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CRISIS AVERTED

Diversion canal to save 300,000 acres from flooding



A diversion canal is being dug with heavy machinery in Zalun Township, to prevent the farmland from being flooded.
PHOTO: MNA

A DIVERSION canal is being built in Zalun, Ayeyawady Region, to prevent the flooding of over 300,000 acres of farmland and residential property. The canal is expected to be completed before the upcoming rainy season.

To satisfy the demand of local residents, the diversion canal and preventive measures against the erosion of the Ayeyawady River will be completed before the upcoming rainy season, said President U Thein Sein yesterday during a visit to the site.

The embankment of the Ayeyawady River near Wathala and Maydon villages in Zalun Township faces the threat of collapse due to the effects of erosion.

President U Thein Sein pledged that the government would give compensation for

land and crops to farmers whose land the canal will pass through.

He also stressed that any farmland created by the canal should also be given to local farmers.

The diversion canal will span more than 300 acres, but it

will prevent more than 300,000 acres from flooding. The canal and preventive measures against erosion are being built with grants from the national disaster fund.

Construction work on the canal began on 29 January 2016.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Poor adherence to law poses risk to labour disputes



Workers at production line of a factory in Yangon. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

DESPITE having a law calling for the formation of arbitration committees in factories, instances of poor adherence to that law has been found, according to an official from the Department of Labour Relations in Hlinethaya Township.

Although instructions had been issued to create a labour dispute arbitration committee at every factory, most of them still fail to follow instructions, said U KhinMaung Cho, staff officer of the department.

If the committees are formed

as instructed, disputes can be settled at the grassroots level, he added. According to the department, it received 40 cases of dispute from the Hlinethaya Industrial Zone in which there are more than 500 factories since early this month, and seven cases are under review.

Most of the cases concern salary and termination of employment, said the department.

According to the settlement of labour dispute law enacted in 2012, the labour dispute arbitration committee shall be formed

with two representatives each from employers, employees at each and every factory.

Analysts pointed out that the less problem between employees and employers there is to the country's manufacturing sector, the more production will be possible as Myanmar is going to enter the ASEAN Economic Community and Global Supply Chains this year. They stressed the need of strengthening the country's infrastructure and building the skills of those in the industry.—*Ko Moe*

Myanmar Skills Competition aims to turn out qualified workers



Matters relating to organizing Myanmar Skills Competition being discussed. PHOTO: MYINT MAUNG SOE

THE National Skill Standards Authority will organise its first-ever Myanmar Skills Competition next month in Yangon, announced an official from the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.

“The major purpose of the tournament is to disseminate knowledge on competencies, technologies and livelihoods of workers among people and to keep abreast of international standards,” said U Kyaw Kyaw Lwin, director

of Myanada Training.

He continued: “It also aims to turn out qualified workers in the country and select outstanding youths to compete in the 11th ASEAN Skills Competition, which will be held in Malaysia this year.”

The local contest is scheduled to run from 14 to 20 March at the Thuwunna Central Training Centre in Thingangyun Township, Yangon.

The competition will cover 12 categories, including cooking,

installation of electrical equipment, air-con services, food catering services and welding.

Hopeful contestants can obtain free application forms from the NSSA at No. 298 Myananda Street, Ward 13, Yankin Township. They may also send requests for application forms to myanmar-skills2016@gmail.com. Interested participants must send their application forms to the office not later than 29 February, an organiser said.—Myint Maung Soe

Traditional boxing event to be held next month

A TRADITIONAL boxing competition will be held in March, with organisers estimating that the event may arouse a greater interest from local audiences than international events.

Organised by the Myanmar Boxing Federation in cooperation with Great Tiger Group, the event is scheduled to be held on 4 March at Mandalay’s Kandawgyi Garden at 6pm, featuring traditional boxing performances by ethnic-minority athletes.

At least 20 well-known ath-

letes will take part in the event. Mandarin Phoe Kay will fight Kyel Lin Aung, while Thabyay-nyo will face Thway Thit Aung, Min Naing Tun will face Joka and Ye Thway Ni will face Tun Lwin Moe in the bouts.

Tickets will be available at two teashops—Kima Tin Win at the corner of 35th and 76th streets and Sein Win Café between 34th and 85th streets, with prices ranging from K10,000 (US\$8.07) to K30,000 (\$24.22).

—Khin Khin Win

Grand Wynn to donate instant noodles to fire victims

GRAND Wynn plans to send 20,000 packs of dried noodles to fire victims in Namhsam and Labutta. The announcement was made at Grand Wynn’s 25th founding anniversary in Yangon on 20 February.

“The food we produce is safe and will be distributed to the people with recommendations from the Food and Drug Administration,” said U L Lamain Dein, CEO of Grand Wynn.—Min Khant Soe

Crime News

Three injured in car accident

A 22 wheel vehicle heading from Mandalay to Lashio being driven by one Myo Ko Oo, 18, ran off the road and turned over at mileposts 114/1-2, Mandalay-Muse road, Kyaukme township on Thursday as the vehicle was overloaded. The accident injured

Daw Hla Aye, 57, the driver Myo Ko Oo, 18, and conductor Maung Soe Htet Kyaw, 24. They are receiving medical care at Kyaukme general hospital. Myo Ko Oo was deemed guilty of careless driving by the police.—Than Htay (Dala)

Marijuana seized in Bago

LOCAL authorities seized a cache of marijuana in Kyauktaga Township, Bago Region, on Friday, arresting three men for drug dealing, police reported yesterday.

Kyaw Kyaw, 30, Bo Tot, 17, and Win Htay, 51, who were carrying 1.04 kilos of marijuana on two motorbikes, were arrested near mile post No 114/0 along the Yangon-Mandalay hi-

ghway in Mukhayan Village by local police.

According to a police investigation, Win Htay, who resides Lettatgyi Village in Kyauktaga Township, rented motorbike taxis owned by Kyaw Kyaw and Bo Tot, asking them to deliver marijuana to a customer.

Everyone involved in the case has been charged under the Anti-Drug Law.—Khin Ko



The suspects are seen with the marijuana seized from them. PHOTO: KHIN KO

Raw opium seized in Waingmaw



Ma Khong Shaung seen with seized opium. PHOTO: MYANMAR POLICE FORCE

AN anti-drug squad seized 1.7 kilograms of raw opium from one Ma Khong Shaung on board a passenger bus at Waingmaw-Kan Paik road, Waingmaw township on Wednesday.

On the same day, members of the police discovered 800 yabba pills in a house owned by one Than Daing in ward 5, Kyaung-Gyi Su ward, Taunggyi. The police have filed charges against them under the Anti-Narcotic Law.—Myanmar Police Force

Illegal jade stones seized in Moemauk

LOCAL Authorities seized 103 illegal jade stones from a car at Sein Lon checkpoint, Moemauk township, Kachin State on Thursday. Acting on a tip-off, a combined team searched a vehicle heading from Moemauk to Lwejai driven by one Aung Kyaw Soe, 21,

with one Nan Win Hlaing, 21, on board. They found 113 visses (a viss is approx. 1.6 kilograms) of jade stones. They are being charged under Section 39 of the Gems Law by police. Members of the police further discovered 87 illegal jade stones in a PAJERO

being driven by one Zin Bo, 29, on the Moemauk-Lwejai road. Acting on a tip-off, members of the police searched the car and found 225 visses of jade stones.

He is being charged under Section 39 of Gems Law by the police.—Myanmar Police Force

Illegal logs seized in Sagaing

AS PART of its operation to control illegal timber smuggling, Myanmar Police Force put more effort to expose illegal smuggling cases in the operation areas. A combined team involving local police and staff from the Forestry Department searched a vehicle near Sayay junction, No.3 District to District Connec-

tion Road in Sagaing Township on 17 February.

The police seized six illegal sawn logs weighing 0.7836 tonnes on Super Custom while en route from Dazai Township of Sagaing Region to Mandalay Region. Driver is U Nan Ya Aung from 6th Street, Ward 15. Similarly, the team also discovered

0.7974 tonnes of 32 illegal sawn logs on a vehicle near Theintaw village, Sagaing-Monywa-Shwebo Road. The vehicle was leading for Mandalay Region with U Kyaw Oo from Zegon village, Kantbalu Township at the wheel.

Action was taken by the Sagaing Police against the drivers.—Myo Win (Sagaing)

Chin National Day celebrated in Haka

THE 68th Chin National Day was celebrated in Haka, the capital of the state, on 20 February.

On behalf of President U Thein Sein, President's Office Minister U Soe Thane formally opened the celebration.

He read a message sent by the president for the occasion of the 68th Chin National Day.

Messages sent by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than and Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint were also put on record at the ceremony.

Along with Union Minister

U Soe Thane, Union Minister for Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development U Ohn Myint, Union Minister for Environmental Conservation and Forestry U Win Tun, Chief Minister for Chin State U Hong Ngai, Deputy Minister for Border Affairs Major-General Than Htut and departmental officials also attended the celebration.

During the ceremony, the Union ministers and local people erected a Chin traditional ceremonial post to mark the day and enjoyed the traditional performances.—Myanmar News Agency



Chins celebrate 68th Chin National Day in Haka. PHOTO: MNA

Water shortages faced in Sagaing Region

ACCORDING to local residents, water shortages are currently being experienced a month earlier than previous years in the Sagaing Region village of Inn Paw, located in Kani township.

The region is usually hit by a scarcity in the availability of water during the month of April, but this year drinking water shortages have been felt as early as the beginning of February.

"We're experiencing a shortage of water in this region before the arrival of the summer months. The residents and animals of our region suffer when we don't have access to water. There is some water left in the government built well," said U Win Naing Oo, the local administrator for Inn Paw village.

The main water reserve for the village of Inn Paw, which is located roughly 45 miles away from the town of Mapin, is a reservoir but it is known that this is

quickly drying out.

"We're going to have a real water shortage in our village before long. We're going to have to start buying barrels of water [from the well] to use which will be priced at K300. It would be better if the government would work as much as its capacity will allow in order to provide water for our village," said a Inn Paw resident, Ko Poe Lone.

Local residents are currently paying K300 per barrel of water from the government dug well. It is known the fee incurred for the water barrels pays the electricity bill of the water pump which sucks up the water from inside the well. When the region suffers from annual water shortages, as well as the local development committee distributing water around in vehicles, civil society groups and charitable residents come to make donations.—Myitmakha News Agency



Sapporo Zoo donates two giraffes to Nay Pyi Taw Zoological Garden

JAPAN'S Sapporo Zoo has donated two giraffes to the Zoological Garden in Nay Pyi Taw.

The two giraffes arrived in Mae Sot, Thailand, today, and they will be transported by car to the Nay Pyi Taw Zoological Garden tomorrow.—Myanmar News Agency

Myanmar's Opportunity: Investing in All Its People

By Axel van Trotsenburg, World Bank vice president for East Asia and the Pacific

MYANMAR is experiencing a historic transformation. The November 8 elections marked a milestone after four years of peaceful transition, with a new Parliament chosen and one political party – the National League of Democracy – holding a majority of seats. In parallel, Myanmar's economy is also undergoing transformation, growing at seven percent a year – among the fastest in East Asia.

