THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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MILITARY MIGHT IMPORTANT

Be always cautious and prepared — Senior General

AS Myanmar is located at the westernmost point of the ASEAN community and sandwiched between China and India , Myanmar is strategically important, said Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services Senior General Min AungHlaing in meeting with officers and other ranks involved in the combined fleet exercise-Sea Shield 2016 yesterday.

In addition, our territorial waters include parts of the Bay of Bengal and India Ocean. Such a strategic land and water location makes Myanmar have a need to be always cautious and prepared, he added.

He continued to say that the Tatmadaw is upgrading its navy to be at full capacity in order to provide safety to businesses such as gas and oil exploration and fishing in the country's water territory where the country has earned its majority of income. Meanwhile, about 87 per cent of the country's exports and imports are relying on the normal trade passing across the Bay of Bengal.

He also stressed the need to build more upgraded watercrafts.

While appreciating the naval personnel's accomplishment of mission, the Senior General explained to his men why capacity building is important and why they should always be on the alert. Afterwards, the Senior General went on to say that independence was lost because of disloyal acts (by some unscrupulous elements), that the political power, the economic strength and the defense capabilities are required to be at their best for the survival of a nation, that the military has protected the democratic path from 2011 to 2015 and that it will continue to do the same during the tenure of second Five Year Period of democratisation process.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing salutes naval forces involved in the combined fleet exercise-Sea Shield 2016. Photo: Myawady

Aircraft and helicopters have been warned against flying under an altitude of 15,000 feet above sea level, and the ships, big and small, cargo motorised boat, fishing vessels and motorised-sampams have also been warned for their safety against cruising, anchoring, fishing or deploying fishing equipment and apparatus within the five-mile radius of the undermentioned areas where the combined fleet manoeuvers are taking place for the period between February 22nd and March 2nd

Despite the warning, three aircraft were detected on 26 February to have flown in the restricted air territory at a high speed.

The aircrafts were found to have entered from the north, heading for the south. The type of the invading aircraft is not known yet.

Further warnings have been issued to prevent the unwanted occurrences from taking place again.—*Myawady*

Gas leak fire destroys two buildings in Shwepyitha

A fire caused by a gas leak from a pipe in Shwepyitha Township engulfed nearby buildings yesterday.

The fire broke out around 5.40 pm but it was brought under control around 6.20 pm.

The gas leak from the 10-inch-diameter pipe reached the cable above the pipe, causing the fire.

The fire destroyed a garage and a tea shop. No causality is reported in the incident.

More than 400 firemen and 38 fire engines were involved in the fire fighting.— *Zaw Gyi (Panita)*

Fire fighers are bringing the gas leak fire in Shwepyitha under control. PHOTO: ZAW GYI (PANITA)

EU delegation visits IDP camps in Kyaukme

EU delegation seen visiting an IDP camp in Kyawkme. PHOTO: MINGALAR TUN

AN EU delegation visited camps for the internally displaced persons (IDP) in Kyaukme, northern Shan State on Thursday, investigating their conditions.

The eight-member delegation talked to IDPs there, querying their conditions at the camps established at monasteries.

More than 3,500 IDPs in total are sheltering at 20 camps in Kyaukme.

Fighting broke out between the Restoration Council of the Shan State/Shan State Army-South and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) in early February and has driven local villagers from their homes.

Local authorities and NGOs are providing them with food and health care services.

They also provide those who wish to return home with K 10,000 and a bag of rice.— *Aung Thant Khaing*

Soaring prices in animal feed worry poultry farmers

SOARING prices in animal feed have caused difficulty to livestock farming, with the likelihood that the spike can take meat prices with it, according to poultry farmers.

U Win Sein, chairman of the Myanmar Livestock Breeders Association, said animal feed account for 75% of the production costs.

The Myanmar Livestock Feed Production Association attributed heavy exports of animal feed to China to the soaring prices.

"Although prices are high, supply is short," said Daw Toe Nanda Tin, member of the Myanmar Fisheries Federation.

The Myanmar Livestock Breeders Association suggested that the ministry concerned make efforts to seek ways to address the situation. —*Thein Ko Lwin*

Myanmar woman extorted by Mahachai Police

A MYANMAR woman was extorted by police in Mahachai, a city ofThailand's SamutSakhon province, 30 kilometres from Bangkok on Thursday,according to the Myanmar Association in Thailand (MAT).

Ma Thanda Win, 29, was detained at a bus terminal and taken to a local police station on allegation that she brought traditional medicines into the capital city.

Bangkok-based MAT's incharge Ko Sai Aye recounted that two Thai police officers checked her passport and the work permit at the bus terminal, with the police search leading to the discovery of a bottle of Myanmar traditional medicine in her handbag.

The medicine bottle was to be transferred from her to her cousin's sister in Mahachai, Ma Thanda Win said, adding that she was threatened with a court trial unless she offered a bribe of 3,000 bahts (US$84).

"I called MAT but they (the two Thai police) snatched the phone from me and switched it off. As I was scared stiff, I had to bribe my way out of the police station." Ko Sai Aye suggested that Myanmar workers in Thailand make prompt contact with his association in case of extortion and/or unfair detention. — *Soe Win (SP)*

Hibernation birds decreased year by year

BIRDS migrated into Myanmar for hibernation have been seen on sandbanks in the Ayayawady River as from early February.

The flocks of several species of birds in the river in Katha preying fish for their food has attracted tourists.

However, the number of fish has decreased when compared to that of previous years as the inflow of water into the river has decreased year by year.— *NgweOo (Katha)*

Migrant birds are seen on a sandbank in the Ayeyawady River. PHOTO: NGWE OO (KATHA)

Triple Purpose Dam Opened

THE triple-purpose Yazagyo Dam was formally opened along with a hydro-electric power plant in Kale Township in Sagaing Region yesterday.

President U Thein Sein attended the opening ceremony and unveiled the stone inscription monument.

The Yazagyo Dam was built to mitigate flooding of Kale area, supply irrigated water for cultivation activities and generate electricity to supply the local populace.

President U Thein Sein told the responsible officials concerned to monitor continually the dam to ensure the strength being enough to withstand the natural disasters inclusive of earthquakes as well as to prevent illegal extraction of timber in the water catchment areas.

The President also visited No 1 State High School in Kale where he met with the school teachers and gave guidance.

Speaking at the meeting, the president asked the school teachers to provide quality education, to develop the rule-abiding habit, to convince them of the goodness of self-respect and to instil in them the patriotic spirit.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Aerial view of Yazagyo Dam. PHOTO: MNA

Kalay gets nursing & midwifery training school

A NURSING and midwifery training school was inaugurated in Kalay,Sagaing Region, fulfilling the need for producing nurses and midwives in the region.

The stone plaque of the school was unveiled by President U Thein Sein. Speaking on the occasion, the president called on local people to strive for regional development as the government has assisted in development infrastructures for transportation, education, electricity supply sectors.

The nursing and midwifery school was constructed at the cost of more than K2.9 billion from the budget of the 2014-2015 FY.

The school will contribute to upgrading health standards and creating job opportunities for local people. It was formally opened by Union Minister for Health Dr Than Aung, Chief Minister of Sagaing Region U Tha Aye and Principal of the training school DrWaiWaiLwin. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Dignitaries seen formally opening the training school for nursing and midwifery in the presence of President U Thein Sein. PHOTO: MNA

President opens 66/11KV subpower station and electricity grid in Kale

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein unveiled the stone plaque to open the 66/11KV Kale subpower station in Sagaing Region yesterday.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Union Minister U Khin Maung Soe recounted that Kale was first fed with electricity in 1955 by a diesel-fired station. Under the guidance of the president, the town got a 500KVA power station on 19 May 2012 and a 1250KVA one on 9 September 2014.

The Minstry of Electric Power has plans to electrify the whole town in 2016-17 fiscal year, with the union minister stressing the difficulty involved in the installation of the electricity grid in the area.

The installation of the Gangaw-Kalay electricity grid and the construction of subpower stations started on 6 January 2015 and completed on 8 February 2016. The projects cost US$20.3 million in material purchase and K3.850 billion ($3.125m) in construction.

The government loses 22 kyats for every unit sold, with the union minister saying that the selling price for a unit is 35 kyats for household use and 75 kyats for industrial use. The selling price averages about 71 kyats a unit, against the production cost of 93 kyats a unit.

Kale in Sagaing Region is located in a strategic trade hub close to India and Chin State.

The newly opened power station and the electricity grid is expected to bring about socio-oeconomic development in the town.—*Myanmar News Agency*

President U Thein Sein sprinkles scented water on stone plaque of the 66/11KV subpower station in Kalay. PHOTO: MNA

Ministry triples its spending on electricity supply in five years

U Maw Tha Htwe. PHOTO: NAING LIN KYI

THE Ministry of Electric Power has tripled its spending on electricity supply over the past five years, investing K593 billion (US$481 million) in 2015-16 fiscal year, up from K177 billion ($143m), said Deputy Minister U Maw Tha Htwe in an interview.

The country's individual consumption of electricity stands at 222 kilowatts, compared to 13,000 kilowatts in the United States, the deputy minister said, adding that world nations use the volume of generated electricity and individual consumption as the yardstick of development.

The installed electricity capacity rose from 3,400 megawatts in 2010 to 5,089 megawatts in 2015, with the deputy minister saying that electricity has been distributed to 15,000 of 60,000 villages across the country.

The National Electrification Plan, conducted in partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) since 2012, aims to enable all parts of the country to have full access to electricity by 2030. The deputy minister admitted that the plan has just covered 33% of the whole country.

"Much remains to be done to meet the target as only one third of the population live with electricity," he said.According to the national census taken in 2014, the country has a population of 50.89 million.

Official statistics show that 66% of electricity comes from hydropower stations, 29% from gas-fired power stations, 3% from coal-fired power stations and the rest from wind, solar and biomass sources.—*Naing Lin Kyi*

Extended hospital buildings in Hlaingthaya nears completion

THE construction of the 100-bed hospital in Hlaingthaya, one of most populated sub-urban townships in Yangon, is nearly completed and it is scheduled to be finished at the end of this month, Project Manager U Zeya Tun said.

With the aim of providing better healthcare to members of public, the project was initiated in December 2014 near the 45-bed Hlaingthaya Township Hospital.

Each RC building will be 134 feet long, 56 feet wide and 30 feet high.

