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ODA MAKES THINGS A-OK

ODA Loan Secured for Hanthawaddy Airport Development

Aye Min Soe

A framework agreement for allocating Official Development Aid (ODA) loans has been signed. The signing is a key step to completing the development of the Hanthawaddy International Airport Project.

“After holding 10 meetings between Department of Civil Aviation and JGC-Yongnam-Changi Airport International Consortium, both sides reached the framework agreement for the ODA loans,” said U Nyan Tun Aung, Union Minister for Transport and Rail Transportation, in his address at the signing ceremony held in Yangon yesterday.

“Meanwhile, we are carrying feasibility studies for drawing ODA loans from the Private Sector Investment Fund of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency,” he added.

The framework agreement between Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) and the newly formed HIA Myanmar Company Ltd, was signed by U Min Lwin, Director-General of DCA, and Mr Yasumasa Isetani, Managing Director of HIA Myanmar Co Ltd. Also present were the union minister, Japanese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Tateshi Higuchi



A scale model of Hanthawaddy International Airport project. PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY DIRECTORATE OF CIVIL AVIATION

and Singaporean Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Robert Chua.

Hanthawaddy International Airport project is estimated to be operational as of 2022, four years later than its target, due to the process of garnering an Official Development Assistance loan

from investors, according to the Department of Civil Aviation.

The ODA loan from the Japanese government will help fund the project.

Currently, Yangon International Airport - which has a capacity to handle 2.7 million

travelers per year - will bear the burden of a growing number of foreign travelers until Hanthawaddy International Airport's construction.

The number of tourist arrivals has increased year by year, reaching 4.4 million in 2014,

increased from 1.06 million in 2012, 2.04 million in 2013. Myanmar expects to see the number grow to over 6 million by 2017.

Hanthawaddy International Airport will be the largest of three commercial airports in the Yangon Region, it will accommodate the growing number of foreigner travelers to Myanmar.

Located in the Bago region about 48 miles north east of Yangon, roughly a 90min to Yangon, the international airport is projected to handle up to 12 million passengers a year. The site of the future airport is going to be built on 9,000 acres of land which once house a Japanese army airport during World War II.



Employees of a gold jewellery shop in downtown Yangon are waiting for the customers. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

Price of Myanmar gold rises during last week of January

RISE in the prices of gold in the world market has caused the prices of Myanmar pure gold to rise to roughly around 7,000 kyats per 0.576 ounces, according to those at the Myanmar Gold Entrepreneurs Association (MGEA).

The value of one ounce of world market gold weighed in at approximately \$1,100 on 22 January, increasing in value by \$120 on January 27. As a result, the price of a measurement unit of 0.576 ounces of Myanmar pure gold has risen to 780,000 kyats.

“The rise in the price of Myanmar gold follows a consecutive increase in the price of gold in the

world market. It's difficult to predict whether the price will continue to rise or not. Trade though is good,” said U Zaw Aung, member of the MGEA and owner of Teite diamond and gold shop.

The price of Myanmar pure gold is dependent on rises and falls in the value of world market gold and the American dollar. The value of gold in the world market has increased again because of the stability of the dollar, subsequently causing the price of Myanmar pure gold to rise once again.

“Normally, a rise in the value of world market gold sees

a fall in the value of the dollar within Myanmar. However, the value of Myanmar pure gold is of course going to rise when the value of the dollar is not as high as it should be,” said U Maw Maw, general manager of the Aung Thamardi gold shop.

The value of 0.576 ounces of Myanmar pure gold in regard to the market price on January 27 was 780,000 kyats; 0.576 ounces of 15 carat gold was valued at 730,000 kyats, while one ounce of world gold cost \$1,120, with the dollar being valued at 1,295 kyats.—Myitmakha News Agency

President unveils Kangyidaung power station in Pathein



President U Thein Sein unveils the 230-KV Kangyidaung Power Station in Pathein. PHOTO: MNA

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein attended the opening of the 230-KV Kangyidaung power station in Pathein, Ayeyawady Region yesterday.

The Union Minister for Electric Power, U Khin Maung Soe told crowd that by maximizing productivity, with the aid of electricity, it would help develop the areas' socioeconomic status. The

delta region consumed 14 megawatts of electricity generated from the Myanaung gas-fueled power station between the years 1975 and 1984, the union minister said. He added that consumption has now reached over 90 megawatts.

To meet the region's rising power demand, the government spent 12.853 million euros (K18 billion) plus K5.350 million on

constructing the Kangyidaung power station.

More power stations are under construction to ensure that the region can benefit from electrification. Currently, Myanmar generates 5,235 megawatts, an increase from 3,413 megawatts in 2015. According to the MoEP 3.5 million households, 34 per cent of the population, now have around

the clock access to electricity.

The MoPE is making efforts to electrify the entirety of Myanmar by 2030-31, in line with the National Electrification Plan, drawn up with the assistance of the World Bank.

The new power station will provide electricity to 40,700 households in 192 villages.

President U Thein Sein and

his entourage also inspected measures taken against the erosion of the river banks in Pathein via helicopters. Flooding and erosion destroy hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland and crops in the area. Local authorities are now engaged in constructing retaining walls to save potential areas from inundation and loss of crops.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Myanmar National Airlines to fly to Bangkok next month



MYANMAR National Airlines introduced its third international flight service yesterday, announcing that the carrier's maiden flight to Bangkok will be launched on 20 February.

The airlines extends its international network with Bangkok as the third destination in 2016 after Singapore and

Hong Kong in 2015, said CEO Captain Than Tun at a ceremony to introduce Yangon-Bangkok service in the MNA office in Yangon.

According to the CEO, Myanmar National Airlines will operate 14 flights a week to Bangkok with a new Boeing 737-800.—*Kay Khine*

Mandalay to host Asian Sepak Takraw Championship in Feb

THE Asian Sepak Takraw and Chinlon Championship will be held in Mandalay's Amarapura Township from 16 to 19 February.

Asian Sepak Takraw Chairman, cum Myanmar's Sepak Takraw and Chinlon Federation Chairman U Soe Naing said that the planning of the event was aimed to alert the world to the fact that peace and stability exists in

Myanmar even during its transitional period. "The championship will entice younger generations into playing sepak takraw," he added. The competition will draw 184 athletes from Japan, South Korea, Pakistan, Iran, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Singapore, Brunei, Laos, the Philippines and Myanmar. Admission is free to all events.—*Nyi Min*

Study on Myanmar's rubber industry to bring more assistance from Japanese govt

THE results of a Japanese study on Myanmar's rubber industry will be submitted to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) of Japan, it is known from director of the ministry Mr. Tadashi Mogi.

The results of a survey conducted during 2013-14 on Myanmar's rubber plantations include interviews with rubber plantation owners and the quality of Myanmar rubber and production; the situation of domestic and international rubber markets, together with experiences of lectures given by rubber experts from METI, all of which will be included in the report that is to be submitted.

"The three year long study that Japan carried out will be submitted to the ministry. The Japanese government will then make decisions on what further assistance is required and provide it accordingly," said Mr. Tadashi Mogi. It is known that Japan will continue to provide assistance to the industry to in-

crease the capacity of rubber trade between Myanmar – Japan and help Myanmar rubber to meet acceptance of an international standard. Consideration has been made for continued assistance from the Japanese government as there is a good potential for Myanmar natural rubber to be bought on the world market, and due to a desire for an increase in the commerce of the material between Japan and Myanmar. "Myanmar rubber has good potential. For example, six Japanese companies are currently purchasing it from the country. If [Myanmar rubber] can meet the quality [desired], then Myanmar might be able to meet the purchasing demand from Japan," added Mr. Mogi.

According to results of the study, there are currently only two rubber factories which can meet a high standard of rubber production and only eight rubber experts nationwide, while there is currently

no body formed to carry out educational trainings on rubber production, or assist with Myanmar rubber being recognized at an international standard. Furthermore, the study has highlighted a need for the Myanmar government to be involved in bringing about of relevant rubber enterprise laws and by-laws in regard to electricity and road transportation. "Projects will be drawn up for continual assistance from Japanese enterprises - it doesn't end here. There is a need to for a complete overhaul [of the Myanmar rubber industry], starting from low level staff in order for Myanmar rubber to reach an international standard. The public and the government also need to work as one. The increase in production [of rubber] can also only work if we can also reduce poverty," explained Mr. Nakatani, an expert from HIDA, a organization under the METI.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Myanmar forced labourers rescued in Phuket

THIRTY-TWO Myanmar workers have been rescued from a dormitory and a boat anchored at Phuket port, Thailand, on 28 January.

A Myawaddy anti-human trafficking squad rescued the workers in collaboration with the Myanmar Association in Thailand (MAT), the Labour Rights

Promotion Network (LPN) and the Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok.

On 23 January, a woman contacted the squad as well as and the police and informed that her nephew had been sold and forced to work on a fishing boat in Phuket. MAT. Thai police raided the boat on 28 January, rescuing

four Myanmar workers on board. Further investigations led them to the rescue of 28 other Myanmar citizens locked in the dormitory. The Myanmar anti-human trafficking unit gave a press conference on the rescue at its office yesterday responding to queries raised by journalists.—*Min Min Lat (Mandalay University)*

President inspects improving of embankments in delta area

Improving of the embankments and river systems in Ayeyawady Region to finish before Monsoon



Plans are underway in Wathala and Maydon Villages in Zalun Township, Ayeyawady Region to prevent erosion.



Local authorities and residents volunteered to reinforce parts of the Nyaungdon embankment as erosion destroyed parts of them during the last monsoon.



If the embankments collapse, more than 3 million acres of farmland will be flooded, causing loss of life and property.