When the new government takes office next month it will pick up the baton to deliver on the people's aspirations for a prosperous and harmonious Myanmar. While it will have solid successes to build on, there remain great challenges ahead.

About a third of the population still lives in extreme poverty. Almost three quarters of children in rural Myanmar grow up in homes without electricity to run a refrigerator or power lights to do homework at night. Only 29 percent of the poorest children graduate from secondary school.

Myanmar has a real opportunity to ensure that economic growth is inclusive and that a growing share of people benefit from the new opportunities that economic growth creates. This means not only sustaining a strong pace of growth, but doing so through a diversified economy that can create good jobs in higher-productivity sectors.

Myanmar's agriculture sector is a good place to start. It employs 65 percent of the country's labor force, but suffers from low productivity. The average rice paddy yields 2.5 tons per hectare, only half the amount of other exporters in the region.

New investments to enhance agricultural productivity by supplying quality seeds and adopting modern farm technologies can raise incomes for farm families,



Mr Axel Trotsenburg is welcomed by Chin ethnic people. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

which comprise most of Myanmar's poor. Such steps can enable a structural shift for the rural workforce to more labor-intensive and higher-productivity sectors and sustainable reductions in poverty and inequality.

Inclusive growth also means greater investment in Myanmar's greatest resource – its people – by ensuring education for all, health-care for all, and energy for all. Providing these essential services will require policy to ensure sound public financing through tax collection, sound public spending, and public investments that favor infrastructure and human development.

Infrastructure investments can spur private sector job growth and support more productive and labor-intensive economic activities, such as manufacturing and textile production.

Inclusive growth also requires a concerted effort to reach the poorest communities, mostly located in rural and remote parts of Myanmar. Myanmar's National Community-Driven Development (CDD) program, which is supported by the World Bank, is doing just that by providing financial support to the poorest communities in the country.

Through its 1,700 projects across nine townships, the CDD

program directly engages local communities in Myanmar's transformation, empowering those communities to choose to invest in the things they decide are most essential – whether repairing a school, health center or a road, or providing safe drinking water.

This program shows us how it is possible to reach and empower even the poorest communities with small investments that yield big dividends in their daily lives – so that everyone can share in the country's good fortune.

Today, Myanmar faces both the opportunity and the challenge of building on the development gains made since 2011. An extended period of inclusive growth and transformation for the entire country, when everyone benefits and is engaged, offers the best prospects for the end of conflict and a lasting peace.

In the final analysis, it is the people of Myanmar who will make the critical decisions that will guide the development of their country. The international community, including multilateral institutions like the World Bank Group, can play an important supportive role.

We are privileged to accompany Myanmar on its journey toward a more peaceful and prosperous future.

LOCAL Business

Appreciation of the dollar stabilises value of Myanmar gold

DESPITE a fall in the value of gold on the world market, a tical's worth (0.576 ounces) of Myanmar gold is currently stable - during this third week of February - at approximately K793,000, gold shoppers have made it known.

An ounce of gold on the world market valued as much as \$1,260 during the second week of February, before declining to \$1,198 in the third week of this month. The value of the US dollar to the Myanmar Kyat has increased from \$1 equalling

K1,200 to approximately K1,250 to the dollar.

"It can be said there is a downward trend in the value of gold on the world market. Prior to 2015, it was normal for the dollar to decline in value when the price of world market gold was high. In the wake of 2015 however, the price of the dollar would mimic the trend of an increase in the value of world market gold. For now, you could say things are back to normal but the price of the dollar still isn't stable," explained

U Maw Maw, general manager of the AungThamardi gold store.

The value of a tical of Myanmar pure gold peaked at K803,000 during the second week of February, dropping to as low as K791,900 during third week of the month. The current increased value of the dollar, and depreciation in value of gold on the world market, has created a situation whereby the price of Myanmar pure gold is not costing what it should. — Myitmaka News Agency



Myanmar National Airlines opens third international route to Bangkok. PHOTO: TRANSPORT MINISTRY

MNA opens third international route

MYANMAR National Airlines opened its third international route to Bangkok, Thailand, on 20 February.

MNA launched the Yangon-Bangkok route at the Yangon International Airport on 20

February with a new Boeing 737-800.

Flights on the route are scheduled on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Monday.

The flights depart from Yangon at 5:45pm MST and arrive

in Bangkok at 7:15pm local time. Return flights leave Bangkok at 9:19pm local time and arrive Yangon 9:35pm MST.

MNA previously opened routes to Singapore and Hong Kong. — Kay Khaing

YSX securities trading to launch in March



(The following is the clarification of U NyoMyint, Senior Managing Director, KBZ Stirling Coleman Securities Co Ltd, over securities trading at the Yangon Stock Exchange.)

THE Yangon Stock Exchange was inaugurated on 9 December with plans for six companies to start trading in March. The companies are FMI, Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings Public Ltd, Great HorKham, Myanmar Citizen Bank, Myanmar Frist Private Bank and MAPCO.

Ten companies have been chosen to operate as underwriter companies, including KBZ SC, MSEC, AYA Trust, CB Securities.

KBZ Bank has been chosen as the Authorised Fund Settlement Bank of the Yangon Stock Exchange by the SECM.

Out of the six listed companies, shares of FMI and Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings Public Ltd are targeted to be sold out to public in early March 2016.

KBZ and MSEC have opened securities accounts for FMI and have also been in talks with AYA Trust and CB Securities to provide necessary services to Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings Public Ltd.

Trading shares at the Yangon Stock Exchange will be available using an online sys-

tem. In order to participate in online trading, companies need to open securities accounts with the underwriter companies. When a securities account is opened, the underwriter companies will save securities of original shareholders and will give login IDs and passwords for the securities so that shareholders can conduct online trading without worrying about losing securities or fraud.

Those who want to open the securities accounts at underwriting companies need to first open bank accounts in person.

When those who have opened KBZ Bank account trade securities online, KBZ, the cash settlement bank, will settle cash in real-time transactions.

Generally, those who want to trade shares can open several securities accounts at underwriting companies. However, to check financial balances quickly, traders should open securities accounts at one underwriting company in order to get the chance to check consolidated financial statements online.

— The Mirror

Foreign hotel booking website to feature hotels in Chin State in bid to boost tourism development

FRENCH based hotel booking service website 'Jovago' is to provide online booking services for hotels located in Myanmar's Chin State in order to boost tourism development to the remote and mountainous region of the country.

Jovago's investments into Myanmar began in November of last year, with the country becoming one of over 40 which the company provides online booking services for.

"We are going to work together with all the hotels in Chin State in order to help make it a good place to travel. We have already been in contact with all the hotels," said Hugo Schleicher, Jovago's manager for Myanmar operations.

Chin State is also a place of interest to those wishing to cross the borders as it has many connections into the far eastern regions of India, while tour companies have made it known that

since last year the most visited parts of the State have been the town of Kampetlat, Nat Ma and Kanedi mountains and the Shalom fortress atop of Chin mountain; the plains of Tiddim and the heart shaped Ri lake.

"If the tourism industry of Myanmar is going to develop then special new tourist regions need to be exposed. Instead of just having one mass-visited destination, other potentially beautiful areas should be made

of interest of tourists," said U Tin HtunAung, secretary of the Myanmar Tourism Entrepreneurs Association.

The official opening of the Indian-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) trilateral highway - which starts in the eastern Manipur region of India before passing through the Tamu, Kalaywa, Monywa, Mandalay, Meitila, Naypyidaw, Mon State, Kawka-reik and Myawaddy of Kay-in State, crossing the boarder

into Mae Sot of Thailand - has brought a growth of tourism to Chin State, Hugo Schleicher evaluated.

Chin State is yet to be used for industrial exploration enterprises, unlike other parts of the country, and still retains all of its natural beauty, while the southern part of the State is home to the Nat Ma mountain national park which is listed as a ASEAN heritage site. — Myitmaka News Agency



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un guides Korean People's Army (KPA) military drills, in this undated photo released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) in Pyongyang on 21 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Top DPRK leader guides military drills

PYONGYANG — Top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Kim Jong Un recently guided war maneuvers of the army's large combined units and watched a flight drill, the official KCNA news agency reported yesterday.

Engaged in the maneuvers were metropolitan defence corps, a tank division and two motorized infantry divisions of the Korean People's Army (KPA), according to the KCNA. The maneuvers were aimed at "further rounding off operational preparedness for reliably defending Pyongyang from any enemy attack," it said.

Kim stressed the importance

of "practical and actual drills."

Meanwhile, he watched a flight drill carried out by fighter pilots of the KPA air and anti-air forces, and expressed satisfaction over the drill. He urged the pilots to intensify training and to round off combat readiness on the occasion of the 7th Congress of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea in May.

Kim was accompanied by Minister of the People's Armed Forces Pak Yong Sik and Chief of the KPA General Staff Ri Myong Su. Ri Myong Su, former Minister of People's Security, has replaced Ri Yong Gil to become the new chief of the General Staff of the KPA.—Xinhua

Opposition SDP holds convention, vows to fight Constitution revision

TOKYO — The Social Democratic Party vowed yesterday to fight Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's drive to amend the war-renouncing Constitution as the small opposition party wrapped up a two-day convention in Tokyo.

The party adopted an action plan calling for "bold" cooperation among Japan's opposition forces to unite against the ruling bloc in

this summer's House of Councilors election.

The main opposition Democratic Party of Japan, the Japanese Communist Party, the SDP and two other opposition parties Friday submitted to parliament two bills that aim to scrap controversial security laws enacted last year.

Senior executives of the four other parties attended the first day

of the convention Saturday as guests and urged unity.

Under the security legislation that is to be put into effect 29 March, Japan would be allowed to exercise the right to collective self-defence and the Self-Defence Forces' overseas roles would be expanded.

Abe, president of the Liberal Democratic Party, in early Febru-

ary called for more public debate about amending the Constitution, which he has said will be one of the issues to be highlighted during campaigns for the upper house election.

The SDP action plan meanwhile expressed alarm about a crisis the small party may be facing in the upcoming summer election.

The party currently has two

House of Representatives members and three upper house members. Of them, the seats of two upper chamber members — SDP leader Tadatomo Yoshida and former leader Mizuho Fukushima — are up for grabs in the election. Support for the SDP is shrinking despite its history dating back to 1955, when it started as the Japan Socialist Party.—Kyodo News

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Indian army deploys troops to quell protests

BAHADURGARH, (India)/ NEW DELHI — India deployed thousands of troops in a northern state yesterday to quell protests that have severely hit water supplies to Delhi, a city of more than 20 million people, forced factories to close and killed 10 people.

Rioting and looting in Haryana by the Jats, a rural caste, is symptomatic of increasingly fierce competition for government jobs and educational openings in India, whose growing population is set to overtake China's within a decade.

The federal government has already deployed 4,000 troops and 5,000 paramilitaries in a massive show of force to restore order. It has ordered an end to the protests by Sunday night, an official in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's office said.

In Bahadurgarh, on the road west from Delhi, around 2,000 protesters were occupying a highway intersection and stopping truck traffic. Shops in the town were closed.