To match the increased number of patients with rooms, authorities decided to construct the extended buildings near the existing 45-bed hospital, which does not have enough spaces for emergency patients and immediately moves them to Insein General Hospital and Yangon General Hospital

After completion of the new buildings, the hospital will deal with emergency cases occurring within the township as well as Htantabin Township, Dr Khin Yupa Soe said.

Officials and staff from the Ministry of Health have providing medical services to residents through the 45-bed township hospital, a township health department, a hospital in Shwelinban Indsutrial Zone and rural health branches.

There are over 800,000 people residing in Hlaingthaya Township.—*Than Htike (Hlaingthaya)*

Orchestra for Myanmar to perform in March

Orchestra for Myanmar seen in a practising session. PHOTO: BRITISH EMBASSY

THE Orchestra for Myanmar, led by founder-director Sebastian See-Schierenberg and associate director Saw James Hsar Doe Soe, will launch its second year of performances and training hosted by the British Council next month.

The orchestra will be joined by special guests and soloists from Spain, Taiwan and the Hong Kong Sinfonietta, and the orchestra's first concert will be presented by Susana Galvan from the British Council.

Musicians from the AOC, the Gitameit music centre, MIT, the National Symphony Orchestra, the University of Arts and Culture and the Amae Gita music school will participate in the concert.

The New Children's Choir, led by American choir director Rebekka Jensen, will also make its debut. The choir is made up of young children from schools and orphanages around Yangon and has undergone two months of recruitment and singing workshops. The choir will perform a selection of music from all over the world, including famous Myanmar songs. The concert will be held at 7pm on 11 March in the Strand Hotel Ballroom.—*British Embassy*

Crime News

Yabba and raw opium seized in Chanmyathasi

AN anti-drug squad seized yabba in a house at Myothit ward 1, Chanmyathasi township, Mandalay on Tuesday. Acting on a tip-off, the police searched the house owned by one Khin Maung Myint and found 9,250 yabba pills. Police searched another house between 81st Street and 82nd Street owned by one Yan Phoo Yon and found four yabba pills and a mobile phone.

Members of the police discovered 3.9 kilograms of raw opium on a motorbike being driven by one Aik Hlwa with passenger Aik Kaw on board on the Tangyang- Mai Kaung road. The police station has filed charges against the suspects under the Anti-Narcotic Law.—*Myanmar Police Force*

Aik Hlwa and Aik Kaw. PHOTO: MPF

Police arrest petty gamblers

POLICE have arrested a woman who allegedly played two-digit lotteries in her house in Zay Lae Soe ward, Magway township on Tuesday. Upon searching the house owned by one Ma Myo alias Ma Sandi Myo Kyaw, 44, they found K39,000 and documents relating to two-digit lottery. Local police have filed charges against her.

Similarly, police seized K6,600 and the relevant documents of lottery from a house owned by one Ma Khin Mar Yee, 42, at Yin Thazi village, Magway township on Tuesday.

On the same day, members of the police arrested one Khin Hsaung, 68, with K12,250 and the relevant documents of the two-digit lottery in ward 2, Myingyan town, Mandalay region. Charges have been filed against the petty gamblers.— *Police IPRD*

Man killed in car accident

ONE Mae Gyi alias Tint Zaw Oo was killed on the spot when a car accident occurred between Taw Pone village and Lay Thar village, on Wednesday. According to an investigation the car was capsized when the driver lost control. The police are still investigating the case.— *U Ye (Ka Thar)*

Yabba seized in Mawlamyine

MEMBERS of the police seized yabba from a motorbike driver at the general hospital entrance gate in Mawlamyine on Monday. Acting on a tip-off, police discovered 195 pills on driver Chit Ko Ko, 39. The police have filed charges against him under the Anti-Narcotic Law.— *Myanmar Police Force*

Chit Ko Ko. PHOTO: MPF

Yabba seized in Hopong

Ma Nan Sai Mon and Ma Nilar, Ma Nan Ngwe. PHOTO: MPF

AN anti-drug squad seized yabba at a house in Haway Hote village, Hopong township, on 21 February. Acting on a tip-off, police searched the house owned by one Ma Nan Sai Mon and discovered 118 yabba pills on Ma Nilar, found together with the host. Police also discovered 180 yabba pills on Ma Nan Ngwe.

On the same day, local authorities seized 580 yabba pills from motorbike driver Li Kaw Myin on Chin Shwe Haw-Laukkai road, ward 2, Chin Shwe Haw town. The police have filed charges against all suspects under the Anti-Narcotic Law.—*Myanmar Police Force*

Illegal coal seized on Andamna sea

A PATROLLING naval flotilla seized three ship loads of coal being illegally exported on the Andaman sea, Kawthaung district, Taninthayi region on Tuesday.

Acting on a tip off, the flotilla seized 850 coal bags on board the Aung Myint Myat 18 cargo vessel with five crew members. They discovered 900 coal bags and aquatic products on board the Yadana Kyore 5 cargo vessel with five crew members and 700 coal bags on board the Myint Myat Aung cargo vessel with four crew members.

The responsible naval officers handed over the cargo vessels and the coal bags confiscated as well as crew members arrested to the Kawthaung police and the Forestry Department.—*Kyaw Soe (Kawthoung –IPRD)*

LOCAL Business

Price of Myanmar gold fluctuated greatly during last week of February

THE price of Myanmar gold is experiencing a great deal of fluctuation during the last week of February because of the fall in the value of gold on the world market, according to local gold shopkeepers. The highest value of one ounce of world market gold in the third week of February was $1,230 but it has fallen to $1,217 in this last week of the month. As such, the value of Myanmar pure gold has followed a similar downward trajectory, with one tical (0.576 ounces) fetching K803,000 during the third week of February, down to K798,000 for the same weight during this final week of the month.

"As the price of world market gold is unstable, one can't say going forward whether it's going to appreciate or depreciate. It's said that it's slightly losing value at the moment but it could rise straight back up. It's difficult to estimate anything at the moment." said U Zaw Aung, owner of Taite gold shop and member of the Myanmar Gold Entrepreneurs Association (MGEA). It is known that the value of Myanmar pure gold is fluctuating but that is hasn't dented the trading of gold, which is continuing on as per normal fashion.

"In the morning the Asia market will see that the price of gold has depreciated. By the evening one can't say whether the price of gold has increased back in value in the European market or not. The current market situation [of gold] though is facing a downward trend." said U Maw Maw, general manager of the Aung Thamardi gold shop.

In regard to how the markets fared on the evening of 22 February, the price of a tical of Myanmar pure gold fetched K795,000; a tical of 15 carat gold valued K750,000; an ounce of gold on the world market cost $1,215 while $1 bought K1,247, according to gold shopkeepers.— *Myitmakha News Agency*

Golden jewelleries are displayed at a shop in Yangon. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

Telenor phone number sold for K112 million

ACCORDING to a statement from telecommunications company Telenor, the highest price one of their special auctioned phone numbers was bought for was with a bid of K112 million.

The phone number auction was held by Telenor Myanmar at the Chatrium hotel on February 25, during which the number combination 09777777777 was snapped up with a hefty bid of K112 million.

The telecommunications company has made it known that a total of K483.5 million was raised from the auctioning off of 55 different numbers in their first special phone number auction.

Telephone numbers are auctioned by Telenor Myanmar. PHOTO: TELENOR FACEBOOK

Of the total sum of money made during the auction, K418.3 million will be donated to the Myanmar mobile bus education project, myME, for their digital education program, it is known. "All of the profit made from the auction event is being donated to the my ME program to financial support the education of between 5,000-10,000 children in 2016." said Petter Furberg, CEO of Telenor Myanmar. The different aspects of the aforementioned auction event were overseen by MN Associates and Deloitte Touche Myanmar Vigour Advisory Ltd.

This was the first, but by no means the last, auction for Telenor, with similar auction events to be held in other States and Regions across the country, it is known.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Mrauk U commercial boat services going under

THE daily running of river motorboat services between urban centres and outlying villages in the Rakhine State district of Mrauk U are on the verge of being shut down, according to local motorboat owners.

The combination of improvements to road infrastructure within the region and a rise in the number of privately owned motorboat has created a situation that could nearly put commercial passenger motorboat enterprises out of business.

"It's not the age of commercial motorboats anymore. Things haven't been good [for the industry] for about three years now. Roads have been built in the countryside, allowing people to travel easily by car or motorcycle. On top of that, it seems as if every family that lives in villages that are completely cut off from road access come to town with their own private motorboats. Nobody rides the passenger river motorboats anymore, so it has come to a point where the commercial motorboat industry is about to close up shop," said U Thein Htun, a port official in Minbya Township.

The lack of commercial motorboat passengers has forced operators to adapt their businesses in order to stay afloat financially, providing transportations services for the movement of goods such as paddy, rice, sand and rocks. Together with a developing road infrastructure in Rakhine State, there is an increased prevalence of local residents using motorbikes, three-wheeled vehicles and cars, while small motorised boats, which have become affordable in recent times, are being used by residents to travel along the waterways in the townships of Myaybon, Minbya, Kyauktaw and Mrauk U.

"A commercial motorboat used to run between the village of Min Kyaung and the town of Myay Pone last year, but it was a financial disaster. Even the petrol expenses incurred couldn't be earned back, which is why the service isn't running this year. Motorboat owners can't get any passengers anymore since everyone is travelling by their own small motorised water boats. Previously, economically viable motorboats that ran services along routes between Myaybon, Minbya and Kan Htaung Gyi don't have any passengers anymore with all the roads that have been built. As a result, most motorboat companies have stopped their operations. Most have switched to renting out their motorboats for the transportation of products such as timber and rice," said U Nyi Taut Kyay, a resident of Min Kyaung Village in Myaybon Township. Up until 2013, the only way to travel around many parts of Rakhine State was via the state's network of waterways, but in the years since, an increase in the number of roads being built has brought about a significant drop in the number of commercial motorboat passengers.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Top DPRK leader guides test fire of newly developed anti-tank rocket

PYONGYANG — The top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Kim Jong Un has recently guided the test firing of newly developed anti-tank guided weapons, the official KCNA news agency reported yesterday.

The weapons were developed by DPRK's national defense experts, according to the KCNA.