Local people and authorities are taking preventive measures laying sand bags and making bamboo lattice to manage river system and to prevent erosion in Ayeyawady Region.

Chrysanthemum thrives in Amarapura

FLOWER growers earn a daily income by growing Chrysanthemum in a village in Amarapura Township in Mandalay Region.

They grow Chrysanthemum on a commercial scale with irrigation water and tube wells.

"I have been growing flowers for more than 10 years. Our region grows a wide variety of flowers," said Farmer U Win Zaw.

The farmers have to buy seedlings from PyinOoLwin. In the past they bought a seedling

at a price of about K6. But now the price sits around K12.

"Investment in flower growing is huge. To grow one acre of Chrysanthemum costs over K6 million, including the values of seedlings, workers' expenses and insecticides. There are about 100,000 plants on acres of farmland," said U Win Zaw.

He went on to say that farmers can generate K15 million per acre. Almost all farmers in the area now grow paddy and Chrysanthemum.—*Than Zaw Min (IPRD)*



Chrysanthemum plantation. PHOTO: THAN ZAW MIN (IPRD)

Educative talks "Menace of the Narcotic Drugs" held in Bago Region



Officials delivering educative pamphlets to the attendees. PHOTO: SHWE WIN (017)

THE Myanmar Anti-Narcotics Association (MANA) of Bago Region (East) and of Taungoo District jointly observed Educative talks on "Menace of the Narcotic Drugs" with a ceremony at No. (7) Basic Education High School on Thursday.

At the ceremony, Regional Minister U Tin Soe for the Ministry of Agriculture and live-

stock of Bago Region made an opening speech. U Kyaw Myint, secretary of Bago Region Anti-Narcotics Association, explained the establishment of Myanmar Anti-Narcotics Association (MANA).

At the talk, author Maung Cheint, who won the National Literary Award discussed "Don't shoot the breeze, Youth",

author Aung Kyi Nyunt (University) "Look up Knowledge in the Literature", author Ma Wutyi Khin (Bago) "Let us try to become a good person".

And Minister U Tin Soe gave gifts to the authors in honour of the event and delivered educative pamphlets of Anti-Narcotic Drugs to the attendees.—*Shwe Win (017)*

Crime News

Yabba and Guns seized in Taninthayi

LOCAL police seized Yabba pills (a synthetic-amphetamine based narcotic) and guns from a house near Bawdikan village, Taninthayi township, on Thursday. Acting on a tip-off, members of the police searched the house of one U Naung Pyu and

found 10.2 kilogram of Yabba, 1633 grams of opium powder, a fibre gun, which are made in Thailand, 12 bullets.

Local police are pursuing U Naung Pyu who managed to escape from the scene.—*Myint Oo (Myeik)*



Fiber gun and bullets. PHOTO: MYINT OO (MYEIK)

Truck Overturns Near Thaton

A 22 wheel truck overturned on route to Thaton from Hpa-An on Saturday near milepost 13/8. Soe Win, 47, lost control of the truck that was later found to have been overloaded with sugar.

Police later filed charges against Soe Win after discovering that taxes for 209 of the 609 bags of sugar were unpaid.—*Tun Tun Htway (Hpa-An)*



Man wanted for attempted murder

A MAN is wanted by police for an attempted murder in Thabeikkyin village, Dala township, Yangon, on Thursday. Acting on a tip-off, members of the

police found Aye Naing Tun, 28, with serious injuries. He is undergoing medical treatment at Yangon General Hospital. Aye Naing Tun said that he and his

friend Ye Moe argued and went into a quarrel. Ye Moe then stabbed him. Dala police are still investigating the case.—*Ye Ye (Dala)*

Mandalay ILBC anniversary held

THE Mandalay ILBC international school held its anniversary in the National Theater on 66th road, Aung Myaytharsan township, Manda-

lay on Thursday.

The students were amused by traditional dance, modern dance, short stories and educational programs.

The ceremony was attended by the school committee, teachers and parents of the students.—*Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)*

Chinese police break silence on missing Hong Kong bookseller



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. PHOTO: REUTERS

HONG KONG — Chinese police have made their first statement on the fate of one of five missing Hong Kong booksellers, believed by many to have been abducted by mainland agents, acknowledging widespread concerns but offering no fresh information.

Lee Bo, 65, a dual British and Chinese national and owner of a publisher and bookstore specialising in books critical of China's

Communist Party leaders, disappeared from Hong Kong on 30 December.

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.

In a rare but brief letter to

Hong Kong media on Friday, police in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong offered no fresh information and did not address their Hong Kong counterparts' requests for a meeting with Lee, government radio station RTHK reported.

The letter repeated two points earlier released by the Hong Kong police — that Lee had sent a letter stating he went to the mainland on his own accord and that mainland authorities had confirmed to Hong Kong that he was "understood" to be on the mainland, RTHK reported.

"If there is news, we will notify (Hong Kong) in a timely fashion," it said.

The British government is still waiting for responses to its diplomatic requests for information and access to Lee.

Lee's wife visited him in a mainland guesthouse last weekend. She issued a statement saying he was healthy and in good spirits, and that he was a witness in an on-going investigation.

The four other booksellers are believed to be still in mainland detention, including Swedish na-

tional Gui Min-hai, who disappeared from the Thai resort town of Pattaya last October.

He surfaced on Chinese state television this month, stating that he had voluntarily turned himself into Chinese authorities last month over a fatal drink driving case more than a decade ago.

As international diplomatic concern intensifies, the European Union on Friday delivered some of its strong criticism yet of China's human rights record.

In a statement on its website, the 28-nation bloc's China delegation called recent televised confessions by detained Chinese and European citizens "unacceptable". It described the disappearance of the booksellers a "worrying trend".

China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying later described the EU's criticism as irresponsible and "not constructive".

Britain handed Hong Kong back to China under agreements that its broad freedoms, way of life and vaunted legal system would remain unchanged for 50 years.—Reuters

Draft Thai constitution paves way for 'outsider' prime minister

BANGKOK — Thailand's new constitution could allow a civilian to become the country's prime minister, according to a draft charter released Friday by country's junta-appointed Constitution Draft Committee.

The document states that candidates for the post of prime minister would be selected by each political party, but did not necessarily need to be either members of parliament or political party members. Civil servants and individuals who had been ousted from their positions would not be eligible, however.

Parliament's 200 Senate seats will be chosen by a new indirect election system, which allows people to freely choose qualified individuals from 20 groups and nominate them as candidates from district level to national level, the draft charter states.

The draft body also wrote that the House of Representatives would consist of 500 seats — 350 single-member districts and 150 elected from party lists.

Regarding independent constitutional organisations, the new draft charter provides them with more power, as it clearly states what each body may do. For example, the National Anti-Corruption Commission could directly send reports to the office of the Attorney General if it found evidence of criminal wrongdoing. However, critics have widely said the draft charter would lead the National Council for Peace and Order — Thailand's ruling junta — to extend its rule and to secure supreme power, as there was no mention in the draft of Article 44, which provides supreme power to NCPO head, and which has been criticised by human rights organisations.

However, CDC President Meechai Ruchuphan implied that the constitution would not allow anyone to do that and declared the draft to be a "reformed charter."

"This constitution will seriously concentrate on preventing and suppressing corruption and will not allow wrongdoers to use politics as a place to purify themselves," said Meechai.

Since a coup d'etat in 2014, Thailand has been controlled by a junta government led by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha under an interim charter.

The first draft charter written by the junta-appointed CDC was rejected in September last year by the military-appointed National Reform Council amid claims that the government wanted to extend its term.

A source from the CDC told Kyodo News that if the draft charter is approved in a referendum in July this year, the country's next general election could be held in November 2017.—Kyodo News

India, Pakistan agree to extend rail communication by three years

NEW DELHI — New Delhi and Islamabad have agreed to extend their agreement on rail communication by three years, Indian officials said Friday.

"The agreement between the governments of India and Pakistan relating to rail communication has been extended

by mutual consent through diplomatic channels for the period of three years from 19 January, 2016 to 18 January, 2019," a statement issued by India's External Affairs ministry said.

The agreement between the two countries over rail communication in respect of

goods and passenger traffic was signed in 1976.

At present, passenger and goods traffic operates on Delhi-Lahore route via Attari-Wagah, and passenger traffic between Jodhpur and Karachi via Munabao-Khokhrapar.—Xinhua

PICTURE OF THE DAY



The first miner is lifted from a collapsed mine in Pingyi, east China's Shandong Province, on 29 January. Two workers were lifted from a collapsed mine in Shandong on Friday night after spending 36 days trapped underground. PHOTO: XINHUA

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Malaysia's 1MDB not contacted by foreign legal authorities



Traffic passes a 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) billboard at the Tun Razak Exchange development in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia's state-owned fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) said yesterday it has not been contacted by foreign legal authorities on any matters relating to the company.

1MDB's comments came in response to a statement by Switzerland's chief prosecutor, who said he had formally asked Malaysia for help with his probe into possible

violations of Swiss law by 1MDB, saying suspected misappropriations amounted to about \$4 billion.

1MDB said it "remains committed to fully cooperating with any lawful authority and investigation, subject to advice from the relevant domestic lawful authorities, and in accordance with international protocols governing such matters."—Reuters

India initiates steps to tackle possible outbreak of Zika virus

NEW DELHI — Day after WHO warned Zika virus was 'spreading explosively' and described the level of alarm 'extremely high', Indian government Friday said it was closely monitoring the spread of Zika virus in several countries and have initiated steps to counter its possible outbreak in the country.

"We are closely monitoring the situation and all necessary steps have been initiated to ensure that India is well prepared in case of any eventuality," Indian Health and Family Welfare Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda said.

Nadda Friday held a meeting with his ministry officials and experts from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in wake of the spread of Zika virus in several countries.

