

Noble spirit of universal brotherhood will benefit endeavors for world peace and stability : Sitagu Sayadaw

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MONKEYS, TIGERS-OH MY!

Hukawng Valley wildlife survey delayed

Aye Min Soe

A SURVEY on tigers and monkeys in the Hukawng Valley in northern Myanmar has been delayed for security purposes, despite plans for its resumption early this year.

“We have a plan to conduct the survey, but cannot say when we will start it,” said an official from the Wildlife Conservation Society (Myanmar) on condition of anonymity.

“We cannot say the number of the endangered species in the Hukawng Valley because we have not yet entered the forest since 2011, he added.

The number of the tigers and other endangered species are expected to have fluctuated since 2011, the year the last survey was taken, because human-made paths into the forest have been discovered, he said.

According to a report by the Wildlife Conservation Society released in October 2010, only 50 tigers remain in the Hukawng Valley.

Gold mining in the Hukawng Valley Tiger Reserve, the

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Hukawng Valley in northern Myanmar, home to endangered species including tigers and monkeys. CREDIT: WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY (MYANMAR)



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing assists veteran journalist U Khin Maung Lay as they prepare to have photo taken. PHOTO: MNA

Media indispensable for nation-building: C-in-C Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing

MEDIA are indispensable for the nation, particularly at a time when the nation is being built anew, said Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing during a meeting with members of the Myanmar Media Council, led by Chairman U Khin Maung Lay at the Bayintnaung Guest House in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

“Media can contribute effective activities toward building the nation,” the senior general said. “Media professionals are urged to make the public aware of democratic practices.”

“The cessation of armed conflicts is of vital importance to peace and development,” he said.

“The Tatmadaw, on its part, will exert effort to achieve eter-

nal peace as well as to help the government and the parliament ensure the rule of law. In this function, media professionals are needed to report on the events in a positive manner,” the senior general said.

The Myanmar Media Council was formed by 27 members on 11 November 2015.—Myanmar News Agency

Landslide in Mayangon Tp kills three



Rescuers remove soil to evacuate the scene of accident of the victims. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

A LANDSLIDE at a monastery in Mayangon Township yesterday left three people dead.

The incident occurred around 9:45am when six workers were digging around a 25-foot high earthen wall in preparation for the construction of a retaining wall.

The three victims have been confirmed as Aye Min, 34; Zaw Min Oo, 24; and Kyo Gyi, 35.

"Once we got the information, we went there and carried out an evacuation together with firemen and police with the use of a backhoe. We discovered three bodies," said U Kyaw

Zaw, the head of Yangon Region's East District Red Cross Society.

"The deadly tragedy happened because the workers have no experience in this kind of work, and there are few work-site safety measures in place," said U Kyaw Ye Aung, a con-

struction expert.

The local police station is investigating the tragedy.

Work began at the site on 4 January.

The last deadly landslide in Mayangon Township occurred in 1992, according to residents.—Zaw Gyi (Panita)

Hukawng Valley wildlife ...

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world's largest tiger reserve, is blamed for devastating the tigers' habitat. The reserve is home to 35 species of mammals, such as the Indochinese tiger, Indochinese leopard, Indian elephant and bears and monkeys; over 370 species of birds; 46 species of frogs; 37 species of fresh water fish; four species of turtle; many species of butterfly and 13,500 plant species.

The Hukawng Valley Tiger Reserve covers 21,890 square kilometres. The Myanmar government has also designated 6,500 square kilometres of the valley as a protected forest reserve.

Myanmar is home to a rich variety of habitats and ecosystems, including 14 terrestrial eco-regions supporting 233 globally threatened species.

Among those species are 37 that are critically endangered and 65 that are endangered. The country contains large expanses of species-rich and globally threatened ecosystems, such as lowland tropical forests and mangrove ecosystems, which are critically threatened elsewhere in the region.

Myanmar Scouting takes 2nd step for revival



Myanmar scouts pose for photo with dignitaries at National Strategic Planning Workshop. PHOTO: KO LATT (MNA)

A WORKSHOP on scouting in Myanmar was held yesterday, taking a second step in development of Scouting in the country.

In his opening remarks at the National Strategic Planning Workshop in Yangon, S Prassanna Shrivastava, Director-WSB/Asia-Pacific Support Center,

said the revival of Scouting in Myanmar will establish a strong movement and the young people will enjoy the Scouting program availing themselves the opportunity of all round development that will lead them in adulthood as a responsible citizen contributing to the development of local, na-

tional and international societies.

Myanmar Scouts was one of the founding members of the Scout Organization of Asia-Pacific Region in 1956.

Following the workshop, there will be a program development workshop from 31 January to 5 February.—Ko Latt (MNA)



Amitav Ghosh delivers lecture at U Thant House

WORLD-RENOWNED writer Amitav Ghosh delivered the 2016 U Thant Commemorative Lecture at U Thant House today.

The lecture was titled "Climate Change and a Rising Asia". The lecture examined Asia's distinctive role in the history of global warming and the bearing this has on today's politics of climate change.

The commemorative lecture was held to mark the anniversary of the birth of former UN Secretary-General U Thant, who was born on 22 January.

Dr Thant Myint-U, co-chairman of the U Thant House Trust and grandson of the former secretary general, gave introductory remarks on the life and legacy of U Thant.

The event was held at U Thant's former home in the Windermere neighborhood of Yangon. The house has been restored over the past three years and now functions as a museum. The lecture was attended by over 120 people, including NLD Patron U Tin Oo.

Amitav Ghosh is the best-selling author of many works of fiction and non-fiction, including "The Glass Palace", which is partly set in Myanmar.

Dr Thant Myint-U said: "I think it was very fitting that we had a discussion today at the U Thant House on climate change. U Thant was a passionate believer in and early advocate of environmental protection."

"We hope U Thant House will continue to be not just a museum, but also a venue for talks on issues related to U Thant's life and legacy, such as peace, human rights, sustainable development and climate change," Dr Thant Myint-U said.—GNLM

The World Buddhist Peace Conference concludes

The following is the concluding remarks by Sitagu Sayadaw Dr. Ashin Nanissara, Chancellor of Sitagu International Buddhist Academy



Dr Rev Nanissara delivering the closing remarks. PHOTO: KHIN YANDANA

Sitagu Sayadaw

OUR Sitagu International Buddhist Academy World Buddhist Peace Conference is nearing an end.

This great and grand conference was an enormous success thanks to the collective efforts and invaluable contribution of you: keynote speakers, distinguished speakers from different faiths, leading members of the Buddhist Sangha, eminent scholars and panelists, and enthusiastic participants. All have worked towards global peace and security during our three-day conference.

I would particularly like to

thank Venerable Dhammasami, Venerable Sugandho, Venerable Kumara and Venerable Dhammapiya for organizing and moderating the conference.

I would like to thank all of the members of the organizing committee, working committee, and especially to all of the donors and volunteers for their countless hours of service.

To each and every one of you, I express my heartfelt thank to you. Without you none of this would be possible.

Over 200 representatives from 51 countries were represented here and many of you traveled great distances from around the world to attend, some

as far as the Americas and Africa.

Please know that Sitagu International Buddhist Academy along with Sitagu International Buddhist Missionary Association exerted an all-out effort to ensure that this special gathering was a success. I hope we met your needs and exceeded your expectations.

According to the Buddha, we as living beings have experienced countless number of past lives and will face the same occurrence until we reach Nibbana. In this journey of lives, we must have been related to each other because of our Kammic connection. It is this same connection that leads to us to being gathered

here today in this “abode of holy recluses” - Sagaing Hills.

We’ve made great strides forward, 62 messages and papers were presented at this conference, along with one panel discussion. Despite different presentations on different perspectives, all the papers converge on an unique aim to find a common platform and common ground to maintain world peace and security.

We have to work together a lot more in the future. I’m confident that frequent discussions and meetings of this kind will bring us better results in our collaborative efforts towards the prevalence of peace in the world.

Working with this goal in mind, I suggest that the next conference be organized at a place and time convenient to all.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my special thanks to the religious leaders from different faiths that attended the conference: Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islam and Jewish particularly, to the Islamic leaders from Iran for their enthusiastic participation and speech. Even though we have different faiths, I firmly believe that we are walking towards our common goal of peaceful co-existence in ensuring peace and security in the world.

We had two extraordinary events during this conference.

First, I would like to thank H.E. Drukpa Thuksey Rinpoche and the 67 Tibetan Buddhist monks that brought the Buddha’s relics from Ladhak, India for display at Sitagu, and additionally in Sagaing and Mandalay.

Secondly, I would like to

thank Venerable PhraBrommasith, the Buddhist Minister for the Overseas Thailand Missionary Office for granting us to be the first ASEAN country to display the Ancient Gandharan Buddhist Manuscript, which is on loan from the Schøyen Institute in Norway. This manuscript is on display in the front near the Buddha.

Tomorrow, we have arranged for you to travel to Bagan - the cultural heartland of Myanmar. With more than 2,000 temples located in 16 square miles, it is the richest archaeological site in Southeast Asia. Bagan flourished from the 11th-13th century AD and you will see the best of Myanmar’s architecture, including sculptures and mural paintings.

Later in the day you’ll travel to either Mandalay or Yangon. For those going to Yangon, in the evening you will visit the majestic Shwedagon Pagoda, Myanmar’s unique religious symbol. After returning to your respective hotels, you will all have time to prepare for your journey home.

Again, I thank each of you and look forward to us meeting again soon to discuss the actions taken since this meeting for world peace and security.

A compilation of your papers will remain on file at Sitagu Buddhist Academy’s library as a reference for the students.

Personally, I’m very pleased that your ardent participation, along with noble spirit of universal brotherhood, will benefit endeavors for world peace and stability.

Use energy-efficient appliances to save energy and money

Honey Win

ENERGY management is important for making the best use of it - reducing consumption while making sure there is enough to satisfy all the needs of the country, said an official from the Ministry of Industry.

“The onus is on all of us to save energy as everyone uses energy every day for various purposes,” Daw Naing Naing Lin, director of the energy saving department of the ministry.

Myanmar has adopted an energy saving goal to reduce energy consumption by 12 per cent by 2020, 16 per cent by 2025 and 20 per cent by 2030.

The goal is aimed at promoting energy efficiency and energy conservation, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emission and contributing towards environmental conservation.

On energy management, the official said that ways and means for effective utilisation of energy are needed as just turning off the lights is not the best way to save energy.

Myanmar formed its National Energy Management Committee in January 2013 to promote energy efficiency through the implementation of short and long term plans.

An energy saving department was also formed under the Ministry of Industry to boost the implementation process for meeting the target of reducing energy consumption annually in the country.

The department plans to explore effective uses of energy, utilisation of renewable energy resources and alternative electricity usage to reduce energy consumption, power waste and household monthly electric bills.

The department also called for the use of energy-saving electrical appliances that have energy labels

and stats on them and renewable energy resources such as wind, solar, hydro and other sources for sustainable energy development in the country.