The test fire aimed to verify the flying control and accuracy of a portable anti-tank laser-guided rocket as well as the power of the warhead, it said. According to the report, several improvements had been made to the weapons from an earlier inspection, including an extension of the firing range and an increase in the power of the warhead and its ability to penetrate armored vehicles. The news agency said Kim was satisfied with the test results. He instructed that a massive production of the weapons should immediately begin. Officials accompanying Kim in the inspection included Director of the General Political Bureau of the Korean People's Army (KPA) Hwang Pyong So and Chief of the General Staff of the KPA Ri Myong Su.—*Xinhua*

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ASEAN says seriously concerned about rising South China Sea tensions

VIENTIANE — Southeast Asian nations expressed serious concern yesterday about growing international tension over disputed waters in the South China Sea.

China claims most of the sea but Southeast Asian countries Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei and Viet Nam have rival claims. Friction has increased over China's recent deployment of missiles and fighter jets to the disputed Paracel island chain.

"Ministers remained seriously concerned over recent and ongoing developments," the 10-members Association of Southeast Asian Countries (ASEAN) said in a statement after a regular meeting of the group's foreign ministers in Laos.

Land reclamation and escalating activity has increased tensions and could undermine peace, security and stability in the region, ASEAN said in the statement.

The United States has criticized China's building of artificial islands and facilities in the sea and has sailed warships close to disputed territory to assert the right to freedom of navigation.

On Friday, the United States urged China's President Xi Jinping to prevent the militarisation of the region.

Viet Nam, which accused China of violating its sovereignty with the missile deployment, echoed the US call on yesterday.

"We call for non-militarisation in the South China Sea," Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh told reporters after meeting his ASEAN colleagues.

"We have serious concerns about that," he said, when asked about China's increasing military activity in the region.

The group agreed to seek a meeting between China and ASEAN's foreign ministers to discuss the South China Sea and other issues, Cambodian Minister Hor Namhong said.

The artificial island at the southern end of Mischief Reef showing a newly-built seawall on its north side and a completed dock are shown in this Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative on 8 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

China's maritime claims are ASEAN's most contentious issue, as its members struggle to balance mutual support with their growing economic relations with Beijing. China is the biggest trade partner for many ASEAN nations.

Neighbours Viet Nam and China compete for influence over landlocked Laos, which has no maritime claims but finds itself in the difficult position of dealing with neighbours at odds over the South China Sea. Laos is tasked with finding common ground on the issue as the ASEAN chair in 2016.

"The South China Sea issue is a headache that Laos would really rather not have to deal with," said one Western diplomat in Vientiane.

Thongloun Sisoulith, Laos Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, played down the challenge.

"We are a close friend of Viet Nam and China, we try to solve the problems in a friendly way," he told Reuters on Saturday. "We are in the middle, but it's not a problem."

Barack Obama is set to become the first US president to visit the country in September to attend an annual summit hosted by the ASEAN chair.—*Reuters*

India signals possible deficit revisions in upcoming budget

NEW DELHI — India should review its mid-term fiscal strategy, a government report urged on Friday, in a possible indication that Finance Minister Arun Jaitley may have to borrow more to raise pay for government employees and bail out banks.

The report called India "a haven of stability" in a gloomy international landscape but, as Group of 20 finance ministers gathered for talks in Shanghai, warned too of possible currency turmoil in Asia after China's recent devaluation.

The Economic Survey, which sets the scene for Jaitley's third budget on Monday, forecast the Indian economy would grow by between 7.0 per cent and 7.75 per cent in the 2016/17 fiscal year that starts on 1 April.

That would be in line with this year's expected outturn of 7.6 per cent but below earlier expectations that growth would accelerate to over 8 per cent.

Although Asia's third-largest economy has overtaken China's as the world's fastest-growing, weak business investment and a growing bad loan problem will compel Prime Minister Narendra Modi to keep the spending taps open to deliver on his promise of jobs for India's 1.3 billion people.

Modi needs to cover the estimated $16 billion annual expense of a once-in-a-decade pay and pension hike for federal employees.

The report also put the total cost of recapitalising banks at $26 billion in the coming years.

India's Finance Minister Arun Jaitley (C) leaves his office to present the 2015/16 federal budget in New Delhi in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

The government will stick to its budget deficit target of 3.9 per cent of gross domestic product in the year now drawing to a close, but the coming year will be "challenging" from a fiscal point of view.

The report, written by economic adviser Arvind Subramanian, said that "credibility and optimality" argued in favour of sticking to next year's deficit target of 3.5 per cent of GDP — phrasing that left room for an upward revision.

"The time is right for a review of the medium-term fiscal framework," the text, handed out in parliament, said.

Analysts said Subramanian was flagging some backsliding on the deficit — if not next year then the year after — to account for an economy that is doing less well than the headline figures suggest.

"My sense is that there is a 20-30 basis points slippage coming in the fiscal deficit number, so basically I'm expecting a 3.7 or 3.8 per cent fiscal deficit number for 2017," said Ritika Mankar Mukherjee, senior economist at Ambit Capital.

Subramanian's cautious advice to raise the deficit has been rejected by central bank governor Raghuram Rajan, who argues that India should keep its powder dry in case the weakening world economy tips into recession. Indian bonds, shares and the rupee gained on a view that the government was at least not throwing fiscal caution to the winds.—*Reuters*

Australia sends relief ship to Fiji in wake of Cyclone Winston

SYDNEY — Australia is sending a relief ship to Fiji to assist in the recovery effort after Cyclone Winston, the worst ever recorded in the southern hemisphere, tore through the island nation last Saturday, as the sheer scale of the disaster becomes clearer.

The death toll from the category five storm remains at 42, according to a statement from Fiji's National Disaster Management Office, although that figure is expected to rise.

Many communities remain without water and it could be weeks before electricity is restored, the statement said.

The scale of damage and loss is becoming apparent to authorities and aid organisations as communications are being gradually restored throughout the archipelago. UNICEF spokeswoman Alice Clements said her organisation now estimates that more than 62,000 Fijians are homeless and living in evacuation shelters.

Fijian woman Kalisi holds her son Tuvosa, 3, as she sits on a bed in the remnants of her home damaged by Cyclone Winston in the Rakiraki District of Fiji's Ra Province, on 24 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

"People are very resilient here and have got a solution to every problem, but there are just so many people who don't have any options," Clements said.

"As hard as we are working and as hard as the government is working the scale of this is going to outrun us all unless we get help," she said.

Australia's military vessel, HMAS Canberra, left on Friday and was expected to arrive in Fijian waters early next week.

It was carrying three helicopters and 60 tonnes of supplies, including water purification equipment and medical supplies.

The ship's departure came as Australia's foreign ministry said on Twitter that the first helicopter load of Australian aid had reached the hard-hit remote island of Koro yesterday.

The Asian Development Bank's South Pacific director, Rob Jauncey, told Radio New Zealand that Fiji's economy would face losses of "tens of millions of dollars" because of the destruction of sugar crops and an expected drop in tourism.

The effects of Cyclone Winston were being felt on the eastern coast of Australia, more than 2,600 km (1,615 miles) southwest of Fiji, on Saturday.

Australia's Bureau of Meteorology issued dangerous surf warnings and authorities closed many beaches in the states of Queensland and New South Wales as swells of up to 6 metres (20 feet) generated by Cyclone Winston battered the coast. —*Reuters*

Thailand's infamous tiger temple fights to keep big cats

BANGKOK — Thailand's controversial Tiger Temple, dogged for years by talk that it supplies the black market and mistreats its animals, is fighting to keep the big cats after wildlife authorities rejected a bid to extend a zoo licence that expired in 2013.

The Buddhist temple, home to more than 100 tigers, has been investigated for suspected links to wildlife trafficking and wildlife activists have accused it of illegal breeding of the animals.

Thai wildlife authorities have sent ten of the temple's tigers to a wildlife sanctuary.

But the temple, which bills itself as a wildlife sanctuary, has denied links to illegal trafficking, and wants to hold on to its tigers.

"This is their home. They are happy here," said Supitpong Pakdijarung, an official of the foundation that runs Wat Pa Luang Ta Bua, as the temple is known in Thailand." "The government has to find a budget to take care of them," Supitpong, the body's deputy chairman, told Reuters. "Here, the money comes from donations. It is about giving and generosity."

Supitpong denies accusations that tigers bred at the temple have been sold on the black market.

But the allegations of mistreatment of tigers had dented Thailand's tourism image, said Teunchai Noochdumrong, director of the country's Wildlife Conservation Office.

"The world is looking at us," he added. "The temple did not allow officials to enforce the law. The temple has affected Thai tourism."

In the past, attempts by wildlife officials to inspect the tigers have been blocked by the temple and its abbots.

Thailand has long been a hub for illegal wildlife trafficking, as a place where everything from exotic birds to reptiles, and even bears, is for sale, driven by international demand for exotic meats and rare pets.

Successive governments have launched campaigns to curb the trade in illegal wildlife, but with varying degrees of success.

One visitor to the temple said the tigers should be left there, rather than being confiscated.

"These animals are used to being around people," said Victoria Carpenter, an American tourist.—*Reuters*

Tigers swim while being trained at the Tiger Temple in Kanchanaburi Province, west of Bangkok, Thailand 25 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Japan fishermen seek workers' comp over 1954 Bikini Atoll nuke tests

KOCHI, (Japan) — Former ship crew members applied for workers' compensation Friday for cancer and other diseases they say were caused by exposure to radiation from US nuclear tests in the Pacific in 1954.

So far only crew members of the tuna fishing boat Fukuryu Maru No 5, also known as the Lucky Dragon, and bereaved family members have received benefits under the country's seamen's insurance in connection with US hydrogen bomb tests at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands in March 1954.

The latest move came after the health ministry disclosed in 2014 documents showing other ships operating in the vicinity around that time were also contaminated with radiation.

The applicants are mariners, or relatives of deceased crewmen, on ships other than the Fukuryu Maru. The 10 include 83-year-old Yutaka Kuwano, and four who are relatives of crewmen who have died.

"We finally arrived at the starting line. The former ship crew members and others are all aging and we want a timely response," Masatoshi Yamashita, a civic group member supporting the move, said after the group filed applications with a branch of the Japan Health Insurance Association in Kochi.

The door has effectively been closed for obtaining compensation from the United States over late-effects of radiation due to a political settlement reached between the Japanese and the US governments in January 1955.

Applying for seamen's insurance benefits is therefore one of the few means left for the former ship crew to receive financial compensation for health problems believed to be linked to exposure to the US nuclear tests.