"We are here to die," said Rajendra Ahlavat, a 59-year-old farmer and protest leader. "We will keep going until the government bows to the pressure. There is no way we will take back our demands."

TV reports from Jhajjar, further west, showed troops fanning

out on the streets against a backdrop of burning and damaged buildings — evidence of the fury of Jats who make up a quarter of Haryana's population and number more than 80 million in total.

Haryana's police chief said the death toll had risen to 10 and 150 more had been injured. "We are trying to identify the conspirators and take action," Director General of Police Yash Pal Singal told a televised news conference.

Protesters have attacked the homes of regional ministers, torched railway stations and staged sit-ins on tracks, blocking hundreds of trains. They sabotaged pumping equipment at a water treatment plant that provides most of Delhi's water.

"No water available now. Still no hope to get it," Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said in a tweet.

The Delhi government ordered schools to shut on Monday and rationed water supply to residents to ensure that hospitals and emergency services have enough.

Maruti Suzuki India Ltd, India's biggest carmaker by sales, suspended operations at its plants in the state after the protests disrupted the supply of some components. With many road and rail links cut, the government announced that extra flights had been laid on to destinations in



Demonstrators from the Jat community eat as they block the Delhi-Haryana national highway during a protest in New Delhi, India, on 21 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

northwest India.

The unrest poses a threat to Modi's promise of jobs and growth for the aspirational Indians who elected him in 2014 with the largest majority in three decades.

Modi, who has previously faced criticism for ignoring unrest that does not fit with the upbeat narrative of his nationalist government, avoided reference to the protests in a visit to the state of Chattisgarh. He unveiled a statue and spoke on efforts towards rural and urban development.

Modi wants to attract foreign investment to back his 'Make in India' drive to create 100 million

manufacturing jobs by 2022. At the current rate India may only create 8 million jobs in that period, by one independent estimate.

The Jat protests echo a similar movement last year in Modi's home state of Gujarat, where the Patel community demanded a greater share of scarce government jobs and college places that are now reserved for people from lower castes. Hardik Patel, the 22-year-old leader of the Gujarat unrest, became a national sensation after drawing half a million people to one rally. The authorities cracked down on Patel, who was charged with sedition in October.—Reuters

Thousands in Japan rally against US base on Okinawa

TOKYO — Thousands of people surrounded Japan's parliament yesterday to protest against government plans to relocate a US military base on Okinawa island, local media reported.

Kyodo news agency said some 28,000 protesters had ringed parliament house in central Tokyo, holding hands and shouting: "Don't build the base". Hundreds more held similar protests across the country, it also reported.

Okinawa was the site of Japan's only land battles in World War II and many residents there resent the fact that it hosts tens of thousands of US troops and military.

The United States and Japan agreed in 1996 to relocate the base, currently in a heavily populated area, to a new site in Henoko, but many residents of the island have rejected the proposal and want the base moved altogether.

Many residents of Okinawa say they associate US bases with noise, pollution and crime. —Reuters



Indian army soldiers take their positions near the site of a gun battle between Indian security forces and militants on the outskirts of Srinagar on 21 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Two soldiers, one civilian died in Kashmir militant attack

SRINAGAR — Militants attacked a paramilitary convoy and a government building in India's disputed Kashmir region on Saturday, killing at least two soldiers and a civilian, police said.

The militants attacked the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel near Srinagar,

Kashmir's capital, before invading the premises of the Entrepreneurship Development Institute, where about 100 people were undergoing a training programme.

Thirteen CRPF personnel were injured in the attack, said Syed Javed Mujtaba Geelani, inspector general of police.

The CRPF is still engaged in a gun battle with the rebels but the police have safely evacuated the civilians who were trapped in the building, Geelani said.

Muslim separatists have been fighting Indian forces in the Indian portion of Kashmir since 1989. India accuses Pakistan of

training and arming the rebels in the portion it controls and sending them to the Indian side, a claim its neighbour denies. India and Pakistan fought two of their three wars since independence in 1947 over Muslim-majority Kashmir, which they both claim in full but rule in part. —Reuters

Japan aquarium takes up challenge of breeding endangered penguin

ASAHIKAWA — Japan's northernmost aquarium is taking up the challenge of breeding endangered Humboldt penguins, whose original habitat is a much warmer region in South America.

Hiddenori Takai, 41, the leader of the seven-member breeding team at Wakkanai Noshappu Aquarium in Hokkaido, says he wants to teach children who visit about "how life is nurtured" through the breeding programme.

Humboldt penguins live in coastal areas of Chile and Peru, and they favor temperatures of around 10 to 20 C.

Many rearing facilities around the world are striving to breed the endangered species. It is likely to be particularly challenging for the aquarium, as it is located in Japan's northernmost city of Wakkanai, where temperatures are much lower.

The annual average temperature in Wakkanai is 6.8 C while the average for the January-February period is as low as minus 4.7 C, according to the Wakkanai Local Meteorological Observato-



Hiddenori Takai, the leader of a seven-member team at Wakkanai Noshappu Aquarium in Hokkaido that has taken up the challenge of breeding the endangered Humboldt penguin on 21 February. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

ry. A fan heater is needed to keep the five Humboldt penguins currently kept at the aquarium warm when temperatures fall.

The aquarium is now planning to welcome a breeding-age pair from another aquarium in the southern Hokkaido city of Muroran.

The aquarium has bitter history. A baby penguin, born in February 2004, died a week after being hatched due to exposure to the cold. It turned out that a window of the building had been left open.

The staff members have

pledged not to make the same mistake again. They are now considering setting up a special room for the penguin couple from Muroran and preparing a better environment for them to breed during the night.

The species usually lay eggs in spring and fall. They take some 40 days to hatch.

Takai said, "We don't have a luxury facility like aquariums in cities, but I want the breeding to be successful and make our aquarium a place where (people can) take a close look at lives."

—Kyodo News

Suspected Islamist militants kill Hindu priest in Bangladesh

DHAKA — Suspected Islamist militants stabbed and killed a Hindu priest at a temple in Bangladesh yesterday, and shot and injured a devotee who went to his aid, police said.

Bangladesh has suffered a wave of Islamist militant violence in recent months, including a series of bomb attacks on mosques and Hindu temples.

Some of the attacks have been claimed by Islamic State, which has also said it is behind the killings of a Japanese citizen, an Italian aid worker and a policeman.

In Sunday's attack, five or six motorcycle-borne attackers cut the throat of the priest, Jogeshwar Roy, 55, as he was organising prayers at the Deviganj temple near Panchagar, 494 km (308 miles) north of the capital, Dhaka, police said.

"We suspect that they

might be members of the banned Islamist militant group Jamaatul Mujahedeen Bangladesh (JMB)," police official Humayun Kabir told Reuters.

The Islamist militant group could not be reached for comment. No group has so far claimed responsibility.

The motive for the killing was probably to create an unstable situation in the country and ultimately establish a caliphate, Kabir, the deputy director general of police in the area, added.

One devotee who tried to stop the priest's attackers was shot in the leg before the group fled, he said. Police have not yet made any arrests.

The government denies that Islamic State has a presence in the country of 160 million people. Police have blamed earlier attacks on home-grown Islamist militants. —Reuters

Trump wins decisively in South Carolina, Clinton clinches Nevada



Voters wait in line at a polling station in Greenville, South Carolina, on 20 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

LAS VEGAS/COLUMBIA — Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump rolled to victory on Saturday in South Carolina in a contest that saw former Florida Governor Jeb Bush drop out, while Democratic hopeful Hillary Clinton beat back a strong challenge from Bernie Sanders in Nevada.

The victories by Trump, who is running as an anti-establishment outsider, and Clinton, a preeminent political insider, solidified their positions as the front-runners to win their parties' respective nominations ahead of the 8 November presidential election.

The night's most prominent casualty, Bush suffered a distant fourth place finish in the Republican contest and announced he had suspended his campaign, ending his dream of becoming a third Bush president after his father and brother.

"The people of Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina have spoken, and I really respect their decision," an emotional

Bush said in Columbia. He finished far out of the running in each of the first three states.

By winning both South Carolina and New Hampshire and holding leads in 13 states that hold Republican contests on 1 March, Trump was arguably on track to win the nomination, an outcome that seemed astounding to contemplate when he entered the race last summer.

"It's going to be very difficult for him to be derailed at this point," said Hogan Gidley, who was a senior adviser to former Republican candidate Mike Huckabee. The 69-year-old real estate billionaire and reality TV star was declared the winner in South Carolina about an hour after polls closed, and launched into a feisty victory speech.

"Let's put this thing away," Trump told cheering supporters in Spartanburg.

He denounced TV pundits for saying there could be enough anti-Trump votes to beat him when the race thins further.

"These geniuses," he said.

"They don't understand that as people drop out, I'm going to get a lot of those votes also. You don't just add them together."

Trump easily defeated Florida Senator Marco Rubio and Texas Senator Ted Cruz, who were in a close fight for second place and the right to declare themselves the anti-Trump alternative.

With 99 per cent of South Carolina precincts reporting, Trump had 32.5 per cent, followed by Rubio with 22.5 per cent and Cruz with 22.3 per cent.

Cruz's inability to distinguish himself from Rubio in the state was a blow to his campaign, which had invested heavily there to rally support among South Carolina's large population of evangelical voters. Trump's victory won him at least 44 of the state's 50 delegates, bringing his delegate count to 61, compared to 11 for Cruz and 10 for Rubio, according to a tally by Real Clear Politics. Republicans need 1,237 delegates to win the party nomination.—*Reuters*

Murdoch's Sun newspaper opposes British PM Cameron's EU deal

LONDON — Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* newspaper said yesterday Prime Minister David Cameron had failed to get a proper deal for Britain from other European Union leaders and was now on the wrong side of history by supporting membership.

The open opposition of Britain's most popular newspaper is a blow for Cameron who has said he will fight for membership in a referendum he has called for 23 June.

"Whatever we think of David Cameron's deal and the case for remaining in the EU, we

don't doubt his sincerity. We just think he's wrong," the *Sun* yesterday said in an editorial.

"His failure to get a worthwhile deal means that he's now on the wrong side of history," the newspaper said in an edition which also ran an article by Cameron arguing for membership.

Cameron said that *Sun* on yesterday readers would be "key voters in one of the biggest decisions of our lifetimes".

Murdoch opened up the possibility that some of his newspapers could oppose membership on Saturday when he

congratulated one of Cameron's closest political allies, Justice Secretary Michael Gove, for opposing Cameron on the EU.

"If we vote to stay after making such a fuss about leaving, the rest of the EU will conclude that although we moan a lot, when push comes to shove we've not got the fight to actually do anything," the newspaper said.

"Yes, the Leave campaign may be chaotic, with petty arguments between the different groups ... But that doesn't mean the fundamental argument is wrong."—*Reuters*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Jeb Bush withdraws from US presidential race

COLUMBIA — Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush said Saturday he is bowing out of the US presidential race.

The 63-year-old son of former President George H. W. Bush and brother of former President George W. Bush has been lagging in Republican primaries that began early February.