Officials at health ministry said they have been directed to constitute a technical group that would monitor the situation arising out of the spread of Zika virus in the countries of its prevalence.

The group has been entrusted with the job to suggest precautionary steps that should be taken in India in case of any eventuality.

The virus was first detected in 1947 in monkeys in Africa. Though there have been small, short-lived outbreaks since then from Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific. Last year it has spread on a massive scale in the Americas and its transmission was detected in Brazil.

"The situation today is dramatically different. Last year, the virus was detected in the Americas, where it is now spreading explosively. As of today, cases have been reported in 23 countries and territories in the region," Margaret Chan, director general of the WHO said on Thursday. "The level of alarm is extremely high."

According to WHO, the virus is known to circulate in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific.

Zika virus is transmitted to people through the bite of an infected mosquito from the Aedes

genus, mainly Aedes aegypti in tropical regions. Health officials say this is the same mosquito that transmits dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever.

People with Zika virus disease usually have a mild fever, skin rash (exanthema) and conjunctivitis. These symptoms normally last for two to seven days. No specific treatment or vaccine is currently available to treat the Zika virus.

Nadda emphasised that there should be an increased focus on prevention to control the spread of the Aedes mosquito, responsible for transmitting Zika virus. Aedes mosquito is said to breed in clean water.

"Community awareness plays an instrumental role in this regard. There is a need for greater awareness amongst community," he said.

Zika virus has been linked to thousands of babies being born with underdeveloped brains.

WHO says the best form of prevention against Zika virus is protection against mosquito bites.—Xinhua

Local governments increasing disaster drills for foreign residents

NAGOYA — Local governments in Japan are stepping up programmes to help prepare foreigners, whether residents or travellers, for natural disasters and other emergencies.

Foreigners, like elderly people, are designated as those in need of assistance in emergencies because of their language barriers and unfamiliarity with geography. Emergency preparedness for them is more important than ever because as many as 2.12 million foreigners resided in Japan at the end of 2014, while the number of tourists from abroad topped 19 million last year.

The city office in Beppu, a hot springs resort in Oita Prefecture that was visited by around 340,000 foreigners in 2014, prepared a tsunami hazard map in English in 2013 because tsunami waves as high as 4.78 metres are forecast to reach there if a massive earthquake occurs along the Nankai Trough in the Pacific south of the western part of Japan's main island of Honshu.

The map includes evacuation tips such as "Escape when you feel a big quake near the coast" or "Escape to a high, rather than distant place." In 2015, furthermore, the city government distributed a map showing the locations of emergency evacuation centres.

Aaron Geffen, a 27-year-old Dutch student, who recently visited Beppu during a short-term study programme in Tokyo, said the presence of many maps showing

evacuation routes in the city "made me ready to escape if anything happens."

In 2014, the city government also started an emergency drill in an area with a large population of people from abroad.

"There are foreign residents who have experienced no earthquake shocks," a city official said. "Exchanges between Japanese and foreign residents enable them to help each other in an emergency."

Sri Lankan student Jude Dilshan, 27, who has experienced a tsunami in his home country, said after taking part in a drill, "Opportunities to learn how to use an AED (automated external defibrillator) and get acquainted with Japanese people are valuable to me."

In Takahama, Aichi Prefecture, where foreign residents account for more than 5 per cent of the population, the first disaster drill for foreign residents was held last November, attended by 25 Japanese Brazilians.

Suggestions by an instructor, such as "Get under a desk when you feel a quake," were translated into Portuguese. Participants also experienced a simulated intensity 7 earthquake, the highest on the Japanese seismic scale, aboard a drill truck and practiced yelling "Help!" in Japanese. In a post-drill questionnaire, all the respondents said that they would like to participate again. Satoshi Hagiwara, 40, who participated in the drill with his family, voiced surprise, rec-



Satoshi Hagiwara (far R), a Japanese-Brazilian, participating with his family members in the first disaster drill for foreign residents held by the Takahama city government in Aichi Prefecture in November 2015. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

ognising that he had been totally ignorant of important information such as possible flood areas and the locations of evacuation centres.

Nobuyuki Kurita, head of Rescue Stock Yard, a Nagoya-based nonprofit organisation dedicated to disaster relief activities, who served as an instructor during the drill, said, "Information taken for granted by Japanese people can be important to foreigners."

Foreigners often form their own communities and rarely join

traditional neighbourhood associations run by Japanese residents.

"We hope that foreign residents repeatedly participate in drills and help us as interpreters in the event of an actual disaster," said Naohiro Fukaya, a senior official of the Takahama municipal government. When a massive earthquake and tsunami hit the northeastern Japan region of Tohoku in March 2011, the confirmation of foreign tourists' whereabouts took much time as railways and other trans-

port systems failed to provide them with enough information in foreign languages. With the number of visitors from abroad expected to increase further before the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo, the Japan Tourism Agency has developed a free mobile phone app to offer them safety tips for natural disasters.

The agency has also worked out guidelines for tourism businesses such as hotels and travel agencies.—Kyodo News

Cameron plays hard to get as EU pushes reform offer



Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron is welcomed by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker (R) ahead of a meeting at the EU Commission headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, on 29 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

BRUSSELS — David Cameron told Brussels on Friday that a proposed “emergency brake” to curb European immigration to Britain was “not good enough” but he saw progress on a deal to persuade British voters to back continued EU membership.

After lunch with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, whose staff described the meeting as “difficult but constructive”, Cameron was at pains to play down talk that a draft package EU officials say could be ready this weekend will herald a deal at a mid-February summit and a summer referendum.

Referring to an EU proposal to help him meet an election pledge to curb benefits for EU workers for four years, Cameron told the BBC: “There is now a

proposal on the table. It is not good enough. It needs more work. But we are making progress.”

His proposal to simply deny British benefits to EU workers for four years was dismissed by many leaders as illegal discrimination against fellow Europeans.

The suggestion described to Reuters by sources close to the talks would oblige London to first prove its welfare system was in danger and then give all other EU leaders a potential veto on the brake being applied.

“The Prime Minister welcomed the fact that there is now an acceptance of the concept that EU migrants should not be able to claim benefits before contributing to the welfare system but reiterated that any alternative to the government’s proposal to re-

strict in-work benefits for 4 years would need to be equally effective,” his office said in a statement.

Cameron’s next key meeting will be over dinner on Sunday in Downing Street with Donald Tusk, the European Council president who will chair the EU summit in Brussels on 18-19 February.

In a telephone call with French President Francois Hollande after his Brussels talks, Cameron said a deal in February remained possible if significant progress can be made in the coming days, the Downing Street statement said.

Sources close to the negotiations say Tusk hopes some of the thorniest issues, notably around migration, can be smoothed out this weekend so he can send out a draft package to the other 27 leaders early next week, paving the way for a summit agreement.

But Cameron, who needs to display a resolve that can deflect Eurosceptic critics at home and perhaps squeeze more concessions from other governments, said he was in no rush.

The referendum need be held only by the end of next year, though many believe Cameron, like EU chiefs, would like the issue settled very soon.

“If there is a good enough deal on the table that meets all of the concerns that British people have ... I’ll take it,” the Conservative party leader said. “If it’s not, I won’t.”

Negotiations on four areas where Cameron wants reform — on issues of national sovereignty and the power of euro zone states over Britain as well as on migration — have moved up several gears this month, however.

With attention turning to how reforms might be implemented, he also met European Parliament President Martin Schulz, whose chamber may have to pass new laws quickly.—*Reuters*

Europe launches ‘most wanted’ list, Paris attack suspects featured

AMSTERDAM — Move over FBI: Europe now has its own “most wanted” list, with suspects in Islamist militant attacks on Paris looming large.

European police agencies on Friday introduced the list on a website hosted by Europol, as part of a push to share more information about criminals across borders in the wake of the Islamic State assault on Paris in November 2015.

The site, which draws com-

parisons with traditional FBI “most-wanted” posters in the United States, features photos and descriptions of fugitives convicted or suspected of committing serious crimes.

National police forces of European countries select suspects for the list when they believe that having them known abroad may help bring about their arrest.

“We are convinced that at least a few of these people are

hiding in a different country than where they committed crimes,” said Europol spokeswoman Tine Hollevoet. Most European Union countries are part of its Schengen passport-free travel zone.

Among the 45 suspects currently featured on the site are Salah Abdelslam and Mohammed Abrini, both linked to the Paris attacks in which 130 people died, and to neighbouring Belgium where they lived.—*Reuters*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Eurostar services suspended after man steps on tracks

LONDON — Eurostar services from London have been halted after a man got on the tracks, local media reported Friday.

The incident occurred at around 8: 30pm GMT near the station of Dagenham Dock, east London, and services have been suspended since then. British Transport Police has made a decision to suspend travel, said a Eurostar spokeswoman, adding that she didn’t know when the train services would be resumed.—*Xinhua*

Dutch jets to join bombing of Islamic State targets in Syria

THE HAGUE — The Netherlands will broaden its role in the US-led coalition against Islamic State to include the bombing of IS targets in Syria, the government said on Friday.

A Dutch squadron of six F-16 fighter jets is already stationed in the region, but was hitherto limited to striking Islamic State positions in Iraq. The aircraft will now be active over Syria until 1 July, targeting Islamic State insurgent operations and training camps, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte told journalists in The Hague.

Islamic State’s bombing and shooting attacks on Paris that killed 130 people in November had already led France and Britain to step up their bombing campaigns in Syria and Iraq.

“We have decided to heed the call of our allies for expansion of the operational area of our F-16s to the east of Syria to further weaken ISIS’s supply lines and ability to advance,” Rutte said, using another acronym for Islamic State.