But proving causal links between their health problems and exposure could be difficult, given that more than 60 years have passed since the nuclear tests and many people with firsthand knowledge of the situation have since died, critics say. According to a study by Shin Toyoda, a professor at the Okayama University of Science, and other researchers, the tooth of one insurance applicant was found to have been exposed to up to 319 millisieverts of radiation, a level far above what would usually be detected from a tooth of an ordinary person.

If the person had received the same dose to his whole body, it would be equivalent to the radiation received during the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 1945 by a person about 1.6 kilometres away from ground zero, the study showed.—*Kyodo News*

OPINION

Corporate management versus sustainable growth

Kyi Mun

IT is very often said in management literature that performance should be achievement oriented whereas strategy must be purpose-driven and success focused. When it comes to corporate performance, it is commonly pointed out by the scholars in the field of management science that corporate performance should be guided in a crystal clear manner by the 7-Ps – Prior planning plus preparations promote peak performance. Although these 7 Ps are recommended for corporate performance strategy, they can be applied to public administration as well as to personal and professional performance on the part of individuals.

Whatever the case may be, a performance strategy ought to be formulated on the basis of the following four factors of success if the strategy has to meet with success: the burning desire; the indomitable mind; the unyielding effort; and insight wisdom. These four factors of success are quite comparable to the four adhipatis – chandādhipati, viriyādhipati, cittadhipai and vimansādhipati – the possession of which can make people achieve success in whatever they do.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the success of a strategy depends upon cutting edge, distinctive capabilities and comprehensive resources, which are the means. Without comprehensive resources, no end can be attained successfully. What then are the most vitally important resources? They are:

- **human resources;**
- **financial resources;**
- **technological resources;**
- **material resources;**
- **information resources;**
- **knowledge resources; and**
- **morale resources**

Resources are essential to achieve good corporate performance along with the three other factors – growth, innovation and productivity. In the highly competitive business world, the corporate management always need positive changes in order that they can be innovative by striving for seeking new and better ways of doing things for greater, better, faster, more economical and more sustainable growth in terms of quality, differentiation and value.

In a nut shell, the corporates are required to ensure efficient allocation of resources as well as effective management to achieve sustainable growth in an eco-friendly manner in which the corporate social responsibilities are carried out to their utmost within the bounds of the budget constraint line.

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

ENGLAND AND BUDDHIST CENTRES

Maung Maung Lay (Sorbonne)

ENGLAND is a Christian Country where there are Christian 72%, Muslim 3%, and unspecified/none 25%. The Church of England is Protestant Episcopal. The queen is its temporal head with rights of appointments to archbishoprics, bishoprics and other offices.

Although the majority of the British are Christians, England may be called a country of freedom of religions because there exist churches, mosques, Hinduist temples and Buddhist centres or monasteries.

According to my personal research, there are about 400 Buddhist groups and centres in England and Northern Ireland including Myanmar Buddhist monasteries. There are about 50 Buddhist groups and monasteries in London and its environ.

While I was staying in London with my daughter who was a staff member of Myanmar Embassy, I used to look for Buddhist centres and monasteries there and visit them during my leisure time.

I visited Oxford Buddha Vihara at No. 356-358, Abingdon Road, Oxford, OX1 4TQ, UK. Oxford is about 60 miles away from London and its takes about 100 minutes by coach to get there. I paid homage to the head of the Oxford Buddha Vihara, the most Venerable Professor Dr. Khammai Dhammasami, D.Phil. (Oxford). I participated in the chanting and practiced Vipassana meditation at the Vihara.

Myanmar Buddhists should know him as a world class Buddhist scholar. He was born in 1965 at Laikha in the Shan State, the Union of Myanmar. He was ordained as a novice in his early teens in his native township and as a bhikkhu at the age of 20 in Mawlamyaing township under the preceptorship of the late most Venerable Sayadaw Abhidhajamaharatthagura Nagasenabhivamsa Taung Lay Lone Monastery. Ven. K.. Dhammasami studied Pali and Buddhism in a traditional monastery, Buddhist university as well as some of the modern ones such as Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka, Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya and University of Oxford.

At present, Ven. Dhammasami is Buddhist Chaplain of Oxford, Executive Member, International Council for United Nations Day of Vesak, Chairman, Compilation Committee for the Common Buddhist Text (a project to produce a book for hotels worldwide to distribute information on Buddhism), Bangkok, Co-convener Union Catalog of Buddhist Texts, Fellow and Lecturer, Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies, Mumbai, Founder/Executive Secretary, The Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities, Professor, International Theravada Buddhist Universities Professor, International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University, Yangon.

Peace Pagoda

Venerable Dhammasami has conducted weekly meditation classes in the United Kingdom since 1996. The 50-minute meditation is preceded by a dhamma talk on meditation and followed by a lively question and answer session, during which the meditators may clear their doubt or discuss matters related to the practice.

Sayadaw also conducts a one-day vipassana meditation retreat, consists of a short introduction to meditation, and then sitting and walking meditation, which are done alternately. The winter programme begins at 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. while the Summer programme commences at 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. There is no charge for the teaching but meditators may bring food to offer monks and share it among their friends. You can make donations as you like to the Oxford Buddha Vihara.

Right now Sayadaw Dr. Dhammasami is leading to establish the Shan State Buddhist University in Taunggyi, the capital city of Shan State. (Venerable Sayadaw Dr. Dhammasami, Venerable Sayadaw Dr. Kumara, Chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Venerable Sayadaw, Dr. Ashin Nyanisara, Chancellor of Sitagu International Buddhist Universities, Dr. Sai Mauk Khan, Vice President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and dignitaries have already opened the Shan State Buddhist University on 7 February 2016.)

We must be proud to learn that Venerable Dr. Dhammasami, a Myanmar national has become a faculty member of the world's famous university, University of Oxford in England, who may be called a Buddhist diplomat from the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Myanmar nationals arriving in the United Kingdom can do traditional meritorious deeds occasionally at the Oxford Buddha Vihara or at six other Myanmar monasteries in London.

The other Myanmar monasteries are –

1. London Vihara (Britain Burma Buddhist Trust)
   1, Old Church Lane, Kingsbury, London, NW9 8TG
2. Tisarana Vihara Association
   357, Nelson Road, Whitton, Twickenham (Greater London), TW27AG
3. London Buddhist Vihara Dharmapala Building,
   The Avenue, Chiswick, London, W4 1UD
4. Sasana Ramsi Vihara, 88
   83 Booth Road, Colindale, London, NW95 JU
5. Thuwana Theigni Mogok Vihara
   94 Stradbroke Grove, London, IG5 0DL
6. Mogok Vipassana Center London
   30 Oliver Gardins, London E65SE
7. The Dhammadhipati Vihara
   472 Summerwood Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 7QZ

A Buddhist Pagoda you should pay homage in London is "London Peace Pagoda". The Peace Pagoda is in the Battersea Park which is situated between Albert Bridge Road and Queens Park Road. Battersea Park is quite close to River Thames in the southern part of London.

The London Peace Pagoda was built by monks, nuns and followers of Nipponzan Myohoji at the behest of the founder and preceptor, the Most Venerable Nichidatsu "Fujii" (known as Fujii Guruji by Mahatama Gandhi) who passed away in January 1985 at the age of 100 years. The inaugural ceremony took place on 14th May 1985. The Pagoda is dedicated to the realization of Universal Peace. It is a symbol of light in the darkness of the present day world, a visible prayer to awaken humanity to peace.

At the Pagoda, it is inscribed, "Pagodas have a history that stretches back 2500 years when the sacred relics of Lord Buddha were enshrined to be revered as his eternal presence. The Pagoda is a sanctuary of refuge for all beings. It is built to further humanity's quest and prayer that the world may be saved from nuclear annihilation, our oneness and sacredness revealed by our act of reverence and worship".

There are four great sculptures of the life of the Buddha, the Birth of the Buddha, the Enlightenment of the Buddha, First Preaching of Dhamma and Parinibanna of the Buddha.

On the sculpture of the "Birth of the Buddha is inscribed " Prince Siddhartha, whose name means "every wish fulfilled" and who was the son of King Suddhodana and Queen Maya, was born in Lumbini Park at the foot of the Himalayas more than 2500 years ago. Immediately he took seven steps in each of the cardinal directions. With his right hand, he pointed to the heavens and, with his left, he pointed to the earth thus announcing the purpose of his birth. " Above and below heaven, I can revered. The triple world is filled with suffering. I shall relieve it all".

In front of the sculpture of the First Preaching of Dhamma, it is inscribed, "Buddha decided to preach the dharma. At the Deer park at Sarnath, where there is still a deer sanctuary in which deer can wander freely, Buddha gave his first sermon on the Four Noble Truths to his five former fellow ascetics. This marked the beginning of the teaching of Buddha and of the community of disciples, establishing the Triple Gem of Buddhism: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha".

The Enlightenment of the Buddha is inscribed, Prince Siddhartha sat cross-legged on a bed of Kusa grass under a Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya. He severed himself from all ignorance, illusions and delusions about the true nature of existence and reposed in an ultimate, unshakeable contemplation devoted to consummating the ultimate, incomparable Enlightenment. Without resorting to any measures of self-preservation or defence, Buddha cultivated great compassion against Mara's army (the personification of all evil). The wondrous great transcendental power that subdue entire Mara's army was in fact Prince Siddharta's great compassion which also renders weapons of murder and destruction useless.

The sculpture of Parinivana (parinibanna) is very moving. It depicts His disciples and animals paying last homage to the demise of Buddha. It carries an inscription, "After 50 years of teaching, walking from town to town and village to village on foot, Buddha arrived at Kusloinara Buddha wished to depart from his life beneath two flowing sala trees by the Hiranavati river. Surrounded by his disciples, Buddha lay down on a couch and lifted his head on his right hand. The birds stopped singing, the wind ceased and the blossom fell from the trees above. Buddha asked his disciples if they had any further questions. No one replied. Finally, he encouraged his disciples to follow his example. As he passed away, flames ceased to burn. Buddha remains forever in this world."

When we are in Myanmar we frequently go to Pagodas and monasteries to do meritorious deeds and so also we can do the same while we arrive in London on duty or on private visits.

You may as well be able to take refuge in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha in London.

Hailing the Union Peace Conference in Taungoo

THE Hailing Ceremony of the Union Peace Conference was held at the Sport Ground of Taungoo District on Friday.