Businessman Donald Trump, 69, claimed victory in South Carolina's Republican primary Saturday, following his win in New Hampshire. Sen. Ted Cruz, 45, won the Iowa Republican caucus.

In Nevada's Democratic primary the same day, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, 68, claimed victory. She also won in Iowa but lost in New Hampshire to Sen. Bernie Sanders, 74. Both parties will decide on their candidates in July for the 8 November election to select the successor to Barack Obama.—*Kyodo News*

Support rate for Abe Cabinet down 7 points to 46.7%

TOKYO — The rate of support for the Cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe stood at 46.7 per cent in a telephone survey conducted Saturday and Sunday by Kyodo News, down 7.0 percentage points from the previous poll in late January.

The decline followed a series of scandals and gaffes involving Cabinet ministers and politicians of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, with 77.7 per cent of respondents agreeing that members of government and the ruling bloc have been lax in their duties.

The disapproval rate for the Cabinet stood at 38.9 per cent, compared with 35.3 per cent in late January.

Abe's point man in his economic policy team, Akira Amari, resigned from the post of economic and fiscal policy minister on 28 January to take responsibility for graft allegations against him and his aides.

On 12 February, LDP member Kensuke Miyazaki, who had vowed to become the first lawmaker in Japan to take paternity leave, resigned after admitting to having an affair with a woman while his wife, a fellow LDP parliamentarian, was about to give birth.—*Kyodo News*

Deal with NATO not in contravention of Constitution

BELGRADE — The law ratifying an agreement with NATO is not in contravention of the Constitution, President Tomislav Nikolic wrote for the *Novosti* daily, explaining why he had signed the bill into law.

The law establishes a legal framework for the cooperation, launched in 2006, with the signing of a status of forces agreement (SOFA), and then strengthened in 2014 with the adoption of an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP), Nikolic notes.

The deal with the NATO Support and Procurement Organisation (NSPO) on logistic support cooperation does envisage diplomatic immunity for NATO troops who are in the territory of Serbia with our permission, but also implies the reciprocal treatment for our soldiers in the signatory states, the Serbian president says, adding that the same principle applies for the exemption from customs duties and other taxes.—*Tanjug*

Three journalists from Turkish state news agency kidnapped by PKK — media

ISTANBUL — Three reporters for Turkey's state-owned Anadolu Agency have been kidnapped by insurgents from the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Mardin, in the mainly Kurdish southeast, the *Hurriyet* newspaper and other Turkish media reported yesterday.

No other information was immediately available.—*Reuters*

Missing radioactive material found dumped in south Iraq

BAGHDAD — A "highly dangerous" radioactive material that went missing in Iraq has been found dumped near a petrol station in the southern town of Zubair, environment ministry spokesman Ameer Ali told Reuters yesterday.

Ali said the material had not been damaged and there were no concerns about radiation.—*Reuters*

— OPINION —

Personal power versus positional power

Khin Maung Aye

IT is natural for all human beings to have a desire to prosper—to succeed in material terms and to be financially successful. People are said to be prosperous when they have become wealthy and successful. When it comes to civil service personnel, a successful employee is one who gets promotions earlier than fellow service personnel, who is sent abroad for further studies or who is sent to international fora to represent his country. This being so, government servants are always vying with one another to achieve career

advancement or to win scholarships to study abroad or to win an opportunity to be chosen as a member of a foreign delegation.

Employees of private firms, for their part, expect promotions and salary raises. They do not value foreign trips as much, partly because such chances are rare and partly because they do not earn extra money from such trips. As salary rises are positively correlated to promotions to higher ranks, company employees often harbour burning desires to climb the corporate ladder.

This being so, employees of government departments or enterprises or of private firms are always finding ways—fair or unfair, just or unjust, honest or dishonest—to get promoted to higher ranks. Since higher positions always come with better salaries and more power, service personnel rarely turn down promotions, even if they have to go to live and work in far-flung areas.

In this regard, it is worth remembering that positional power can spoil service personnel be-

cause it can lead employees to misusing the power vested in them by their positions. It is, therefore, important not to rely too much upon positional power in getting things done. It is true that managing things involves the use of positional power. However, its overuse can spoil the user. That being the case, The Global New Light of Myanmar would like to urge all service personnel, be they employees of the government or private companies, to rely chiefly upon their personal power in getting things done.

Write for us

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

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

Nation Building and Education

Sayar Mya

IN my two earlier articles, it was my pleasure and honor in sharing knowledge with the esteemed readers of the Global New Light of Myanmar with the themes (a) Nation Building through Normative Concept; and (b) Nation Building reflects different things to different people.

A few of my friends suggested I write about some countries in our own region that Myanmar could emulate either part, ingredient or component for easy reading as most of us are in fledgling status in the context of nation building. The suggested notion is quite acceptable to me to write on the countries in our region or elsewhere across the globe.

Although my background was in Myanmar Foreign Service, I am interested in sharing of knowledge on education that is critical to nation building.

What is Education?

Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. Educational methods include storytelling, discussion, teaching, training, and directed research. Education frequently takes place under the guidance of educators, but learners may also educate themselves.

Education can take place in formal or informal settings and any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts may be considered educational. The methodology of teaching is called pedagogy or a study of teaching methods.

Is Education different from schooling?

Mark K. Smith is a researcher

and educator based in London at Developing Learning. Smith explores the meaning of education and suggests it is a process of inviting truth and possibility. It can be defined as the wise, hopeful and respectful cultivation of learning undertaken in the belief that all should have the chance to share in life.

Education is commonly and formally divided into stages such as preschool or kindergarten, primary school, secondary school. Higher education, also called tertiary, third stage, or postsecondary education, is the non-compulsory educational level that follows the completion of a school such as a high school or secondary school.

Tertiary education is normally taken to include undergraduate and postgraduate education, as well as vocational education and training. Colleges and universities mainly provide tertiary education.

Collectively, these are sometimes known as tertiary institutions. Individuals who complete tertiary education generally receive certificates, diplomas, or academic degrees and then college, community college, university or apprenticeship.

A right to education has been recognized by some governments, including at the global level: Article 13 of the United Nations' 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognizes a universal right to education. In most regions education is compulsory up to a certain age.

Formal education

Formal education occurs in a structured environment whose explicit purpose is teaching students. Usually, formal education takes

place in a school environment with classrooms of multiple students learning together with a trained, certified teacher of the subject. Most school systems are designed around a set of values or ideals that govern all educational choices in that system. Such choices include curriculum, physical classroom design, student-teacher interactions, and methods of assessment, class size, educational activities, and more.

Education is normally means the acquiring of knowledge as well as the skills that are well accepted by a given society. The education status may differ from one country from another. On the other hand, the nation-building is the implementation of processes that are pushed ahead or geared towards composing the various institutions of the country. The main aim is to reflect the wishes, needs and aspirations of the wider society.

Since education is the pathway to any nation-building endeavor, it provides and brings in the good things as follows.

Firstly, education creates an enlightened society. This is crucial prerequisite to nation-building, because the more a people become enlightened they more they would refrain from doing wrong things. They will never endanger the nation-building efforts.

The educated elites and citizens will always tend to responsive and responsible general public. In other words, it means that they obey state laws, bye-laws, rules and regulations. Without this characteristic, no nation-building efforts will be set into motion and a smooth sail.

Secondly, nation-building requires a "meritocratic system"

with a view to make the all the institutions more effective. Only in this kind of environment and better education system, the country will have the best human resources that are competent enough to carry out day to day affairs of the state.

Most states collapsed as a result of low level of education because the human resource is so weak. It means the incapacity of filling qualified students at the state institutions. However, by elevating the level of education, the nation-building task could be improved.

Thirdly, the nation-building requires a democratic society that allows the contribution of all people in the country --- rich or poor. With proper education, there will always be an increase in democratic participation. All inclusive participation will in turn enhance nation-building initiatives in a better perspective. We can trust and count in the citizens' participation in the nation-building.

On the fourth aspect of nation-building and education, the schooling stands out as very crucial in the formation of cross-cutting cleavages. In other words, division between people or groups could be narrowed down and forge them to come together. Such trend could embraces diversity among the nationals. Therefore, accepting differences is very important in nation-building. Until or unless we reconcile and accept our differences and come together, progress in nation-building will not move ahead. With good education, the fear of such stagnation could be set aside.

As the fifth point, education creates a large middle-class such as doctors, engineers, scientists, pro-

fessionals, technicians, teachers, normal business people, traders, etc. This class is very important to nation building because they provide the necessary expertise that needed in a nation-building.

This is the reason why emphasis has been laid on education because an educated society is always a strong society. It is the society that is set for development.

We have already arrived at 21st century, and it is necessary that all developing countries must equip themselves with e-government or electronic government system in the nation-building.

E-government (short for electronic government, also known as e-gov, Internet government, digital government, online government, connected government) consists of the digital interactions between a citizen and their government (C2G), between governments and government agencies (G2G), between government and citizens (G2C), between government and employees (G2E), and between government and businesses/commerce (G2B).

The focus should be on:

- The use of information and communication technologies, and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government.
- The use of information and communication technologies in all facets of the operations of a government organization.
- The continuous optimization of service delivery, constituency participation and governance by transforming internal and external relationships through technology, the Internet and new media.

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Rakhine State villagers fear flooding after land reclamation

RESIDENTS of Kyaukpru, Rakhine State, have expressed anxiety over land reclamation activities on the Ngalapwae River for construction purposes, worrying that the river will burst its bank and flood during the rainy season.

The Ngalapwae River is over 10,000 feet long and over 500 feet wide. The 400 square feet of reclaimed land are meant to be the site of a new office for the Ministry of Border Affairs and shops. The land is being reclaimed on both sides of the narrowest part of river. "Some land was reclaimed

on the river back in 2014 for the construction of the bridge. It was in that year that the Kalarbartaung Village began to suffer from the flooding of the Ngalapwae River during the rainy season. Furthermore, flooding of the road, which connects the town with the docks, cut off vehicles transporting import and export goods. With the further reclamation of land on the river this year, we are sure to experience severe flooding," said U Maung Win Aung, a resident of Ngalapwae Village. Several residents of Kalarbartaung and Ngal-

apawe villages have been made homeless during the rainy season after the gateway for water into the sea, which flows from tributaries of the river and urban quarters of the town, became blocked, flooding the villages.

U Sein Htun Aung, the head of the township municipal department, said the details of tabulation records for the construction of buildings and shops on the reclaimed land could not be viewed, adding that he was not aware of any construction plans. —Myitmakha News Agency

Forest fire spreads to village

A forest fire destroyed a building in which a computer training course was being held for villagers in Naungpain Village in Kyaukme District on 21 February.

The fire spread to the building at 1:30pm, and villagers and firefighters put out the fire.

The fire was brought under control around 1:50pm. It

took two fire engines to put out the blaze. No one was injured, and the damage was valued at K1,740,000 (US\$1,410).—Kyaukme IPRD



Firefighters and volunteers are trying to control forest fire in Kyaukme. PHOTO: KYAUKME IPRD

Nation Building and Education

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Open education and electronic technology

In 2012, the modern use of electronic educational technology (also called e-learning) had grown at 14 times the rate of traditional learning. Open education is fast growing to become the dominant form of education, for many reasons such as its efficiency and results compared to traditional methods. Cost of education has been an issue throughout history and a major political issue in most countries today.