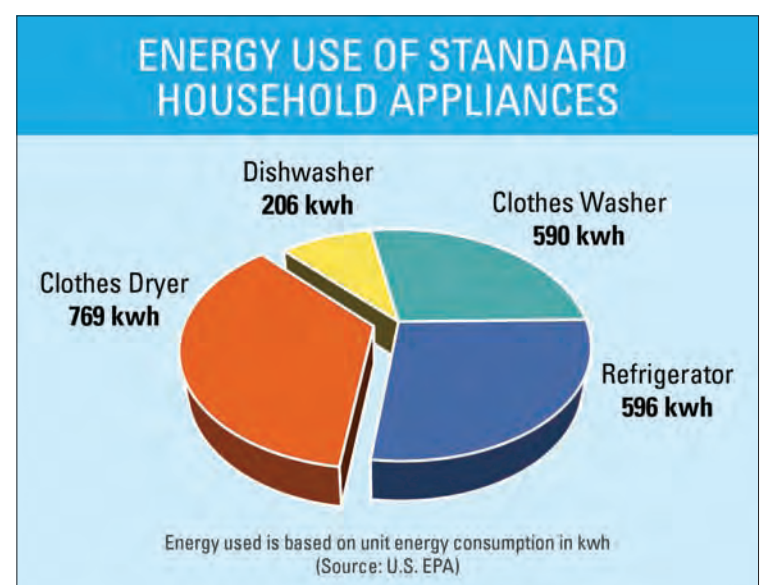
According to the department technology, experts and legal measures are weak in Myanmar to develop energy efficiency.

Four sectors — industrial, residential, commercial and public building — are categorised in the implementation of ensuring the saving of energy, said the department.

As Myanmar lacks energy auditors and energy managers, we need to learn from experts through training courses, said Daw Naing Naing Lin.

Among ASEAN countries, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia are the only three countries that have no rules and regulations on energy efficiency and energy conservation, she added.

She emphasised the impor-



tance of setting energy efficiency ratios and minimum energy performance on electrical appliances in accordance with the law, stressing the need to reduce tax on energy-efficient appliances and to increase tax on appliances that have high energy consumption.

According to the department, the Ministry of Industry is conducting training courses on energy efficiency in Yangon and Mandalay in cooperation with United Nations

Industrial Development Organisation.

Plans are underway to heighten energy efficiency awareness among the public in regions and states.

The director called for a switch from using tungsten light bulbs that have 40W to 60W to 13W CFL bulb or 8W LED bulbs to reduce energy consumption, lower household electricity bills and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

Yangon Zoological Garden celebrates 110th anniversary



Visitors celebrate 110th anniversary of the founding of the Yangon Zoological Garden. PHOTO: KO KO NAY

THE Yangon Zoological Garden, the oldest and second-largest zoo in Myanmar, celebrated its 110th anniversary of its founding on 25 January this year.

To mark the occasion, a festival was held in the compound of the garden, located on 61 acres of land near Kandawgyi Lake.

The three-day event offers a wide range of entertainment programmes, including food stalls, puppet shows, circus and music performances, chinlone demonstrations and elephant dance.

The zoological garden is open from 8am to 6pm daily, and

admission fees are K1,000 per adult, K500 per child and K3,000 per foreign visitor.

With a collection of 46 species of mammals, 69 species of birds and 18 species of reptiles, the zoo draws thousands of visitors annually.

The zoo was founded with the aim of offering students and members of the public to learn about different kinds of animals, as well as plants.

A museum of natural history, an aquarium and an amusement park were also opened for public observation within the compound of the garden.—Ko Ko Nay

Green gram farmers in Nyaung U face water shortage

FARMERS in some villages of Nyaung U Township, Mandalay Region, are badly in need of water to grow green gram, though they expect to receive water from nearby river pump projects, according to local farmers.

“Summer green gram is usually grown during the waxing of Tabaung, the 12th month of Myanmar calendar,” one farmer said. “We hope the authorities supply agricultural

water to our farmlands as soon as possible.”

One local woman said officials pledged to supply water from the Thukaungtal River Pump through eight canals this year, but the farmers have yet to receive the water.

Many farmers from Thukaungtal, Ahtetnyint, Aouknyint and Yansein villages rely on commercial green gram cultivation for their livelihood.—Kyaw Htay

Rice prices rise in Bago

FARMERS in Phyu Township, Bago Region, have set high prices for rice, even though a large volume of new monsoon rice is now entering the market, according to one farmer.

The Thukha-2, Sinthukha and Manawtun rice strains doubled this year, trading at around K60,000 (US\$461.17) per 100 baskets.

Farmers expect to make record earnings from their current rice stocks.

“Farmers will be able make a profit by selling their stocks this year,” said a farmer from the eastern part of Phyu Township. “We charged just K500,000 for 100 baskets last year.”



Bags of rice await sale at a mill. PHOTO: KYEMON

Among the six townships in Taungoo District, Bago Region, Phyu Township is the primary producer of monsoon paddy and winter crops such as beans.

Those farmers in the township cultivated over 150,000 acres of monsoon paddy and over 100,000 acres of winter crops this year.—Phyu Myint Oo

Crime News

Illegal timber seized in Mon State

ILLEGAL teak weighing over one tonne was found by police in two taxi cars near Mokepalin Village in Kyaikhto, Mon State, on Friday.

A combined team involving members of local police and staff from the Forest Department searched the two vehicles near the Sittaung New Bridge road in Mokepalin Village.

Those vehicles were en route from Thagaya, Bago Region, to Kyaikhto. They were driven by Hlwan Moe Aung and Than Zaw Oo. Both drivers are registered residents of Yangon.

The team found 0.6776 tonnes of timber in one vehicle and 0.5968 tonnes in the other vehicle.—Ye Khaung Oo



Hlwan Moe Aung and Than Zaw Oo are seen with the illegal teak timbers found in their vehicles. PHOTO: YE KHAUNG OO

Two men killed in hit-and-run accident

A CAR collided with a motorbike between mile posts No. 145/7 and No. 146/0 on the Yangon-Mandalay highway, leaving two people dead.

The collision which occurred on Saturday at around 3am in Phyu Township, Bago Re-

gion, killing unlicensed motorbike driver Sai Thiha Sithu, 21, and his passenger Wai Yan Phyo, 18, both of whom were from Yayshangyi Village.

Police found the bodies of the two men beside a destroyed motorbike. They assumed that

a reckless car driver fled the scene northbound along the Yangon-Mandalay highway.

Police from the Zeyawaddy Station searching for the careless driver and have filed a lawsuit against him.—Phyu Myint Oo

Car accident kills teenage girl, injures one

A 22-WHEEL truck collided head-on with a motorbike three miles from the northern part of Kywepwe along the Yangon-Mandalay highway in Oaktwin, Bago Region on Thursday evening, killing a girl and seri-

ously injuring a motorbike driver.

The 19-year-old Poe Ei Thein, from Wedaung Village in Pyhu Township, died on the spot while motorbike driver Kyaw Thet Win, 23, from Wegyitaung Village, sustained serious injury

and is receiving care at a hospital.

Truck driver Hsan Myo Oo, 37, from Aungchantha Street in Magway Region, was found guilty of careless driving by the Kyawelpwe Police Station.—Ko Lwin (Swa)

Gun, drugs seized in Dawei

AUTHORITIES investigated several drug cases over the last two days, arresting nearly ten suspects found in possession gun, drugs and related substances.

Acting on a tip-off, police searched a house owned by Thiha Naing in Dawei Township, Taninthayi Region, and discovered a loaded gun, 1,436 yabba pills,

K117,000 (US\$89.93) and four motorbikes from Kay Thi Soe, the wife of the homeowner, together with other three men. Police arrested them on Wednesday.

On the same day, an anti-drug squad also searched a highway bus en route from Yangon to Sittwe and arrested Kyaw Min, who was found in possession of 509,960

yabba pills, K550,000 (\$422.74) and a handset.

On 21 January, local police seized a several yabba pills and over 25 kilos of marijuana from drug dealers in Mingaladon Township, Yangon. All people involved in these cases were charged under the Anti-Drug Law.—Myanmar Police Force

Wreckage found in Thailand unlikely to come from missing Malaysian jet

BANGKOK — A piece of suspected plane wreckage found off the east coast of southern Thailand on Saturday was unlikely to belong to Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 which vanished nearly two years ago, said aviation experts and Thai officials.

A large piece of curved metal washed ashore in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, Tanyapat Pathhikongpan, head of Pak Phanang district, told Reuters. Villagers reported it to authorities for identification, he said.

“Villagers found the wreckage, measuring about 2 metres wide and 3 metres long (6.6 by 9.8 feet),” he said.

The find fuelled speculation in the Thai media that the debris could belong to MH370, which disappeared with 239 people on board during a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing in March 2014. A piece of the plane washed up on the French island of Reunion in July 2015 but no further trace has been found.

Experts said that while powerful currents sweeping the Indian Ocean could deposit debris thousands of kilometres away, wreckage was extremely unlikely to have drifted across the equator

into the northern hemisphere.

The location of the debris in Thailand “would appear to be inconsistent with the drift models that appeared when MH370’s flap-eron was discovered in Reunion last July,” said Greg Waldron, Asia Managing Editor at Flight-global, an industry publication.

“The markings, engineering, and tooling apparent in this debris strongly suggest that it is aerospace related,” said Waldron. “It will need to be carefully examined, however, to determine its exact origin.”



A woman whose relative was aboard Malaysian Airlines flight MH370 holds a placard as she and other family members express their demands to Malaysia Airlines outside its Beijing office on 6 August 2015.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Other possible sources of aerospace debris included the launching of space rockets by India eastwards over the Bay of Bengal, he said.

There has been no official confirmation from Thailand that the wreckage belongs even to a plane, never mind the missing Malaysia jet.

“Personally, I don’t think it’s MH370,” Thai government spokesman Sansern Kaewkamnerd told Reuters.

District head Patthikongpan said the debris “could have been

under the sea for no more than a year, judging from barnacles on it.”

A spokesman for the Joint Agency Coordination Centre, the Canberra-based authority which is overseeing the international search for MH370, told Reuters it was “awaiting results of the official examination of the material.”

The Malaysian transport ministry is in contact with Thai authorities to verify the debris, a ministry spokesman said.

Investigators believe someone may have deliberately switched off MH370’s transponder before diverting it thousands of miles off course. Most of the passengers were Chinese.

Lingering uncertainty surrounding its fate has tormented the families of those on board. Some have said even the discovery of debris would still not solve the mystery.

The fragment found in Thailand “just doesn’t look like aircraft fuselage,” aviation expert Geoffrey Thomas told Reuters from near Perth.

“It just doesn’t make any sense,” he said. “I don’t think there’s any connection with MH370 whatsoever.”—Reuters

Indonesia’s second-biggest party to back President Widodo



Indonesian President Joko Widodo. PHOTO: REUTERS

JAKARTA — The leader of Indonesia’s second-largest political party has said his party will lend support to President Joko Widodo’s government, potentially making it easier to pass legislation by giving it a majority in the house of representatives, news Website Detik reported yesterday.