Peace supporters marched to the sport ground in three columns holding placards which read "For Building Durable (Sustainable) Peace", "Peace and Democracy" and "To end conflicts at long-last".

U San Hla, who presided the hailing ceremony over the Union Peace Conference, gave an opening speech, and Dr. Daw Mar Mar Wai, a retired Professor of the Myanmar Department of Taungoo University, proposed her support of matters related to the Peace Conference. Author U Pwint Thu Aung seconded the proposals made by Dr. Mar Mar Wai.

Present at the ceremony were Departmental officials, members of the Maternal and Child Welfare Association, members of the Myanmar Women's Affairs Association, national races, teachers and students, trainees of the University of Nursing and local people.— *Shwe Win (Pyay)*

Hailing Ceremony of UPC holding at the Sport Ground of Taungoo.
PHOTO: SHWE WIN (PYAY)

US officials, touring missile defence site, voice concern about North Korea

VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE, (Calif) — Senior US defence officials voiced concern about North Korea's nuclear ambitions on Friday as they toured American missile defence sites a day after watching the military test-fire its second intercontinental ballistic missile in a week.

Deputy Defence Secretary Robert Work and Admiral Cecil Haney, combat commander of US nuclear forces, said they were confident American missile defences could counter the nuclear threat from Pyongyang despite a mixed record of success in testing.

"I think when you look at what it's designed for, and that's a North Korean type problem, I think (I have) a very high confidence that we would have the capability," Haney said after visiting a nondescript metal building where workers assemble the ground-based interceptor at the heart of the defence system.

Their remarks were a second day of messaging North Korea about its nuclear ambitions. Work said the test-firing of the unarmed Minuteman III missile on Thursday night was aimed at demonstrating the reliability of US nuclear arms to potential nuclear rivals like Russia and North Korea.

The tour of missile defence facilities was another signal to Pyongyang, which recently detonated an underground nuclear device and tested a rocket in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions.

"North Korea as a whole (is) very, very problematic in terms of their thirst to have a nuclear capability," Haney told reporters, citing Pyongyang's indifference to Security Council resolutions and its provocative attacks on South Korea.

The United States currently has 30 ground-based interceptor missiles to target and destroy nuclear ballistic missiles while they are still in space. Four of the interceptors are at Vandenberg and the rest at Fort Greely, Alaska.

The US military is building another 14 interceptors at a cost of nearly $1 billion to be installed at Fort Greely by the end of 2017, fulfilling a pledge by former Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel in 2013 after Pyongyang threatened a pre-emptive nuclear strike on the United States.

The deputy secretary said on Friday the ICBM test-shot late on Thursday was viewed as a success because of its proximity to the target near Kwajalein Atoll in the South Pacific. The military does not generally disclose how close the missile lands to its target.

Work said it was the eighth consecutive successful test of a Minuteman III and the 27th consecutive successful missile test in the nuclear force, including air-launched cruise missiles and submarine-launched missiles.—*Reuters*

An unarmed Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile launches during an operational test from Vandenberg Air Force Base, California at 11:01pm on 25 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

Greece seeks to stem migrant flow as thousands trapped by border limits

ATHENS/IDOMENI — Greece moved to slow the flow of migrants from its islands to the mainland on Friday as thousands of homeless refugees were trapped in the country by border limits imposed along a Balkan route to richer nations in northern Europe.

From its northern frontier with Macedonia to its port of Piraeus in the south, Greece was inundated with refugees and migrants after border shutdowns cascaded through the Balkans, stranding at least 20,000 in the country.

At Idomeni, a small community on the border with Macedonia, Reuters witnesses saw hundreds of families walking towards the frontier to join an estimated 3,000 more at a makeshift camp where many pitched tents in a field close to razor wire fence.

More than 500 km further south, hundreds of people were temporarily accommodated at a disused airport west of Athens. Sleeping mats were strewn across the terminal among biscuit wrappers as many women sat on the floor, some weeping.

"Planes bombed our homes, it was dangerous to stay there," said mother of three Rajiya Zara, 38, nine months pregnant. "I'm afraid for my children."

Between 300 and 400 people refused to stay at the airport, and took off on their own. "Help Us," a large piece of paper held by one said. "We are human, open the borders", read another, scrawled on a sleeping mat.—*Reuters*

NEWS IN BRIEF

G-7 finance chiefs discuss world economy on Shanghai sidelines

SHANGHAI — Finance leaders from the Group of Seven industrialized countries yesterday had an informal meeting, amid growing concerns over a further slowdown in the global economy.

The meeting in Shanghai took place early in the morning before finance ministers and central bankers of the world's 20 leading developed and developing countries began their second day of discussions, officials with direct knowledge of the situation said.

The G-7's top policymakers are believed to have exchanged their views on possible measures to cope with financial instability stemming from a global stock sell-off and a spike in currency volatility this year, as well as a continued fall in commodity prices.—*Kyodo News*

DPK leader Hasim Taci elected as Kosovo president, in third round

PRISTINA — The provincial assembly in Pristina elected Hasim Taci, leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (DPK), as new Kosovo president in the third round of voting on Friday.

Among those voting for Taci were the Serb list MPs, and the new president, in his first address in parliament after the vote, voiced a special appreciation for the support.

Taci was elected president of Kosovo by a secret third round ballot, winning 71 votes, while needing a simple majority of minimum 61 votes.

Taci failed to muster the necessary 80 votes in the previous two rounds.

Today's assembly session to elect the Kosovo president was disrupted by opposition Self-Determination MPs releasing tear gas canisters two times during the vote.—*Tanjug*

New cargo train service links China, Russia

HARBIN — A cargo train with 47 containers holding Chinese-made goods left Harbin for Russia yesterday, marking the opening of a new freight route between the two countries.

The new route links Harbin, capital of northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, with Russia's fourth largest city Ekaterinburg, said sources with Harbin Commerce Bureau.

Saturday's train transported 1.46 million US dollars worth of bicycle parts and light industrial products, mostly from southern China. It will complete the 5,889-kilometre-journey in 10 days.

Before the route was launched, cargo from southern China to Russia was always transported via Dalian Port in the northeastern Liaoning Province for ocean shipping. "A shipment took 40 days on average and was quite expensive, too," said Meng Qingwen, general manager of a logistics company that provides freight services between Harbin and Europe.—*Xinhua*

Girl in wheelchair sits silently at shut Macedonian border for hours

IDOMENI, (Greece) — Wheelchair-bound Zhino Hasan, 17, sat silently and alone for most of Friday in front of a closed border gate, hoping that Macedonia would relent and allow her and her family to resume their northward trek through the Balkans to Germany.

Her father, Sarkawt, wheeled her there at daybreak on Friday, hoping to get a headstart in the queue whenever the border Greece shares with Macedonia in the small community of Idomeni reopens.

The Hasan family, Iraqi Kurds from Kirkuk, are among at least 20,000 refugees and migrants trapped in Greece following successive border shutdowns along the Balkan route used by refugees to reach wealthier European nations.—*Reuters*

Bangladesh police arrest three more suspected of killing Hindu priest

DHAKA — Bangladesh's police arrested three more men on Friday suspected of killing of a Hindu priest, the latest incident of increasing Islamist violence in the south Asian nation.

The three men are members of the banned militant group Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), police said, and join three other suspects in custody who have been charged over Sunday's deadly attack. The six are accused of slitting the throat of the priest, shooting and injuring two devotees and setting off homemade bombs at a Hindu temple in northern district of Panchagarh. One of the men arrested on Friday admitted involvement in the attack, said Humayun Kabir, the deputy inspector general of police in charge of northern Bangladesh.—*Reuters*

Syria fighting largely halts as agreement kicks in

Female fighters from the Democratic Forces of Syria use a tablet in al-Shadadi town, in Hasaka Province, Syria, on 26 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

BEIRUT — Fighting appeared to stop across most areas of western Syria yesterday after a landmark "cessation of hostilities" came into effect under a US-Russian plan which warring sides in the five-year conflict have accepted.

If the temporary halt in fighting holds, it will mark the first time world powers have been able to negotiate a pause in the civil war. Under the fragile agreement, Syria's government and its enemies are expected to cease fighting so aid can reach civilians and peace talks can resume.

A monitoring group and the United Nations reported only isolated fire in western Syria after the temporary ceasefire began at midnight on Saturday (2200 GMT Friday).

The United Nations said it expected breaches in the temporary truce and urged restraint in curbing any new outbreaks of fighting.

"Let's pray that this works because frankly this is the best opportunity we can imagine the Syrian people has had for the last five years in order to see something better and hopefully something related to peace," said UN Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura.

Damascus and its ally Russia, as well as a range of insurgent groups fighting against them, have said they would take part in the plan.

The temporary truce does not apply to Islamic State and al Qaeda affiliate the Nusra Front, and the Syrian government and Moscow have said they will not halt combat against those militants. Other rebels seen as moderates by the West say they fear this will be used to justify attacks on them.

Nusra Front, one of Syria's most powerful Islamist rebel groups, on Friday urged insurgents to intensify their attacks on President Bashar al-Assad and his allies, adding to dangers facing the agreement.

Fighting raged across much of western Syria right up until the cessation came into effect, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

There was calm in many parts of the country shortly after midnight, it said.

"In Damascus and its countryside ... for the first time in years, calm prevails," Observatory director Rami Abdulrahman said.

"In Latakia, calm, and at the Hmeimim air base there is no plane activity," he said, referring to the Latakia base where Russia's warplanes operate.

Some gunfire had been heard shortly after midnight in the northern city of Aleppo, and there were some blasts heard in northern Homs Province, but it was not clear what had caused them, Abdulrahman said.

The United Nations unanimously demanded late on Friday that all parties to the conflict comply with terms of the plan as part of efforts to end a war that has killed more than 250,000 people and driven 11 million from their homes. De Mistura said he intends to restart peace talks on 7 March, provided the halt in fighting largely holds.

On Friday, at least 40 government soldiers and allied fighters and 18 insurgents were killed in battles and air strikes in Latakia province, the Observatory reported.

Six people were also killed in an air raid in western Aleppo province in the hours before the halt, it said.

Near Damascus, dozens of air raids hit the besieged suburb of Daraya. Rescue workers said at least five people were killed in Douma, northeast of the capital.