Online courses often can be more expensive than face-to-face classes. Out of 182 colleges surveyed in 2009 nearly half said tuition for online courses was higher than for campus based ones. Many large university institutions are now starting to offer free or almost free full courses such as Harvard, MIT and Berkeley teaming up to form **EdX**, which offers free online courses or classes. Other universities offering open education are

Stanford, Princeton, Duke, Johns Hopkins, Edinburgh, U. Penn, U. Michigan, U. Virginia, U. Washington, and Caltech. It has been called the biggest change in the way we learn since the printing press. Despite favorable studies on effectiveness, many people may still desire to choose traditional campus education for social and cultural reasons.

The conventional merit-system degree is currently not as common in open education as it is in campus universities, although some open universities do already offer conventional degrees such as the Open University in the United Kingdom.

Presently, many of the major open education sources offer their own form of certificate. Due to the popularity of open education, these new kind of academic certificates are gaining more respect and equal "academic value" to traditional degrees. Many open universities are working to have the ability to offer

students standardized testing and traditional degrees and credentials.

A culture is beginning to form around distance learning for people who are looking to social connections enjoyed on traditional campuses. For example, students may create study groups, meet ups and movements such as **UnCollege**. The word **UnCollege** provides students ready to be independent learners such as down the home-schooling route do so as a purely academic choice.

An integral approach to education automatically supports ongoing growth of learners and teachers over the entire span of development. Every parent is first a teacher; therefore, character education essentially begins at home.

According to **Mahatma Gandhi**, "Knowledge without character is a powerful evil." Character is based on human values. It is powerful tool that influences society. Integral parenting addresses the body, mind, soul and spirit of every child. It also moulds the child's character for long term growth and development.

Rural community gets vocational training

A VOCATIONAL training course in motorbike repairs organised by the the Rural Development Department in Dakhina District was opened in Zabuthiri Township in Nay Pyi Taw on 16 February with the aim of ensuring job opportunities and improving the socioeconomic status of rural people.

The course's trainers have been instructing 20 trainees in the basics of repairing wheel disorders, adjusting carburetors, adjustments, mechanics and installing electrical wiring.

The course will last for 15 days from 16 February to 1 March.—Shwe Koteko



Snakebite life insurance policy holders increase in Bago Region

THE Bago regional office of Myanmar Insurance of Ministry of Finance, has made it known that of the five different kinds of insurance policy that they offer, more residents of the region have been taking out policies for snakebite life insurance than fire and allied perils insurance policies.

The insurance policies on offer by Myanmar Insurance in Bago Region are life insurance, third party liability insurance, fire and allied perils insurance, marine cargo insurance and travel insurance.

"There has been a growth in the numbers of residents taking out fire [and allied perils] and snakebite life insurance within the

Bago Region. Snakebite life insurance is one of eight life insurance policies offered [by Myanmar Insurance]. Many of those who have taken out snakebite life insurance are from rural areas," explained Daw Than Win from Myanmar Insurance of Bago Region.

A snakebite life insurance policy form from Myanmar Insurance costs K500. If a policy is then taken out the insurance holder is liable to a minimum payout of K80,000 in treatment expenses if they are bitten by a snake during the year, and should their snakebite prove fatal, a maximum claim of up to K500,000 can be made.—Myitmakha News Agency

Character building is further enhanced from knowledge gained from Schools, Colleges, Universities and other centers of learning like Polytechnics, Teachers Training Institutes and other Private Educational Providers.

Development Goals

Since 1909, the ratio of children in the developing world attending school has increased. Before then, a small minority of boys attended school. By the start of the 21st century, the majority of all children in most regions of the world attended school.

Universal Primary Education is one of the eight international **Millennium Development Goals**, towards which progress has been made in the past decade, though barriers still remain. Securing charitable funding from prospective donors is one particularly persistent problem. Researchers at the Overseas Development Institute have indicated that the main obstacles to funding for education include conflicting donor priorities, immature aid architecture, and a lack of evidence and advocacy for the issue.

Additionally, Transparency International has identified corruption in the education sector as a major stumbling block to achieving Universal Primary Education in Africa. Furthermore, demand in the developing world for improved educational access is not as high as foreigners have expected.

Today, we are living in the world which encompasses knowledge. Education is crucial. It is not machines, land, and capital. It is human brain. Brain is the most important asset to any family, community and nation.

We have to form good education and develop it for socio-economic development. The quality of education means growth and development in intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social aspects. Research and creativity and innovation are very important for the future development. We could achieve this only through education, and build the nation in accordance with the desire, wishes and aspiration of the entire population including the national brethren.

Syria's Assad says he is ready for truce if 'terrorists' do not exploit it

BEIRUT/MADRID — Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said on Saturday he was ready for a cease-fire, on condition "terrorists" did not use a lull in fighting to their advantage and that countries backing insurgents halted support for them.

His comments were made as the Syrian opposition said it had agreed to the "possibility" of a temporary truce, provided there were guarantees Damascus's allies including Russia would cease fire, sieges were lifted and aid deliveries were allowed country-wide.

"We have said that we are ready to stop military operations, but the issue relates to more important factors ... such as preventing terrorists from using it to improve their positions," Assad told Spanish newspaper *El Pais* in an interview.

He also said any truce must ensure that "other countries, especially Turkey, are prevented from sending more terrorists and weapons, or any kind of logistical support".

Damascus refers to all insurgents fighting against the Syrian army and its allies as terrorists.

Turkey, other Sunni regional powers and Western countries have supported insurgents fighting against Assad, whose forces are bolstered by Iran, Russia and Lebanese Hezbollah.

Asked about the possibility of Turkey and Saudi Arabia sending ground forces into Syria, Assad said: "We're going to deal with them like we deal with the terrorists. We're going to defend our country. This is aggression."

Attempts to negotiate a truce in recent months have failed. The latest round of talks at the United Nations in Geneva is being jointly chaired by Russia and the United States.

World powers agreed in Munich on 12 February to a cessation of hostilities that would let humanitarian aid be delivered in Syria.

The ceasefire was scheduled to start a week later, but did not take effect. Syrian army offensives continue unabated across the country, backed by Russian air strikes.

Assad said last week he would keep "fighting terrorism" while peace talks took place, vowing to retake the whole country.

He told *El Pais* his troops were now close to fully controlling the northern city of Aleppo and were advancing towards the Islamic State stronghold of Raqqa province.

Once he has control of the country, Assad also said in the interview, the next step would be to form a national unity government that would lay the groundwork for a new constitution and general elections.—*Reuters*

US Air Force drone crashes in Afghanistan

KABUL — An unmanned American aircraft crashed at an airfield in southern Afghanistan less than three months after an identical drone went down in November, a US Air Force spokesman said yesterday.

After ending its combat mission in 2014, the US military still uses air strikes by drones and other aircraft in Afghanistan to target suspected members of al-Qaeda and

Islamic State and back up Afghan forces battling a Taliban insurgency.

There were no injuries or civilian damage in the crash of the state-of-the-art \$14-million MQ-9 Reaper late on Saturday night, Captain Bryan Bouchard of the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing said in a statement.

"The crash was contained on Kandahar airfield," he added. "US Air Force authorities will investigate the cause of the

crash but hostile fire was not a factor."

Usually guided remotely by pilots outside Afghanistan, unmanned aircraft have played a major, and sometimes controversial, role in the American war, acting as spy planes and launching missiles at suspected militants.

In November, another Reaper operating out of Kandahar and armed with missiles was totally destroyed when it

went down more than 483 km (300 miles) to the northeast of the base in a mountainous area.

The cause of that crash was not made public but the military also ruled out ground fire as a suspected factor.

Reapers were the US Air Force's first specifically designed "hunter-killer" unmanned aircraft, and are larger and more powerful than the older MQ-1 Predator drones.—*Reuters*

Niger starts voting in presidential election

NIAMEY — Niger began voting in an election yesterday in which President Mahamadou Issoufou is running for a second term with a promise to crush Islamist militants and develop the economy in one of the poorest countries in the world.

He faces 14 candidates including Seyni Oumarou, lead-

er of an opposition coalition. Critics say Issoufou used repression ahead of the vote, including arresting opposition supporters and jailing opposition leader Hama Amadou over charges related to a baby-trafficking ring.

Issoufou's government says it respects the law and calls the charges politically

motivated. Polls opened at 8 am local time (0700 GMT) but voting started slowly, with election officials laying out material at polling stations and a few people arriving to cast their ballots, witnesses said.

"I exercised my right to vote in favour of the candidate of my choice and I'm happy. I hope the election goes well,"

said Hadiza Djibril, a resident of the Karadje neighbourhood on Niamey's right bank.

Islamist militant group Boko Haram, which is based in neighbouring Nigeria, has staged a series of attacks in recent months, forcing authorities to declare a state of emergency in the southeastern region of Diffa.—*Reuters*

Twin bomb blasts kill dozens in Syria's Homs — monitoring group

BEIRUT — At least 46 people were killed in twin car bomb blasts that hit Syria's Homs yesterday in one of the deadliest such attacks in the city in five years of civil war, a monitoring group said, and state media confirmed the explosions.

At least 100 others were wounded by the explosions in the city centre's Zahra district, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Footage from pro-Damascus television channels showed charred corpses buried among rubble, damage to shop fronts and debris littering a wide area. Many cars were on fire, sending out plumes of black smoke. Wounded people walked around dazed.

State television quoted the governor of Homs as saying at least 25 people had been killed.

A bomb attack claimed by Islamic State last month in Homs in the west of the country killed at least 24 people as government forces took back some Islamic State-held villages in Aleppo province in the north.

Sunday's attacks also came a day after government advances against Islamic State. There was no immediate claim from the group, however.

A bomb attack in December which killed 32 people took place after a ceasefire deal that paved the way for the gov-



Damaged buses are seen at the site of two bomb blasts in the government-controlled city of Homs, Syria, on 21 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

ernment to take over the last rebel-controlled area of the city, which was a centre of the 2011 uprising against President Bashar al-Assad.

Observatory director Rami Abdulrahman said the attack was the second most deadly of its kind in Homs since 2011, and the deadliest for almost a year and a half.

Violence rages on unabated across the country as world powers and the United Nations push to end the conflict, meeting in Geneva to try to broker a ceasefire.

Peace talks were suspended almost immediately earlier this month as Syrian government forces and their allies, backed by Russian air strikes,

intensified assaults against insurgents in Aleppo Province.

The latest fighting in the north of the country has displaced tens of thousands of people, many of whom headed for the Turkish border. The exodus added to more than 11 million already displaced by the conflict that has claimed 250,000 lives.—*Reuters*

Shift in US sanctions could ground Russian rocket engines

WASHINGTON — The US Air Force would ground the Russian-built RD-180 engines that power its Atlas 5 rockets if a US government review determines that several sanctioned Russian individuals have too close a relationship with the engine maker, a top US general said on Friday.