The move, which falls short of an actual agreement to join the government’s minority ruling coalition, was announced by Golkar leader and powerful tycoon Aburizal Bakrie yesterday.

“Another problem that should be solved is our position related to the President Jokowi,” Bakrie was quoted as telling a party meeting on Saturday. “As a political power, Golkar was not born to be in opposition.

“To side with President Jokowi’s power, we participate with progressive power,” he added, using Widodo’s popular nickname. “Our goal is to participate.”

Golkar, which controls nearly 15 per cent of seats in parliament, has been embroiled in a leadership dispute for months.

Bakrie, patriarch of the family-owned Bakrie Group conglomerate, backed defeated presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto in the presidential election in late 2014. Disgruntled party members mounted a bid to oust him when Golkar, the political vehicle of former authoritarian ruler Suharto, failed to make it into government for the first time ever in the last election.—Reuters

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Chief Executive Officer -

Nakagawa Kiyoshi
gnlmdaily@gmail.com

Chief Editor - Khin Maung Aye
khinmaungaye@hotmail@gmail.com

Deputy Chief Editor - Aye Min Soe
koayeminsoe2006@gmail.com

Chief Reporter
Ye Myint, uyemyint76@gmail.com,

Consultant Editors

Jacob Goldberg
jgold.news@gmail.com

Alec Wilmot
alec.wilmot.gnlm@gmail.com

Editors

Ye Htut Tin
mryehtuttin@gmail.com

Kyaw Thura, kthura.spk@gmail.com,

International news

Tun Tun Naing
tunyunaing@gmail.com

Reporters

Khaing Thanda Lwin
juniorlwin25@gmail.com

Tun Aung Kyaw
tunaungkyaw.31@gmail.com

Translators

Ma Than Htay,
Hay Mar Tin Win
haymarfat@gmail.com

Proof reader

Nwe Nwe Tun

Computer Team

Tun Zaw, Thein Ngwe,
Zaw Zaw Aung,
Ye Naing Soe, Nyi Zaw Moe,
Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win,
Sanda Hnin, Zu Zin Hnin

Circulation & Advertising

San Lwin (+95) (01) 8604532

Ads and subscription enquiries:
adv.gnlm@gmail.com

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Thousands of Malaysians rally against TPP ahead of parliament vote

KUALA LUMPUR — Thousands of Malaysians staged a rally in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday to protest against the Trans-Pacific Partnership pact as the country’s parliament was set to debate and vote on the multilateral agreement next week.

The rally was mainly backed by opposition parties, especially the Pan Islamic Party, or PAS, and Bantah TPPA, a coalition of nearly 60 nongovernmental organisations that are against the TPP accord.

Their contentions range from anticipated increases in medicine prices to erosion of sovereignty and further economic displacement of ethnic Malays.

Protesters marched from various gathering points chanting “Bantah TPP” (oppose the TPP) or “Hancur TPP” (destroy the TPP) before congregating at a field known as Padang Merbok in the city centre.

Online news daily Malaysia-kini quoted the police as putting the number of protesters at between 5,000 and 7,000. Addressing the crowd at Padang Merbok, a PAS leader Nasruddin Hassan said the TPP agreement could impact small businesses, especially those run by ethnic Malays.

“We are worried the TPPA will disrupt the country. It will im-

pact small businesses. Bumiputera businesses will not be able to compete,” online daily, the Malaysian Insider, quoted him as saying.

Bumiputera, literally meaning “prince of soil,” refers mainly to the ethnic Malays who make up some 60 per cent of the country’s population of 29 million and who enjoy special privileges through the state affirmative action policy due to the perception that they are still weak economically compared to the minority ethnic Chinese.

The “bumiputera” issue is particularly sensitive to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak whose party, the United Malays National Organisation, depends heavily on the Malay vote bank.

One of the chief critics of the TPP deal is former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad who is well known for his strident anti-United States rhetoric. He views the TPP as a tool by the United States to colonize small nations like Malaysia.

Mahathir seized on the remarks made last week by International Trade and Industry Minister Mustapa Mohamad that 26 laws would have to be amended over the next two years to comply with TPP requirements, as a sign that Malaysia is “submitting to foreign forces.”

“Malaysia is not exactly like the other members of the TPP. We have many sensitivities because of our racial mix, our economic disparities, our poverty rates and our low levels of incomes. To correct all the economic, political and social problems certain policies and laws must be put in place,” Mahathir recently wrote in his widely followed blog.

“I have no doubt the rubber-stamp parliament will approve the TPP. That in itself is evidence that we are preparing to submit to foreign forces and give up the Merdeka (independence) that our former leaders had fought so hard for,” he added.

The lower house is scheduled for a special sitting Tuesday and Wednesday to debate and vote on the TPP accord. The Senate will deliberate on the matter Thursday.

With the ruling National Front coalition dominating both houses, the agreement is expected to sail through in time for its signing on 4 February in Auckland, New Zealand by the 12 member countries.

The TPP agreement involves Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, United States and Viet Nam, which together account for about a third of global economic output.—Kyodo News

19th century mansion in old Delhi restored for future generations

NEW DELHI — Vijay Goel, an Indian parliamentarian belonging to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, has successfully restored a 200-year-old three-story crumbling structure in old Delhi opposite the historic Red Fort.

Situated just behind the famous Jama Masjid mosque and between two temples, the building is now ready to showcase India's traditional architecture, dance forms, art and culture, paintings, music, and last but not the least Indian cuisines — both street food and complete meals — that this part of Delhi is famous for.

The structure is locally known as a "haveli" — a mansion of a unique residential architectural style having historical and/or architectural significance with different spaces for men and women.

Goel's successful endeavor may perhaps pave the way for the restoration of many such havelis to their former glory of the Mughal Empire (1526-1858), which the newer generations can only hear of today.

"My passion for cultural heritage, restoration of old structures and preparing them for the next generations led me to begin this haveli's restoration six years ago," said Goel, 62.

"Once I had bought it,

around 10 years ago, I thought of restoring it because of its strategic location right in the center of old Delhi's Chandnichowk, in the Dharampura area, overseeing many of the important buildings around."

He added that the structure was in such a bad condition that he initially had no idea how to restore or renew it, and the government provided no assistance.

"Everyone likes to talk about cultural heritage and restoration work, but no one likes doing it," he said.

Describing his approach, he said the restoration began with the removal of tons of debris lying on the rooftop so as to lessen the weight on the structure.

"Restoring the basic frame of the structure was most important for us, and we successfully gave it a face-lift using modern engineering techniques with the help of specialised masons," he said. Finding the right kind of material for carrying out the restoration work was not an easy task for Goel and his son Siddhant.

"After much legwork we procured materials from different cities like Jaipur, Sikandra, Dholpur (all in Rajasthan state), Agra and Moradabad (in Uttar Pradesh state)," said Siddhant.

In the restored haveli, there is an intricate use of stone brack-

ets, marble inlays, multifoliated arched gateways, arches, carved sandstone facades and wooden doorways.

It has 13 rooms for tourists to stay in, two courtyards where old dance forms would be performed, and two restaurants for dining.

"Our plan is to also make it a cultural centre to showcase India's art and culture, dance forms and the like, and also extend a helping hand to those who want to adopt and restore such old structures in the vicinity," adds Goel.

The haveli's design is a coalescence of Mughal, Hindu and European architecture, which includes grills, pillars, windows, doors and designs on the ceiling. Enough care has been taken to give the structure a traditional Indian look.

In particular, the original "lakhori" bricks can be seen on the walls inside one of the restaurants which has been aptly named after the specially crafted red bricks.

In order to attract foreign tourists, the surroundings of the haveli have also been spruced up, with tons of open wiring hanging above the streets being laid underground, and a proper sewerage system replacing the open drains of old.—Kyodo News



A 200-year-old building belonging to India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party is pictured in old Delhi on 19 January, 2016. The structure, a "haveli," which is a historically significant mansion with different spaces for men and women, has recently been restored, and is set to showcase Indian culture, from dance and music to Indian cuisine. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Wife of missing Hong Kong bookseller says reunited with husband in China

HONG KONG — The wife of one of five missing Hong Kong booksellers said she met with her husband in China, according to a statement released by the Hong Kong police yesterday amid growing diplomatic pressure on Chinese authorities to clarify the fate of the men.

Lee Bo, 65, an owner of a publisher and bookshop specialising in books critical of China's Communist Party leaders, vanished in late December amid widespread speculation that Chinese authorities may have abducted him in the financial hub and spirited him across to China for an investigation.

Lee, who has dual Hong Kong and British citizenship, surfaced on Saturday, meeting wife at a guesthouse in mainland China, the Hong Kong police said in a statement issued after midnight yesterday.

His wife, Sophie Choi, told police that she had met with her husband at a guesthouse in China on Saturday and that he was healthy and in good spirits.

The statement cited Lee's wife as saying he was "assisting in an investigation in the capacity of a witness," though she didn't give specifics on the location nor the nature of the investigation, the statement added.

The Hong Kong police said



Members from the pro-democracy Civic Party carry a portrait of Lee Bo (L) and Gui Minhai before they protest outside Chinese Liaison Office in Hong Kong, China on 19 January, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

they would continue to probe the case, and would put in a fresh request with police in China's southern Guangdong Province to arrange a meeting with Lee Bo.

Calls to the mobile phones of Lee and his wife went unanswered.

The disappearances have prompted fears that mainland Chinese authorities may be using shadowy tactics that erode the "one country, two systems" formula under which Hong Kong has been governed since its return to China from British rule in 1997.

One of the missing men, Gui Min-hai, a Swedish passport-holder, appeared on China

state television last weekend, saying he had voluntarily turned himself in to Chinese authorities over a fatal drink-driving offense more than a decade ago.

So far, Chinese authorities have not responded to multiple requests for comment from Reuters, nor have they made any substantial statements explaining Beijing's role in the disappearances nor the fate of the men.

Earlier this month, thousands took to the streets of Hong Kong demanding to know the whereabouts of the men who were all linked to a publisher that was reportedly planning a new book on the private life of Chinese leader Xi Jinping.—Reuters

School execs held, allegedly abet foreign students to work illegally

FUKUOKA — A man running a Japanese language school in Fukuoka Prefecture was arrested Saturday for allegedly letting several foreign students work longer than the maximum hours allowed by law, police said.

Suetsugu Ueno, 57, a top official of the school, Japan International Education Institute in Nogata in the southwestern Japanese prefecture, and two other officials of the school were arrested on suspicion of abetting foreigners' illegal work in violation of the immigration law. Four Vietnamese students aged from 19 to 24 were also arrested.

It is rare for police to pur-

sue criminal charges against language school officials in relation to foreign students' illegally long work hours, police sources said.