“Only by taking away ISIS’s safe havens in Iraq and Syria can we prevent more attacks.”

The Netherlands is also considering providing more military equipment and training to Iraqi soldiers battling the militants. It will fund moderate, armed Syrian opposition groups and assist the reconstruction of schools and hospitals, the statement said.—*Reuters*

Merkel says implementation of EU-Turkey deal ‘urgent’

BERLIN — German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Friday urged rapid implementation of the European Union’s deal with Turkey, saying progress was needed to get a grip on the refugee crisis.

“We spoke about the refugee question of course, on the one hand about the EU-Turkey agenda, which must be implemented urgently because we need progress,” Merkel said after talks with Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi.

Italy has blocked a European Union plan to provide Turkey with 3 billion euros (\$3.26 billion) in aid in exchange for a commitment to stem the flow of migrants into Europe.—*Reuters*

Chinese police detain four Vietnamese drug-dealers

NANNING — Police in South China’s Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, which borders Viet Nam, have detained four Vietnamese drug dealers and are hunting for the fifth suspect.

Local police made separate arrests on 11 January and 12 January, said Shi Bing, head of the border patrol brigade of Longzhou County. A total of 23.5 kg of drugs, including heroin, methamphetamine and magu (a stimulant composed of methamphetamine and caffeine), were seized from the suspects, he said.

According to local police, some drug dealers have been engaged in two-way trafficking. They brought heroin to China and smuggled methamphetamine and other synthetic drugs out to Viet Nam and other countries, he said.—*Xinhua*

Ukrainian government officials briefed on Serbia’s EU path

BELGRADE — Serbia’s Minister for European Integration Jadranka Joksimovic met with a Ukrainian government delegation on Friday to discuss the European integration process and ways of bilateral cooperation in that area.

Joksimovic briefed the delegation, comprised of Ukrainian officials responsible for EU accession affairs, on the mechanisms of coordinating Serbia’s European integration process and its experiences on the EU path. She reiterated that the accession process is long and fraught with challenges but ultimately beneficial to the state and the citizens. The two sides agreed that there is ample room to strengthen cooperation and that their countries should improve relations in a range of fields in the future.—*Tanjung*

OPINION

Natural Resources Not Sole Option For Foreign Investment

Kyaw Thura

AS a nascent democracy, our country should revise its national policies simply because a transparent and effective management acts as a catalyst of development. Available evidence supports the view that building human and institutional capacities is the best way to address the challenges likely to arise in maximising the benefits of our country's rich natural resources.

We need more human resources and institutions to implement them on the understanding that the presence of foreign investment in the domestic economy can be a constant source of income and employment, which in turn contribute to national economic growth.

In addition, our young people can take advantage of technology spillover and technical know-hows, transferred through foreign direct investment. Economic growth is highly regarded as an invaluable tool for the fight against poverty in developing countries.

Frankly speaking, the motive behind the inflow of foreign investment into our country is due to an abundant supply of natural resources. Foreign firms invest heavily in extractive industries by casting covetous eyes on our gems, copper, oil and gas. As a result, our country saw a dramatic surge in foreign investment from \$4b in 2011 to US\$22 billion in 2015.

According to researchers, foreign investment

has the potential to boost domestic investment as well. For instance, the investment by local businesses reached K5,179 billion (\$4b) in 2015, up from K241.75 billion (\$186 million) in 2011.

Either way, the availability of natural resources should not always be a magnet for foreign investment. Instead, we should fortify our domestic economy and encourage competitive markets at home. This should be a sole option open to foreign investors.

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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.

Action, accountability and inclusion: way forward towards zero disabilities among children with leprosy

Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region

LEPROSY is one of the ancient diseases known to humanity particularly as an incurable disease and for the deformities and social consequences it causes. Religious scriptures and historical accounts also reveal that people affected by leprosy were often viewed by society in a poor light. Introduction of multidrug therapy by WHO in the early 1980s made the disease "curable" and caused a significant impact on reduction of the global burden. The forty-fourth World Health Assembly in 1991 called for the "elimination of leprosy as a public health problem" with a target of bringing down the registered prevalence to less than one case per 10 000 population. Most countries achieved this by 2005.

New cases, however, continue to occur. The global leprosy data for 2014 states that 213 899 new leprosy cases were reported from 121 countries that year. Of these, only few countries from

Asia, Africa and South America were considered highly endemic. The WHO South-East Asia Region accounted for 72% of the global caseload. Not less than 7% of new cases presented with visible deformities. Every tenth patient was a child and even some of them were afflicted with permanent visible deformities. The epidemiological picture clearly suggests continued transmission of infection in the community and delayed detection of the disease. Trends over the past 10 years indicate that the number of new cases and those with visible deformities have remained fairly constant. This stagnation in leprosy control causes concern among experts in leprosy, partner agencies and governments of leprosy-endemic countries.

Though leprosy control globally has registered impressive achievements in reducing the

disease burden, breaking the chain of transmission remains the

principal challenge towards eliminating the disease and fulfilling the vision of "a world free of leprosy". The last mile in eliminating leprosy can be completed with inclusive approaches, as well as adequate health and social coverage that include patients and communities affected by leprosy.

The fear of acquiring leprosy and ending up with permanent deformities leads up to the stigma, and is also its main cause. Instances of discrimination against those affected keep surfacing from time to time at home, in schools, at the workplace, and even in health-care settings. This further perpetuates the stigma. Leprosy is still a legal ground for divorce in some countries; and in others persons affected are sometimes deprived of welfare measures. Stereotypes prevailing in the community about leprosy and the fear of getting identified with the disease continue to act as barriers to seeking treatment. WHO continues its efforts towards placing leprosy high on its agenda for reaching the goal of a world free of it. The Bangkok Declaration of 2013 was one

such milestone wherein governments and non-state actors joined hands reaffirming their commitment and pledging more resources to eliminate the disease as a health problem in its entirety.

A child diagnosed with leprosy indicates recent infection while the occurrence of the disability is evidence of delay in access to services. It is totally unacceptable to have a child getting permanent progressive disfigurement due to leprosy in today's world. In consultation with national leprosy programmes and other stakeholders, WHO developed the Global Leprosy Strategy 2016-2020: Accelerating towards a leprosy-free world, which will guide leprosy control work over the next five years. The strategy is based on the principles of initiating action to stop transmission of leprosy infection, ensuring accountability in implementation, and promoting inclusion of communities and particularly those affected. It aims at zero deformities among child leprosy patients.

The action is aimed at stopping leprosy transmission and its complications through quality

leprosy services. Promoting inclusion of communities focuses on breaking the vicious cause-and-effect equation between deformities due to leprosy and delayed treatment-seeking behaviour. Ensuring government stewardship is the best guarantee for rolling out equitable services across countries in a sustainable fashion. The Global Leprosy Strategy is structured to maximize synergies of these three approaches. The patronage of national governments, relevant civil society actors and communities, and adequate resources will take us closer to a leprosy-free world.

World Leprosy Day 2016 reminds us that it is high time for governments, partner organizations and networks of persons affected to join hands to eliminate leprosy and its consequences and deformities, and the discrimination that comes with it. It is important to recognize that every person has a role and every institution a responsibility towards preventing deformities among children due to leprosy and march towards a world free of leprosy.

Manageable scale production of toddy palm sap pots increase income in Ngathayauk



FAMILIES of local residents from No 3 Taunggon Ward in Ngathayauk Sub-Township, NyaungU District, produce earthen pots for the gathering of toddy palm sap on a manageable scale.

They reportedly make water pots, cooking pots, vases and toys for children.

They sell K50 per toddy palm sap pot, K350 per water pot, K150 per cooking pot or vase. Prices of toys are lesser than the pots.

"We have some difficulties in production because of the rising price of firewood and cow

excrement this year although we can get clay, the raw material for pottery industry, free of charge. So, we will see less benefits this year," said a pottery businessman.

"A kiln can produce about 2,000 earthen pots at once.

We send earthen pots to the markets in Chauk, Myingyan, NyaungU and Kyaukpadaung townships.

Actually, production of toddy palm sap pots contributes much to increasing family income," he added.—Ye Win Naing (NyaungU)

Connect to Learn takes significant step toward reaching 21000 students in Myanmar

ERICSSON (NASDAQ: ERIC) has made significant progress in its Connect to Learn project in Myanmar. A total of 155 teachers from all 31 schools have successfully completed the first stage of their training, which will now allow them to begin integrating ICT into their classroom teaching, and to use the internet to enrich the learning experience of students.

Connect to Learn is a public-private partnership that involves the use of ICT solutions to promote universal access to quality secondary education in developing countries.

The project was largely made possible through a strategic partnership between Ericsson and the UK Department for International Development's (DFID) Girls' Education Challenge. Since the program began in Myanmar in June 2015, it has supported the development of ICT skills in teachers in 31 schools in Mandalay, Mon and Bago

states.

DFID's Head in Myanmar, Gavin McGillivray, says "The UK government has made a substantial commitment to supporting education in this country to help ensure that all children have the opportunity to maximise their potential. We are excited by the innovative approaches that Connect to Learn is piloting – and hope that the initiative will help inform the way the country modernises its schooling more broadly – with positive impacts for the learning, health and wellbeing of girls as well as for their families and communities."

Sardar Umar Alam, Head of UNESCO Yangon, says, "Being the first-of-its-kind ICT for Education project in Myanmar, UNESCO tailor-made basic ICT skills training, including the use of mobile broadband networks and learning applications, for selected teachers in the project schools. Additional

training is planned to further develop the skills of teachers to integrate ICT and apply multimedia in their teaching and learning. We believe the training will not only improve quality of education in classrooms, but will also enhance overall innovation in teaching and learning with this empowerment of teachers in Myanmar."