Lieutenant General Samuel Greaves, who heads the Air Force's Space and Missile Systems Centre, said the Pentagon was reviewing responses about the sanctions issue and related matters in time to meet a 22 February deadline set by Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain.

McCain last week asked the Air Force and Pentagon to explain why the US government is continuing to use engines built by Russia's NPO Energomash given sanctions in place against Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin and other sanctioned individuals, who control the company after a big reorganisation.

Congress banned use of the Russian RD-180 rocket engines for military use after 2019, following Russia's annexation of

the Crimea region of Ukraine in 2014.

But US lawmakers eased the ban late last year, worried that it could drive United Launch Alliance, a joint venture of Lockheed Martin Corp and Boeing Co, out of business and leave only privately-held SpaceX, to lift satellites into space.

Greaves said the Air Force would abide by US law.

"These folks are on the sanctions list, and if the Department of the Treasury comes back and says there's a problem with that relationship, then we have to work with the Congress and others to determine a way ahead," he said.

Asked to elaborate about possible consequences, he said, "If we're not supposed to be flying the RD-180s, they're grounded."

The Treasury Department declined comment. A spokeswoman for United Launch Alliance also had no immediate comment.

The US Court of Federal Claims had ruled on the issue in response to a lawsuit filed in April 2014 by SpaceX, concluding



United Launch Alliance launches an Atlas V rocket with an United States Air Force OTV-4 onboard from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Florida, on 20 May 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

that the purchases were not in violation of US sanctions.

At the time, senior US officials said that control of Energomash by Rogozin could provide a basis for formally blocking the

property and interests of the company. McCain argues the situation has changed due to a new Russian law that took effect in January, which consolidated the Russian space industry under a

single state corporation, Roscosmos. Roscosmos is due to merge with the state-owned parent company of Energomash, making Energomash a direct subsidiary, he said.—Reuters

South Africa confirms first case of Zika virus



An *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito is seen in a lab of the International Training and Medical Research Training Centre (CIDEIM) in Cali, Colombia on 2 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

JOHANNESBURG — South Africa confirmed its first case of the mosquito-borne Zika virus in a Colombian man, health authorities said.

The virus, which is causing international alarm after spreading through much of the Americas, was detected in the man on his visit to Johannesburg, Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi said.

"The businessman presented

with fever and a rash approximately four days after arrival in South Africa but is now fully recovered," he said.

The World Health Organisation declared the outbreak a global public health emergency on 1 February, noting its association with two neurological disorders — microcephaly in babies and Guillain-Barre syndrome that can cause paralysis.—Reuters

Bangladeshi 'tree man' undergoes successful surgery on right hand

DHAKA — A nine-member medical team on Saturday operated on the right hand of a Bangladeshi man whose hands and feet have grown to resemble gnarled tree branches.

Abul Bajandar underwent his first surgery successfully at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) Saturday.

"We operated on Bajandar's right hand and the surgery was a success," Samanto Lal Sen, director of the 100 Bed

Burn Unit Project at the DMCH, told journalists.

He said Bajandar's future operations will be conducted gradually.

Md Abul Kalam, professor and head of the Department of Burn and Plastic Surgery and Project, led the nine-member team performing the operation for about four hours starting at around 10:30am (local time) Saturday.

Bajandar over the past 20

years has been suffering from the rare disease called epidermodysplasia verruciformis, which has tree trunk-like warts, almost weighing four kg on both his hands and feet. The rare disorder is also known as "tree man" disease. Bajandar got admitted to the DMCH on 30 January. He is said to be the fourth man in the world with the illness which makes the functionality of his limbs severely limited.—Xinhua

Record number of Americans apply to be astronauts: NASA

WASHINGTON — US space agency NASA said Friday that a record number of Americans have applied to be astronauts this year.

NASA said in a statement it has received more than 18,300 applications for its 2017 astronaut class, almost three times the number it received in 2012 for the most recent astronaut class, and far surpassing the previous record of 8,000 in 1978.

"It's not at all surprising to me that so many Americans from diverse backgrounds want to personally contribute to blazing the trail on our journey to

Mars," said NASA Administrator Charlie Bolden, himself a former astronaut.

"A few exceptionally talented men and women will become the astronauts chosen in this group who will once again launch to space from US soil on American-made spacecraft."

The application window opened on 14 December, and closed Thursday. Now, an 18-month process will begin to choose eight to 14 individuals for the opportunity to become astronaut candidates. NASA said it will announce its selections in mid-2017.

Then, the astronaut candidates will go through about two years of initial training on spacecraft systems, spacewalking skills and teamwork, Russian language and other requisite skills. Finally, those who complete the training will be assigned on any of four different spacecraft: the International Space Station, NASA's Orion spacecraft for deep space exploration, or one of two American-made commercial crew spacecraft currently in development — Boeing's CST-100 Starliner or the SpaceX Crew Dragon, NASA added.—Xinhua

Fiji super cyclone kills five, raises fears of health crisis

SYDNEY — Downed power lines and flooding are hampering relief efforts in Fiji after one of the most powerful storms recorded in the southern hemisphere tore through the Pacific island nation, flattening remote villages and killing at least five people.

Harsh winds and torrential rains tore up homes and cut power, water and communications links across the nation of about 900,000 people, although Suva, the capital, escaped the brunt after the storm changed direction at the last minute.

Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama confirmed the death toll and declared a 30-day state of emergency, with schools ordered to shut and a nationwide curfew extended until Monday morning.

“When we are able we will provide timelines for the return of water and power,” he said, adding that electricity supply to some areas had been deliberately cut to avert further damage.

The archipelago of about 300 islands hit late on Saturday by tropical cyclone Winston, which packed winds of 230 kph



A service station lays in ruin after Cyclone Winston swept through the town of Ba on Fiji's Viti Levu Island, on 21 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

(143 mph) that gusted up to 325 kph (202 mph).

Businessman Jay Dayal, who lives near Rakiraki, on the north coast of Fiji's main island where the cyclone hit land, said the storm damage was extensive.

“I wouldn't be surprised if people are now starting to go without food,” Dayal told Reuters. “It looks like a different country, it doesn't look like Fiji.”

Humanitarian agencies warned Fiji may be facing a po-

tential health crisis, mainly due to the lack of electricity. Low-lying river areas where hundreds of people live in tin sheds are also particularly vulnerable, aid workers said.

“We need electricity to en-

sure pumps are working and for sterilization,” Rajjeli Nicole, an official of aid agency Oxfam, told Reuters by telephone that flights have been scheduled yesterday to assess damage in remote areas.—*Reuters*

Beijing to build ventilation ‘corridors’ to help tackle smog

BEIJING — Authorities in Beijing plan to develop a network of ventilation “corridors” to help tackle the city's notorious air pollution, China's state news agency Xinhua reported yesterday.

Construction in the zones, which will be created by connecting parks, rivers, lakes, highways and low building blocks, will be strictly controlled and obstacles to air flow will be removed over time, Xinhua cited Wang Fei, deputy head of Beijing's urban planning committee, as saying. There will be five large corridors that will be more than 500 metres (0.3 miles) wide and several smaller ones, the report said, without giving a time frame for the project. Pollution is a sensitive topic in China, spurring public protests every year about environmental degradation, particularly from factories. For

Beijing and its surroundings, the government has set a target for 2020 of reducing pollution by 40 per cent from 2013 levels. A senior environment official said on Friday the city's air quality has improved over the last two years. Beijing frequently features near the top of the list of China's most polluted cities as emissions from vehicles and heavy industry combine with weather conditions to raise smog levels.

The worst bouts of air pollution tend to coincide with periods of low wind. The authorities have increased efforts to reduce air pollution in the wake of the city's first “red alerts” in December last year, when hazardous smog engulfed the city. Beijing will close 2,500 small polluting firms this year as part of efforts to combat pollution, Xinhua reported last month.—*Reuters*



A woman wearing a protective mask makes her way in a business district on a heavily polluted day in Beijing, China on 3 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

Moderates could gain influence over choice of next leader in Iran vote

BEIRUT — Iran's Assembly of Experts, made up mostly of elderly clerics, has not mattered much for years. The body's main task is choosing Iran's supreme leader, but that job has not come vacant since 1989.

This time it's different. Given the ailing health of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 76, the Assembly to be elected on 26 February for an eight-year term is likely to pick his successor, charting the course of the country for many years to come.

The Supreme Leader is the highest military and judicial authority in the country and has broad powers overseeing other branches of government. Even the president, who is directly elected, has less authority.

Khamenei, hardline successor to the Islamic Republic's founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, has ensured for decades that Tehran remains hostile to the United States abroad, and slow to embrace cultural reforms at home.

Elections for parliament are scheduled for the same day, but it is the outcome of the Assembly election that is likely to have a much greater long-term impact.

In terms of numbers, hardliners are almost certain to have the upper hand. The Guardian Council, a hardliner-dominated government body which reviews the eligibility of candidates, has

already disqualified 475 candidates, many thought to be moderates, leaving just 161 people vying for 88 places.

Among those disqualified was Khomeini's grandson Hassan Khomeini, a charismatic reformer blessed with his grandfather's potent name. The Council questioned his religious qualifications.

But the list of those permitted to stand includes other prominent moderates, first and foremost President Hassan Rouhani himself, who is riding a wave of domestic popularity after helping seal a nuclear deal with world powers last year.

He is joined by one of his most influential predecessors, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who already holds an Assembly seat and will be campaigning to keep it.

Earlier this week, Rouhani released the names of 16 candidates, including Rafsanjani, in a bloc calling themselves the “Friends of Moderation.” Their campaign slogan: “Moderation is Islam.”

Within the assembly, a conservative majority bloc is likely to be led by hardline clerics like Mohammad Taghi Mesbah-Yazdi, Ahmad Jannati and Mohammad Yazdi.

Nevertheless, the moderate minority could still play an important role in choosing the next

Supreme Leader.

When Khamenei was chosen in 1989 after Khomeini's death, the decision was taken only after elaborate backroom dealing that went far beyond a simple tally of votes in the Assembly.

There was discussion of putting together a leadership council, before a handful of top clerics in the Assembly, including Rafsanjani, pushed for the nomination of Khamenei.

Khamenei did not have the appropriate religious rank to hold the position at the time, so the constitution was amended to allow him to take his post. Similar dealing may take place in order to choose Khamenei's successor.

“Shi'ite clerics are really masters of the art of the deal,” said Hadi Ghaemi, executive director of the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, a US-based organisation which has criticised the widespread disqualification of candidates.

“So while it is important how big your faction is in the Assembly of Experts it does depend on who the charismatic dealmaker is at that time.”

In December, Rafsanjani broke a taboo by noting that a group had been formed within the Assembly to review possible candidates who could replace Khamenei.—*Reuters*

PICTURE OF THE DAY



Two horses fight at an ethnic Miao's horse fighting event celebrating Chinese Lunar New Year in Liuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China, on 20 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Seven people killed in random Michigan shootings, suspect in custody

MICHIGAN — Seven people were shot and killed and several others wounded in Michigan on Saturday night in a series of apparently random public shootings, according to authorities and local media.

The Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety said on its Facebook page that six people had been shot and killed and several others seriously wounded in three shootings in Kalamazoo County, in southwest Michigan.