Foreign students with a work permit from the Immigration Bureau can work up to 28 hours a week, but the police believe the school's officials found two or more part-time jobs for each of those students so their total work hours exceeded those allowed by law.

The school officials are suspected of trying to cover up the students' illegal work by keeping their weekly work hours at each workplace at 28 hours or shorter.—Kyodo News



Police search Japan International Education Institute, a Japanese language school in Nogata, Fukuoka Prefecture, in southwestern Japan, on 23 January, 2016. A man running the school was arrested the same day for allegedly letting several foreign students work longer than the maximum hours allowed by law. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Confident Trump says could 'shoot somebody' and not lose voters



US Republican presidential candidate and businessman Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally at the South Point Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada on 21 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

PELLA, (Iowa) /ANKENY — US Republican front-runner Donald Trump expressed confidence on Saturday that he could push back attempts by his rivals to knock him off his top perch, saying he could stand on New York's Fifth Avenue "and shoot somebody," and still not lose voters.

Nine days from the first nominating contest in Iowa, however, it was Republican rival Marco Rubio who won the endorsement Saturday from the Des Moines Register, the state's biggest and most influential newspaper. On the Democratic side, the Register picked Hillary Clinton.

The endorsements were big developments for both Rubio and Clinton. Rubio, a Florida senator, has been running third behind Trump and Texas Senator Ted Cruz in Iowa, while Clinton has struggled to fend off a challenge to the Democratic nomination from Bernie Sanders.

Trump and Cruz, Trump's chief obstacle to a victory in Iowa, held competing rallies across the state while in New Hampshire, other candidates battled for votes in that state's 9 February first-in-the-nation primary for the 8 November election.

Trump, the New York billionaire and former reality TV star who has been virtually impervious to attacks from his opponents, pushed the limits of his political rhetoric again in Sioux Centre, Iowa.

"I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose any voters," he said.

Trump has been a difficult target for criticism from his rivals because not all of his supporters are conservatives and

many are most interested in his projection of strength, not where he stands on a particular issue.

The latest Reuters-Ipsos tracking poll had Trump pulling in 40.6 per cent support of Republican voters nationally. A CNN/ORC poll has Trump up in Iowa with 37 per cent to 26 per cent for Cruz, who has led in some other Iowa polls.

Trump did not repeat the "shoot somebody" line at a later rally in Pella, while stressing to the crowd there that he would tone down his rhetoric as president.

Cruz responded to Trump at an event in Ankeny, where he picked up the endorsement of conservative firebrand Glenn Beck, a counterweight of sorts to Trump's endorsement by 2008 vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin.

"Listen, I will let Donald speak for himself. I can say I have no intention of shooting anybody in this campaign," Cruz said.

Beck was more direct.

"There is one thing to have a healthy ego, there is another to give a man who believes those kind of things, who has a habit of anyone who stands in his way of destruction," Beck said. "To give that man the full power and scope of the office of the presidency is something we will grow to regret."

Iowa Republican Senator Chuck Grassley was an introductory speaker at Trump's Pella event. Grassley did not endorse Trump but repeated Trump's signature phrase, saying Republicans have a chance to "make America great again."

During his speech, Trump called Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly biased and said she should not be a moderator at a Fox-host-

ed Republican debate in Des Moines on Thursday. Kelly's questioning at an 6 August debate in Cleveland had prompted Trump to unleash a series of insults at her.

There was no indication that Fox planned to remove her as a moderator.

"Megyn Kelly has no conflict of interest. Donald Trump is just trying to build up the audience for Thursday's debate, for which we thank him," said a Fox News spokesperson.

The potential for more chaos in what has been a turbulent race on both the Republican and Democratic sides emerged on Saturday with the news that former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg might launch an independent run for president.

A source said part of Bloomberg's concern was the problem that Clinton is having in defeating Sanders.

"I hope he runs," Trump told reporters in Pella.

At a First In The Nation forum for candidates in Nashua, New Hampshire, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush was notably withering in his criticism of Trump.

He reminded voters of Trump's dismissal of Senator John McCain as not a hero because he got captured during the Vietnam War. McCain spent 5-1/2 years as a prisoner of war. He was a two-time winner of the New Hampshire primary and the 2012 Republican presidential nominee.

"It is not strong to insult women. It is not a sign of strength when you insult Hispanics. It is not a sign of strength when you say that a POW was a loser because they got caught. John McCain is a hero," Bush said.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Syrian pro-government forces retake key town in Latakia Province: state TV, monitor

BEIRUT — Syrian pro-government forces recaptured the rebel-held town of Rabiya in the western coastal province of Latakia yesterday, Syrian state television and a Britain-based monitoring group said.

The advance, with the backing of Russian air strikes and directed partly by Russian officers, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. It paved the way for a push by pro-government forces right up to the Turkish border, it said.

Moscow intervened in Syria's civil war on the side of President Bashar al-Assad in September.—Reuters

Eight die, five injured in Beijing bungalow fire

BEIJING — Eight people died and five others were injured after a fire broke out in a residential bungalow area in Beijing, according to the local fire squad.

The fire occurred at a bungalow in Sunhe Township in eastern Beijing's Chaoyang District in the early hours yesterday.

Firefighters were alerted around 3:24am Sunday. The flames were put out about one hour later.

The bungalow is a private masonry-concrete structure house built by local villagers.

The fire occurred as Beijing was hit by the coldest temperatures in years. Investigation into the cause of the accident is under way.—Xinhua

Iran considers buying over 100 Boeing planes

TEHRAN — Iran is interested in buying over 100 aircraft from Boeing, deputy transport minister Asghar Fakhrieh Kashan told Reuters at Tehran's first major post-sanctions gathering of global businesspeople.

Tehran has long said it will need to revamp an aging fleet, hit by a shortage of parts because of trade bans imposed by Washington and other Western countries. World powers last week lifted sanctions against the Islamic Republic in return for Tehran complying with a deal to curb its nuclear ambitions.—Reuters

Beijing to spend 16.5bn yuan for cleaner air in 2016

BEIJING — Beijing will earmark 16.5 billion yuan (about 2.57 billion US dollars) to improve air quality in 2016, sources with the Beijing environment authorities said yesterday.

The funds will be used to cut back on coal use and eliminate outmoded vehicles in the capital.

The average density of PM2.5, airborne particles smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter, in Beijing last year declined by 6.2 per cent year on year, statistics with the Beijing Environment Protection Bureau show.

Beijing aims for a year-on-year drop of 5 per cent in its average PM2.5 reading in 2016.

The city government has promised to remove 200,000 high-emission vehicles from the roads and promote the use of clean energy in 400 villages this year.—Xinhua

Jordan kills 12 infiltrators attempting to cross borders from Syria

AMMAN — Jordanian troops on Saturday killed 12 infiltrators in a foiled attempt to cross from Syria into the kingdom, an army statement said.

Another 24 fled back into Syria after they were shot at by troops with the army confiscating 2 million drug capsules that were left behind, the statement said.

The Jordanian border guards acted under rules of engagement to shoot and kill anyone seeking to infiltrate across 370-km (230-mile) border with Syria.

Jordan says it has tightened controls over its northern border with Syria and officials say the army has thwarted many attempts in recent years by jihadists trying to cross from the kingdom into Syria to join a Sunni Islamist-led insurgency against President Bashar al Assad.—Reuters

OPINION

No life is cheap

Kyaw Thura

Informal settlement, or squatting, is a nagging problem in Myanmar that persists with no resolution in sight. In the past five years, the news of evictions of thousands of squatters has hit the headlines, sparking public anger and protest against these assaults on the lives of poor people. This regularly happens around the country.

Rural people have come to see urban areas as easy sources of employment and opportunity. Analysts accuse the government of insufficient spending on rural development, pointing out that migration from rural to urban areas in the pursuit of higher living standards is the result of poverty and insufficient infrastructure.

Without reliable infrastructure, people cannot lead productive lives. People would not so readily leave their native towns if their survival and comfort were guaranteed there. It is, therefore, important to acknowledge that removing the squatters by force is not a solution to the problem.

In addition, squatters are not like moths to the flame. They knowingly occupy vacant lands, risking eviction and, sometimes, imprisonment. These informal settlers seem to have no choice but to hope for the best and prepare for the worst while earning their livings in the slums. The problem of squatters living in rural and urban slums deserves careful consideration and should come under discussion at parliament. The sooner, the better.

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We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email khinmaungaye@hotmail@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.

TODAY CARTOON

What's your hubby addicted to? Is it betel nut or liquor or cigarettes?

No, his addiction is use of facebook.

Hn!!

I'm fed up. He's using fb all time, day & night.

I'll like. Well. Have shared now.

I'll block it. Hnn!

I'll make comment. Come on!

Conflict and Emergencies

Some of the most serious disasters and emergencies are created or further complicated by conflict and the forced movement of large numbers of people. Conflict also imposes the greatest demands on environmental health personnel, equipment, supplies and supporting services, thus calling for the most skilful use of relief resources. The secondary impact of conflict, in terms of the public health problems it creates and the disruption of environmental health services it causes, are of major importance. An emergency is a situation or

San Shwe Aung

In recent years we have been experiencing many disasters around the world. Both natural and man-made disasters have taken front page stories in the world media almost every other day if not daily. Disasters of both categories inevitably leave human suffering in various degrees. Disasters are events that occur when significant numbers of people are exposed to extreme events to which they are vulnerable, with resulting injury and loss of life, often combined with damage to property and livelihoods. Disasters, commonly leading to emergency situations, occur in diverse situations in all parts of the world, in both sparsely populated rural and densely populated urban regions, as well as in situations involving natural and man-made hazards. Disasters are often classified according to their speed of onset (sudden or slow), their cause (natural or man-made), or their scale (major or minor). Various international and national agencies that keep track of disasters employ definitions that involve the minimum number of casualties, the monetary value of property lost, etc. Other definitions are used by countries for legal or diplomatic purposes, e.g. in deciding when to officially declare a region a "disaster area". The terminology used here is less precise so as to cover a broad range of situations. The forces that bring vulnerable people and natural hazards together are often man-made (conflict, economic crisis, overpopulation, etc.). An example of natural and technological hazards combining in surprising ways was seen in Egypt in 1994. Heavy rain near the town of Dronka weakened railway lines. A train carrying fuel was derailed and leaking fuel was ignited by electrical cables, causing an explosion. Finally, burning fuel was carried by flood waters through the town, killing hundreds of people.