Ericsson and its coalition of partners for the Connect to Learn project leverage the strengths and contributions of each collaborator. For example, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) provides project funding, UNESCO provides teacher training and mobile technology-based educational programs on English language and life skills and the Earth Institute manages the student stipend and school grant component, as well as conducting implementation research at the schools.—*Kyaw The-ein (MNA)*

Study on Myanmar's rubber industry to bring more assistance from Japanese govt

THE results of a Japanese study on Myanmar's rubber industry will be submitted to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) of Japan, it is known from director of the ministry, Mr. Tadashi Mogi.

The results of a survey conducted during 2013-14 on Myanmar's rubber plantations includes interviews with rubber plantation owners and the quality of Myanmar rubber and production; the situation of domestic and international rubber markets, together with experiences of lectures given by rubber experts from METI, all of which will be included in the report that is to be submitted.

"The three year long study that Japan carried out will be submitted to the ministry. The Japanese government will then make decisions on what further assistance is required and provide it accordingly," said Mr. Tadashi Mogi. It is known that Japan will continue to provide assistance to the industry to increase the capacity of rubber trade between Myanmar – Japan and help Myanmar rubber to meet acceptance of an international standard. Consideration has been made for continued assistance

from the Japanese government as there is a good potential for Myanmar natural rubber to be bought on the world market, and due to a desire for an increase in the commerce of the material between Japan – Myanmar. "Myanmar rubber has good potential. For example, six Japanese companies are currently purchasing it from the country. If [Myanmar rubber] can meet the quality [desired], then Myanmar might be able to meet the purchasing demand from Japan," added Mr. Mogi.

According to results of the study, there are currently only two rubber factories which can meet a high standard of rubber production and only eight rubber experts nationwide, while there is currently no body formed to carry out educational trainings on rubber production, or assist with Myanmar rubber being recognized at an international standard.

Furthermore, the study has highlighted a need for the Myanmar government to be involved in bringing about of relevant rubber enterprise laws and by-laws in regard to electricity and road transportation.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Big chill in Tachileik good for sale of coal burners

A SPELL of cold weather in the eastern Shan State town of Tachileik between January 25-27 caused a three day spike in sales of coal burners as people sought to keep themselves warm in their homes.

"On an average day, we'll sell about 2 or 3 burners. But we've been selling over a 100 a day since the start of the extra cold weather," said Daw Moe Moe from Wun Kaung Market in Tachileik.

As well as coal burners being imported from the town of Mai Sai, located on the Thai side of the boarder, into Tachileik with the arrival of the big chill, coal was also being circulated for sale.

"The temperature has been getting colder by the day. Par-

ents have prevented their children from going to school for two days, keeping them in the home, afraid they'll get cold.

People have taken time off work, bought a heater and been huddling around it in the homes to keep warm," said a resident of Tachileik, Ko Kyaw Moe.

Starting from January 25, the temperature in Tachileik dropped to 8 degrees centigrade before climbing up to 15 degrees three days later on January 27.

There have also been reports from some residents that temperatures dropped to as low as 7 degree centigrade on January 26 on the Lwemway mountain, located near the eastern Shan State town of Keng Tung, to the point where ice formed.—*Myitmakha News Agency*



Local people buy charcoal burners at a shop in Tachileik. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

Rakhine narcotic busts mark six year high

SITTWAY, January 29 - the haul of narcotics confiscated during 2015 in Rakhine State was the highest volume seen by authorities in the last six years, according to records of narcotic confiscations.

The volume of confiscated narcotics during 2015 was nearly the same volume of that confiscated for the whole five year period of 2010-14, says the Rakhine State narcotics police force.

In terms of the number of cases of drug busts within the State in the last five six years, there were 21 cases in 2010, 18 cases in 2011;

15 cases in 2012, 34 cases in 2013, 12 cases in 2014, while there was a sharp rise last year with a total number of 51 cases.

The main type of narcotic confiscated during drug busts in the State in the last few years, according to records, is the pink WY imprinted methamphetamine tablet.

"We captured over 600,000 narcotics pills in this month of January alone. In the town of Ann we picked up a total of 509,960 in one just bust, weighing 11.3 kilos," said U Ri Htun

Thant of the Rakhine narcotics police force.

The same individual also made it known that the new year has already seen five cases of methamphetamines in Rakhine State before January 24.

The frequency of confiscations of narcotics in Rakhine State in the last six years is due to the fact that the State became one of the main trading routes for narcotics and methamphetamines in Myanmar, according to the Rakhine narcotics squad.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Developing faster reading

THE Information and public Relations Department (IPRD) and Basic Education Department jointly organised an event for Developing Faster Reading at No.13 Basic Education High School in Popathiri township, Oaktara District, Nay Pyi Taw from 25 to 28 January. Students from the 13 BEHS sang "the school of Myanmar" to open the ceremony. At the event, essay, debate, and poem competitions were held.

At the ceremony, U San Win, Deputy Director of (IPRD) in his speech remarked that the library should be a good place for the students to promote their knowledge.

He also said that the students, who are future leaders should read knowledgeable books to improve their performance while U Ba Tun, Oaktara District Education officer spoke words of thanks to IPRD for holding Developing faster reading event.

Moreover, officials of the IPRD presented prizes to the 44 students. And, the BEHS School libraries from Popathiri received 55books from U Maung Maung and Daw Thin Thin Zin and, 550 various kinds of books from IPRD. Students from No.20 Hight school performed the U Shwe Yo and Daw Moe dance for guests.—*Tin Soe Lwin*

Syrian opposition to go to Geneva as peace talks open

GENEVA/BEIRUT — Syria's main opposition group agreed to travel to Geneva, where the United Nations on Friday opened peace talks to end the country's five-year-old war, but said it wanted to discuss humanitarian issues before engaging in political negotiations.

On the ground, opponents of President Bashar al-Assad said they were facing a Russian-backed military onslaught, with hundreds of civilians reported to be fleeing as the Syrian army and allied militia tried to capture a suburb of Damascus and finish off rebels defending it.

UN envoy Staffan de Mistura had invited the Syrian government and an opposition umbrella group to Geneva for "proximity talks", in which they would meet in separate rooms.

Until the last minute, the opposition High Negotiations Committee (HNC) had refused to go. The group, which includes both armed and political opponents of Assad, had insisted it wanted an end to air strikes and sieges of towns and the release of detainees before talks could start.

Late on Friday, the HNC said it was going to Geneva, having received guarantees that its demands, outlined in a UN Security Council resolution last month, would be met, but it made clear its engagement in the process would initially be limited.

"The HNC will go to Geneva tomorrow to discuss these humanitarian issues which will pave the way into the political process of negotiations," spokesman Salim al-Muslat told the Arabic news

channel al-Arabiya al-Hadith.

The HNC said it had drawn up a list of 3,000 Syrian women and children in government prisons who should be released.

De Mistura opened the talks on Friday by meeting the Syrian government delegation. He said that while he had not yet received formal notice that the HNC would attend, he expected to meet its delegation on Sunday.

"They've raised an important point of their concern, they would like to see a gesture from the government authorities regarding some kind of improvement for the people of Syria during the talks, for instance release of prisoners, or some lifting of sieges," de Mistura said.

But he added this was



An overview of the room where UN mediator for Syria Staffan de Mistura and the Syrian delegation lead by Syrian Ambassador to the UN Bashar al Jaafari opened the Syrian peace talks at the United Nations European headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, on 29 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

a human rights point and "not even an issue to negotiate", and had strongly suggested the best way to get such measures implemented would be to start negotiating in Geneva, by proxy or directly.

US Secretary of State John Kerry had made a major push to get the HNC delegation to Geneva, and the group said he had contacted it by phone to urge it to attend.

"Secretary Kerry has

been in touch with all of his counterparts, including this morning with (Russian Foreign Minister) Sergei Lavrov ... and with others, trying to find a way, a formula, in which we can urge the delegation or some version of the delegation to show up here," a senior US official said.

The Syrian government delegation, headed by United Nations ambassador Bashar al Jaafari, arrived at the talks on Friday afternoon but made no statement.

Another major force, the Kurds who control much of northeast Syria and have proven one of the few groups capable of winning territory from Islamic State, were excluded from the talks after Turkey demanded they be kept away. The Kurds say their absence means the talks are doomed to fail.—Reuters

Egypt Air mechanic suspected in Russian plane crash

LONDON — An Egypt Air mechanic whose cousin joined Islamic State in Syria is suspected of planting a bomb on a Russian passenger plane that was blown out of Egypt's skies in late October, according to sources familiar with the matter.

So far Egypt has publicly said it has found no evidence that the MetroJet flight, which crashed in the Sinai Peninsula after takeoff from Sharm el-Sheikh airport, killing all 224 people on board, was brought down by terrorism.

A senior security official at the airline denied that any of its employees had been arrested or were under suspicion, and an Interior Ministry official also said there had been no arrests.

But the sources, who declined to be identified because of the sensitivity of the ongoing investigation, said the mechanic had been detained, along with two airport policemen and a baggage handler suspected of helping him put the bomb on board.

"After learning that one of its members had a relative that worked at the airport, Islamic State delivered a bomb in a handbag to that person," said one of the sources, adding the suspect's cousin joined Islamic State in Syria a year and a half ago.

"He was told to not ask any questions and get the bomb on the plane."

Another source said of the other suspects: "Two policemen are suspected of playing a role by turning a blind eye to the operation

at a security checkpoint. But there is a possibility that they were just not doing their jobs properly."

None of the four have been prosecuted so far, the sources told Reuters.

The crash has called into question Egypt's drive to eradicate Islamist militancy and hurt its tourism industry, a cornerstone of the economy.