Local media said early yesterday a teen-aged girl who was shot had died, becoming the seventh fatality.

"We seem to be dealing with a worst-case scenario, someone driving around

shooting," Kalamazoo County Undersheriff Paul Matyas told NBC News after the shootings. At least three people were wounded in the attacks.

The Kalamazoo Public Safety Department said a suspect fitting the description of the gunman had been apprehended without incident, citing Chief Jeff Hadley.

The suspect was not identified, but media reports, citing police, said he was aged 45, from Kalamazoo.

The public safety department earlier described the gunman as a white male in his 50s who was believed to be driving a dark coloured Chevy HHR SUV with chrome wheels, adding that

the vehicle may have been damaged. Police said the man who was arrested was driving a black HHR and had a weapon in the vehicle.

According to local media, four people were shot dead at a Cracker Barrel restaurant in Texas Township, and two more died at a Seelye Kia dealership in Kalamazoo. The teen-aged victim who later died was also shot at the restaurant.

The carnage began early Saturday evening when Matyas said police were first called to a Kalamazoo County apartment building where a woman was shot multiple times before later being listed in serious condition.

Hours later, they were called to the car dealership

where two people were shot and killed, and a third was wounded.

Four people were killed at a third shooting scene in the Cracker Barrel parking lot, where the gunman opened fire on people in their cars after a brief conversation. A fifth person died later.

The victims and shooting scenes appeared to have no link apart from the suspect. No motive for the seemingly random attacks had been determined.

Authorities could not be reached to verify the reports independently, but confirmed the deaths in media interviews and on social media. The victims' identities were not released.—Reuters

Udovicic: Sport tourism has great potential

BELGRADE — Minister of Youth and Sport Vanja Udovicic toured the stand of the Tourist Organisation of Belgrade which on Saturday ran a promotion of the 2017 European Athletics Indoor Championships at the Tourism Fair, and pointed to the huge potential of sport tourism.

"The development of sport infrastructure gives it a necessary boost. Just take the newly-built athletics hall as an example — it will be officially opened on 1 March to welcome

people from across the world," the line ministry cited Udovicic as saying.

Director of the Office for Kosovo-Metohija Marko Djuric dropped by the stand shared by his Office and the Tourist Association.

"Given its natural beauties and holy sites, every journey through Serbia's southern province is a personal story created through interactions with our monasteries and conversations with our people," Djuric said.—Tanjug

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'Fuocoammare' (Fire at Sea) wins Golden Bear for best film in Berlin

BERLIN — Gianfranco Rosi's documentary film "Fuocoammare" (Fire at Sea), about the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean off the Italian island of Lampedusa, won the Golden Bear prize for Best Film at the Berlin International Film Festival on Saturday.

It was a fitting end for a festival which went out of its way to make refugees welcome by giving them free tickets. Rosi paid tribute to those who risked their lives to escape war and poverty, and to the people of Lampedusa who welcomed them.

"Of course now at this moment my deeper thoughts go to all the people that never arrived to Lampedusa on these journeys of hope," Rosi said in his acceptance speech on stage at Berlin's cinema palace for the glittering awards ceremony.

Rosi, who won the top prize for another documentary in Venice in 2013, in this film shows daily life on the small island, mostly through the eyes of a young boy named Samuele who makes slingshots to shoot at birds and cactuses.

In the sea nearby, the Italian navy searches for overloaded boats full of refugees dying of suffocation and asphyxiation by diesel fumes and brings survivors back to Lampedusa for treatment and for transport to refugee cen-



Director Gianfranco Rosi poses with Jury President and actress Meryl Streep (R) after receiving the Golden Bear — Best Film award for the movie 'Fuocoammare' (Fire at Sea) during the awards ceremony at the 66th Berlinale International Film Festival in Berlin, Germany, on 20 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

tres.

"I want to dedicate this award to the people of Lampedusa who were always extremely open to accept people arriving there," Rosi said.

He noted that the flood of refugees that has made headlines recently began some 30 years ago

for the island just off the coast of North Africa.

Rosi said he had asked Dr Pietro Bartolo, a physician on Lampedusa who treats refugees and appears in the film, why the island welcomes the tens of thousands of people who land there.

"He told me Lampedusa is a

place of fishermen, we are fishermen, and fishermen, they all accept always, anything that comes from the sea. So this may be a lesson that (we) should learn to accept anything that comes from the sea," Rosi said.

The Silver Bear Grand Jury Prize went to "Smrt u Sarajevu"

(Death in Sarajevo) and its director Danis Tanovic.

The Best Director award went to France's Mia Hansen-Love for her film "L'Avenir" (Things to Come).

The Best Actor award went to Majd Mastoura for his role in the Tunisian film "Inhebbek Hedi" while Trine Dyrholm took Best Actress for her role in the Danish film "Kollektivet" (The Commune).

The best script award went to Polish director and screenwriter Tomasz Wasilewski for "Zjednoczone Stany Milosci" (United States of Love) while the cinematography award went to Mark Lee Ping-Bing for the camerawork in the Chinese film "Chang Jiang Tu" (Crosscurrent) directed by Yang Chao.

An award for a film that opens new perspectives was given to the eight-hour-long Filipino film "Hele sa Hiwagang Hapis" (A Lullaby to the Sorrowful Mystery), directed by Lav Diaz.

Festival Director Dieter Kosslick said that watching Diaz's film was a unique experience, not just for its length but also because the premiere started quite early in the morning. "So we all showed up on the red carpet, totally dressed up, the sun was shining, but it was 8.30am," Kosslick said.—Reuters

Karlie Kloss to receive Inspiring Woman of the Year award



LONDON — Model Karlie Kloss will be honoured for inspiring a generation of young girls at the ELLE Style Awards.

The 23-year-old model will have the distinction later this month of being named Inspiring Woman of The Year at the fashion gala, reported Digital Spy.

Kloss has been selected as the inaugural prize winner for encouraging girls to study for science and technology through the Kode with Karlie scholarship.

In her 10-year modelling career, Kloss has been a Victoria's Secret Angel and modelled for Marc Jacobs, Dolce & Gabbani, Dior and Hermes.

She is to accept the Inspiring Woman of The Year Award as part of London Fashion Week on Tuesday, 23 February.

Among last year's ELLE Style Award winners were Rosie Huntington-Whiteley for Model of the Year, Erdem for Designer of the Year and Taylor Swift as Woman of the Year.—PTI

Israeli-Palestinian hip-hop movie wins audience prize in Berlin

BERLIN — An Arabic-language hip-hop film featuring mostly Palestinian actors and directed by an Israeli won a prize as an audience favorite on Saturday at the Berlin International Film Festival.

Director Udi Aloni's "Junction 48" took the Panorama Audience Award for best fiction film. The film "Who's Gonna Love Me Now?" by Tomer and Barak Heymann was voted best Panorama documentary.

"Junction 48" tells the story of a Palestinian rap star and his girlfriend who live near Tel Aviv in the mixed Jewish-Palestinian city of Lod, known until recently as one of the main drug-running centres of the Middle East.

Actress Samar Qudus said it should be easy for Palestinians to identify with the movie, even

though it depicts people living lives that are radically different from strict Muslim traditions.

Her character, for example, allows a picture of her face to be used on a poster advertising a hip-hop concert, prompting members of her family to say they plan to injure her if she performs.

"It's still a revolutionary movie because it doesn't talk about the way we Palestinians are usually represented in the world," Qudus said.

"We are representing ourselves by the new generation without trying to prove anything to anyone, with our 'goods' and 'bads'," she told Reuters in an interview.

"We are trying to present what is the real new generation trying to do without making the

reality looking any better or any worse."

Director Aloni was pleased with audience reactions.

"We are all so optimistic because we also brought some young kids that we gave them tickets, you know 20 years old, that don't know anything about us and they adore it.

"So probably the choice of having Tamer, he is so charismatic, and hip-hop that is so universal, it was a very good move."

Singer Nafar doesn't expect everybody in the Middle East to love the film but he is confident it will open up a debate. "It's going to open a stage and I think it's very important and the movie is not here to give solutions, the movie is here to raise the right questions," he said.—Reuters

Ne-Yo marries Crystal Renay

LOS ANGELES — Singer Ne-Yo has officially tied the knot to model and fiancée Crystal Renay. The couple exchanged vows in front of family and friends at the Terranea Resort in Rancho Palos Verdes, Los Angeles, reported People magazine.

"We can't wait to start our life together. We're looking for-

ward to just being each others' best friend," Ne-Yo said.

A picture of the newlyweds revealed the bride in a pretty white gown with lace sleeves.

Ne-Yo, whose real name is Shaffer Chimere Smith, met Renay for a collaboration for his 2015 album "Non-Fiction".

He proposed to her last sum-

mer and rumours about them already married surfaced in August as they announced Renay's pregnancy. The couple are expecting a baby boy later this year.

Ne-Yo is already a dad to 5-year-old Madilyn Grace and 4-year-old Mason Evan from his relationship to ex-fiancée Monyetta Shaw.—PTI

Bangkok's Chinatown: a night at the opera

BANGKOK — Battles, a search for love and justice, all set in China. Hired by local Chinese shrines, opera companies in Bangkok's Chinatown perform mythical stories in Mandarin to round off celebrations marking the Lunar New Year in the Thai capital.

The wobbly wooden planks creak as the actors perform, moving from makeshift stage to stage. Among the audience, children look captivated, including a boy wearing a Barcelona soccer strip while his neighbour holds chopsticks and a bag of street food.

Chinese opera has a long pedigree in Thailand, home to the largest overseas Chinese community in the world.

The Chinatown cast, a mix of Chinese and Thai performers, range from a seasoned actor of more than 30 years, to a 7-year-old girl.

"Every time I get nervous and excited," says the girl, Vonvai, who began performing two months ago. "I want to perform well and enjoy it. I try to get better each time."

Hours before going on stage, performers in these operas, which blend music, legend and drama, start to

apply their elaborate make-up, while the baby of a cast member sleeps backstage.

Offstage, musicians follow the dream-like action while playing traditional Chinese instrument including drums, plates and flutes.

The operas combine colourful costumes, elaborate sets, with dialogue and singing that tell tales of tragedy and comedy alike.

Nappapat Natee, 25, part of the Yong Hong Troupe, has been involved in Chinese opera for 10 years. She typically performs the role of a warrior. Occasionally she plays a character such as the em-

peror or his mother.

Beyond entertainment, the purpose of these roving performances in the Bangkok evening is to preserve Chinese culture and tradition in a country where Thai-Chinese are often third or fourth generation. The performances are also put on to please the gods.

All the elders of the neighbourhood around Yaowarat Road, Chinatown's main thoroughfare and often referred to as the Golden Road, attend these operas.

Among them is Monchai, 70, who has been a loyal spectator for more than four decades.



A Chinese opera actress performs in Chinatown in Bangkok on 17 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

While an unwavering fan of the skill and artistry of the operas, he is anxious that their appeal may falter. "I really like these

stories based on history," he says. "But I'm worried that the younger generation will struggle to understand them."—Reuters

London kicks off fashion shows amid catwalk shake-up

LONDON — London picked up the fashion baton from New York on Friday with five days of catwalk shows and presentations amid an industry shake-up as designers strive to sell their creations faster.