Access to safe drinking water is very important to prevent the outbreak of infections diseases. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

state characterized by a clear and marked reduction in the abilities of people to sustain their normal living conditions, with resulting damage or risks to health, life and livelihoods. Disasters commonly cause emergency situations, both directly and indirectly. Evacuation or other necessary steps taken to avoid or flee from a disaster, for example, can cause disruption of normal life on a scale calling for emergency action. Sudden, large-scale movements of people within and between countries often produce emergency conditions. Dramatic loss of livelihoods and increased spending needs due to drought or flooding may place people in a very vulnerable situation. A cholera epidemic may overwhelm the capacity of a city's under-resourced health service, creating an urgent need for support. In such emergency situations, local coping mechanisms are overwhelmed and so collective, specialized and often external action is required. During an emergency, it is common to see primary effects of the disaster followed by secondary effects. For instance, the primary effect of a mudslide might be that many people are injured and need urgent medical attention. A secondary ef-

fect might be that blocked sewers and broken water mains lead to an outbreak of water- and sanitation related disease some weeks later, or that the loss of livelihoods through the destruction of vegetable gardens and workshops leads to reduced food intake and a nutrition emergency some months later. Human needs for non-material things, such as security and cultural identity can also be affected, and the psychological and social impacts of a disaster may be felt many years after the event. Emergency situations are often described in public health terms, with the crude mortality rate (CMR) being widely accepted as a global measure of their severity. A CMR which is significantly higher than the rate in the affected population before the disaster, or which is above 1 death per 10 000 population per day indicates an emergency situation (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1992; Sphere Project, 2000). CMRs in the emergency phase following various types of disaster may be many times the background rate for the region or the affected population. Many more deaths may occur during the post-disaster emergency phase than as a direct result of the disaster itself.

The term complex emergencies is used to describe situations of disrupted livelihoods and threats to life produced by warfare, civil disturbance and large-scale movements of people, in which any emergency response has to be conducted in a difficult political and security environment. A combination of complex disasters and natural hazards (e.g. military and political problems combined with severe winter weather, coastal storms and flooding, drought and a cholera epidemic) was particularly devastating in the 1990s in such countries as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Peru and Somalia.

The effects of disasters on health facilities, services and infrastructure

One way in which disasters may cause, or worsen, emergency situations is through the damage they do to environmental health facilities and services. Flooding, power failures, broken pipes and blocked roads can all disrupt water, waste and food-handling services. Hospitals could be destroyed and treatment & medication services which are essential will be heavily disrupted or totally out of

service. Roads can be cut and bridges washed away making access to the disaster affected area not accessible by external help and search & rescue team, red cross professionals and volunteers, medical teams, food, medical supplies & drinking water delivery, security forces to help the survivors. There could be a lot of confusions in terms of availability of correct data & information of the

Lack of power may also affect proper functioning of health facilities

affected number of population, list of damaged facilities and infrastructure. Power cuts related to disasters may disrupt water treatment and supply plants, thereby increasing the risk of water-borne diseases. Lack of power may also affect proper functioning of health facilities, including preservation of the cold chain. Deaths associated with natural disasters are overwhelmingly caused by blunt trauma, crush-related injuries or drowning. The sudden presence of large num-

bers of dead bodies in the disaster-affected area can fuel fears of outbreaks. When death is directly due to the natural disaster, human remains do not pose a risk for outbreaks; the source of infection is more likely to be the survivors than those killed by the natural disaster. Dead bodies pose health risks in a situations requiring specific precautions, such as deaths from cholera or haemorrhagic fevers. The mass management of dead bodies is often based on the false belief that they represent an epidemic hazard if not buried or burned immediately.

- Burial is preferable to cremation in mass casualty situations.
- Every effort should be made to identify the bodies.
- Mass burial should be avoided if at all possible.
- Families should have the opportunity, and access to materials, to conduct culturally appropriate funerals and burials according to social custom.
- Ensure use and correct disposal of gloves
- Use body bags if available
- Wash hands with soap after handling dead bodies and before eating
- Disinfect vehicles and equipment
- Dead bodies do not need disinfection before disposal (except in case of cholera, shigellosis, or haemorrhagic fever)
- The bottom of any grave must be at least 1.5 m above the water table, with a 0.7 m unsaturated zone.

Prevention of communicable diseases following natural disasters

The following priority measures are critical to reduce the impact of communicable diseases after natural disasters:

- Ensuring uninterrupted provision of safe drinking-water is the most important preventive measure to be implemented following a natural disaster. Chlorine is widely available, inexpensive, easily used and effective against nearly all waterborne pathogens.
- Settlement planning must provide for adequate access for water and sanitation needs and meet the minimum space requirements per person, in accordance with international guidelines
- Access to primary health care is critical to prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of a wide range of diseases, as well as providing an entry point for secondary and tertiary care. The immediate impact of communicable diseases can be mitigated with the following interventions:
 - Ensure early diagnosis and

treatment of diarrhoeal diseases and ARI, particularly in those aged <5 years.

- Ensure early diagnosis and treatment for malaria in endemic areas (within 24 hours of onset of fever, using artemisinin-based combination therapy ACT for falciparum malaria).
- Ensure availability of drugs included in the interagency emergency health kit, e.g.
 - oral rehydration salts for management of diarrhoeal diseases, antibiotics for ARI.
- Distribute health education messages, including:
 - encouraging good hygienic practices (eg. 4 clean hygiene awareness);
 - promoting safe food preparation techniques;
 - ensuring boiling or chlorination of drinking water;
 - encouraging early treatment seeking behavior in case of fever;
 - encouraging use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets as a personal protection measure in malaria-endemic areas.
- Vector control interventions adapted to the local context and disease epidemiology Surveillance/early warning system plays a crucial role in rapid detection of cases of epidemic-prone diseases is essential to ensure rapid control. A surveillance/early warning system should be quickly established to detect outbreaks and monitor priority endemic diseases. Priority diseases to be included in the surveillance system should be based on a systematic communicable disease risk assessment. A comprehensive communicable disease risk assessment by the country health authorities and WHO can identify and prioritize these threats. It is important to ensure sampling and transport materials for investigation, and appropriate stockpiles are readily available for rapid response to outbreaks, e.g. cholera kits, in areas where cholera is considered a risk. Immunization must follow after the surveillance results are established. Mass measles immunization together with vitamin A supplementation are immediate health priorities following natural disasters in areas with inadequate coverage levels. Where baseline coverage rates among those aged <15 years are below 90%, mass measles immunization should be implemented as soon as possible. The priority age groups are 6 months to 5 years, and up to 15 years if resources allow. Typhoid vaccination in conjunction with other preventive measures may be useful to control typhoid outbreaks, depending on local circumstances. The cost of the cholera vaccine, and the logistic difficulties involved with the administration, have prohibited its widespread use. Although helpful in specific circumstances, it should not be viewed as a replacement for the provision of adequate water and sanitation. Prevention of ma-

laria and dengue is very important in post disaster situations. Specific preventive interventions for malaria must be based on an informed assessment of the local situation, including on the prevalent parasite species and the main vectors. An increase in mosquito numbers may be delayed following flooding, allowing time for implementation of preventive measures such as indoor residual spraying of insecticides, or the re-treatment/distribution of insecticide-treated nets preferably long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLIN) in areas where their use is well-known and accepted. Early detection of a possible malaria outbreak can be enhanced by monitoring weekly case numbers must be part of the surveillance/early warning system. Treatment with artemisinin-based combination (ACT) therapy should be provided free of charge to the user in disaster-affected areas with falciparum malaria. For dengue, the main preventive efforts should be directed towards vector control. Social mobilization and health education of the community should emphasize elimination of vector breeding sites as much as possible, specifically by: – continuous covering of all stored water containers; – removal or destruction of solid debris where water can collect (bottles, tyres, tins, cups, coconut shells etc.). Although disaster-related deaths are overwhelmingly caused by the initial traumatic impact of the event, disaster preparedness plans should consider the health needs of the surviving disaster-affected populations. The health impacts associated with the sudden crowding together of large numbers of survivors, often with inadequate access to safe water and sanitation facilities, will require planning for both therapeutic and preventive interventions, such as rehydration materials, antibiotics and measles vaccination materials. Disaster response teams should be aware of and have access to the latest updated guidelines for communicable disease prevention and control, such as the WHO field manual on Communicable disease control in emergencies and the Sphere project's Humanitarian charter and minimum standards in disaster response. The risk of transmission of endemic communicable diseases, such as ARI and diarrhoeal diseases, is increased in displaced populations due to associated crowding, inadequate water and sanitation and poor access to health care. Improved detection and response to communicable diseases is important in order to monitor the incidence of diseases, to document their impact and to help to better quantify the risk of outbreaks following natural disasters.

Reference:

1. Communicable disease control in emergencies-WHO
2. The Sphere project's Humanitarian charter and minimum standards in disaster response-2011

Iran's leader says never trusted the West, seeks closer ties with China



Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif (R) shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Tehran, Iran on 23 January 2016.

PHOTO: REUTERS

DUBAI — Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Saturday called for closer economic and security ties with China, saying Iran had never trusted the West, as the two countries agreed to increase bilateral trade more than 10-fold to \$600 billion in the next decade.

Iran's most powerful figure told Chinese President Xi Jin-

ping during a visit Iran wanted to expand ties with "more independent countries", adding the United States was "not honest" in the fight against terrorism in the region.

"Iranians never trusted the West... That's why Tehran seeks cooperation with more independent countries (like China)," Khamenei said.

"Iran is the most reliable country in the region for energy since its energy policies will never be affected by foreigners," Khamenei was quoted by his official website as saying at a meeting with Xi.

Xi is the second leader of a UN Security Council member to visit Tehran since the nuclear deal Iran struck with world powers last year. Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Tehran in November.

Iran emerged from years of economic isolation this month when the United Nations' nuclear watchdog ruled it had curbed its nuclear programme, clearing the way for the lifting of UN, US, and European Union sanctions.

"Iran and China have agreed to increase trade to \$600 billion in the next 10 years," President Hassan Rouhani said at a news conference with Xi broadcast live on state television.

"Iran and China have agreed on forming strategic relations (as) reflected in a 25-year comprehensive document," he said.

Iran and China signed 17 accords on Saturday, including on cooperation in nuclear energy

and a revival of the ancient Silk Road trade route, known in China as One Belt, One Road.

"China is still heavily dependent on Iran for its energy imports and Russia needs Iran in terms of its new security architecture vision for the Middle East," said Ellie Geranmayeh, policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. "Iran plays quite an integral role for both China and Russia's interests within the region, much more than it does for the Europeans," Geranmayeh said.

Khamenei said Iran would never forget Chinese cooperations during the sanctions.

"The China-Iran friendship ... has stood the test of the vicissitudes of the international landscape," Xi was quoted as saying by China's Xinhua news agency.

The Chinese state-backed *Global Times* newspaper said in an editorial on Saturday that China hoped to improve ties with Iran as part of its sweeping plan to rebuild trade links with Europe and Asia and carve out new markets for its goods.

"China is of course considering its self interest in strengthening cooperation with Iran, espe-

cially at a time when China is in the midst of expending efforts to push forward the One Belt, One Road initiative, Iran is an important fulcrum," the paper said.

While China seeks closer ties with Iran, earlier this week it signaled its support for Yemen's government, which is fighting an Iran-allied militia, during Xi's visit to Saudi Arabia, Iran's rival for influence in the region.

Iran has called on China to join the fight against the Islamic State militant group and play a more active role in the region.

Tehran is widely credited with convincing Russia to start its military intervention in Syria and join the fight against Islamic State.