Russian President Vladimir Putin stressed on Friday that combat actions against Islamic State, the Nusra Front and other groups the Syrian government regards as terrorists would continue. The United States said it was time for Russia to show it was serious about halting fighting by honouring a commitment not to strike Syrian groups that are part of the moderate opposition.—*Reuters*

Iran starts election count to set post-sanctions power balance

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei fills his ballot during elections for the parliament and Assembly of Experts, which has the power to appoint and dismiss the supreme leader, in Tehran, on 26 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

TEHRAN — Iran started counting tens of millions of votes yesterday after hotly contested elections that could see reformists speed up Tehran's opening to the world or long-dominant hardliners reassert the Islamic Republic's traditional anti-Westernism.

The twinned elections for parliament and a leadership body called the Assembly of Experts are seen by some analysts as a potential turning point that could shape the future for the next generation, in a country where nearly 60 per cent of the 80 million population is under 30.

The elections are the first since Tehran agreed with major powers to curb its nuclear programme, leading to the removal of most of the stringent international sanctions that have paralyzed the economy over the past decade.

Turnout was heavy. Polling was extended five times for a total of almost six hours, because so many people wanted to vote.

No official results were released overnight, state television said in its morning news bulletin. The Interior Ministry published a statement saying no result would be valid before it was officially announced by the ministry.

The statement appeared after the Fars and Tasnim news agencies, both affiliated to hardliners in the establishment, began publishing "unofficial lists of winners" claiming that conservatives had scored some early wins.

The Fars count listed around 30 lawmakers and more than 20 members of the Assembly of Experts, mostly conservatives, as having won seats. A clear outcome may take days to emerge, although conservatives normally perform well in rural areas and young urbanites are seen as favouring more moderate candidates allied to President Hassan Rouhani. Supporters of Rouhani, who championed the nuclear deal, are pitted against hardliners close to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khameni. They are deeply suspicious of detente with Western countries, seen as adversaries implacably opposed to the 1979 revolution that toppled the Shah.—*Reuters*

Iran briefly overstepped a limit set by nuclear deal, IAEA says

VIENNA — Iran briefly exceeded a limit set by a deal with major powers under which sanctions against it were lifted, the UN nuclear watchdog said on Friday, but Tehran then came back within the permitted bounds.

Under its July deal with the United States, Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany, Iran is allowed to have 130 tonnes of heavy water, a moderator in reactors like the one it has disabled at Arak and a chemical it produces itself.

"On 17 February, the agency verified that Iran's stock of heavy water had reached 130.9 metric tonnes," the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which polices the deal, said in a regular report on Iran's nuclear program sent to its member states.

By Wednesday, however, 20 tonnes of heavy water had been shipped out of the country, bringing the stock back under the threshold of 130 tonnes, apparently in keeping with a soft limit under the terms of the 14 July deal, which is formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"All excess heavy water which is beyond Iran's needs will be made available for export to the international market," one of the annexes in the deal stipulates, adding: "Iran's needs are estimated to be 130 metric tonnes."

In Washington, a US official who spoke on condition of anonymity played down the incident.

"Iran briefly exceeded its 130 metric ton heavy water stockpile limit under the JCPOA by less than one ton. The IAEA has now verified that Iran has shipped out 20 metric tons and is back well under this limit," said the US official. "Iran made no effort to hide anything it was doing from the IAEA. Because of the enhanced monitoring and verification provisions in the JCPOA, the IAEA immediately became aware of this issue and raised it with Iran, and Iran fixed it," he said. "It is not surprising that there are challenges for Iran in ensuring it is meeting all of the many nuclear commitments in the early stages of implementation of the JCPOA, but again, this issue has been resolved," the US official added.—*Reuters*

An aerial view of the Rio Doce (Doce River), which was flooded with mud after a dam owned by Vale SA and BHP Billiton Ltd burst, at an area where the river joins the sea on the coast of Espirito Santo in Regencia Village, Brazil, in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Brazil, Samarco deal to be announced on Monday

BRASILIA — Brazil's government and Samarco Mineracao SA [SAMNE.UL] will announce on Monday the settlement of a lawsuit for damages caused by a deadly dam spill at a mine in November, Brazilian Attorney General Luis Inacio Adams told Reuters on Friday.

Officials and executives met on Friday to finalize the deal, which the attorney's general office said was 95 per cent complete.

"We should make the announcement on Monday," Adams said in a text message.

Regarded as Brazil's worst environmental disaster, the burst dam killed 19 people, forced hundreds to leave their homes and polluted one of the country's main rivers.

On Thursday evening, Brazil's *O Globo* newspaper published a column saying Samarco, a joint venture between Vale (VALE5.SA) and BHP Billiton (BLT.L), had committed to provide 4.4 billion reais ($1.1 billion) between 2016 and 2018 and additional funds for another seven years.

That would be much lower than the 20 billion reais the government was originally seeking when it first filed the lawsuit.

A source close to the negotiations confirmed the figures were being discussed but told Reuters nothing had been signed yet. Samarco took the first step on Friday to resume operations in the area by requesting licensing to store mining tailings, said a Minas Gerais state environmental official.

BHP said earlier on Friday that significant progress had been made with the negotiations, and it was hopeful that an agreement would be reached. "If and when that happens, an announcement will be made," BHP said in a statement to the Australian Securities Exchange.—*Reuters*

Trump wins Christie backing, marches towards Super Tuesday

FORT WORTH, (Texas) — Republican candidate Donald Trump on Friday won the surprise endorsement of New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, the most prominent mainstream Republican to get behind the former reality TV star's White House campaign.

Christie said the billionaire front-runner has the best chance of beating Democrat Hillary Clinton in the 8 November US presidential election — although Clinton has yet to secure her party's nomination.

The endorsement gives Trump a further lift before next week's Super Tuesday nominating contests. It comes just a day after he took a battering from his two main rivals at a televised Republican debate.

Trump's unorthodox candidacy has stirred controversy and shaken the Republican Party at its roots, but an increasing number of senior Republicans are becoming resigned to the idea he will be their candidate in November.

Trump is "rewriting the playbook," said Christie, 53, who until two weeks ago was himself a rival for the Republican nomination. Christie dropped out after failing to muster much support for his candidacy.

Trump, 69, who has never held public office, has campaigned as a political outsider. He is riding a wave of voter anger at the slow economic recovery, illegal immigration and what he says is America's diminishing role in the world.

"The best person to beat Hillary Clinton in November on that stage last night is undoubtedly Donald Trump," Christie told a news conference on Friday, a day after the last Republican candidates' debate before Super Tuesday.

The debate marked a new, more aggressive approach for US Senator Marco Rubio, 44, who has emerged as the Republican establishment's challenger to Trump. The other main challenger at the debate was US Senator Ted Cruz of Texas.

Trump has unsettled mainstream Republicans by winning three straight nominating contests — in New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada. Polls show he is likely to win big in key primaries on Tuesday. "Since I started this whole thing I've been practically Number 1," Trump said on Friday at a rally in Texas. The 11 Republican nominating contests on Tuesday have a total of almost 600 delegates at stake, and could set Trump up to clinch the presidential nomination.—*Reuters*

ILO's new contact telephone and fax numbers

Due to the changes of Myanmar Post and Telecommunications (MPT) services for its auto telephone customers, Yankin RSU Exchange needs to upgrade its mechanical functions. MPT advised that the old system will be replaced with modern MSAN Exchange urgently. Hence, the first three digits of the ILO's telephone have been changed. The following are the new telephone numbers of the ILO Liaison Office for the general public's record and information.

Liaison Officer
International Labour Organization (ILO)

Office address	:	**No # 1/A, Kanbae (Thitsar) Road Yankin township, Yangon, MYANMAR**
Telephone	:	**01 233 6538, 01 233 6539 01 578 925, 01 579 956**
Fax	:	**01 233 6582**
P.O Box	:	**679**
E-mail	:	**yangon@ilo.org**

ILO takes this opportunity to inform the general public of its other numbers in different locations.

Forced Labour complaint

Contact number in Bago Region	: 09 73 22 02 06
Contact number in Magway Region	: 09 44 80 59 036
Contact number in Mon State	: 09 42 11 75 562
Contact number in Chin State	: 09 45 26 59 346
Contact number in Mandalay Region	: 09 45 26 59 345
Contact number 24/7	: 09 45 26 59 344

Peace Project (Shan State)

Office address	:	**No # 14, Nawarat Road, Thittaw Ward, Taunggyi Township, Shan State (South)**
Contact number in Shan (South)	:	09 25 07 86 411

Five died in Washington state murder-suicide

SEATTLE — A man fatally shot four people believed to be members of his own family then kept police at bay for several hours on Friday before killing himself, but a 12-year-old girl thought to be the gunman's daughter escaped the carnage, authorities said.

Although details of the slayings inside a rural home near the community of Belfair, about 25 miles (40 km) west of Seattle, remained under investigation, a Mason County Sheriff's official said the violence appeared to have stemmed from a "family-domestic situation."

"As far as I know, this is one family, the shooter was the father and the victims were his family," Chief Deputy Russell Osterhout told Reuters.

He said the lone survivor, the 12-year-old girl, escaped or was released by the gunman before the suspect emerged from the house after hours of negotiations with law enforcement and a police SWAT team and shot himself in front of sheriff's deputies. It remained unclear when the four people found shot to death inside the home were slain.

A neighbour, Jack Pigott, 79, who lives across the road from the crime scene, told Reuters by telephone he heard several bursts of gunfire coming from the wooded property Thursday night, and assumed it was target shooting.

Police arrived at the home after the suspect himself called a sheriff's sergeant on the officer's work cell phone to say that he "did something" and asked that authorities be sent to the residence, Osterhout said.

When law enforcement officers turned up at the home at about 8:30am (1630 GMT) they could see the man through a window and could see that he was armed, Osterhout said.

The ensuing standoff with authorities who converged on the sprawling property ended with the suspect emerging at noon and taking his own life, apparently with one self-inflicted gunshot, the chief deputy said, adding that he did not personally witness the suicide. Osterhout said he believed the four victims were all found in one area on the property, away from the gunman.

The sheriff's office earlier released photos showing law enforcement officers with guns drawn taking cover behind their vehicles, and a row of patrol cars parked along a gravel road in a heavily wooded area.

The latest round of deadly US gun violence came a day after a man near Wichita, Kansas, fatally shot three people to death and was slain by police at a Kansas lawnmower factory where he worked.