London Fashion Week, which returns to a car park as its main venue, will feature 83 designers presenting their autumn/winter 2016 collections, including Burberry, Alexander McQueen, Erdem and Topshop Unique.

Among the most anticipated shows will be that of luxury goods maker Mulberry, which returns to the catwalk after a break with new creative director Johnny Coca, formerly at Louis Vuitton and Celine.

"The industry as a whole is really exciting," said Pandora Sykes, fashion features editor at *The Sunday Times Style* magazine. "He is the person that made everyone want Celine luggage. So if he can even lend a soupcon of that to Mulberry, then they are already on the up."

The London shows



A model presents a creation from the J. JS Lee catwalk show at London Fashion Week Autumn/Winter 16 in London, Britain on 19 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

take place as an increasing number of luxury labels seek to satisfy demand from clients living in different climates, by bridging the usual six-month gap between catwalk presentation and retail availability. Burberry has said it is cutting down its four catwalk shows to two in February and September, featuring both menswear and womenswear, and that the clothes will be available

to purchase straight after.

In an interview, Mulberry Chief Executive Thierry Andretta said Burberry's decision will "impact people's thinking".

British Fashion Council Chief Executive Caroline Rush told Reuters that businesses were "really thinking about how do they put the customer at the heart of what they do, and this is really what it is about."

"And all of the noise and excitement that comes out of London fashion weeks and shows is ... how do we get that better connection with the customer that wants to buy the product?"

Among the first to kick off Friday's shows was Seoul-born J. JS Lee who said her line was inspired by Victorian architecture and furnishings. Models wore tailored trouser and skirt suits with frayed detailing, as well as dresses with draped detailing in red, yellow, black and white.

Presenting furry coats, lace and knitted dresses and folklore-like frocks in black, nude, pink and lilac, Turkish designer Bora Aksu said he took inspiration from a Russian duchess living a spartan life.

"Her life journey of just being a duchess at a young age and being a farmer girl inspired the collection so there is lots of contrasting elements in it," he said. "So there are things like rainbow coats but also the fur is representing her aristocracy."—Reuters

News Channel in Brief

(22-2-2016, Monday)

<p>6:00 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paritta by Hilly Region Missionary Sayadaw <p>7:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> People's Talks <p>8:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary (Women in myanmar Society) <p>9:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary (ASEAN) <p>10:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly Entertainment News <p>11:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MRTV's Youth Programme <p>1:20 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tasty Trip <p>1:50 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gitadagale Phwintbaohn 	<p>2:35 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary <p>3:15 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2016 University of Entrance Examination (Myanmar) <p>4:35 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Distance Education (TV Lectures) Second Years (Psychology) <p>5:35 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socio Economic Scenes <p>6:35 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes or No Talks Show <p>7:15 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TV Drama Series <p>8:00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> News / International News / Weather Report <p>9:00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> News TV Drama Series Lawka Ni Ti
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Note/ Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)

Myanmar International

(22-2-2016 07:00am ~ 23-2-2016 7:00am) MST

<p>Today Fresh</p> <p>07:03 Am News</p> <p>07:27 Am Mosaic Painting (Precious Stones & Gems)</p> <p>07:42 Am A Lucky Boy</p> <p>08:03 Am News</p> <p>08:26 Am The Man and The Elephant (Part- I)</p> <p>08:42 Am The Man and The Elephant (Part- II)</p> <p>09:03 Am News</p> <p>09:26 Am Myanmar Traditional Instruments - Myanma Harp (Episode-2)</p> <p>09:51 Am Distinguished Myanmar Ladies "Tin Moe Lwin"</p> <p>10:03 Am News</p>	<p>10:27 Am "Myanmar's Beauty and Nature" Beach</p> <p>10:52 Am Graffiti: Portraiture</p> <p>(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm) - Sunday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am) (03:00 Pm ~ 07:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)</p> <p>Prime Time</p> <p>07:03 Pm News</p> <p>07:27 Pm Food Trip (EP-2)</p> <p>08:03 Pm News</p> <p>08:26 Pm Taste Of Myanmar (Mandalay Noodle Salad)</p> <p>08:44 Pm Fantastic Orchid Garden From The Flower City</p> <p>08:54 Pm Orphanage</p> <p>(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm)- Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am) (11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am)- Sunday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am) (03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) -Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)</p> <p>(For Detailed Schedule – www.myanmaritv.com/schedule)</p>
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Entertainment Channel

(22-2-2016, Monday)

<p>6:00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alinka Wut Yee Music Troupe <p>6:30 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fashion Show <p>7:00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TV Drama Series 	<p>7:45 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TV Drama Series <p>8:35 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Musical Programme <p>8:50 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dramatic Arts <p>Midnight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Close Down
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From 22.2.2016 (Monday) 06:00 Pm
To 23.2.2016 (Tuesday) 06:00 Pm
This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.



Matthew Centrowitz (USA), left, poses with Nick Willis (NZL) after winning the Wanamaker Mile in 3:50.63 during the 109th Millrose Games at The Armory, New York, on 20 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Centrowitz takes mile, Felix and De Grasse win sprints

NEW YORK — Matthew Centrowitz surged to victory with a final-lap burst to repeat as Wanamaker Mile winner, while elite sprinters Allyson Felix and Andre De Grasse powered to wins at the 109th Millrose Games on Saturday.

Centrowitz, feeling sub-par due to congestion, laid back behind New Zealand rival Nick Willis before charging past at the gun for the final lap to win in a meet record 3:50.63 for a 2016 indoor best.

“Caught a little something this week, but still wanted to defend my title,” Centrowitz said. “I couldn’t attack it like I wish I could’ve until I had to.” Willis,

the 2008 Olympic 1500 metres silver medallist, repeated his runner-up finish to Centrowitz from last year in 3:51.06 for his third second to go with a pair of thirds in Wanamaker bids. Shannon Rowbury won the women’s mile by nearly two seconds, clocking 4:24.39. Felix and DeGrasse, sprinters with high Olympic expectations, were unhappy with their starts in the 60-metre dashes yet emerged victorious on the fast Armory track. Four-times Olympic champion and nine-times world champion Felix was taking a break from arduous training in her quest for a rare 200-400m double at the Rio Olympics.

“This was about working on

my start which still needs more work,” said Felix, who won in 7.15 seconds, five-hundredths of a second ahead of world champion long jumper Tianna Bartoletta. “My start will be huge for my 200 this year. I know it wasn’t great (on Saturday) but I was in the race at least. “My start has always been an issue and for the 200 it’s key. The majority of the girls running the 200 are coming from the 100 and I need to be able to compete.”

De Grasse, appearing as a professional for the first time in his 2016 debut, won his 60m race in 6.61 seconds, barely edging China’s Bingtian Su by one-hundredth of a second.—Reuters

Moratti sister lets slip Mourinho ‘is going to Manchester’

MILAN — The growing rumours that Jose Mourinho will be the next manager of Manchester United were further fuelled by a throw-away remark from Inter Milan dignitary Bedy Moratti on Saturday.

The Portuguese’s name has been increasingly linked by the media with the job amid the struggles of incumbent Louis van Gaal to win over the United faithful. The speculation was sent spinning into overdrive when Moratti, sister of former Inter president Massimo, let slip to reporters after a meeting with Mourinho that the former Chelsea boss “is going to Manchester”.

Mourinho was in Milan to watch Inter take on Sampdoria

amid reports in Italy that he might be interested in a return to the club he steered to Champions League glory in 2010, a suggestion he was quick to deny.

After Mourinho had visited former employer Massimo Moratti and his family for lunch, Bedy, filmed in a video interview with Calcio Mercato, said: “It was pleasant. He’s still fantastic. He’s been missed on a human level. “Now he’s happy — he’s going to Manchester and he’s well.”

Bedy, whose family retain a major stake in Inter, was a board member at the San Siro outfit and is honorary president of supporters’ group Inter Club.—Reuters

Nadal dumped from Rio semi-finals by Uruguayan battler

RIO DE JANEIRO — Rafa Nadal’s below-par season has continued with the former world number one dumped from the Rio Open semi-finals with a 6-7(6), 7-6(3), 6-4 defeat by unseeded Uruguayan Pablo Cuevas on Saturday.

The top seed pipped Cuevas in a first set tie-break and denied his opponent two set points in the second but succumbed to his first defeat against the world number 45. “I lost an opportunity, that’s it,” Spaniard Nadal said after being denied his 100th ATP final by

claycourt specialist Cuevas who fired 48 winners to clinch the contest.

“I fought until the end. I have to accept it and keep working to try to change the dynamic. That’s what’s happening today and I have to work hard to change it,” added the 14-times grand slam champion. “I didn’t win a title, so it wasn’t a positive two tournaments. I had my chances in both. I lost in the semi-finals of both tournaments and just have to look forward to Indian Wells.” —Reuters

Reading stun West Brom in FA Cup, Arsenal held

LONDON — Championship strugglers Reading spiced up an otherwise dull afternoon in the FA Cup fifth round with a shock 3-1 victory over Premier League West Bromwich Albion after holders Arsenal were held 0-0 by Hull City on Saturday.

Arsenal’s inability to break down Championship leaders Hull’s massed defences ended their 14-match winning streak in the competition.

Top-flight Watford were also up against Championship opposition in Leeds United and edged a dour game 1-0 to reach the quarter-finals for the first time in nine years.

In the day’s only all-Premier League clash, Everton won 2-0 at Bournemouth, Ross Barkley and Romelu Lukaku scoring for the visitors after the Toffees’ keeper Joel Robles saved a first-half

penalty from Charlie Daniels.

Reading, currently 16th in the second-tier Championship, guaranteed there will be at least one club from outside the Premier League in the last eight as they came from behind to beat West Brom.

They have won only once in the league since the turn of the year but goals from Paul McShane, Michael Hector and Lucas Piazon punished West Brom for a lacklustre display after they had taken the lead through captain Darren Fletcher.

Both McShane, a former West Brom player, and Hector converted headers from free kicks by Oliver Norwood while Piazon’s late effort capped a dismal exit for West Brom.

It only got uglier for Albion after the final whistle when their midfielder Chris Brunt was

struck by a coin thrown from an area housing West Brom fans.

“I’ve never seen anything like that in 10 years, it’s disgusting,” Brunt said in a statement. “I hope the police have got hold of him.”

Arsenal’s three-year unbeaten run in the FA Cup continued but they laboured to beat a second-string Hull side.

With one eye on Tuesday’s Champions League last 16 first leg at home to Barcelona, Arsenal made nine changes from the side that beat Premier League leaders Leicester City last week.

Even when manager Arsene Wenger, in charge of his 100th FA Cup tie for the club, threw on the likes of Alexis Sanchez and Olivier Giroud the Gunners could find no way past Hull’s inspired keeper Eldin Jakupovic.—Reuters



Arsenal's Olivier Giroud in action with Hull City's Curtis Davies during FA Cup Fifth Round at Emirates Stadium on 20 February. PHOTO: REUTERS