"Although China and Russia backed UN sanctions against Iran on its nuclear programme, they were also heavily pushing for special waivers to continue trading with Iran," Geranmayeh said.

"Iran had a relationship both politically and economically with China and Russia for the last ten years in ways that it hasn't had with Europe. So it's quite natural to see it opening up first to these countries."—*Reuters*

Strikes on east Syrian town kill 63, including children

BEIRUT — At least 63 people, including nine children, have died in air strikes believed to be carried out by Russian warplanes on a town in eastern Syria, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said yesterday.

The raids on Khasham near the city of Deir al-Zor on Saturday were among a series of strikes that also hit two other towns in the past 48 hours, killing scores of people. Russian jets have been bombing around Deir al-Zor as Syrian pro-government forces clash with Islamic State fighters, who control most of the province. The group has besieged remaining government-held areas of the city since last March and last week launched new attacks.

Warplanes have also hit Islamic State's de facto capital of Raqqa over the past two days, killing at least 44 people in the city, the Observatory said, raising its toll from Saturday after many of the wounded died of their injuries.—*Reuters*

Haiti protesters stoke political crisis while powers seek consensus

PORT-AU-PRINCE

— Stone-throwing protesters stoked Haiti's political crisis on Saturday, a day after they forced the Caribbean nation to call off a presidential election and despite calls for consensus from global powers.

Haiti was due to choose a replacement for President Michel Martelly in a runoff vote yesterday, but the two-man race was postponed indefinitely after opposition candidate Jude Celestin refused to participate on alleged fraud that spread anti-government protests and violence nationally.

Martelly says the fraud claims are unfounded but critics believe he unfairly favoured his chosen successor, banana exporter Jovenel Moise, and some are demanding that Haiti, the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, start its \$100 million election again from scratch.

Striking a defiant note, Moise criticised the election council for postponing a vote he was confident of winning, and said he was ready to stand whenever a new date was set. The United Nations joined the United States and other major powers that had supported the election in denouncing the violence and calling for a negotiated solution that leads to a new vote.

About a thousand protesters snaked through capital Port-au-Prince's downtown, a district still largely in ruins after a devastating



National Police officers protect themselves from rocks thrown by protesters during a demonstration against the electoral process in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on 22 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

2010 earthquake. Some flung rocks and burnt tires, others beat a man alleged to be a thief.

Soldiers from Haiti's UN peacekeeping mission patrolled the streets in white armoured vehicles at sundown.

Martelly is due to leave office in two weeks and Haiti may need an interim body to see the country through to the next election, but he and different opposition leaders will struggle to agree on the contours of such an administration.

Haiti has been unable to build a stable democracy since the overthrow of the 1957-1986 dictatorship of the Duvalier family and ensuing military coups and election fraud.

Drawn from the capital's poorest neighbourhoods, the protesters deeply oppose Martelly's business-friendly reign, which they say was artificially propped-up by foreign powers.

They believe that with him out the way, there will be a better

chance of electing a president who will champion the poor.

"We demand the departure of Martelly before 7 February," said Volcy Assad, a protest leader and an aide of Moise Jean-Charles, the third-place candidate in the October round who believes he was cheated of victory.

"We want a transitional government to set up an investigation commission that will determine the sincerity of the elections," Assad said.—*Reuters*

Oil rips 10 per cent higher as bears race to cash in on crash



A climber ascends a silo covered in ice in Cedar Falls, Iowa, United States, on 17 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEW YORK — Oil prices surged 10 per cent on Friday, one of the biggest daily rallies ever, as bearish traders who had taken out record short positions scrambled to close them, betting the market's long rout may finally be over.

The onset of a massive snowstorm on the US East Coast sent US heating oil HOC1 up more than 10 per cent, helping fuel a 15 per cent gain in crude prices over two days that has reversed nearly half of the relentless, fund-driven selloff that had pushed crude below \$30 a barrel for the first time in 12 years.

"I think panic took over common sense and now we're starting to get a grip on reality," said Phil Flynn, analyst at Price Futures Group in Chicago.

A large driver of the rebound in prices over the last two days has been short covering, buying back barrels sold previously at a higher price, as investors take advantage of the lowest prices since 2003. Short positions in the US oil futures and options markets had doubled in three months to record highs of more than 200 million barrels in the week to 12 January.

Data late on Friday showed

that some bearish traders had begun taking profits even before the rebound, with short positions falling in the week to 19 January.

"Given the volatility we've seen in the oil price, even intraday, swings of 3 to 4 per cent, if you are going to see a rebound, this is the kind of rebound you'd expect," CMC Markets analyst Jasper Lawler said.

Brent LCOc1 rose \$2.93, or 10 per cent, to settle at \$32.18 a barrel. It was the biggest daily rise since a fierce short-covering rally in late August, when prices had just tested post-financial crisis lows

around \$42 a barrel.

At that time, Brent gained more than 25 per cent in three days, the biggest three-day rally since the run-up to the first Gulf War in 1990. Some suggested there could be more gains next week as more shorts rush for the exit.

"Markets seldom repeat themselves with precision, but we see potential for a variation on that theme now," said Tim Evans, energy futures specialist at Citi Futures.

US crude CLc1 rose \$2.66 or 9 per cent to settle at \$32.19 per barrel. The latest rally is somewhat less impressive on an absolute basis than on a percentage basis. Brent has gained \$4 a barrel in two days, a more common occurrence when oil was over \$100 a barrel in the years prior to 2014.

Freezing conditions and snowstorms have gripped parts of Europe and the United States, threatening to cripple a broad swath of the US Northeast, the world's largest heating oil market, with about two feet (61 cm) of snow.

In the longer run, however, the cold snap may not be quite the boon oil bulls were hoping for.

Most in the industry maintained that the overwhelming bearishness of investors and oversupply woes persist.

"The big, big themes globally have not changed, but these are short-term positive developments," said Richard Hastings, macro strategist at Seaport Global Securities.—Reuters

Toshiba to sell part of its chip operations

TOKYO — Japan's Toshiba Corp plans to sell part of its chip business as it aims to recover from a \$1.3 billion accounting scandal, three people familiar with the matter told Reuters on Saturday.

The electronics conglomerate has started accepting bids, with early interest shown by the Development Bank of Japan Inc, said the sources, who declined to be identified because they are not authorised to talk to the media.

The state-owned bank has already invested in Seiko Holdings Corp's semiconductor operations.

The sale would exclude Toshiba's mainstay NAND flash memory operations, according to two people with direct knowledge of the matter and one person familiar with the discussions.

On the block are businesses that handle system LSI and discrete chips, which are widely used in cars, home appliances and industrial machinery. The loss-making operations posted sales of 330 billion yen (\$2.78 billion) in the year ended March 2015. A Toshiba spokesman told Reuters the company hasn't made a decision yet on the sale of its chip operations, while a spokeswoman at the Development Bank of Japan declined to comment. Following the accounting scandal, Toshiba has been focusing on nuclear and other energy operations, as well as its storage business, which centres on NAND flash memory chips used in smart phones. The Tokyo-based company, which is selling off non-core chip operations, plans to invest heavily in its flash memory production capacity in Japan to better compete with South Korea's Samsung Electronics Co Ltd.—Reuters

As China cuts green car subsidies, automakers' electric dreams differ

BEIJING — China will maintain plans to gradually phase out subsidies for green energy vehicles until they are fully eliminated in 2021 and allow the market to determine the direction of green car development, Finance Minister Lou Jiwei said on Saturday.

But auto executives speaking alongside Lou at an industry conference in Beijing laid out differing visions as to which technology the market will favor:

Tesla-style pure electrics or plug-in hybrid cars currently favored by Volkswagen AG and others.

Green car sales more than quadrupled in 2015 with the market finally taking off after years of subsidies and preferential government policies, leading China to surpass the United States to become the world's largest market for electric cars.

The government sees new energy vehicles, a catch-all for

pure electric, hybrid and fuel cell cars, as a means for China's auto industry to catch up to foreign competition while also combating pollution that chokes many urban areas.

Lou reiterated plans to cut subsidies by 20 per cent over the next two years and 40 per cent by 2019-2020, eliminating them altogether after 2021 so that the industry does not grow dependent on them.

Instead, Lou said China should pursue market-based policies. He praised California's emissions policy, under which Tesla can generate environmental credits from its emissions-free vehicles and then sell the credits to other companies, for playing a critical role in the success of the Silicon Valley carmaker.

This was an example to learn from, he said. China has yet to institute a similar system.—Reuters

Verizon eyes brands, content for go90 sponsored video

NEW YORK — Verizon Communications Inc (VZ.N) is in talks with advertisers and content makers to offer sponsored video, such as sports games and music concerts, to users of its mobile-video service go90 at some time in the future, CFO Fran Shammo told Reuters. Sponsored data is like a toll-free line to consume data on mobile phones from video streaming to app activity. Wireless providers bring in sponsors such as brands and advertisers to pay for data usage so that it does not count

against a consumer's data cap.

Most Americans own a mobile phone and a saturated US wireless market has Verizon and its rivals turning to new businesses. Verizon is making a big bet on mobile video aiming to unlock revenue from advertising and data usage. "What we're trying to get after is for sponsors to come in and pay for the sponsorship to put exclusive content on go90," Shammo said. "You'll see certainly a lot of activity on go90 and sponsorships and advertisers."

He did not provide details on discussions with potential sponsors and content makers or a timeframe on when sponsored content will begin appearing on go90.

Verizon launched its go90 mobile video app in October and has announced content partners such as the National Football League, the National Basketball Association, AwesomenessTV, the Food Network and Vice Media. Since acquiring AOL Inc and its advertising technology for \$4.4 billion in June, Verizon executives

have said that its ad-supported go90 model will include a combination of highly targeted commercials, content sponsorships, exclusive content and pay-per-view live concerts and sporting events.

Sponsored content is the "basis of the go90 model," Shammo said. When asked if content companies such as the National Football League could partner with Verizon's go90 to bring advertisers and brands to sponsor content, Shammo said, "we're open to anybody." —Reuters



A man is silhouetted against a video screen with Vodafone and Verizon logos as he poses with a Samsung Galaxy S3 in Bosnian town of Zenica in 2013. PHOTO: REUTERS

Massive blizzard paralyzes New York and Washington, 19 died

NEW YORK — Millions of residents, business owners and workers began digging out yesterday from a massive blizzard that brought Washington, New York and other northeastern US cities to a standstill, killing at least 19 people in several states.

The storm was the second-biggest in New York City history, with 26.8 inches (68 cm) by midnight Saturday, just shy of the record 26.9 inches set in 2006, the National Weather Service said.

Thirteen people were killed in weather-related car crashes in Arkansas, North Carolina, Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee and Virginia on Saturday. One person died in Maryland and three in New York City while shoveling snow. Two died of hypothermia in Virginia, officials said.

On the New Jersey shore, a region hard-hit in 2012 by Superstorm Sandy, the storm drove flooding high tides.