Islamic State's Egypt affiliate is waging an insurgency in parts of the Sinai, although mostly far from the tourist resorts along its Red Sea coast.

Russia and Western countries have long said that they believe the flight was brought down by a bomb smuggled on board. Egypt however has so far publicly said it has not found any evidence of foul play.—Reuters



An Egyptian army soldier stands guard near debris from a Russian airliner which crashed at the Hassana area in Arish city, north Egypt, on 1 November 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

France to recognise Palestinian state unless deadlock with Israel broken

PARIS — France will recognise a Palestinian state if a final push that Paris plans to lead for a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians fails, its foreign minister said on Friday.

US-led efforts to broker peace for a two-state solution collapsed in April 2014 and since then there have been no serious efforts to resume talks.

Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius has repeatedly warned that letting the status quo continue risks killing off a two-state solution and playing into the hands of Islamic State militants.

Last year he failed in efforts to get the United States on board to push for a UN Security Council resolution to set parameters for talks between the two sides and set a final deadline for a deal.

The expansions of settlements by Israel since then have been described by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as "provocative acts" that raise questions about its commitment to a two-state solution.

"We cannot let the two-state solution disintegrate. It is our responsibility as a UN Security Council member and a power seeking peace," Fabius told an annual gathering of foreign diplomats.

Fabius has previously

called for an international support group comprising Arab states, the European Union and UN Security Council members that would essentially force the two sides to compromise.

He said Paris would begin preparing in the "coming weeks" an international conference bringing together the parties and their main partners, American, European and Arab.

If this last attempt at finding a solution hits a wall, "well ... in this case, we need to face our responsibilities by recognising the Palestinian state", he said.

A French diplomatic source said the aim was to launch the conference before the summer and that it would not be accompanied by a UN Security Council resolution, which would inevitably fail.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has previously criticised recent French initiatives, calling them "counter-productive".

Despite anger in the US administration over Israeli settlements, there is little prospect of US President Barack Obama supporting any initiative that could upset the US Jewish lobby 10 months before an election. A US official responded cautiously to Fabius' statement.

"The US position on this issue has been clear.

We continue to believe that the preferred path to resolve this conflict is for the parties to reach an agreement on final status issues directly," the official said.

Nabil Abu Rdainah, spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, said he welcomed the move.

"There is no doubt that a French recognition of the Palestinian state will contribute to building peace and stability in the region," he said. An Israeli official, who declined to be identified, said:

"The foreign minister of France says up front that if his initiative reaches a dead end, France will recognise a Palestinian state. This statement constitutes an incentive for the Palestinians to bring about a dead end. Negotiations cannot be held nor peace achieved in this manner." Palestine has non-member observer status at the United Nations and its flag flies with those of member states at UN headquarters in New York. Sweden became the first EU member nation to recognise the Palestinian state in 2014 and has been followed by several others.

Palestinians seek a state in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, parts of which have been occupied by Israel since a 1967 war.—Reuters

Swan song: humans implicated in huge Australian bird's demise



A giant flightless bird known as *Genyornis newtoni* (R) is surprised on her nest by a 1 ton, predatory lizard named *Megalania prisca* in Australia roughly 50,000 thousand years ago, in this illustration courtesy of Peter Trusler, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia. Scientists said on 29 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

WASHINGTON — The mystery behind the extinction of a huge flightless bird called *Genyornis* that flourished in the grasslands and woodlands of prehistoric Australia may have been solved, with burned eggshells as the clue

and people as the culprits.

Scientists said on Friday burn patterns detected on eggshell fragments indicate that the humans who first arrived in Australia roughly 50,000 years ago gathered and cooked the big bird's

eggs, playing havoc with its reproductive success.

The study is the first to provide direct evidence that these early human inhabitants preyed on the remarkable large animals that once thrived in Australia but

disappeared after people got there, University of Colorado geological sciences professor Gifford Miller said.

Genyornis, at almost 7 feet tall (2 metres) and perhaps 500 pounds (225 kg), was much bigger than today's large flightless birds like the ostrich or emu. It possessed powerful legs, small wings, large claws and a big beak for eating fruit, nuts and maybe small prey.

It was a member of a family of giant birds called dromornithids, some reaching 10 feet (3 metres) tall and 1,100 pounds (500 kg), that was related to ducks, geese and swans. *Genyornis* vanished around 47,500 years ago, Miller said.

The researchers analysed burned *Genyornis* eggshell fragments, some only partially blackened, discovered at more than 200 sites. The eggs were the size of a cantaloupe, weighing about 3-1/2 pounds (1.5 kg).

"We conclude that the only explanation is that humans harvested the giant eggs, built a fire and cooked them, which would not blacken them, then discarded

the fragments in and around their fire as they ate the contents," Miller said.

"Wild or natural fires could not produce such patterns. We have no direct evidence that humans hunted the adults, but loss of eggs certainly reduced reproductive success."

There has been a long-running debate over whether people caused the extinction of Australia's unique collection of large animals, also including a 25-foot-long (7.5 metres) monitor lizard called *Megalania*, a nearly rhinoceros-sized wombat called *Diprotodon*, large marsupial predators and 1,000-pound (450-kg) kangaroos.

More than 85 per cent of Australia's large mammals, birds and reptiles disappeared after people arrived.

Some experts blame human hunting, while others blame climate shifts, in particular continental drying from about 60,000 to 40,000 years ago. With the new study, published in the journal *Nature Communications*, the case for a human role becomes stronger, Miller said.—Reuters

Race for Zika vaccine gathers momentum as virus spreads

WASHINGTON — Companies and scientists are racing to create a Zika vaccine as concern grows over the mosquito-borne virus that has been linked to severe birth defects and is spreading quickly through the Americas.

Zika is now present in 23 countries and territories in the Americas. Brazil, the hardest-hit country, has reported around 3,700 cases of the devastating birth defect called microcephaly that are strongly suspected to be related to Zika.

The Geneva-based World Health Organisation (WHO), stung by criticism that it reacted too slowly to West Africa's Ebola epidemic, convenes an emergency meeting on Monday to help determine its response to the spread of the virus.

The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention has activated an emergency operations centre staffed around the clock to address Zika, agency officials told Reuters.

On Thursday, the WHO said as many as 4 million people in the Americas may become infected by Zika, adding urgency to the research efforts. Vaccine developers made clear a vaccine for widespread public use is at least months, if not years, away.

The closest prospect may be from a consortium including drugmaker Inovio Pharmaceuticals Inc that could have a vaccine ready for emergency use before year-end, according to one of its lead developers. Inovio's share price gained more than 15 per cent in Friday trading.

Canadian scientist Gary

Kobinger told Reuters on Thursday the first stage of testing on humans could begin as early as August. If successful, the vaccine might be used during a public health emergency by October or November, said Kobinger, who helped develop a trial vaccine for the Ebola virus.

Privately owned vaccine developer Hawaii Biotech Inc said it began a formal programme to test a Zika vaccine last fall as the virus started to gain traction in Brazil, although it has no timetable yet for clinical trials.

"Right now, we are in the pre-clinical stage, as I suspect everyone is," Chief Executive Officer Dr Elliot Parks told Reuters.

Another private vaccine de-

veloper, Boston-based Replikin Ltd, said it was preparing to start animal studies on a Zika vaccine in the next 10 days. Data from the trials on mice and rabbits would likely be out in the next couple of months, Replikin Chairman Samuel Bogoch told Reuters.

"No one has the \$500 million (£351 million) on hand to take it (a vaccine) all the way to human trials. Somewhere along the course we hope to have big pockets join us," Bogoch said.

Zika had been viewed as a relatively mild illness until Brazilian health officials identified it as a matter of concern for pregnant women. While a direct causal relationship has not been established, scientists strongly suspect

a link between Zika and thousands of children born in Brazil with abnormally small heads, brain defects and impaired vision. There is no treatment for Zika infection.

Efforts to combat Zika are focused on protecting people from being bitten and on eradicating mosquitoes, a tough task in many parts of Latin America, where people live in poverty and there are plentiful breeding grounds for the insect.

"We do not have a vaccine for Zika yet. The only thing we can do is fight the mosquito," Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff said on Friday, reiterating her call for a national eradication effort.—Reuters

Chinese astronomers offer new insight on star formation

BEIJING — Chinese astronomers have discovered newborn stars arising in clusters as they "adopt" interstellar gases, providing a new explanation for how stars form.

Astronomers have long thought clusters could only form stars in bulk at once in the first millions of years of their "lives". However, recent discoveries of multiple star populations at different ages in clusters have made astronomers question the conventional theory of star birth.

To solve the puzzle, a research team led by Deng Licai, astronomer at the National Astronomical Observatories of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), studied data collected by the Hubble Space Telescope for one year. Their study has, for the first time, found young populations of stars within clusters have developed from star-forming gas flowing in from outside of the clusters themselves, standing in contrast to the conventional idea of the clusters' initial stars shedding gas as they age in order to form next generation of stars.

"The young stellar populations, which originated from gas external to the clusters, are like the adopted children of the clusters," said Deng.

The research was published in the online edition of top science journal *Nature* on Thursday.—Xinhua



A technician from Oxitec inspects pupae of genetically modified *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes in Campinas, Brazil, on 28 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

European, UN troops accused of sexual abuse in Central African Republic

UNITED NATIONS — Twelve more children in the Central African Republic have accused European soldiers and United Nations peacekeepers of sexual abuse, the United Nations said on Friday, with one senior official saying such abuse was “rampant” there.

Foreign troops were deployed in Central African Republic after mainly Muslim rebels seized power in the majority Christian country in 2013, provoking reprisals and fuelling religious and inter-communal violence that has killed thousands. French troops have been in the country since December 2013. European Union troops were there from April 2014 to March 2015. A United Nations peacekeeping mission assumed authority from African Union troops in September 2014.