The girl who survived was found on the property after the standoff and though not seriously injured was transported to an area hospital as a precaution, Osterhout said. The neighbour, Pigott, recounted stepping outside his own home between 8:30 and 9pm on Thursday to fetch some firewood off his porch when he heard gunshots — "four or five rounds and then a pause, and then another four or five rounds and a pause and then a couple more rounds."

In the dark, he said, he "assumed they were target shooting, which they had a tendency to do once in awhile."—*Reuters*

Michigan governor's aides urged switch away from Flint River

DETROIT — Quality problems prompted two of Michigan Governor Rick Snyder's top lawyers to urge that Flint be moved back to the Detroit water system just months after a decision to draw water supply from the Flint River, according to emails released on Friday.

Several critics have called for Snyder to resign over concerns about the state's poor handling of the crisis, and the governor said Friday he felt regret every day.

Flint switched its water supply from Detroit to the Flint River in April 2014 in a bid to cut costs when the city was under a state-appointed emergency manager.

While the city switched its water source back to Detroit in October 2015, corrosive water from the river had already leached lead from city pipes, posing a serious threat to public health.

Snyder's aides discussed Flint's water quality problems as early as autumn 2014, with one calling the situation "downright scary,"

The top of the Flint Water Plant tower is seen in Flint, Michigan, on 7 February.
PHOTO: REUTERS

about a year before the switch back to the Detroit system was finally made. *The Detroit Free Press and Detroit News* earlier reported about the emails, which were released by the governor's office.

"That's where I'm kicking myself every day," Snyder said after signing a $30 million supplemental bill to reimburse Flint residents for their water bills. "I wish I would have asked more questions."

Snyder, scheduled to testify to Congress on 17 March, has repeatedly apologised for the state's poor handling of the crisis.

Liberal group Progress Michigan again called for Snyder to resign, citing the emails.

"There's no reasonable person who can believe at this point that every top adviser to Rick Snyder knew that there was an issue, but Snyder knew nothing," said executive director Lonnie Scott, who also called for Snyder's resignation.

Valerie Brader, Snyder's senior policy adviser, addressed problems over the quality of Flint River water in an email to the governor's chief of staff, Dennis Muchmore, and others on 14 October, 2014. She argued Flint should be returned to the Detroit water system, citing bacterial contamination and reduced quality that prompted General Motors to switch away from the river due to rusted car parts.

Michael Godola, then the governor's legal counsel, responded, calling the Flint River as a water source "downright scary."

On Friday, State Representative Sheldon Neeley of Flint asked Attorney General Bill Schuette for his legal opinion on whether an official withholding information that leads to death or harm can be charged criminally. —*Reuters*

Britain's campaign to leave EU takes 4 per cent point lead

LONDON — The campaign to take Britain out of the European Union in a 23 June referendum has taken a 4 percentage-point lead, according to an online survey taken by the ORB pollster for *The Independent* newspaper published on Friday. The poll, carried out on 24-25 February, showed support for the "out" campaign had risen to 52 per cent from 48 per cent a month ago, while support for the "in" campaign had fallen to 48 per cent from 52 per cent a month ago. "Since last month we have seen a shift in opinion towards Brexit," Johnny Heald, managing director of ORB International, said in an email. London Mayor Boris Johnson defied Prime Minister David Cameron last weekend and said he would campaign to leave the EU, but 60 perc ent of respondents in the ORB poll said Johnson's decision made them no more likely to vote to ditch membership.—*Reuters*

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV HYUNDAI PROGRESS VOY NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV HYUNDAI PROGRESS VOY NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28.2.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S FAR SHIPPING LINES
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV WEST SCENT VOY NO (106N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV WEST SCENT VOY NO (106N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28.2.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S INTERASIA LINES
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV EVER ABLE VOY NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV EVER ABLE VOY NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28.2.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S EVERGREEN SHIPPING LINE
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV PATHEIN STAR VOY NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PATHEIN STAR VOY NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28.2.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S CONTINENTAL SHIPPING LINE PTE LTD
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV PERLA VOY NO (007W)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PERLA VOY NO (007W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28.2.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
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My life isn't about Justin Bieber: Selena Gomez

Singer Selena Gomez. PHOTO: REUTERS

LOS ANGELES — Singer-actress Selena Gomez made it clear that she didn't want to talk about her ex-boyfriend Justin Bieber anymore.

The "Hands to Myself" hitmaker recently threatened to delete her Instagram account after some fans accused her of dissing the "Sorry" singer in her latest post, which she later deleted, reported Ace Showbiz.

The fiasco happened when the 23-year-old songstress uploaded on Instagram a video of herself singing to Lil Wayne's song "Single" while driving.

Out of nowhere, she suddenly said, "I sure did go through that... I'm single."

Her words led her followers to speculate that she was throwing shade at Bieber. As more people accused her of dissing her ex-beau, the "Same Old Love" singer posted her reaction in the comments section.

She fired back at haters by dropping a comment in all caps. "THAT'S A JOKE. I WAS SINGING BACK TO LIL WAYNE. MY LIFE ISNT ABOUT MY EX," she said, implying that the video had nothing to do with Bieber.

This is not the first time that Gomez has fired back at haters on social media. Back in 2014, she called out an Instagram user who said that Gomez should "burn in hell with cancer." Gomez wrote, "The comment you left about cancer was absurd. How distasteful of a young woman.—*PTI*

Italian composer Ennio Morricone (C) poses on his star with director Quentin Tarantino (L) and producer Harvey Weinstein after it was unveiled on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in Hollywood, California on 26 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Ahead of Oscars, composer Morricone honoured with Walk of Fame star

LOS ANGELES — Italian film composer Ennio Morricone, nominated for an Oscar this year for his work on "The Hateful Eight," was awarded a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame on Friday, honoring his diverse career spanning decades.

Morricone, 87, has composed the scores for more than 450 films, from 1960s Spaghetti Westerns including "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" to Quentin Tarantino's frontier drama "The Hateful Eight."

"The international composers that had written in film, they have never had the pleasure that I have had today," Morricone said in Italian at Friday's ceremony.

The veteran composer is the frontrunner to win his first ever Oscar in the best original score race on Sunday, after five nominations in previous years.

"I never would have said it would be me, I never thought I would get it, when I would get it, if I would get it," Morricone said about his Oscar nomination.

Tarantino and Weinstein Company co-founder Harvey Weinstein were on hand to pay tribute to Morricone on Friday, with the director saying he had been a long-time fan of the composer.

"I had a huge record collection I'd been collecting since I was a kid and I realised I had more Ennio Morricone records than I have of anybody else," Tarantino said.

"This is one of the richest careers in our industry, who has brought so much joy," Weinstein added. A Rome native, Morricone began his career as a film music composer in 1961 with "Il Federale."

He received an honourary Oscar in 2007 for "his magnificent and multifaceted contributions to the art of film music," working with directors such as Bernardo Bertolucci, Lina Wertmuller, Brian De Palma, Roman Polanski and Oliver Stone.

The composer most notably collaborated with Sergio Leone on the director's westerns starring Clint Eastwood, such as "A Fistful of Dollars," "For a Few Dollars More," and "The Good, The Bad and The Ugly."Additionally, he wrote the scores for "The Battle of Algiers," "Cinema Paradiso" and "Once Upon a Time in America."—*Reuters*

Philippines may ban pop singer Madonna for disrespect to flag

MANILA — American singer Madonna may face a ban in the Philippines for disrespecting its flag in her concerts this week in the capital Manila, a domestic broadcaster said on Friday, citing a historical commission official.

The 57-year-old entertainer is on a world tour to promote her "Rebel Heart" album, and did sold-out shows on Wednesday and Thursday.

"She ridiculed our flag," the official, Teodoro Atienza, told radio station dzBB, adding that Madonna violated a law that prohibits the wearing of the Philippine flag "in whole, or in part, as a costume or uniform". The singer and concert producers could be held liable for the violation even if they were unaware of the law, said Atienza, who is chief of the heraldry section of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines.

"They may face deportation and might not be able to return to the country. She also allowed the flag to touch the stage floor, which is another violation."

There was no immediate response from the organisers of the concerts, held in the same hall where Pope Francis met Philippine families last year. Madonna's next stop will be in Singapore on Sunday. A Roman Catholic bishop in the Philippines this week urged the faithful to boycott Madonna's shows over her "suggestive" performance and "vulgar" clothes.

Roman Catholics make up about 80 per cent of a population of more than 100 million in the Philippines, where the church has strong influence, blocking legislation on the death penalty, divorce and same-sex marriage.—*Reuters*

Yoko Ono hospitalised in New York with flu-like illness: spokesman

LOS ANGELES — The artist Yoko Ono, the widow of the late former Beatle John Lennon, was admitted to a New York City hospital on Friday after complaining of severe flu-like symptoms, her West Coast-based spokesman said.

Spokesman Elliot Mintz denied US media reports that Ono, 83, had suffered a possible stroke or heart attack, and said he understood she would be released from the hospital yesterday.

Ono had called her doctor, who said her symptoms sounded like the flu, and advised her to go to the hospital as a precaution, Mintz said. He did not know if she admitted herself or was taken by ambulance.

Artist Yoko Ono as she listens through an earpiece before she was honoured as 'Illustrious Visitor' by Mexico City's mayor Miguel Angel Mancera at Mexico City's town hall in Mexico City, on 3 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

Her career as an artist has spanned more than five decades. Last year, the Museum of Modern Art in New York marked her achievements with an exhibition of her early works showing how her ideas influenced the development of art in the city in the 1960s. Ono, also an experimental musician and film-maker, was once described by Lennon as "the world's most famous unknown artist: everybody knows her name but nobody knows what she does."

She and Lennon were married on 20 March, 1969, and their son, Sean, was born in 1975. Lennon was shot to death on 8 December 1980, outside the famed Dakota apartment building just west of New York's Central Park.—*Reuters*

New pop at Emporio Armani, practical wardrobe from Etro in Milan

MILAN — The digital age was at the forefront of the Emporio Armani fashion show in Milan on Friday with Italian designer Giorgio Armani dotting his womenswear fall line with bold colourful shapes.

In a mainly black collection with flashes of bright colour, the 81-year old Armani softened day suits with looser silhouettes in an apparent nod to the 1980s, reinforced by multi-coloured jumpers and plenty of sequins.

The autumn/winter 2016/2017 line, called "New Pop", blended "classic style and digital designs", according to show notes.

Armani presented short skirts in shiny patent black and floaty short jumpsuits that looked like skirts for "high-tech heroines".