After dumping about two feet of snow on the Washington area, the storm unexpectedly strengthened as it spun northward and slammed into the New York metropolitan area on Saturday, home to about 20 million people.

Winds gusting to more than 40 mph (64 kph) sculpted drifts many feet high, burying cars.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo declared a state of emergency, as did 10 other governors. A ban imposed on all travel on New York City area roads and on Long Island, except

for emergency vehicles, was set to end at 7am on Sunday. Bridges and tunnels into the city were also set to reopen.

Subways running above ground and trains operated by the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North halted service on Saturday and were to be evaluated for service restoration at 6 am.

By early Sunday the storm had all but moved off the coastline, with remnants trailing over parts of Long Island and Cape Cod. Much of the northeast was expected to see a mix of sun and clouds yesterday with temperatures just above freezing.

Given the massive storm's impact, it was too soon to tell how much Wall Street's reopening on Monday would be affected.

Broadway theaters cancelled Saturday matinee and evening performances at the urging of the mayor, and a Bruce Springsteen concert set for Sunday was called off.

As an otherworldly quiet descended on the usually bustling city of 8.5 million, the nation's most populous, tourists and residents took to city streets, venturing into the expanses of parks, some on skis. Others built snowmen and had snowball fights.

Authorities in New York and New Jersey halted public transportation and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority took the rare step of suspending operations through Sunday.

About 3,500 flights were



A heavy earth moving machine is used to clear snow on Capitol Hill during a winter storm in Washington on 23 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

canceled on Sunday, with more than 600 already canceled for Monday, said FlightAware.com, the aviation data and tracking website.

United Airlines said it would not operate at Washington-area airports yesterday, and would gradually resume service on Monday. The airline plans to start "very limited operations" yesterday afternoon at its Newark, New Jersey, hub.

The brunt of the blizzard reached the New York City area after battering Washington, where snow piled up outside the White House and famous monuments were frosted with snow.

The record high of 28 inches of snow in Washington was set in 1922 and the biggest recent snowfall was 17.8 inches in 2010.

High winds battered the entire East Coast, from North Carolina to New York, reaching 70

mph in Wallops Island, Virginia, late on Friday, whipping up the tides and causing coastal flooding, said National Weather Service meteorologist Greg Gallina.

The snow also engulfed the Mid-Atlantic cities of Baltimore and Philadelphia while about 150,000 customers in North Carolina and 90,000 homes in New Jersey lost electricity. Accumulations in parts of Virginia and West Virginia reached 40 inches.

Tides higher than those caused by Superstorm Sandy three years ago pushed water onto roads along the Jersey Shore and Delaware coast and set records in Cape May, New Jersey, and Lewes, Delaware, said NWS meteorologist Patrick O'Hara.

Some evacuations were reported along the New Jersey shore. Wildwood, a town of more than 5,000 people about 30 miles (48 km) southwest of Atlantic City on a barrier island, saw

some of the worst flooding.

Emergency workers in inflatable boats rescued more than 100 people from homes, said Wildwood Fire Chief Christopher D'Amico.

Water levels reached chest-height in parts of Wildwood and refrigerators and soda machines floated down the main street.

Further north, barrier islands near Atlantic City were also experiencing significant tidal flooding, said Linda Gilmore, the county's public information officer.

The high tides were set to return yesterday morning.

The storm developed along the Gulf Coast, dropping snow over Arkansas, Tennessee and Kentucky on Friday. On the coast, warm, moist air from the Atlantic Ocean collided with cold air to form the massive winter system, meteorologists said.—Reuters

India's ruling BJP re-elects Amit Shah as president for second time

NEW DELHI — India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) yesterday re-elected Amit Shah as its president for a second term.

Shah was elected unopposed.

"Amit Shah has been unanimously elected as the president of party and will hold the post for the next three years," Indian home minister and senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh told media. "Only one candidate has filed nomination paper and that is Amit Shah."

Shah is considered to be a

close aide of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has served as home minister of western state of Gujarat when Modi was its chief minister.

He took charge as BJP president in July 2014, midway from Singh who joined Modi's cabinet as India's home minister.

Following the announcement celebrations broke out at the BJP headquarters with supporters beating drums and playing the tune of conchshells near the dice.

BJP leaders credit Shah with

the party's spectacular performance in several states and assuming power in Maharashtra, Haryana, Jharkhand and Indian-controlled Kashmir.

However, BJP suffered badly in New Delhi and recently held Bihar elections.

BJP will soon plunge into its election campaign for polls in five states later this year.

Senior BJP veterans LK Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi were conspicuously missing during Shah's nomination.—Xinhua

Snow shuts airport on South Korean resort island Jeju

SEOUL — Flights at the airport on the South Korean holiday island of Jeju were halted yesterday for a second day due to the biggest snowfall in three decades and high winds, forcing hundreds of cancellations, officials said.

The popular vacation spot off the south of the Korean peninsula, recorded its biggest snowfall in 32 years at 11 cm (4.33 inches) as of Sunday, with more than 1 metre of snow in mountain areas.

Many flights were either cancelled or delayed before Jeju airport was shut at 5:45

pm (0845 GMT) on Saturday, when all flights were cancelled until 9am on Monday, the transportation ministry said.

On Saturday, 296 flights were cancelled and 122 delayed.

All 517 flights scheduled for Sunday as well as around 60 flights scheduled for Monday morning were cancelled, Korea Airports Corp said.

Roughly 6,000 passengers were stranded at the airport on Saturday, the ministry said, but the number had fallen to 1,500 early yesterday morning.—Reuters

Congratulation Kanbawza Bank Ltd

On World Finance 100 (2015)

We congratulate Kanbawza Bank Ltd on its being incorporated into the list of 'World Finance 100' at the World Economic Forum held at Davos, Switzerland from 21st to 23rd January, 2016. This listing is done by London-based World Finance in England, which selects every year the best and the most successful companies of 100 from among the leading business firms around the world.



The Central Executive
Committee/Executive Committee
Union of Myanmar Federation of Chamber
of Commerce and Industry

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U Win Aung-Dr Moe Mya Mya
Chairman
Dagon Group of Companies

Hollywood producers name 'The Big Short' year's best film

LOS ANGELES — Hollywood producers named "The Big Short" the best film of 2015 at a glitzy awards show on Saturday, which was dominated by talk of racial bias in voting for the Oscars to be awarded next month.

The Producers Guild of America, which is among the leading industry organisations representing makers of movies and TV shows, also named its best animated film which went to "Inside Out," favourite documentary, won by "Amy," about the late singer Amy Winehouse, and honoured "Game

of Thrones" as top television drama. In past years, the PGA's best film winners have often gone on to win the best picture Oscar, Hollywood's big prize.

The Academy Awards will be bestowed on 28 February to producers, directors, actors and actresses by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

But Oscar talk has been overshadowed by a cloud of racial bias since nominees announced earlier this month did not include many actors and directors of colour. The lack of diversity for a second straight year resurrected the social media hashtag #OscarsSoWhite, and elicited plans for a boycott among

A-list actors such as Will Smith and director Spike Lee.

"The Big Short" producer Dede Gardner acknowledged the issue during her acceptance speech for the evening's top award.

"Yes, we have a real problem, we do. We need to tell stories that reflect our world, our country," Gardner said. She was not alone in acknowledging that filmmakers needed to directly confront the troubling issue. Shonda Rhimes, creator of television drama "Grey's Anatomy," also addressed the need for greater diversity, while Producers Guild of America president Gary Lucchesi said the industry must "make a conscious decision to challenge the status quo." —Reuters



Director Adam McKay (R) accepts the award for Best Comedy for "The Big Short" along with actor Christian Bale (2nd from L) and other cast and crew at the 21st Annual Critics' Choice Awards in Santa Monica, California on 17 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Iggy Azalea wants bejewelled white horses at her wedding?

LONDON — Rapper Iggy Azalea is reportedly planning two wedding ceremonies, and wants "bejewelled white horses" at each one.

The 25-year-old "Fancy" rapper is currently planning her nuptials to Nick Young and won't be sparing any expense when it comes to the festivities, and is even considering tying the knot twice, reported Female First.

"She is insisting on not one, but two weddings. She wants one in Australia, where she's from, and another in Nick's hometown of LA. She wants 20 bejewelled white horses and a USD 100,000 firework display at both," a source said.

"She's insisting on over 250 guests for each ceremony and is also pushing for two honeymoons — one to Fiji and the second to Hawaii. They're looking at a bill close to USD 500,000." —PTI

Feels great to see my mother happy with my fame: Varun

MUMBAI — He has been part of seven films in two years, and actor Varun Sharma says he feels great to watch his mother happy with all the fame he has received.

Varun, who was last seen in "Dilwale", is happy that he has achieved the dream of becoming an actor, for which his family supported him.

"If I am with my family and if a fan or an admirer comes and gets a picture clicked, the smile on my mother's face is beautiful. I know she has struggled for it, she had the strength of sending her son in an industry which doesn't give you certainty of revenue or persistence of work," Varun told PTI. "Now, when she smiles with all the fame I've got, it feels great that you can make your parents happy by achieving your dreams which they believed in too," he said.

Varun made his debut in "Fukrey" in 2013 as the character of 'Chucha' and received

rave reviews. The actor credits the Shah Rukh Khan-Kajol starrer "Diwale" for making him a household name. "With 'Dilwale' the audience expansion has been on another level. From 'chucha' it has become 'Varun Sharma' so the transition has been really great. When I went home in Punjab the response I got was amazing. When I meet people they now recite me my own dialogues."

The actor has appeared mostly in comedy films like Kapil Sharma's "Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon" and Sonam Kapoor starrer "Dolly Ki Doli". Varun now wants to try other genres.

"I really want to shift. Even though I enjoy doing comedy, I never thought I could do it. Even in theatre I used to do very intense roles. I've never done comedy while I was doing theatre...But I will never leave the comedy genre because it has given me an identity, love and affection." —PTI

Oscar diversity campaign may take time but Chris Rock will still host

LOS ANGELES — The Oscars have launched a landmark campaign to diversify the ranks of Academy Award voters who decide which actors, movies and filmmakers earn recognition, but Hollywood's highest honors may remain a predominantly white affair for some time to come.

Amid an outcry against a field of Oscar-nominated performers lacking a single person of color for a second straight year, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced a sweeping affirmative

action program on Friday, pledging to double female and minority membership by 2020.

But host Chris Rock will not step away from the high-profile job, the show's producer Reginald Hudlin said on Saturday, telling Entertainment Tonight at an NAACP Image Awards luncheon the comedian has scrapped his material.

"As things got a little provocative and exciting, he said, 'I'm throwing out the show I wrote and writing a new show,'" Hudlin told ET.