UN Assistant Secretary-General for Field Support, Anthony Banbury, appeared emotional while announcing the new UN cases.

“It’s hard to imagine



UN peacekeepers deployed in Central African Republic. PHOTO: REUTERS

the outrage that people working for the United Nations and for the causes of peace and security feel when these kinds of allegations come to light, particularly involving minors, which is so hard to understand,” Banbury said.

“The United Nations is doing everything we possi-

bly can to assist the victims, to bring accountability and justice ... and hopefully to prevent any such cases from recurring,” he told reporters in New York.

Six children accused troops from France, Georgia and an unidentified European country of sexual abuse, said to have oc-

curred mostly in 2014 in or near a camp for displaced people next to the airport in Central African Republic’s capital Bangui.

Those three countries and the European Union are investigating the accusations, the United Nations said.

Another six children

accused UN troops from Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger and Morocco and UN police from Senegal of sex abuse. The number of allegations made in 2015 against UN peacekeepers is now 22. Bangladesh and Morocco are investigating, while the United Nations

is investigating the cases involving Democratic Republic and Niger after those states failed to respond to the allegations. The United Nations is investigating the Senegal case, in line with standard procedure involving police.

“What is abundantly clear in the Central African Republic is that it has been rampant,” UN human rights spokesman Rupert Colville told reporters in Geneva.

“All these peacekeeping forces have played a very important role, and we shouldn’t ignore that. But ... we can’t ignore the fact that hopefully a small number in these armies are committing appalling abuses,” Colville said.

Convictions have been “far, far too few”, Colville said. Last month, an independent review panel accused the United Nations and its agencies of grossly mishandling allegations of child sexual abuse by international peacekeepers in Central African Republic in 2013 and 2014. —Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV XETHA BHUM VOY NO (1063)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV XETHA BHUM VOY NO (1063) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 31.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S REGIONAL CONTAINER
LINES**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV DOLPHIN STRAIT VOY NO (626)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV DOLPHIN STRAIT VOY NO (626) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 31.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S CMA CGM LINE**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV MAERSK ATLANTIC VOY NO (1603)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MAERSK ATLANTIC VOY NO (1603) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 31.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT
(S’PORE) PTE LTD**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV TOVE MAERSK VOY NO (1603)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV TOVE MAERSK VOY NO (1603) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 31.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT
(S’PORE) PTE LTD**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV PACAO VOY NO (003N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PACAO VOY NO (003N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 31.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S YANG MING LINE**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV MERATUS GORONTALO VOY NO (126N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MERATUS GORONTALO VOY NO (126N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 31.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S YANG MING LINE**

Phone No: 2301185

Auto Telephone numbers of Yangon South Dagon Exchange Area will be changed

To provide better quality and upgraded services for its auto telephone numbers, Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications will substitute IP System NGN (Next Generation Network) with MSAN (Multi Service Access Node) of South Dagon KY Exchange. Hence, the numbers which start with (595xxx) of South Dagon Exchange will be replaced with the numbers which start with (234-8xxx) of Ahlone ZXSS10SS1B (SoftSwitch) Exchange on 19th February, 2016. Those new numbers will have both voice call and ADSL internet access. Current ADSL users do not need to register again. New ADSL users will need to register to Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications for internet access.

Static IP of South Dagon KY Exchange Area will be changed into Static IP Range (172.x.x.x) Network. For further information and preparation for changes, Current ADSL Static IP users are requested to contact telephone numbers (01-650870 and 01-662707) of ADSL office at the Information Technology Department of Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications

Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications

Auto Telephone numbers of Yangon Htauk Kyant Exchange Area will be changed

To provide better quality and upgraded services for its auto telephone numbers, Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications will substitute IP System NGN (Next Generation Network) with MSAN (Multi Service Access Node) of Htauk Kyant KY Exchange. Hence, the numbers which start with (600xxxx) of Htauk Kyant KY Exchange in Yangon will be replaced with the numbers which start with (943-7xxx) of Mayangone Soft-X3000 (SoftSwitch) Exchange on 12th February, 2016. Those new numbers will have both voice call and ADSL internet access. Current ADSL users do not need to register again. New ADSL users will need to register to Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications for internet access.

Static IP of Htauk Kyant KY Exchange in Yangon will be changed into Static IP Range (172.x.x.x) Network. For further information and preparation for changes, Current ADSL Static IP users are requested to contact telephone numbers (01-650870 and 01-662707) of ADSL office at the Information Technology Department of Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications.

Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications

Zayn Malik releases new single album



Zayn Malik in action. PHOTO: REUTERS

LOS ANGELES — Some 10 months after he quit hugely popular boy band One Direction, Zayn Malik released his debut single “PILLOW-TALK” on Friday under the name, ZAYN.

The song, which was put out alongside a video, is the first of his upcoming debut album “MIND OF MINE”.

The album is scheduled for release on 25 March — a year after he left the British-Irish group.

The 23-year old singer can be seen kissing model

Gigi Hadid in the kaleidoscopic-like video.

Writing to his more than 17 million Twitter followers, Malik tweeted “Crazy love today” after the release.

The hashtag #PillowTalk was trending on the social media feed on Friday.

Malik left One Direction after five years with the band, which came to prominence on the British talent show “The X Factor”.

At the time, he apologised to fans and said he wanted to lead a normal life.—Reuters

Jack Black on ‘Kung Fu Panda’: ‘I love the job’

LOS ANGELES — Po, the “Kung Fu Panda” of the popular animation franchise, returns to cinema screens for a third adventure — much to the delight of actor Jack Black, who voices the character.

“I love the job. If I could just do animated film all the time, I would, because you wake up at 11, you stroll in your PJs, you lay down some hot tracks for an hour and

half, two hours, three hours sometimes,” he said in an interview.

Actress Kate Hudson added: “But then you see the movie and you don’t have to worry about what you look like on screen or what that felt like.”

“Kung Fu Panda 3”, which also stars Angelina Jolie, Dustin Hoffman and Bryan Cranston, hits US cinemas on Friday.—Reuters

Chris Brown criticises Grammy

LOS ANGELES — Chris Brown may have earned 15 Grammy nominations in his career, but the singer is unhappy with the nominations for this year’s awards.

The 26-year-old singer took to Twitter to call out on the award show.

“#GRAMMY? This is probably the main reason I love

being free to create any kind of music I want,” he wrote the first tweet. “Too many people kiss ass and work less,” Brown wrote.

The “Loyal” hitmaker posted a series of tweets doubting the nomination process.

“The awards used to mean something. Now it’s about likes, and memes,” he posted.

Grammy nominations were announced in early December. Brown earned a nomination for his collaboration with Lil’ Wayne, Nicki Minaj and Drake for the song “Only,” but did not receive a nod for anything on his latest album “Royalty”.

The singer won the Grammy for best R&B album in 2012.—PTI

Tom Hanks named America’s most popular movie star

LOS ANGELES — Superstar Tom Hanks has been crowned America’s favourite movie star in a new online countdown.

Hanks, 59, whose latest film “The Bridge of Spies” is up for six Oscars, topped a Harris Poll that surveyed more than 2,200 adults in the US about the best Hollywood actor-actress, reported Variety.

Hanks also nabbed the title in 2002, 2004, 2005 and 2013.

Jumping up two spots from last year, Johnny Depp was runner-up.

Depp portrayed notorious gangster Whitey Bulger in 2015’s “Black Mass”. Neither Hanks nor Depp is up for a best actor Oscar, despite early buzz surrounding their performances. Both were

also snubbed for a Golden Globe nomination.

Denzel Washington, who was absent from the big screen in 2015 and topped last year’s list, fell two positions to America’s third favourite movie star.

The “Training Day” actor was honoured with the coveted Cecil B DeMille Award earlier this month at the Globes.—PTI

Lady Gaga, Taylor Kinney to marry in Italy?

NEW YORK — Pop star Lady Gaga is reportedly keen to tie the knot with Taylor Kinney in Italy to “celebrate her heritage”.

The ‘Til It Happens to You’ hitmaker is reportedly keen to “celebrate her heritage” with a beautiful wedding in the European country but are in no rush to walk down the aisle, reported

New York Post.

“She wants to celebrate her heritage, so they’re looking at places in the Italian countryside. She wants a big Italian wedding,” a source said.

“They’re still enjoying their engagement, so they have to figure out the right time to do it. They’re not fully planning yet.”

The 29-year-old singer and actress is also planning to settle on a venue before she decides on her dress as she wants the venue to “inspire” the gown.

“The venue is going to inspire the dress, so she has to lock that in first. It’ll make her figure out what the dress will be and who will make it.”—PTI

Carrie Underwood to honour military families on tour

LOS ANGELES — Country star Carrie Underwood is set to honour soldiers and their families throughout her upcoming North American tour.

Underwood, 32, said she will be meeting with military families to thank them for their service, reported *Billboard* magazine.

“I’m honoured to be able to join Carnival Cruise Line and Operation Homefront to lift up these soldiers and their families,” Underwood said.

“I am really looking forward to meeting them on my tour and for the opportunity to personally thank them for all they do for our freedom. I feel country music has always been very close and very supportive of military members and their families. I feel like this is just another really cool opportunity to say thank you.—PTI



Carrie Underwood. PHOTO: REUTERS

Macao ready for upcoming Spring Festival



MACAO — Lanterns are hung up to greet the upcoming Spring Festival in Macao, south China, on 29 January 2016. The Spring Festival, or the Chinese Lunar New Year, will fall on 8 February this year. According to Chinese zodiac, 2016 is the Year of the Monkey. PHOTO: XINHUA

Hundreds stranded at central Japan spa resort following heavy snow

NAGANO (Japan) — More than 250 guests and staff were stranded yesterday at a spa resort in central Japan after trees apparently knocked down by heavy snow blocked routes to the area, local authorities said.