Italian designer Giorgio Armani poses with his models at the end of the Emporio Armani Autumn/Winter 2016 women's collection during Milan Fashion Week, Italy, on 26 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

Small shapes — circles, squares and triangles — in pink, yellow, blue and green dotted the black, and a few white, coats, tops, skirts, shorts, dresses and trousers.

The veteran designer, nicknamed "King Giorgio" in Italy, turned to sparkles for the evening, putting shiny black as well as coloured sequins on elegant dresses, jackets and coats.

He paired some outfits with bold yellow and pink sturdy round heels. Armani will show his main line, Giorgio Armani, on Monday. At her fashion show, Veronica Etro returned to a youth in London for an energetic collection for brand Etro, presenting lots of vibrant patterns and embroidery that decorated leather jackets, coats and long dresses.

Etro, whose brand is known for its famed Paisley print, added plaid this time — in red and black — as well as flower, kimono, tiger and dragon prints for her fall outfits.

The designer sought to mix formal and informal in her clothes, with show notes describing the line as a "highly functional seasonal wardrobe ... ready for both day as (well as) night, for the speedy street as well as glittering evenings".

Models wore reversible outerwear: plaid wool coats that turned into embroidered jacquard pieces, canvas military-style parkas with brocade inside and quilted embroidered velvet jackets with silky interiors — all ready for day and evening.

There were also ribbed turtlenecks, oversized jumpers, silky pyjama trousers, long printed chiffon dresses as well as lace ones, in mainly rich dark colors. The looks were accessorized with colourful long scarves and large beanie hats. Milan Fashion Week runs until Monday.—*Reuters*

Monarch butterflies rebounding but population still well off highs

A Monarch butterfly rests on a plant in Angangueo, Mexico in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

AUSTIN, (Texas) — North America's monarch butterflies are on a rebound and the number of the plucky orange and black creatures, which gather in Mexico before flying north to Canada, could soon stand at around 150 million, a new survey showed on Friday.

The survey from a scientist at Natural Resources Defence Council (NRDC) is the second this month to show the numbers on the mend, but the population is still well below a high in the 1 billion range two decades ago.

The monarch's recent comeback is due to favourable weather and the planting of more milkweed, an important plant to keep numbers up on its migration route, the NRDC survey said.

"Today's news provides a hopeful indication that we are helping them head in the right direction and curbing the loss of this magnificent butterfly. But we must be careful not to declare victory too soon," said Sylvia Fallon, a senior NRDC scientist.

She based her findings in large part on studies showing areas where the butterflies congregate when they spend the winter in Mexico's Oyamel forest. They have suffered mightily over the years from the expansion of farmland, sprawling housing developments and the clear-cutting of natural landscapes along their migration path, experts say.

Monarchs lay eggs only on milkweed plants, which grow wild throughout the United States. But the milkweed, on which their larvae feed, can cause stomach problems for cattle that eat it, so ranchers and farmers destroy it, NRDC researchers said.

The butterflies congregate in Mexico and then go through several generations as they fly north on their long migration to Canada.

Their plight has become an international issue. In February 2014, the United States, Mexico and Canada agreed to set up a joint task force to protect the butterflies.

While an estimated 1 billion monarchs migrated in 1996, only about 35 million made the trip in 2013, according to Marcus Kronforst, a professor of ecology and evolution at the University of Chicago who has studied monarchs.—*Reuters*

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(28-2-2016 07:00am ~ 29-2-2016 7:00am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:25	Am	A Visit To Today's Along-Daw-Katthapha
07:42	Am	Dhamma School
07:54	Am	Serene and Scenic Magwe
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	KYAUKSE Elephant Dance
08:49	Am	Amazing May Phoo Han
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Rakhine The Land Of Sublime Pagodas
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Horse Cart Driver
10:36	Am	Reflected Glory

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	To The Land Of Countless Temples — Bagan Trip (Ep-2)
07:48	Pm	Today Myanmar: BRT SYSTEM In YANGON
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Hanthawaddy U Win Tin "A Fearless Man" (Episode- 2)
08:43	Pm	Myanmar Masterclass "Artist Win Pe Myint"

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

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

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(28-2-2016, Sunday)

6:00 am
- Paritta by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw

7:35 am
- Business News

8:35 am
- Meet The Successful

9:35 am
- Weekly Entertainment

10:35 am
- Documentary

10:45 am
- Poem For Children

11:35 am
- Documentary

11:50 am
- Amazing World

12:50 pm
- Myanmar Movies

3:45 pm
- Ooredoo MNL-1 2016 (LIVE) Zwekapin United FC & Magwe FC

6:35 pm
- Documentary (Women in Myanmar Society)

7:15 pm
- Radio Drama

8:00 pm
- News / International News/ Weather Report

9:00 pm
- News
- Tasty Trip

Note/ Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)

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Europe's Infantino chosen to lead FIFA into new era

Newly elected FIFA President Gianni Infantino gives a thumb up as he arrrives for a news conference during the Extraordinary FIFA Congress in Zurich, Switzerland, on 26 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

ZURICH — Gianni Infantino vowed on Friday to lead FIFA out of years of corruption and scandal after the former UEFA general secretary was elected to succeed his Swiss compatriot Sepp Blatter as president of football's world governing body.

"We will restore the image of FIFA and the respect of FIFA, and everyone in the world will be proud of us," the 45-year-old law graduate, who for the last seven years has been the leading administrator for Europe's governing body, told an extraordinary FIFA Congress in Zurich.

"I feel a lot of emotion and have not realised yet what has happened today."

After a first round of voting in which he narrowly beat Asian Football Confederation President Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa of Bahrain, Infantino appeared to gather up almost all the votes that had been cast for the two trailing candidates, Prince Ali and Jerome Champagne.

He won 115 of the 207 votes in the second round, giving him a simple majority ensuring a European again holds the top job until 2019 and frustrating the hopes of those looking for a swing to Asia.

Infantino owed his candidacy to the fact that Europe's preferred candidate, his former boss and UEFA president Michel Platini, was banned from football last year along with Blatter for ethics violations.

"I thank Michel Platini for everything that he has taught me and given me and the work we have done together," Infantino said. "I have strong, dear thoughts for Mr Michel Platini right now."

Only the ninth president in FIFA's 112-year history, he inherits a very different job from that enjoyed by Blatter, who toured the world for 17 years like a head of state, dispensing development funds to his global support base.

Before the election, the Congress had overwhelmingly passed a set of reforms intended to make FIFA more transparent, professional and accountable.

That package should mean the new president faces much closer scrutiny than Blatter did — his salary will be published for the first time — and have less influence over the day-to-day management of the organisation's business affairs.—*Reuters*

PGA Tour player Bohn has mild heart attack at Honda Classic

PALM BEACH GARDENS (Florida) — American golf professional Jason Bohn suffered a mild heart attack after the second round of the Honda Classic at Palm Beach Gardens in Florida on Friday, according to PGA Tour officials.

The 42-year-old Bohn, a double winner on the PGA Tour, complained of chest pains after shooting a two-over 72 at PGA National and was immediately checked by medical staff on site. He was then taken to a local hospital where tests disclosed that he had suffered a mild heart attack, officials said. Bohn was reported to be in a stable condition and will undergo further tests yesterday.

Fellow PGA Tour player Tom Gillis tweeted: "Thoughts and prayers go out to Jason Bohn who had a heart attack this afternoon. Hang tough buddy."

Bohn, whose most recent PGA Tour win came at the 2010 New Orleans Classic, missed the cut at the Honda Classic after carding scores of 71 and 72.—*Reuters*

Jason Bohn of the US tees off the first hole during the final round at the Canadian Open golf tournament at the Glen Abbey Golf Club in Oakville, in 2013. PHOTO: REUTERS

Manchester City are beatable in League Cup: Klopp

Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — Liverpool can beat the "best team in the Premier League" when they take on Manchester City in the League Cup final at Wembley on Sunday, according to boss Juergen Klopp.

The Reds are intent on landing their first trophy since winning the last of their record eight League Cups in 2012, and are full of confidence after a 4-1 victory over title contenders Man City at the Etihad Stadium in November.

"Maybe from the squad side this (Man City) is the best team in the Premier League," German Klopp, 48, told the BBC.

"Maybe another team will win the league but Man City is really high quality. But you can beat them," he added.

"We have a good chance to make more problems for them than they can imagine in this moment."

Liverpool, who are eighth in the Premier League, are also through to the last 16 of the Europa Cup — where they will face Manchester United — after beating Augsburg 1-0 at Anfield on Thursday. Former Borussia Dortmund boss Klopp, who took over from Brendan Rodgers in October, is adamant his side will be fresh and motivated for their 12th League Cup final appearance.

"This job, in professional football, we do it only to win things — titles, cups, whatever," Klopp told reporters.

"A lot of players, managers have to work their whole life, and they can be really successful, but never have the chance to win something.

"After a very short time we have the chance. I am sure you will see in the game that we really want to win this."

Klopp said selecting his side for Sunday was proving difficult with so many players available.

"We have had a few (injury) problems since I've been here, but never the problem that we had too many players," he said.

"Making a squad this time is two things — the best thing I could ever do and the most difficult I had to do until now, because a few players will be disappointed with our decisions, for sure."—*Reuters*

Federer plans tour return in April

ZURICH — World number three Roger Federer has delayed his ATP World Tour return by a month and plans to make his comeback from knee surgery at the Monte Carlo Masters in April.

The 17-times grand slam champion had initially intended to return in March at the elite Indian Wells Masters in California where he has won the title four times.

In a Facebook post on Friday, the 34-year-old Federer said: "I have now had a lot of great practices on the court and in the gym. As it is a long year, I don't want to push it too hard and come back too soon."

"I will unfortunately not be able to make it back in time for the great event in Indian Wells but I do plan on playing in the desert next year."

"After consultation with my team, I have decided to enter the Monte Carlo Rolex Masters. Thanks for the support and I will see you back on tour soon," the Swiss added. Federer had arthroscopic knee surgery in Switzerland earlier this month to repair a torn meniscus, having suffered the injury away from a tennis court the day after his Australian Open run ended in the semi-finals.

He withdrew from the ABN AMRO World Tennis Tournament in Rotterdam and the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships with the intention of returning for the 10-20 March BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells in California. However, Federer has now set his sights on the clay surface of Monte Carlo for the 10-17 April ATP World Tour Masters.—*Reuters*

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