"You should expect [#Os-

carsSoWhite jokes]," Hudlin said, adding "And, yes, the Academy is ready for him to do that." The largely white, male and older makeup of the 6,000-plus film industry professionals who belong to the academy has long been cited as a barrier to racial and gender equality at the Oscars. "It's unprecedented for the academy to make this kind of drastic overhaul," said Tom O'Neil, editor of the awards-tracking website Gold Derby. "It's a very dramatic announcement and a very welcome breakthrough." —Reuters



Iggy Azalea. PHOTO: REUTERS

Heavy snow hits western, central Japan, and even Okinawa feels chilly

TOKYO — A cold air mass gripped the Japanese archipelago, bringing heavy snow and gusty winds to a wide area of western and central Japan on Sunday, forcing airlines to cancel many flights and West Japan Railway Co to reduce the speed of bullet trains on sections of the Sanyo Shinkansen lines.

The blanket of snow reached as far as south-western Japanese cities such as Nagasaki and Kagoshima and the temperature in Naha, the prefectural capital of Okinawa, dropped to 8.9C on Sunday morning, far below the average low for January.

Amami Island, a subtropical island located some 380 kilometres southwest of Kagoshima City, also observed snowfall for the first time in 115 years, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

On Kyushu island, Nagasaki saw 15 centimetres of snow, Kagoshima 10cm and Saga 6cm.

In the Chugoku region in western Japan where the snowfall was

heaviest, the town of Kitahiroshima in Hiroshima Prefecture recorded 142cm of snow, while Suzu, Ishikawa Prefecture on the Sea of Japan coast in central Japan, saw 59cm of snow.

Shortly after midnight Saturday, 11 cars and other vehicles were involved in pileups on a road in Fukuoka Prefecture in freezing condition amid snowfall, injuring two men, police said.

Around 6am, six teenagers who climbed the 847.5-metre Mt. Kusembu straddling Fukuoka and Saga prefectures called for help, saying they were unable to descend due to snow.

Local firefighters found them near the peak of the mountain and rescued them about 90 minutes later.

The weather agency warned of continued stormy weather in western and central Japan through Monday and further traffic disruption.

Up to 1 metre of snowfall is expected through Monday morning in the Hokuriku region,



Central areas of Fukuoka, western Japan, are covered in snow on 24 January 2016, as heavy snow fell over a wide area of western and central Japan. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

70cm in Chugoku, and according to the weather agency.—Kyodo News

Endangered snow leopards spotted at Mt Qomolangma

LHASA — Wild snow leopards were caught on camera in a Tibetan county at the north face of Mt. Qomolangma, suggesting that the endangered species also lives at the mountain, researchers said on Friday.

Lhapa Tsering, an official with the Administration Bureau of the Qomolangma reserve, said that the Mt. Qomolangma Snow Leopard Conservation Centre and the Wildlife Institute of Beijing Forestry University surveyed the population density of wild snow leopards in Dingri and Gyirong counties on the north face of the mountain from October to November of 2015.

They found clear images of snow leopards from seven infrared cameras they had placed in Dingri County last year at an altitude of 4,000 metres, Lhapa Tsering said, adding that the number of the animals recorded has not been calculated so far.

A total of 120 infrared cameras were placed in the wild during last year's

survey. The remaining 113 cameras are expected to be retrieved by the end of this month, he said.

Gao Yufang, executive director of the Mt. Qomolangma Snow Leopard Conservation Center, said scientists will research the snow leopard population, their prey and habitat after retrieving the cameras in order to come up with more specific protection plans for the animals.

Snow leopards, one of China's Class A protected animals, are usually found in the Himalayas in central and south Asia at altitudes between 3,000 and 5,500 metres.

The animal has rarely been seen in the wild over the last century due to loss of habitat and poaching. An estimated 3,500 to 7,000 snow leopards live in the wild worldwide, with about 2,500 to 3,500 in China. The 8,844-metre-high Mt. Qomolangma, located on the border of China and Nepal, is the world's tallest mountain.—Xinhua

8th Johannesburg International Mozart Festival kicks off

JOHANNESBURG — Ballet dancers perform during the Viennese New Year Concert at Linder Auditorium in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 23 January 2016. The 8th annual Johannesburg International Mozart Festival (JIMF) kicked off here Saturday, starting with two popular Viennese New Year Concerts which are given by South African conductor Richard Cock and Johannesburg Festival Orchestra and Joburg Ballet on the first two days. Running from 23 January to 7 February 2016 and with the theme of "Alla Turca (in the Turkish style)" this year, the JIMF this year are scheduled to bring 19 concerts, workshop and master classes.—Xinhua



PHOTO: XINHUA

mitv Myanmar International

(25-1-2016 07:00 am~ 26-1-2016 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:27	Am	The Rising Glory Of Myanmar Arts
07:55	Am	Wedding Planner "U Cho Gyi"
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Living in Off-Season
08:39	Am	Family of Toys
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Amazing May Phoo Han
09:37	Am	Herbal Medicine By Thurein (Aloe Vera)
10:03	Am	News

10:26	Am	Those Who Never Give Up (Ep-1) Aung Thamar
		Di Gold Shop
10:51	Am	Products of Myanmar - Bomboo Hat

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm) - Sunday Repeat (03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am)
(03:00 Pm ~ 07:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:27	Pm	Food Trip (Ep-10) (Part -1)
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Taste Of Myanmar (Papaya Salad)
08:45	Pm	Aye Aye Soe: Myanma Pioneer Female Bodybuilder

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am) - Sunday Repeat (03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am)
(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) - Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

(For Detailed Schedule – www.myanmaritv.com/schedule)

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(25-1-2016, Monday)

6:00 pm	8:40 pm
• Alinka Wut Yee Music Troupe	• Musical Programme
6:25 pm	8:55 pm
• Pyi Thu Ni Ti	• Teleplay
6:45 pm	9:35 pm
• Fashion Show	• Sat Kal Ma (Magic)
7:05 pm	10:00 pm
• TV Drama Series	• ASEAN Cultural Fair-2014
7:55 pm	10:20 pm
• TV Drama Series	• Myanmar Video

From 25.1.2016 (Monday) 06:00 Pm
To 26.1.2016 (Tuesday) 06:00 Pm

This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.

Leicester back on top, Liverpool win thriller at Norwich

LONDON — Leicester City went top with a win over Stoke City, title rivals Manchester City lost ground and Liverpool edged a nine-goal epic at Norwich City on Saturday as a weird and wonderful Premier League season churned on.

As 20-times English champions Manchester United were losing at home to Southampton, pre-season relegation favourites Leicester moved three points clear of Arsenal with 15 games remaining. Danny Drinkwater, Jamie Vardy and Leonardo Ulloa struck to secure a 3-0 win for Claudio Ranieri's unlikely lads.

Leicester's day then got better as Manchester City were held 2-2 in a lively late kickoff at West Ham United — Sergio Aguero earning his side a point after City twice trailed. What epitomised the appeal of the world's richest football league, however, was Liverpool's 5-4 win at relegation-threatened Norwich City.

Liverpool took the lead at Carrow Road through Roberto Firmino but with 35 minutes remaining trailed 3-1 as Dieumerci Mbokani, debutant Steven Nismith and a Wes Hoolahan penalty put the hosts in control.

Jordan Henderson, Firmino's second and James Milner then swung the game Liverpool's way only for Norwich defender Sebastian Bassong to score a stoppage-time leveller.

There was still time though

for Adam Lallana to decide a rollercoaster of a match, sparking crazy Liverpool celebrations in which manager Juergen Klopp broke his glasses.

Eight players were on the scoresheet in only the fourth Premier League match to finish 5-4.

"It was spectacular, wild, good football, and both teams had good moments," Klopp told reporters. Leicester have 47 points, City and Arsenal, who play Chelsea on Sunday, 44 with fourth-placed Tottenham Hotspur in the hunt after a 3-1 victory at Crystal Palace moved put them on 42.

Harry Kane cancelled out Jan Vertonghen's own goal but he was upstaged by England team mate Dele Alli, whose 25-yard volley after flicking the ball up and over his own head to put Tottenham ahead is a candidate for goal of the season. Nacer Chadli scored Tottenham's third. "It was a fantastic goal," Tottenham boss Mauricio Pochettino, whose side have 42 points, said. "I think it will be shown around the world on the TV."

Manchester United stayed in fifth place, one point above West Ham, but it was a surprisingly dull day at Old Trafford where United were booed off after losing 1-0 to

Southampton. Saints' Charlie Austin scored in the 87th-minute on his debut, heaping more pressure on United manager Louis van Gaal. Lacklustre United managed only one shot on target and have now gone eight hours 26 minutes without scoring in the opening half of a game at Old Trafford. "You can't say the fans

are not right," Van Gaal told Sky Sports. "They are disappointed and have a right to boo."

Ranieri praised his Leicester side's passion and heart as they gained a timely fillip ahead of fixtures against Liverpool and title rivals Arsenal and Manchester City. —Reuters

Leicester's Danny Simpson in action with Stoke's Jonathan Walters during Barclays Premier League at King Power Stadium on 23 January.
PHOTO: REUTERS

Swift Serena into Australian Open quarter-finals

MELBOURNE — World number one Serena Williams set up a rematch of last year's Australian Open final against Maria Sharapova after she comfortably accounted for Russian Margarita Gasparyan 6-2, 6-1 in the fourth round on Sunday.

The victory for Williams, who is seeking a seventh Australian Open title and 22nd grand slam trophy overall, could not have been in sharper contrast to that of Sharapova, who preceded her onto Rod Laver Arena.

Sharapova was made to work hard for her 7-5, 7-5 victory over 12th seeded Swiss Belinda Bencic before eventually sealing a place in the eagerly anticipated quarter-final in two hours, five minutes.

Williams then swept aside Sharapova's Russian compatriot in 55 minutes with little fuss.

Her only hiccup came in the first game of the match when the 21-year-old raced out to a 0-40 lead and then achieved the second break of the powerful American's serve this tournament to take a surprising 1-0 lead.

Unfortunately for Gasparyan, that was as good as it got against the 34-year-old, who rattled off the next four games on her way to sealing the set in 30 minutes and then breezed through the second in 25 minutes. The victory was the third successive straight forward win for the American, who has not

been pushed in Melbourne since her first round clash with Italy's Camila Giorgi.

She has spent a total of just two hours, 39 minutes on court since beating Giorgi and sounded a coded warning to Sharapova ahead of their clash on Tuesday.

"I just feel like I'm really confident in my game right now, not against her or against any other opponent," Williams said. "I feel if I can just continue to play well, then it could be good."

While her progress through the tournament has been relatively comfortable, Williams said she had another massively motivating factor that could help her up her game on Tuesday. Losing.

Williams has not lost to Sharapova since 2004, a run of 17 successive victories, and holds an 18-2 career record overall against the five-time grand slam winner.

"I think the person who's winning could definitely feel the pressure because there is a lot of expectations," Williams added. "The person

who is losing (could think) 'well, I have lost X amount in a row; I don't have anything to lose'.

"But in this situation, I don't have anything to lose because I'm just here. Every tournament for me is just a bonus at this point in my career." —Reuters



Serena Williams.
PHOTO: REUTERS