The municipal government of Matsumoto in Nagano Prefecture is trying to remove fallen trees blocking the roads but officials said they are not certain when the routes will be cleared.

Hotels and spa facilities in the Iriyamabe hot spring resort are without electricity but no injuries were reported among those stranded, the officials said.

People are warming themselves by wood stoves and other means, they said.

A route to the prestigious Tobira Onsen Myojinkan inn has been blocked since Friday, leaving about 120 guests and staff at the inn and a nearby spa facility cut off.

Another road leading to a hotel in the area was also blocked, leaving 110 people stranded.

The municipal authorities are trying to confirm the situation of at least 12 households in the area that are believed to be cut off.

Elsewhere, more than 20 residents in the neighbouring village of Yamagata have been cut off as a route to the area has become impassable, village officials said.

—Kyodo News

Iconic Chicago Ferris wheel rolling to the Missouri Ozarks

CHICAGO — An iconic 15-story Ferris wheel, which had been part of the Chicago skyline for 20 years, will be trucked across the Mississippi River and rebuilt like a “big Erector Set” at a Missouri amusement park, officials said on Friday.

The Ferris wheel, modeled after the one built for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, also known as the Chicago World’s Fair, can hold 240 passengers on 40 gondolas.

The wheel is going to The Track Family Fun Parks in the tourist-friendly town of Branson, Missouri, swapping a view of Lake Michigan for one of the Ozark Mountains, said Track Chief Executive Craig Wescott. Branson officials approved the wheel, 50feet (15.2m) taller than the city’s 100-foot (30.5m) height limit for structures, on Thursday night.

Wescott said trucks will carry the disassembled wheel to Branson next month, and it will be ready by Memorial Day at a cost of \$2.5 million.

“This is oversimplified, but it’s like a big Erector Set,” said Wescott, referring to the children’s building toy. Chicago is building a new 196-foot-tall (60m) Ferris wheel on Navy Pier this year, a popular multi-use tourist attraction which is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

There has been a boom in city observation Ferris wheels in the last few decades, including the 443-foot London Eye (135m) unveiled in 1999; the 525-foot Star of Nanchang in China (160m) put up in 2006, and the 550-foot High Roller (168m) in Las Vegas in 2014. Coincidentally, the original 1893 Chicago wheel, built by engineer George Ferris, also was taken to Missouri and featured at the 1904 World’s Fair in St Louis. It was later demolished.—Reuters

Singapore’s Chinatown Heritage Centre reopens after rejuvenation

SINGAPORE — The rejuvenated Chinatown Heritage Centre of Singapore officially opens on Thursday to unveil a refreshed visitor experience that tells a richer story of Chinatown’s evolution from its early days as a Chinese migrant settlement to the current vibrant heritage precinct.

Visitors to the centre can expect a comprehensive Chinatown story narrative that goes beyond the 1960s, in-depth collection of personal stories from the Chinatown community, explore Chinatown’s multi-ethnicity, nightlife and heritage businesses, as well as enhanced multi-sensory features in the form of soundscapes, multimedia content, interactive story panels, olfactory experience and mood lighting.

The centre, which underwent rejuvenation in October 2014, is officially reopened by Mr S Iswaran, minister for Trade and Industry. The rejuvenation aims to strengthen the centre’s content and presentation style since it first opened in 2002 so as to better bring alive the precinct’s heritage.

“As Chinatown evolves and increasingly discerning visitors seek more authentic and in-depth experiences, we saw the need to rejuvenate the Chinatown Heritage Centre to reflect the dynamic nature of the precinct, including that of a new generation that is continuing the legacy of their forefathers.”

“We hope that the centre will be a living interpretive centre that will inspire visitors to explore the precinct at a deeper level, and for the locals to gain a deeper appreciation of their heritage,” said Kenneth Lim, director of Cultural Precincts Development, Singapore Tourism Board (STB).

The centre will also host a regular line-up of temporary exhibitions and community events in a new exhibition gallery and event space, as part of STB’s vision for the centre to be a key platform for community engagement.—Xinhua

Shark eats another shark at Seoul aquarium

SEOUL — An aquarium in South Korea has said its biggest shark has eaten another in what it has described as a “turf war”.

In the first such incident at Seoul’s COEX aquarium, an eight-year old female sand tiger shark, some 2.2 metres (7.22 ft) long, is said to slowly eaten a smaller five-year old male shark, about 1.2. metres in length.

The attack is said to have happened early Thursday evening and about 10 minutes later, the female was filmed swimming with the body of her tank mate hanging out her mouth.

Some 21 hour later only the tip of the tail remained.—Reuters



(31-1-2016 07:00 am~ 1-2-2016 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh		
07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Continuation In Rural Tradition
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Discovering Tribes “Lisu: Their Life and Customs” (Part- I)
08:48	Am	To The Blue Ridge Mountains of Rhododendrons
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Manuha Temple Festivities
09:44	Am	Kyauk Phyu Township
09:52	Am	Great Minds of Myanmar (Anthropologist U Kyaw Win)

10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Myanmar’s Beauty and Nature “Beach”
10:52	Am	Products of Myanmar - Products Of The Loom

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

Prime Time		
07:03	Pm	News
07:25	Pm	Bagan: The Land of Pagoda
07:50	Pm	Today Myanmar
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	The Writer: Chit Oo Nyo (Part II)
08:55	Pm	Now in Yangon

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

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



Germany's Angelique Kerber kisses the trophy after winning her final match against Serena Williams of the US at the Australian Open tennis tournament at Melbourne Park, Australia, on 30 January 2016.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Kerber stuns Williams to win Australian Open title

MELBOURNE — Angelique Kerber became the first German to win a grand slam title since her childhood idol Steffi Graf in 1999 when she upset world number one Serena Williams 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 to clinch the Australian Open yesterday.

The 34-year-old American had been seeking her seventh Melbourne Park title and 22nd overall, which would have moved her into a tie with Graf for the most grand slam singles titles in the Open era.

The seventh seeded Kerber, however, was not overawed by the occasion of her first grand slam final, breaking twice in the first set as Williams made 23 unforced errors.

Williams cut down on the errors to send it into a third, which Kerber, who had the opportunity to serve it out while leading 5-3 only for the American to battle back, clinched when Williams hit a volley long in the next game.

The opening salvo had looked ominous as Williams raced through the first game to love and then put pressure on the German, who was down 15-30 after a double fault but managed to suppress any demons she may have had and held on.

The 28-year-old German then played superb defensive tennis against the powerful Williams,

scrambling to force her to play an extra shot that ultimately contributed to 23 unforced errors from the American in the first set.

Those errors and a lack of timing on several potential winners enabled the German to break again in the seventh game and then seal the first set in 39 minutes when Williams made another unforced error.

The pair held serve in the opening two games of the second set before Williams began to get her timing back and made less errors as she raced out to a 4-1 lead, though the concerned look she shot her supporters in the players' box suggested she had been battling to work the German out.

Williams sent the match into a decider when Kerber hit an easy forehand into the net to clinch the second set.

Both players suffered early breaks in the third set but the championship appeared to have tipped in the German's favour in a marathon sixth game when she finally converted her fifth break point to take a 4-2 lead.

She extended that to 5-2 and was serving for the title at 5-3 before Williams fought back, though the inspired German was able to clinch her first grand slam and then collapse onto the court in jubilation.—Reuters

Real Madrid poised for record kit sponsorship deal

LONDON — Real Madrid are poised to sign a record 10-year kit sponsorship deal with Adidas worth 140 million euros (106.8 million pounds) a season, Spanish newspaper *Marca* reported on Friday.

The contract would be soccer's most lucrative shirt sponsorship, dwarfing the 75 million pounds (€98 million) a year deal Manchester United agreed with Adidas in 2014. It would be an important coup for Real president Florentino Perez, who has turned the club into the world's richest by income, and has always believed in marketing as a fundamental element to bringing success on the pitch.

The 10-times European Cup winners' current sponsorship deal with Adidas runs until 2020.—Reuters

Tortured Murray outlasts Raonic to reach Melbourne final

MELBOURNE — Andy Murray went through paroxysms of frustration but seized another opportunity to break his Australian Open jinx with a four-hour, five-set semi-final victory over Milos Raonic on Friday.

Four times the British world number two has advanced to the final at Melbourne Park and four times he has been vanquished, three times at the hands of Novak Djokovic.

The Serbian will again stand in his path on Sunday as the Scot seeks to add another grand slam title to his 2012 US Open and 2013 Wimbledon crowns.

"Five finals is a great achievement," said Murray. "You can't take that away from me."

"I should be happy about that. There's very few players that will have made five Australian Open finals, so I have to be proud of that achievement."

Raonic, meanwhile, was left heartbroken after suffering a thigh injury that hampered him from the middle of the third set of the 4-6, 7-5,

6-7(4), 6-4, 6-2 defeat. Winning tennis matches never looks like a walk in the park for Murray but for much of the contest against the Canadian, he at least had some justification for the tortured grimaces and explosions of anger that followed every setback.

The 13th seed has been on fire this year and his big serve and huge forehands had one of the best returners in the game on the ropes, while his new-found net game helped him to a healthy 72 winners.

Murray said earlier this week that he would waste no more energy on the histrionics but the match was just minutes old when he returned to his chair muttering curses having been broken to love in his first service game.

That was to be Raonic's only break of the match but it was enough to win the first set and, after Murray had pounced to even up the contest, he ramped up his 230 kilometre-per-hour serve to clinch the third on tiebreak.—Reuters



Britain's Andy Murray. PHOTO: REUTERS