of preferred lies on a soft, receptive layout.

“I missed a couple of short ones, actually, out there but just one green missed in regulation and I got that up and down. So overall, a great round.”

Goosen has fond memories of the Presidents Cups at Robert Trent Jones Golf Club, especially the 2005 edition when he finished with a 4-0-1 record that included a victory over Woods in the last-day singles.

“It was a great week for me but it would have been nice if the team had won,” smiled Goosen, who has not won on the PGA Tour since the 2009 Transitions Championship. “I have a lot of good memories here.”

Former world number one Woods, who has struggled on the PGA Tour this year while working through his latest swing change as he recovers from back surgery, rebounded impressively from three bogeys in his first four holes.

With his iron play especially sharp, Woods picked up shots at the fifth and eighth before he recorded four consecutive birdies from the 10th on the way to a three-under round.

“I feel great,” said Woods. “After that start, it was tough to turn it around, which I did. I sucked it up, turned it around and posted a good number.”

“We got the fresh greens tomorrow (teeing off early in the second round). Hopefully go out there and post a low one.”

Defending champion Justin Rose of England, the world number seven, celebrated his 35th birthday on Thursday by shooting an eight-birdie 66.

Reuters



Tiger Woods watches his ball after teeing off in the first round of the Quicken Loans National golf tournament at Robert Trent Jones Golf Club in Gainesville, VA, USA on 30 July, 2015.—REUTERS

Ex-Chelsea striker Drogba joins Montreal Impact



MONTREAL, (Quebec), 31 July — Former Chelsea striker Didier Drogba has signed for the Montreal Impact, the club announced on Monday as the Ivorian joined a growing list of famous international players in Major League Football.

Drogba, who was part of the Chelsea team that won the English Premier League title in May, has joined Montreal in a trade with the Chicago Fire, which had his MLS rights.

“It’s an honour to welcome Didier Drogba to the Impact,” said team president Joey Saputo.

“This is one of the biggest days in club history and his arrival to the club will be beneficial in every aspect.”

The 37-year-old Ivorian joins an MLS roster that includes Englishmen Steven Gerrard (Los Angeles) and Frank Lampard (New York City), Brazilian Kaka (Orlando), Spaniard David Villa (New York City) and Italian Andrea Pirlo (New York City). Drogba left Chelsea after playing 381 games and winning four Premier League titles across two stints with the Stamford Bridge club.

He twice won the Golden Boot

for top scorer, and in 2012 scored the equalising goal and subsequent winning penalty kick that earned Chelsea the Champions League title.

Drogba was mainly used as a substitute last season. Terms of his deal with Montreal were not announced and there is no word yet on when he will make his debut.

Drogba will be a designated player, which means his wages will not be restricted by the team’s salary cap.

Montreal are sixth in the Eastern Conference with 24 points from 18 games.—Reuters

Barca’s youth eager to shine during transfer ban

BARCELONA, 31 July — Barcelona’s famed youth academy has taken a back seat to big-name signings in recent years but as a result of the FIFA transfer ban imposed on the club, promising youngsters have been given a chance to shine in Luis Enrique’s side.

During the pre-season tour of the U.S., at one point there were 10 homegrown youth players on the pitch against Chelsea on Tuesday.

Rafinha and 20-year-old Sergi Samper have looked sharp in midfield while Sandro Ramirez, also aged 20, has been a threat in attack and took his goal well in the Chelsea clash they lost on penalties.

Sergi Roberto, though, has been the most used player in warm-up matches and Luis Enrique praised his performance at right back.

With Barcelona serving a two-window transfer ban in 2015, set after they broke rules on signing under-age players, the club have focussed their efforts on fast-tracking youth players to the senior squad in the absence of marquee signings.

“Sergi Roberto has done well and he has the ability to play in several positions,” Luis Enrique told reporters after the Chelsea match.



Manchester United’s Andreas Pereira (R) in action with Barcelona’s Rafinha during International Champions Cup on 25 July, 2015.—REUTERS

“He is an option that we are going to use. He is a player that is strong and I am sure that he can give us a lot at fullback.”

Over the last couple of seasons as players of the calibre of Neymar and Luis Suarez arrived at the Nou Camp, the Catalan side had depended less and less on their homegrown talent.

Lionel Messi was the only youth product in their lethal attacking trident that helped them win the treble last season.

Players such as Thiago Alcantara failed to find their way into the first team and he ended up at Bayern Munich with former Barca coach Pep Guardiola, who had previously relied heavily on the youth academy to bolster the club.

But with the FIFA transfer ban forcing Barcelona to look for new talent closer to home, the youth academy’s graduates know that they may never get a better chance to make a quick impact among the club’s big boys.—Reuters